

CONSUMING BEAUTY

POSTFEMINIST BEAUTYPRACTICES:
NEOLIBERALISM EMBODIED



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“A feminism for difficult times need to remember our dreams of earth-shattering change, our most inclusive traditions of radicalism, critique and irreverent and bloody-minded activism and our impatience with a world that is just not good enough, for any of us, not yet”.

(Bhattacharyya, 2011, p. 316)

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the tremendous pressures on women to satisfy increasingly narrow constructions of beauty. It aims to get insights in how this repressive mechanism gets shape and, importantly, is accepted, justified and even celebrated by women themselves. It emphasizes that bodies are relational, in other words, the way we construct and experience our bodies is codetermined by wider social processes. This relationship has a double entanglement: the dominant system tries to construct bodies to its needs and in the same time the narratives of this system codetermine what we come to feel as normal, acceptable and beautiful (bodies). To understand the way the female body is currently constructed this thesis focuses on widespread postfeminist ideas and their relationship to the dominant discourse of neoliberalism. Because, were feminism is know for its critique on the narrow construction and objectification of female bodies the contemporary emancipated woman, self-consciously, even cheerfully, involves herself in an extensive arsenal of beauty practices. This thesis will explore the role of this ideologies in the construction of the female body and how simultaneously its discourses function for us to come to experience this as natural and even pleasurable.

Thereto, the first part of this thesis will make a theoretical argumentation based on existing literature; the first paragraphs will concentrate on the key-concepts of neoliberalism and embodiment, followed by a brief description of current constructions of the female body, contemporary beauty-practices and postfeminism. After that several parallel narratives of both neoliberalism and postfeminism and their role in the construction of the body is explored. These narratives are respectively; free choice, pleasure, self-discipline, ridiculisation and consumerism. Next the construction of the female body based on these narratives will be problematised in the context of class and power differences. Finally this discourses 'out there' will be taken all together and it is emphasised how postfeminism in fact reconstructs the female subject as an unrestraint, autonomous, fully controlled individual who seems to have lost all relations to social reality.

The second part of this thesis contains a critical discourse analysis of expressions of popular Facebookpages concerned with fashion and women as well as analyses of the real-life experiences of 5 women in the age of 23 to 25. From this analysis it becomes clear that the described narratives of postfeminism and neoliberalism are indeed used extensively in Facebook expressions and this results in a very narrow and restrictive construction of femininity. The individual approach to feminism that postfeminism takes, in fact functions to maintain and reinforce unequal relations of patriarchy. Postfeminism is a feminism stripped from its radical potential and it is rather complicit with forces of neoliberalism then concerned with social inequalities. The analysis also shows that resistance to these construction is made hard by the tendency of dominant discourse to incorporate resistant ideas, such as feminism, and its property to feel as natural, the only way and untouchable. The crux of dominant discourse, as becomes also clear from the interviews is that it gets insight of us, and fighting something inside you is more difficult then resisting outside forces. Thus in conclusion, by deconstructing the discourses that play a role in the restrictive construction of female bodies and femininity, this thesis aims to give us handles to better understand the construction of our own bodies and its relation to neoliberal ideology, because when we understand the origin of our feelings it will strengthen us to resist them. It wants to break with the paralyzing discourse of individuality and make us feel that we do matter, our bodies are relational and our actions therefore do matter!

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“We are losing bodies faster than we are losing languages”.

(Orbach, 2011, p. 393)

1. Introduction

When thinking of the construction of bodies, one of the most eye-catching expressions of body practices are, of course, practices of beauty. Practices that, in contemporary society, seem indispensable from identity and which -especially for women- are presented as essential necessities in our quest for love, riches, happiness, and success (Carolan, 2005, p. 92).

In modern society, prevails a relentless pursuit for bodily perfection; contemporary women are under great pressure to attain a body ideal that is achievable only for less than 5% of population (Redfern & Aune, p.22). Bodies, up to their most intimate parts, are (re)build to the model of photo-shopped images, identities are created through the consumption of fashion, make-up, hairstyle, exercise, botox and plastic surgery, even little toes are amputated to fit better into the latest Jimmy Choos¹ (Ibid.) and physical aging became an act one should simply not commit. In some circles visible aging became a sign of being untended really, it became a choice, because one could perish in practices that will, to a great extent, abate any traces of time.

During the 'second wave' of feminism there was a strong emphasis on the repressive consequences of beauty images and the subsequent objectification and sexualisation of women. Beauty practices were extensively criticized for their narrow and restrictive definitions of beauty and their often unhealthy, self-mutilative and potentially dangerous consequences (Lazar, 2011, p. 37; Pitts, 2005, p. 232). Moreover, positioning these practices of beauty in a wider structural political context, Feminists like Catherine MacKinnon saw the perceived sexualisation of the female body as the foundation of patriarchy (Pitts, 2005, p. 232).

Within contemporary popular culture though, these critiques seem to be dismissed mostly as obsolete. The so-called third wave, or post-feminism, highly influential and adopted in popular (media) culture, is build around a strong notion of young girls and women freely, joyfully and individually choosing to (re)build their identity, sexuality and bodies. Within post-feminist ideology emancipation is seen to be already achieved and expressed by women freely consuming, dressing up, recreating, shopping, exercising, pole dancing, flirting and building a career in the same time (Gill & Scharf 2011; McRobbie). Thus the practices formerly criticized are now precisely celebrated. Indeed, in this respect the objectification problematized during the second wave might seem outdated, as contemporary women, far from being presented as passive objects, are increasingly presented as active, desiring, heterosexual subjects (Gill, 2008, p. 437). But criticizing this post-feminist ideals, scholars have noted that while -especially white, western, middle class- women have attained some form of emancipation in social and political autonomy during the last century, there seems to have occurred a renewed discursive emphasis on femininity as a pathological condition, nowadays repackaged as a ruthless pursuit for bodily perfection (Tincknell, 2011, p. 83; Carolan, 2005, p. 97).

¹ Popular designer shoes

We are born in our bodies and therefore our body is something we often experience natural and very personal, yet our bodies are also relational, influenced by culture. The social constructions of bodies have profound social consequences and are of political importance. Throughout history body differences have often played an important part in the distribution of power (Emmett, 1998, p. 506) and to day the postfeminist construction of the female body seems to be a tool in the restoration and preservation of power hierarchies.

The art of dominant ideology as formulated by Peter Golding and Graham Murdoch is to become experienced as natural, inevitable and –crucially- legitimate by those who benefit least of it, they turned to the media to explore its roll in constructing ideologies that serve to sustain and justify relations of domination (Gill, 2008, p. 433). Thus this thesis aims to deconstruct the discourses that legitimize the contemporary oppressive construction of the female body. When we understand what has gone in to us, this might give us tools to actually bring about change, both personally and politically.

Where the body used to be our own physical limitation of space; one could only be in one place at a time, during the last decade a new infinite space that is disconnected from the physical body itself, became available: the internet. Most of the world population has now access to this virtual space and the openness of this space is promised to offer new democratising chances. The inexorable rise and popularity of social media and the wide reach of information make this space extremely important in the contemporary constructions of dominant ideology *and* of body images. Thus to gain insight in the way contemporary body images are constructed, -and consequently could be constructed differently- the research question of this thesis is:

How are contemporary dominant discourses reflected and used in the construction of the feminine body by social media? And what social impact does this have?

To answer this question I'll mainly concentrate on parallels between the dominant ideology of neoliberalism and the popular discourse of postfeminism. The concept of postfeminism can be seen as an attempt to understand the ambiguous relationship of many young women towards feminist ideas. This thesis will explore what role this postfeminist mentality plays in contemporary construction of our bodies. The field of exploring postfeminism and its relationship to neoliberalism is relatively new though important pioneering work has been done by Angela McRobbie (2009), author of the book *The aftermath of feminism: gender culture and social change* and by Rosalind Gill, author of several important articles and co-editor of the book *New femininities, postfeminism, neoliberalism and subjectivity* (2011). According to the latter the relationship between neoliberalism and gender relations and specifically to circulating postfeminist ideas remains still underexplored. She calls for further exploration of this intimate relationship "to illuminate both postfeminist media culture and contemporary neoliberal social relations" (Gill, 2008, p. 443). In this thesis I will therefore try to answer a piece of this puzzle.

To gain insights in this topic this thesis is based on extensive reading of existing literature, a critical discourse analysis of popular Facebookpages that are of relevance to the construction of the female body and analysis of the real life experiences of women as expressed in 2 focus interviews with 5 different women.

2. Brief outline

The next chapter will explore these connections based on existing literature. Thereto it will first go into the main-concepts of neo-liberalism, embodiment and postfeminism. It then gives a theoretical understanding of the social and political construction of contemporary bodies and it will describe several distinguishable discourses, that are of importance of the female body, in isolation. Next it will give a theoretical interpretation of the way postfeminism has reconstructed subjectivity. Finally I will justify some choice made in the process of his thesis.

Chapter three will discuss the methodological choices made in this thesis. First I will go into Jacque Derrida's concept of deconstruction and then I'll focus briefly on theories of discourse and dominant ideology. Next I'll explain the principles of the method of Critical Discourse Analyses, after that I'll theoretically substantiate the importance of digital space in the construction of the body. Finally will be a description of the choices made to collect the research material. In chapters four to eight follows the analyses of the obtained research materials. Chapter four focuses on the bodily effects of a reconstruction of feminism into postfeminism, chapter five emphasises the power of capital in digital space on the construction of the female body, chapter six shows how a conflation of the discourses that have been described in isolation in the theory chapter functions to conceal structural unequal relations of power. Chapter seven focuses on how a restrictive femininity is constructed on Facebook and finally chapter eight pays full attention to the complex real life experiences of the interviewed women and the role dominant discourse plays for them. In the end I will try to distract a meaningful conclusion from all of this and make a case for radical change.

2. The theoretical body

In this chapter I will explore the relationship between postfeminism and neoliberalism, its impact on the construction of the female body and the social consequences of this construction. It will be necessary first to get a better understanding of the related concepts and their role in this thesis; Paragraph 1 will go into the theory and practice of neoliberalism, and next I will explore theories on the relationally and social construction of the body (paragraph 2). Paragraph 3 will give a brief overview of current constructions of the female body, followed by a brief description of the theory and practice of postfeminism and its relationship to feminism both in popular culture and in academic writing (paragraph 4). Then with the key-concepts clarified we can start to explore the relationship between neoliberalism and feminism and its influence on the construction of the female body. Paragraph 5 explores the roll of different neoliberal and postfeminist narratives in the contemporary construction of the female body, respectively; choice (5.1), pleasure (5.2) and self-discipline (5.3). After ridiculing sexism (5.4) and consumption (5.5). Paragraph 6 will then argue how the contemporary construction of the female body based on the described narratives is connected to problems of class and social power. In a thesis were one wants to explore discourses and their impacts it becomes necessary to deploy some theory of agency and social constructions of the self paragraph 7 will pay attention to the construction of the postfeminist subject and it's implications for understanding social reality. Finally paragraph 8 will explicate some theoretical and pragmatic choices made during the process of this thesis concerning questions of gender and ethnicity.

1. Neo-liberalism

Undeniably contemporary society is profoundly influenced and structured through neoliberal ideology. The neo-liberal thought expanded during the past decades to almost every corner of the earth, propelled by institutions such as the Worldbank, IMF and the WTO, as well as by the promising panacea of growing economies, democracy and wealth.

Neoliberalism as we know it today, set of under Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US as a new organisational form of the economy developed to overcome the accumulation crisis of the 70's. It was the answer to Keynesianism, or the welfare state, that didn't bring the desired results for capital to overcome the previous crisis. In essence it entailed "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, p.2 in Gill & Scharf, 2011, p. 5). Neoliberalism as an ideology then, draws on the genuine faith that mechanisms of the market and competition will result in the best possible results for all. Market equilibriums of supply and demand bring the best quality for the best price, and competition "is supposed to allocate all resources, whether physical, natural, human or financial with the greatest possible efficiency" (George, 1999). To establish economic growth that would benefit all, the emphasis is on the freedom of the individual. The neoliberal program introduced by Margaret Thatcher

thus entailed: confronting trade union power, attacking all forms of social solidarity that were in the way of competitive flexibility, dismantling or reducing the commitments of the welfare state, the privatization of public enterprises, reducing taxes, encouraging entrepreneurial initiative, and creating a favourable business climate to induce a strong inflow of foreign direct investment (Harvey, 2005, p. 23). According to Thatcher there was, no such thing as society, only individual men and women and their families. The neoliberal utopia then draws on grand narratives of individualism, private property, competition, entrepreneurship, personal responsibility, family life and consumption (Harvey; Gill; McRobbie; George) that would give the market space to guarantee the freedom of all –individuals- (Harvey, 2005, p. 7). These values have now deeply penetrated our society and all spheres of daily life, and as such, are seldom questioned².

But despite all good intentions, it is hard to miss how the results of neoliberalism in practice aren't always as rosy as they are presented in theory. Notwithstanding unprecedented total wealth, inequality during the past decades has only increased; we've seen a massive growth of the gap between rich and poor, not just between different parts of the world, but also within most nation-states (Yuval-Davis, 2009, p.6). The global result in 1996, was that the 358 richest people in the world had a net worth that was equal to the combined income of the poorest 45% of world population, -2.3 billion people- (Harvey, 2005, p. 34/35). And it didn't stop there, under the influence of new crises inequality still exhibits a rapid growth, as emphasised by the occupy-movement statement: 'we are the 99%'. The distance between the richest and poorest countries has only increased under neoliberal influence: from about 3 to 1 in 1820 to 44 to 1 in 1973 and 72 to 1 in 1992 (Shah, 2013). In a world full of abundance and unimaginable large flows of capital, still almost 870 million people encounter structural starvation (FAO, 2012), an estimated 29.8 million people live in slavery (global slavery index 2013), 28,3 million people with AIDS do not have access to medication (Aids Fonds 2013), one out of two children in the world lives in poverty (Shah, 2013), one in five Greeks, now lives under the poverty line (HLN, 2013), the environment is on the edge of collapse (George, 1999) and a registered 17.306 people found death in the ten years between 1993 and the end of 2012 in an attempt to reach a better life in Europe –and that is only the registered- (United, 2012). In sum, it appears that the neoliberal panacea doesn't live up to what it promises. Yet, neoliberalism doesn't seem disputed by a majority of society.

Neoliberalism indeed became the undisputed dominant ideology of our time, Thatcher's justification of economic liberalism by the single word TINA –there is no alternative- became a folk religion and any alternatives to neoliberal organisation are relegated to the realm of fantasy or visionary utopia. The question then, posed in 1977 by Peter Golding and Graham Murdoch "how it is that the gross injustices and inequalities of contemporary capitalism come to be understood as natural,

² Although a notion of society remains and is increasingly deployed in politics, both in rising nationalism and in predatory neoliberal policies such as the 'participatiesamenleving' (participative society) of Rutte.

inevitable and – crucially – as legitimate by those who benefit least from them” (Gill, 2008, p. 433) seems still of relevance. David Harvey (2005, p. 5) argues that for a way of thought to become dominant -that is, accepted as the only way- it needs an apparatus that appeals to our instincts, institutions, values and desires as well as to the possibilities of the social world we live in. When such an apparatus is successful it becomes embedded in common sense and thus taken for granted and not open to question. The foundation of neo-liberalism is based on such appealing concepts, namely human dignity and individual freedom (Harvey, 2005, p. 5), which gave it the right potential –and timing, and finances- to become a dominant ideology that became to feel natural and inevitable. Many influential scholars have noted how we have, to a great extent, internalized the basic values of neoliberalism (eg, Butler, Foucault, Golding, Gramsci, Murdock and many more), which was exactly what its founders and stakeholders aimed for. In the words of Thatcher: ‘Economics are the method, but the object is to change the soul’ (Harvey, 2005, p.23). What neoliberal stakeholders understood then, according to Susan George (2005), is the concept of cultural hegemony; if you can occupy people’s heads, their hearts and hands will follow.

David Harvey (2005, p. 19) argues that neoliberalism is marked by double appearance: it can be seen either as a utopian theoretical design for the reorganisation of capitalism, or as a political project in the interest of capital and to restore the power of the economic elites. According to his analysis, the latter is the case; in practice the utopian argument has functioned to justify and legitimate all actions in favour of the restoration and preservation of power hierarchies. Neoliberalism then is presented as concerned with individual freedom, democracy, choice and personal responsibility, while in reality it is a class-controlled economical project that systematically strips assets from the poor and concentrates prosperity within a tiny global elite (Tyler, 2011, p.22).

In any case, the fact of the matter is that neoliberalism profoundly changed our world, it fundamentally changed our actions, values, understandings, norms and feelings and therewith our subject positions and bodies. This thesis is greatly inspired by the book ‘Caliban and the witch’ by Silvia Federici. In this book she describes extensively how the crisis of feudalism, in which the elite lost its control on the oppressed population, was answered by the implementation of capitalism and how this new organisation of society influenced the social position and bodies of women -and how this eventually led to the witch hunts-. Harvey argues that neoliberalism too was a reaction of the elites to restore power hierarchies (Harvey, 2005, p. 15) and moreover we’ve seen how under the rule of neoliberalism inequalities have tended to rise rather than diminish. My interest in this thesis goes to how this dominant system plays out on female bodies and with what consequences, and therewithal how it tries to incorporate resistance in order to disarm it. Thereto it is needed to gain some theoretical insights in the social constructions of bodies, the next paragraph will explore this social body and the concept of embodiment.

2. Social bodies

Bodies, and their attached narratives, can be interpreted as mirror reflections of society: For centuries, soft hands and white skin were features of the upper class, reflecting them not working the land (Carolan, 2005), in times of scarcity, fat symbolises prosperity and status, and today, skin bleaching and eyelid corrections are very popular practices in 'the non-western world' symbolizing a white, western and modern ideal (Jones, 2011). Body-images are often direct responses to the prevailing sentiments of a specific time; at the outset of World War I in the US, the idea that otiose fat on civilians could have been used as rations for soldiers, judged the fat body as unpatriotic and similarly in the 1950s an appreciation of fit and strong bodies arose, for a nation of soft bodies was seen as a nation that was soft on communism (Carolan, 2005). Bodies, although seemingly natural and inevitable physical appearances, are relational (Orbach, 2011, p. 391; DuPuis & Guthman, 2006, p. 438), they too are cultural constructs. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu they "bear the imprint of society" (Mackie & Stevens, 2009, p. 263). Thus, bodies are highly political matters, the way people construct, position, decorate and (re)build bodies reflects cultural norms, class, intentions and social status. In the end, every society is interested in body images and practices (Langman, 2003, p. 226) and knows specific, culturally embedded norms of healthy, beautiful and successful bodies.

2.1 Foucault's concept of biopower

In modern society, according to the influential thinker Michel Foucault (1978), the operation of power has shifted from external forces to forces that play out within the body, this modern form of power he termed 'biopower'. According to Foucault the rise of political liberty and its institutions in western society was accompanied with a new form of discipline directed towards the body. While modern ideas signified a decrease in the absolute power of the sovereign over its subjects, simultaneously "a series of disciplinary practices that operated corporally to regulate and train the body from within" developed (Carolan, 2005, p. 97). This biopower, emerged with the industrial revolution; the modern organisation of society required able-bodied workers, social control and self-discipline in all parts of life, including the body. In order for biopower to work most effectively, people needed to believe in the new organisation of society as an ideology, so that norms became the regulating power rather than legal codes (DuPuis & Guthman, 2006, p. 443). Legal codes are fought against way easier than the norms and ideals of ones own internalisation and environment. These disciplinary practices then, according to Foucault, get inside us through institutions such as the army, the school, the prison, the hospital, the mental ward and the factory. Through the practices of these institutions, "bodies can be shaped in ways that support the modern, capitalistic, liberal state" (Carolan, 2005, p. 97). Thus Foucault talks of political anatomy which creates 'docile bodies', these are bodies that have been inscribed discursively to embody the moral, social and political conventions of a socio-political system (Carolan, 2005, p. 97).

Within the rise of capitalism biopower functions as a mechanism of power distribution used to mobilise individuals as resources. Bodies became resources for labour and the military (Mackie & Stevens, 2009, p. 260) which required healthy, disciplined and able-bodies, and, in the case of women, for the reproduction of the

population, both by 'producing' future generations of labour as by taking care of working (male) family members (Federici, 2009). In conclusion, in modern society, powers play out on the intimate domain of the body, where dominant ideology is internalised and shapes the body according to the needs of the system.

2.2 Body experience

The construction of the body as a resource for the system is not something we involve ourselves in deliberately, the exact point is that through institutions we internalize properties, norms and identities in favour of the dominant system, which come to feel natural and inevitable.

While during the industrial revolution, the desires of the system for certain types of bodies were pretty straight forward, in the age of neo-liberalism, with its internal paradoxes and –western- abundance, the expectations of the body and the accompanying consequences become ever more complex and opaque. On the one side the self, influenced by postmodern thought is seen as characterized by multiplicity, performativity and pastiche (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 101), constructed differently at different times in accordance to the expectations of the situation. Yet, on the other side contemporary culture with its emphasis on individuality shows an increasing belief in the development and expression of the true autonomous self. According to Stuart & Donaghue (2012, p. 101) the fusion of these two trends gave rise to the neoliberal subject as a hybrid, which incorporates the flexibility of the postmodern subject into the individualized liberal subject. The complexities of the construction and the embodiment of this subject within postfeminist discourse are the topic of this thesis, and will get comprehensive attention later. For now the point is that we are embodied subjects that place ourselves within the world through our bodies. In the words of Merleau-Ponty: 'we come to understand our relationship in the world via positioning of our bodies physically and historically in the space' (Kumar, nd. P. 1). The body is the active and perceptive vehicle of being and not merely a textual entity produced by discursive practices (Ibid.). Yet, while in previous times the function of the body was to a great extent determined by physical capability, today identity creation is highly intertwined with the aesthetics of the body; "the body has become the visible carrier of the self" (Franco, 2008, p. 471). The construction of the body at all bodily levels such as style, manners, strength, capabilities and aesthetics, in contemporary society is strongly connected to the construction of identities. Ideas of self-discipline, self-control and deservingness get connected to the successful construction of the body and this way the outward appearance of one's body has become a window to one's inner worthiness (Carolan, 2005, p. 89)

Bodies thus, are not merely constructed as resources; simultaneously they are constructed as identities. Identities then, are both a result of ascribed bodily properties, -the historicity of a given body- and of the recreation of the body in order to claim a certain identity. This can be understood by Judith Butler's concept of 'performativity': We get ascribed categories based on the bodies we're born with, female or male, when our body is decided to be female, in most cases we come to identify as a woman through normative inscriptions, we feel we *are* woman. This then is reinforced by performative acts, by repeated iteration, the things we do

because we feel it is what a women naturally does, this way sex, gender and other categories are produced and reinforced: being a women becomes an embodied practice (Butler, 1993). Thus bodies are not simply natural givens, they are inscribed and lived through expression of culture, both mass mediated culture, and daily life. The construction of the body is therefore a highly political matter and in contemporary society an important issue of power.

3. Contemporary (postfeminist) body obsession

3.1 Tight beauty

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, yet, the beholder is seldom out of culture. Of course culture always has determined, or at least influenced, what was seen as beautiful. Not only considering attractive bodies, but also in the fields of art, design, landscapes and architecture. Within contemporary society though, we see an increasingly narrow and universal standard of beauty in this most intimate field that is the body.

Beauty, under influence of Hollywood, multi-national beauty companies, the music industry, regular- and social-media and commercials became associated in all corners of the world with whiteness, pale skin, wide-eyes and thin bodies. Skin whitening and eye- and nose-corrections became very popular and normalised beauty practices within parts of the 'non-western' world reflecting a Western orientated standard of beauty. Local perceptions of beauty meanwhile gave way under pressure of the relentless stream of images produced (Jones, 2011).

In the mean time, as said, the definition of beauty seems to have an ever-smaller bandwidth; there is an increasingly narrow perception of the perfect body, combined with increasing pressure to achieve this ideal. Models and celebrity culture, conforming to, or recreating this ideal (at least in their polished representations) fill public space and this way promote an ever more reduced and uniform image of femininity (and it happens with masculinity, too) (Orbach, 2011, p. 392). The bodies we see everyday are photoshopped bodies, they are rebuild through cosmetic surgery and there is a considerable amount of time put in their representation through exercise, make-up, clothes, lighting and selection of the perfect shot. We are aware of this somehow, but that doesn't mean that the image doesn't touch us. Through the thousands of images that impose themselves upon us every week, in which there is a sheer over-presence of particular kinds of bodies, our perception of real bodies shifts to expect filtered, smoothed, polished, softened and re-arranged bodies (Coleman, nd. p. 11). And we all seem to have an interest in reproducing (or at least endeavour) such a perfect body -as the next paragraph will try to make clear- this way reinforcing the discourse upon others and ourselves.

3.2 Feminine beauty success

Beauty, in our world, is not just a nice addition; it is serious business with serious consequences. All kinds of successes in life are linked to beauty, and not entirely without reason; research has demonstrated the existence of a 'beauty premium' which means that women who are considered conventionally attractive, that is, who comply to current cultural standards of beauty, earn higher incomes, get higher

student evaluations (Jones, 2011, p. 886) and, all other things being equal, “are considered more intelligent, more trustworthy, more likeable and more desirable than less conventionally beautiful people” (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 100)

Correspondingly, successful femininity in popular discourse is directly connected to conventional beauty. There is a very strong emphasis on bodily appearances and femininity became almost inseparable of involvement in a set of narrow described beauty-practices. For a woman, to have control over her body (that is, to meet up to prevailing beauty standards) is the visible expression of having control over her life. All parts of life became associated with this yardstick for feminine success; “acceptedness, companionship, love, admiration, success, and a general contentment while on this earth” (Carolan, 2005, p. 89), all are promised as the rewards of bodily control. Female identities are created through choices of fashion, beauty treatments, and bodily appearances, this way the body became the expression of the self and ones worth or status is determined by the appearance of the body (Ibid.).

In turn, not to be able, or simply not to choose, to comply with prevailing beauty standards can have serious social and cultural consequences, including cultural and social exclusion, conviction and personal feelings of misery, anxiety and severe uncertainty. What is at stake is not only the construction of “appearance, style and identity, but also material and cultural survival, human equality and dignity” (Pitts, 2005, p. 245).

This emphasis on bodily success brings severe social pressure to meet prevailing norms of the construction of the body and involvement in beauty practices. According to Susan Bordo beauty produces norms “against which the self continually measures, judges, disciplines and corrects itself” (Tyler, 2011, p.29). Moreover the ongoing emphasis on the construction of the body shifts the experience of the body as the place from where one lives, to something one needs to be ever watchful of, and tending to (Orbach, 2011, p. 392).

3.3 Technology of beauty

Important in the construction of contemporary bodies is the lack of technical constraints; designers and advertisers have a whole arsenal of techniques to create the most perfectly imaginable image. In digital space, highly influential in contemporary times, there are no physical restrictions to the construction of the perfect body. For example, the fashion-company ‘Forever 21’ photoshopped away the kneecaps of models showing skirts and shorts on their website, this way creating ‘perfect legs’ -on which no women would ever be able to walk- (nieuwsblad.be, 2013).

The images that fill up the spaces of our daily life’s, in majority, show bodies that are made-over by graphic tools. But that doesn’t mean in all cases that the graphically designed body is unreachable: Cosmetic surgeons literally sculpt bodies in all imaginable forms and shapes, often after the example of photoshopped images. Thus, meet the phenomenon of the designer vagina; pornographic magazines like Playboy, Penthouse, and People started to airbrush labia from pictures showing frontal female nudity to make them less explicit and to conform to censorship regulation laws that deem the only acceptable genital appearance is one that is ‘neat

and tidy'. Labia minora are too offensive for unrestricted pornography. Yet, this graphical construction of a vagina that was meant less explicit, or in other words less sexual, had an unexpected physical outcome; women, confronted with the airbrushed vaginas of playboy bunnies, recognised a difference with their own vaginas and came to feel that these were not normal and/or less sexually desirable. And so the trend of the designer-vagina was born, where cosmetic surgeons rebuild vaginas after the conservative photoshopped images of porn-magazines (Smyth, 2012).

3.4 Sexuality

With a changing perception of the body and of femininity comes almost necessary a change in the construction of sexuality. Hilary Rathner in this respect talks about a 'technology of sexiness', which in turn, is central to 'sexual entrepreneurship'. She argues how romantic narratives have changed under influence of modernity throughout the 90's: While the classic romantic heroine brought virtue, innocence and goodness as commodities to the marriage market, contemporary romance demands a 'technology of sexiness'. The contemporary single girl faces the task of embodying heterosexuality through the disciplined use of make-up, fashion, exercise and cosmetic surgery (Gill & Harvey, 2011, p.56). A variety of scholars have identified new cultural constructions of female sexuality mainly characterized by the embodiment of a new confident, powerful, sexy femininity. Douglas Rushkoff called this new figure the 'midriff': "a young, attractive, heterosexual woman who knowingly and deliberately plays with her sexual power and is always "up for" sex" (Gill, 2008, p. 437). Surely sexual confidence should be only encouraged and maybe this is one of the positive contributions of the postfeminist discourse, yet what seems concerning is how in this field too exists great pressure to satisfy a narrowly defined normative sexuality, coupled to the construction of feminine identity. In addition the normative construction of feminine sexuality within contemporary discourse often entails misogynist and sexist expressions.

As said the concern of this thesis is the contemporary narrow construction of the female body and the way this body is embraced instead of resisted by women themselves. Whatever happened to the feminist critique against this crushingly tight beauty images? The next paragraph will start to explore the relation of the contemporary emancipated woman to such feminist criticism.

4 Postfeminism

What is postfeminism? Like so many post-theories that is hard to grasp, postfeminism is complicated, ambiguous and often paradoxical. It's seldom openly proclaimed and as a term it is probably more used by its critics than by its proponents. It's not a theory and it's more than the idea that feminism became unnecessary for gender equality is supposed to be already achieved. If one wants to grasp what postfeminism actually is I'd say that it is more of a discourse performed in popular culture where it expresses itself in series and movies about modern women such as *Sex and the City*, *Desperate Housewives* and *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Gill & Scharf, 2011, p. 4), in make-over reality shows willingly reconstructing people in all

possible domains of their lives (family, dress, body, behaviour, sex) in chick-lit, in women's magazines, commercials, in pop-music and the accompanying video-clips. Furthermore in newspaper articles and opinions, even in books critically concerned with the position of women (Wolf, 1991) the beauty myth), and last yet most important in the performativity of daily life.

Before going into theories, assumptions and academic literature about this discourse maybe it's useful to give an example that can be seen as populist itself but does, I guess, characterize what postfeminism inter alia entails: The Spice girls

4.1 The Spicegirls; postfeminism in a nutshell

The Spicegirls were an immensely popular girls group in the 90's. Selling over 80 million records worldwide made them the best-selling female group of all times, they coined the term girl power and made it famous and they are widely recognised for being very influential in popular culture. The concept of Girl power might be considered the foundation of post-feminism, inspiring discourses of strong emancipated women, economical independence, the right to pleasure, free choice and sexual agency.

The spice-girls were formed as a marketing operation, or in other words: a product to sell. The father-and-son music management team Bob & Chris Herbert got the idea to create a girl-group that could compete with the boy-groups dominating the hit parades at the time. In first instance they wanted to 'appeal to the boys' for the boy-groups mainly attracted female audiences and thus a great target audience – namely men- was not provided for yet. What is stunning then is that the spice-girls were a product created by men, meant to sell to men, yet, proclaiming girl power.

In practice though, the carefully created image, combined with erotic looks and the post-feminist self-confidence called girlpower turned out to be very appealing to teenage girls. The spice-girls became immensely popular and omnipresent through radio songs, music videos, newspaper headlines and partaking in lots of commercials. This collaboration with companies to sell products also fits very well in the postfeminist discourse as will become clear later in this thesis.

The success of the Spicegirls was mainly due to their carefully created image. A pop-magazine gave the girls each a nick-name based upon their image, the images were then included and exploited by the group members themselves, this way young girls could easily identify with one of the members of the group. This construction of distinctive identities within the group is another recognisable characteristic of postfeminism: a clear tendency to individualist identities. Yet, while the created images looked aesthetic distinct, they were all constructed through consumer choices and beauty practices with one ultimate aim: to be sexy. This construction of identity that is self-managed through consumerism and beauty practices is yet another recognisable feature of postfeminism: choose your so-called feminine identity and then consume and behave accordingly.

The five distinct 'types' or images that were created by the Spicegirls can also give us an interesting insight in contemporary constructed postfeminist discourses. Let's have a quick look at the five different 'types':

Posh spice: Victoria Beckham reflects an upper middle class attitude and style, showed by the consumption of designer outfits and high-heeled shoes. We see this

back in postfeminism in the creation of a spoiled-women identity based on shallow consumerism -and often the finances of a male-counterpart or parents-. It is this kind of women that are lucky and up-class enough to spend their days shopping and in beauty-saloons.

Scary Spice: Stands for her 'in your face' attitude that is loud and cheeky with matching outfits, often using leopard prints and, according to wikipedia, for her voluminous curly Afro hair being the only black member of the group (now that's scary). Within postfeminism women are aloud to be there, to show themselves and to take up space, this is connected to discourses of personal empowerment, emancipation and entitlement to pleasure. In theory this would count for white, black or Asian woman alike, yet in practice we see a clear overrepresentation of white women in the fashion industry and advertisements. But there are postfeminist voices opposing this institutionalised racism.

Baby Spice: this nickname was to Emma Bunton, according to Wikipedia, "because she was the youngest of the group, wore her long blonde hair in pigtails, wore babydoll dresses, had an innocent smile, and had a girly girl personality." This kind of identity building is seen back in a tendency within postfeminism to accept and reinstall natural gender differences (Franco, 2008, p. 483; Gill, 2011, p. 64; Lazar, 2009, p. 381). Resulting in the girly-girl extensively described by Ariel Levy (2006). This girly-girl or baby-doll tends to openly present itself as innocent, dependent and unknowing. Also aging is an important topic in contemporary popular identity building, there is an agony of growing old and girls tend to get sexualised ever younger in ads and by products such as children's strings.

Sporty Spice: according to Wikipedia; reflecting 'Mel C's' tracksuit and ponytail, though girl attitude and tattoos first, and secondly, her actual involvement in athletics. This order reflects clearly the emphasis on the looks before the performance. In this image we can again recognise the discourses of girl-power (being literally strong), and individual independence and free choice (in having tattoos). But above all, in the past decade sport became a must, with fitness taking over the world. Words as 'strong' 'choice' 'control' and 'empowerment' are used to convince women they should do fitness or sports. This is also closely connected to the self-construction of the body through self-surveillance, self-control and discipline, both in exercising and in eating: no one has the right to be fat anymore, fat became the embodiment of excessive behaviour and weakness, despite all the consumptive temptations (which in turn created a whole new market for diet-products). Fitness is thus presented as "exercising choice, command, control and mastery over one's body, and consequently ones life" (Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998 p. 319)

Ginger Spice: assigned to Gery Haliwell for her liveliness and flaming red hair. This is the most ambiguous character of the group to me but I guess it represents in some way the corporate career women; Haliwell was seen as the leader of the group because of her articulate conversational style and the her ascribed business savvy nature -although it could also be that she was just the 'red-head' needed to satisfy 'all tastes'-. Of course this is a highly known adopted identity and aim in contemporary postfeminist society. The ideal neo-liberal female subject, seen in many tv-series, doesn't believe in the glass ceiling, equality is achieved; women

should not whine, they should work harder and manipulate the man in their surroundings to achieve their own goals. This ideal woman combines it all: a corporate carrier, a fem fatale attitude, running a family -or being single with great sexual agency and confidence- and looking good.

Strikingly, the 5 different characters and their physics seem to embody each of them one form of dominant and stereotypical sexuality focused on 'male preferences': One dark and exotic, one blond, young, girly and innocent, one sporty and agile, one up-class and one wild and exotic redhead. –It could be the sections of an average porn-site-. In real life of course, these different constructed images generally are no definite moulds, nor are they usually performed as such distinct identities, yet more importantly, while some of the features of the characters overlap others seem to be contradictory. This is very exemplifying of the postfeminist discourse; seemingly contradictory discourses all come to fit and are combined in an ultimately very narrow definition of womanhood. The next section will explore exemplary characteristics and narratives of postfeminism as found in literature on the topic.

4.2 postfeminism & feminism; What is post in postfeminism?

Like so many of the post-discourses the relation with that what was before is often ambiguous and contradictory deployed, yet ultimately one of the defining narratives of postfeminism consists of the idea that emancipation has largely been reached. Women have way more freedom and opportunities than they had just decades ago, now all they have to do is grab them. We find a renewed self-confidence of women: there is a notion of strong women that can do what they want to do and be who they want to be, as long as they work hard for it, basically the American dream feminized. This dream is advocated by powerful women who declare that 'the glass ceiling' does not exist; it's women that hold themselves back. Important in this notion, according to which equality in the West has been reached, is the systematic construction of an 'other' that is assumed to be still in need to be rescued, this other is usually depicted as the 'oppressed Muslim women' (Gill, 2011, p. 67). This way the "West's comforting liberal fiction of itself as "egalitarian"" (Gill, 2011, p. 67) is maintained by looking and pointing away to 'others', western freedoms are celebrated and young women are "encouraged to see themselves as the grateful subjects of modern states and cultures which permit such freedoms unlike repressive or fundamentalist regimes" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 27).

4.3 Popular postfeminist approaches to feminism

The relationship of popular postfeminism with feminism is ambiguous and two-fold: on the one hand elements of feminism are taken into account and vocabulary such as choice, freedom and empowerment are commonplace, women's issues and women's rights are now taken up by powerful institutions, justifying the idea that gender equality in the West has been reached, or at least, is taken care of. In the same time, on a cultural level, feminism is marked through vilification and negation (McRobbie, 2009, p.1) that states it outdated, extreme, difficult and un-pleasurable (Lazar, 2009, p. 373).

Second wave feminism generally sought causes for gender inequality in patriarchal power relations, this, together with its criticism on sexism and the objectification of

women has left feminism an image of too strict, unpleasant man-hating, no-fun, masculine women. While this more classical feminism is thought to focus against men, postfeminism shifted its focus to women themselves, who are now held responsible for the successes in their own lives and thereto called to self-manage and self-discipline. Women are expected to (re)build the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and in addition, to present all their actions as freely chosen (Franco, 2008, p. 483; Gill & Scharf, 2011, p. 7; Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p.106). According to Angela McRobbie (2009), the new freedoms won by women are reversed through the fields of feminine instruction and pleasure that prompt a discourse of female individualisation “which requires the repudiation of feminism which is frequently typecast as embodying bodily failure, hideousness or monstrosity” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 61/62). Many issues criticised by second wave feminism, such as all kinds of beauty-practices, consumption and the sexualisation of the female body are now proclaimed as feminine entitlements, as something that women naturally like, as fun, as things that women want themselves and choose for and therefore any critique is being dismissed (Lazar, 2006, p. 506). As far as it isn't despised, feminism is also declared obsolete; emancipation has been reached, there is no need for it anymore, women now have the freedom to build their own life. This creates a strong feeling that change has been realized and therefore resistance became unnecessary.

But of course in our society deep gender inequalities and profound sexism persist that sometimes appear on the surface, and in such cases, can no longer be ignored. Thus, you see feminism sometimes being invoked, most of the time in a new –or third wave- interpretation, for example by women's-magazines, websites, paper-articles, or popstars. Women's rights for instance, remain an issue that gets a great deal of attention, although it is apparent that the call for more rights is most of the time one for women outside of the Western world. Also sexist articles written by men and the fact that women still are far behind in the higher segments of the labour market can count on a good deal of attention, sometimes combined with a call upon feminism, -yet other times, feminism is held accountable for these things-. More often however, you see how the different and seemingly incompatible approaches are combined to overcome the paradoxes of contemporary repressive society: Feminist ideas are popularized and presented as if widely assumed and accepted, yet in the same time there is taken distance for it as a politics of the past. (Lazar, 2011, p. 38), it is given the status of common sense, while it is “also reviled, almost hated” (McRobbie, 2001, p.6). These kinds of combinations of different approaches partly constitute a sense of naturalness and normativity of -perhaps repressive- practices. In women's magazines for instance, editorials on how one should love her body and feel comfortable in it no matter its shape, go side-by-side with articles in the very same magazines proclaiming instructions of a narrow selection of required beauty-practices. The apparent absence of conflict between these quite contradictory messages normalizes a very narrow definition of female beauty (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 99). In conclusion the relationship between the popular postfeminist discourse and feminist notions is ambiguous, complicated and paradoxical, feminism is sometimes despised other times distorted or deemed

successfully achieved. Yet often combines these seemingly mutually exclusive approaches.

4.4 Academic feminist approaches to postfeminism

According to Lazar (2009) there are two important approaches to be found in academic literature on post-feminism in relation to feminism which, she concludes, both have much value in the analysis of postfeminism. The first approach, mainly adopted by critics of consumer culture, views postfeminism as co-optative. This approach emphasises how feminism is used within other discourses that strip it from its radical potential and make it appear as if change has been realized. Here the social theory of Marcuse applies. Marcuse laments that contested ideas on reality in modern time less frequently stay oppositional, alien and transcendent, because of the ability of dominant discourses to incorporate ideologies of resistance. Dominant ideology incorporates countermovement, it gives the idea that what used to be counter-ideology, is not counter anymore, it has been adopted and thus real change has been made. This way dominant ideology exercises its power to give a false idea of change through its incorporation of certain discourses of resistance. This precisely knocks the force out of resistance and therefore real change is not realized (Esques, Duncan & Miller, 1998 p. 321). The girl-power discourses can provide an example of this co-optation: emancipation has been reached, women are strong now and have the power to accomplish their dreams, yet these dreams most often became individual goals that lack any political notion or urge for change. An important consequence of co-optation is that it leaves traditional femininity -including a revival of acknowledged gender differences- remarkably undisturbed (Lazar, 2009, p. 373). Angela McRobbie (2009) on the other hand argues that it is feminism's potential success that causes a counter-reaction. Dominant powers make every effort to make sure feminism will not be a threat again, to this end popular postfeminist culture produces new femininities that are neither feminist nor traditional. This new femininity blurs the contradictions between feminine and feminist and combines features of both in one identity (Lazar, 2009, p. 373). Young women are now offered freedom, independency, respectability, citizenship and entitlement mainly through wage earning capacity. According to McRobbie (2009, p. 2) "The young woman is offered a notional form of equality, concretised in education and employment and through participation in consumer culture and civil society, in place of what a reinvented feminist politics might have to offer". What is empowering in McRobbie's approach is that it does not leave us merely victims of a system, rather it makes us the transformers of the system (even though the system tries to transform in the opposite direction), the system changes itself to counter our changing potential.

4.5 What is post is a decline of radical potential

What in the end marks a great difference between feminism and postfeminism, according to many critical feminist scholars, is its political direction (Gill, 2008, p. 443; Gill & Scharf, 2011, p. 7; Lazar, 2009 p. 43; McRobbie, 2009). Postfeminism is strongly associated with the individual discourse, it's all about the right to have fun, to make individual decisions, personal empowerment and it is often very narcissistic, only thinking about one's own pleasure despite the social consequences. This focus

on personal gains makes it an I-feminism, which “detracts from a collective ‘we-feminism’ needed for continuing dialogue and social change” (Lazar, 2009, p. 397). There is a strong focus on the personal and individual rather than on the social and collective and Lazar argues that the disavowal of feminism “radically reverses feminist efforts to make the personal political, by repeatedly and universally reducing the political to the personal” (Lazar, 2011, p. 49).

This adjustment to the interpretation of feminism has an influence on its radical potential, postfeminism as a dominating discursive system is fostering a culture of post-critique (Lazar, 2009, p. 372). Critics noticed how the way that feminism is taken into account in the post-feminist discourse by the incorporation of other dominant discourses, creating a “liberal, equal opportunities feminism” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 14), and simultaneously making it appear as if change has been effected, takes the bite out of feminism and furthermore leaves traditional oppressive ideas of femininity unimpaired (Lazar, 2009, p. 373). Meanwhile a more “radical feminism concerned with social criticism rather than with progress or improvement in the position of women in an otherwise more or less unaltered social order” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 14) is invoked more negatively. In the words of Cole and Hribar movement feminism “generated spaces and identities that interrogated distributional relation inequalities, meanings, differences and identities,” (Cole and Hribar quoted in: Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998 p. 321) compared to postfeminism that “includes spaces that work to homogenize, generate conformity, and mark Others, while discouraging questioning” (Ibid.).

One might have already recognised some remarkable similarities between postfeminist thought and familiar neoliberal discourses. The next Paragraph will dive deeper into this relationship.

5 Parallels in postfeminism and neoliberalism

Contemporary academic work started to explore parallels between the ideologies of post-feminism and neo-liberalism (Gill; Gill & Scharf, Lazar, McRobbie) and there seems to be consensus among scholars that there is a powerful resonance between both ideologies. According to Rosalind Gill (2008) these operate within at least three levels. First, “both appear to be structured by a current of individualism that has almost entirely replaced notions of the social or political” (Gill, 2008, p. 443). Neo-liberalism has elevated the individual to be the first concern without any scruple.

Neoliberalism profits of a decline of collectivisation: collectively organised workers disrupt the markets of supply and demand and also the system of competition. Likewise any collective sharing of commodities undermines the market. Accordingly neo-liberal discourse rejects any social responsibility, it’s everyone for themselves. This results in a de-politicisation of all social processes and injustices under the argument that all is individual choice and responsibility.

“Secondly, it is clear that the autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neo-liberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of post-feminism” (Gill, 2008, p. 443). The neo-liberal story is based on the idea that the individual –and now also woman- is an emancipated, autonomous subject, making free rational decisions and that the consequences of

this decisions are ones own responsibility. Everyone should strive for her own successes, by calculating and making rational decisions. In the words of Stuart & Donaghue (2012, p. 101); "A central characteristic of the neoliberal subject is an emphasis on autonomy and self-responsibility that holds 'individuals' accountable for their own fate and eschews any acknowledgment of meaningful social or structural constraint on the self". The liberal idea is that of free choice, but the fact that opportunities to make choices are not equally divided is ignored, moreover the autonomous subject is placed out of context; any influence of culture is denied. You see this back in the postfeminist story of both carefully constructing ones life yet everything being free choice. According to Gill these two parallels suggest that postfeminism is not simply a response to feminism, "but also a sensibility that is at least partly constituted through the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideas" (Gill, 2008, p. 443).

But there is a third relation: "it is women who are called on to self-manage, self-discipline. To a much greater extend than men, women are required to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely choosen" (Gill, 2008, p. 443). There is a very strong emphasis on women to regulate and orchestrate every part of their lives, to carefully build and construct their identities and bodies, to 'make' themselves. Thereby inequalities are downplayed through the idea that by adjusting to the system, working hard and making the right choices everyone can overcome their class (being a women) and reach the top.

In sum, parallel discourses of post-feminism and neo-liberalism include; individualism, free choice, emancipation, rationality, pleasure, control, manufacturability, self-surveillance, self-monitoring, self-management and self-discipline (Gill & Scharf 2011, McRobbie 2008). Furthermore the postfeminist discourse, heavily influenced by neoliberalism puts a strong emphasises on the construction of the female body (through consumption), a resurgence of ideas of natural sexual differences and a celebration of unrestrained consumption. To top it off, it suffuses all of this an ironic tone that refutes easy critique, usually even before one could start it (Gill, 2011, p. 64).

These parallels between neoliberalism and postfeminism are not neutral, they do not work outside relations of power and they also play out on women's bodies. According to Susie Orbach (2011, p. 388) the "neoliberal agenda has designated the female body, either purposefully or unintentionally, as the site for transformation, control, and profit". Angela McRobbie argues in this respect that powers of inequality are threatened by feminist tendencies of empowered women. Traditionally oppressive patterns and stable gender binaries evaporate in the service of the labour market; women became less dependent because marriage takes place later in life, birth control, childlessness, etc. This gap in patriarchy is replaced by strict beauty-rituals which women must perform their entire lives (McRobbie, 2011, p. 62). In her words, patriarchy delegates "a good deal of its power to the fashion-beauty complex" (McRobbie, 2011, p63), the associated commercial domain then becomes the source of authority and judgement for young women (McRobbie, 2009, p. 61).

Also in less-abstract ways power interests might influence the construction of the female body: Eskes, Duncan & Miller (1998 p. 341) point out that the contemporary demography of business leaders and executives consists mainly of white man, therefore its not hard to see who benefits of the promotion of specific standards of beauty over others. “The dual systems of patriarchy and capitalism are closely meshed with each other in a way that preserves patriarchal power and economic power –a hard system to beat” (Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998 p. 341).

In the next paragraphs I’ll go deeper into these neoliberal discourses and how they contribute to the construction of the postfeminist subject and body. While these discourses often function together instead of isolated, for a good theoretical understanding they are here secluded. When might see them as different strings that together form the tissue of society.

5.1 Choice

Many scholars have noted how choice became the base value of postfeminism (e.g Gill, 2008; Gill & Scharf, 2011; Lazar, 2011, McRobbie, 2009). Within this currently very influential narrative of choice, all women’s actions and circumstances are presented as a result of their own free choices and therefore “no further analysis or problematization of them is welcomed or warranted” (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 99). The contemporary woman is presented as an emancipated subject in total control of her own life and unrestrainedly making her own individual decisions. The construction of this postfeminist subject, as a follow-up of the second wave critic on the objectification of women, draws heavily on “[t]he neo-liberal panacea that all choices are good as long as they are freely made” (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 101). This totally ignores any cultural conditions or restraints that might be attached to these choices. The choice argument then functions to traverse any attempt to analyse constraints on women’s choices by accusing these of erasing women’s agency and freedom (Ibid.). This reclaimed subjectification is a very interesting phenomenon that will be perused deeper later in this chapter. What’s important to stress here however is the notion that every criticism on any practice or situation is dismissed by the argument that women freely choose these for themselves and for their own good.

5.1.2 Beauty practices

A de-problematization of beauty practices is a common focus of the choice argument. To involve oneself in beauty practices, for instance, is presented as joyful leisure, and in addition, ‘looking good’ is increasingly recognized as a basic need for women to feel comfortable with themselves. This way ‘looking good’ (and being a sexy hetero subject) became a full feminine issue in its own right, framed in a discourse of playfulness, freedom and choice, that pretends it has nothing to do anymore with the approval of men or the suppression by patriarchy. Women are presented as just pleasing themselves, looking beautiful and being sexually confident, along the way “they just happen to win men’s admiration” (Gill, 2008, p. 437). In other words women are presented as happily and freely *choosing* to involve themselves in all kinds of beauty-practices. There are even some third-wave feminist scholars who claim that “our ability to choose to engage in these practices is one of

the gifts of feminism” (e.g. Baumgardner & Richards, 2000 in Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 99).

The discourse then belittles the consequences of this choices, it ignores both the fact that choice is a privilege not freely given to everyone, and, that making the ‘wrong choices’ “(e.g. become too fat, too thin or have the audacity or bad judgement to grow older)” (Gill, 2008, p. 442) can have serious social consequences in ones life such as exclusion, conviction, career disadvantages and humiliation.

Simultaneously, the very same discourse of choice is used to justify these social consequences, they are presented as unproblematic, because one has a choice to adjust to the prevailing standards, or not, and as such, a choice to endure the social consequences of vigilantism, or to adjust to the expectations of society. This way the far-reaching social consequences of not making the ‘right choices’ are brought as a woman’s own individual choice and responsibility (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p.114). Making the ‘right choices’ –or not- is still seen as a free choice: one can freely choose not to comply with beauty standards, -like for example not shaving ones legs, having wrinkles, or being fat (which is obviously often not much of a free choice), etc- but than one also chooses the consequences. It’s ones own responsibility and still a free choice, if you do not want to be subjected to conviction, just shave your legs, Botox your wrinkles, or lose weight.

What follows is that complying with beauty-standards becomes the default option, non-confirmative choices are questioned and have profound consequences, this way non-conformity is constructed as an active choice or statement, whereas conformance often goes unnoticed and unquestioned (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p.113). The neo-liberal self likewise constructs choice as without restrictions; there is little space for individuals to explicitly acknowledge (cultural) restrictions or social pressures, the neoliberal subject is self-responsible, flexible and autonomous. This construction of non-conformance as an explicit choice in contrast to conformity indicates that “conformance to feminine beauty standards is not constructed as requiring as much effort or risk as does non-conformance, serving to render beauty practices unremarkable” (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p.116). Conformity is experienced as easy and normal in contrast to difficult and strange non-conformity and therefore unproblematic and effortless (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p.118).

This way, the discourse functions to normalize practices that, on closer inspection, do not seem to be so much liberating, nor emancipating, at all. What the fairytale of free choice mostly ignores, is the fact that choices might be not so free and unlimited as they are presented. The “crushingly cruel beauty images that western women are judged against and incited to emulate” (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 99) are packaged by the postfeminist promise of liberation through empowered choice. But “For all its ‘choices’, contemporary Western culture places intense scrutiny on women’s bodies” (Ibid).

In contemporary society it should be hardly a surprise that this advocated discourse of choice generally comes down to a choice to consume. One can –to a certain extend- choose what colour of shoes one wants, or which style of fashion to follow. Yet, “the choice not given to women is the one not to consume, and in turn the freedom not to comply with the commercialized beauty rituals and ideals entailed by the consumption of those products” (Lazar, 2011, p. 45).

The discourse of choice intimately collaborates with processes of individualisation - and a notion of personal pleasure- to render the actual outcomes of contemporary practices unproblematic, and this way depoliticizes them. The 'choice-feminism' that thus emerges entails a shift from political and social choices, to an entitlement to individual women to make personal choices. Postfeminists claim this entitlement to choice; Naomi Wolf states for example: we (as individuals) deserve the choice to do whatever we want with our faces and bodies (Lazar, 2011, p. 43). This individual approach leads to an uncritical and asocial adoption of restrictive societal norms and consumer culture. In the words of McRobbie "The sphere of leisure and consumer culture is dominated by the vocabulary of personal choice, and is the primary site for hedonism, fantasy, personal gratification and entertainment" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 27). It's all about the entitlement to strive for individual gains, but, we should not forget that the consequences of personal engagement in beauty practices go beyond personal benefits "in terms of reinforcing the patriarchal ideology that naturalizes and normalizes these practices for all women"(Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 100).

In conclusion, what the discourse of choice achieves might be the exact opposite of what it narrates: People are "increasingly exhorted to make sense of their individual biographies in terms of discourses of freedom, autonomy and choice – no matter how constrained their live may actually be" (Gill & Scharf, 2011, p. 6). In the context of female beauty practices the promises of liberation offered by postfeminism leaves us with a relatively undisturbed traditional gender order (Lazar, 2011, p. 46/47) and ever more restricted constructions of the body.

5.2 Pleasure

Equally important in the construction of the postfeminist subject is a discourse –or politics- of pleasure. Female other-centeredness in which women were expected to prioritize the needs and interests of husband and children and get personal satisfaction through the fulfilment of their loved ones, gave way to an entitlement to individual female pleasure (Lazar, 2009, p. 375); the modern woman is all about herself. Michelle Lazar (2009, p. 375) calls this therefore an 'it's about me!' discourse. The postfeminist adopts an entitlement to pleasure (Lazar, 2009), which along the way dismisses second wave feminism as being radical, critical and unpleasant. The second wave reproaches against beauty practices and so-called feminine practices and stereotypes are invalidated: being feminine is declared fun. This entitlement to pleasure means an entitlement to feminine practices: women can be girls once more (Lazar, 2009, p. 372). There is a revaluation of gender differences and all things declared feminine (Franco, 2008, p. 483; Gill, 2011, p. 64; Lazar, 2009, p. 381).

The critique of second wave feminism is dismissed, currently beauty practices are reclaimed as pleasurable for women and feminine, something we naturally like to involve ourselves in (Lazar, 2006, p. 506). They become a form of pampering oneself and are often expressed as a woman's 'me-time', which is in turn presented as a necessary luxury in her busy life (Lazar, 2009, p. 376/377).

Beauty-practices became leisure activities as an end in themselves; dressing up, nurturing, shopping, manicures, salon-treatments, they are all presented as

pleasurable and a woman's 'time for herself'. This approach of beauty practices as pleasurable has been critiqued by many scholars for it makes effort invisible (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 100); is waxing, or dieting, or working to pay for all these practices, really so much fun? And what about all the time spend on these practices? What's more, the discourse of pleasure functions to hide the serious social consequences of (non) compliance with beauty standards (Ibid.).

Evidently this discourse too is closely linked to consumption, the leisure activities celebrated generally equate to consumption in its purest form. Within post-feminism these consumption-activities -such as shopping- are glorified and women are encouraged to pamper themselves by that, 'because they're worth it'.

One could make a comparison with the, by feminists extensively criticized, tendency of capital to present reproductive work as leisure time: taking care of the kids, the husband and the house to reproduce labour for free. In the same line one could imagine how manicures, shopping and other time-consuming activities function to preserve gender differences, -and all of that while supporting capital-.

The postfeminist discourse narrates that women can satisfy all their needs and desires through commodity consumption (Lazar, 2009, p. 375). This way an "entitlement to consume" (Lazar, 2009, p. 380) is brought to life, which links a feminine entitlement with the right to consume, "and to do so unreservedly" (Lazar, 2009, p. 397). Beauty culture is re-energized through the postfeminist discourse by offering a new rationale for guilt-free consumerism (Lazar, 2009, p. 374) in which a critical -feminist- notion of guilt is left behind. In the worth's of Michelle Lazar (2009, p.375): "It is an entitlement to live a self-absorbed, hedonistic and narcissistic lifestyle based upon consumerist values".

This lifestyle, based on commodity consumption, then, is held to be freely accessible for all, while in fact it is a luxury that many cannot afford. While the 'it's about me' discourse presents itself as pro-feminist and woman-centric by encouraging women to pamper themselves and reclaim individual pleasure, the unique key offered to unlock these entitlements is through consumption. (Lazar, 2009, p. 380/381). In addition through the discourse of pleasure an "I-feminism" (Lazar, 2009, p. 380/381) is created that once again shifts the focus from the social to the personal and individual. (Ibid.)

5.3 Self-discipline, control and autonomy

Despite the postfeminist emphasis on free choice and pleasure it is by no means required to lower ones guard. Parallel to the discourse of liberalism prevails a focus on self-monitoring, self-management and control, both on the body and on the establishment of everyday life. It is the feminine American dream were women are expected to self-manage to a much greater extend than men, women are required to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and in addition to present all their actions as freely chosen (Gill & Scharf, 2011, p. 7). There is a sense of manufacturability of all parts of life in which the body, once again, plays an important role. Rosalind Gill (2008, p. 441) argues that while the performance of successful femininity has long been marked by monitoring and surveilling the self, there are three features that mark out the present moment as distinctive. First, she

argues, the intensity of self-surveillance and thus the intensity of the regulation of women has dramatically increased, while in the same time such regulation is in its entirety denied. Secondly she recognizes how the surveillance has extended over entirely new spheres of live and intimate conduct. And thirdly she describes a new focus on the transformation and remodelling of women's interior life, being carefree, confident and unconcerned with one's body are now central aspects of femininity in their own right. Gill illustrates her arguments with the contemporary preference of popular media for reality shows. These shows are a case in point of how –predominantly women– are called up to regulate and rebuild their lives. Bodies, families, homes, relationships, sex lives, they are all up for melioration. This requires first for people to believe that there is something lacking or flawed in their lives and then that by following the advice of experts –which often means practicing appropriately modified consumption habits– this can be fixed (Ibid.). Not surprisingly many of these reality shows concentrate on reorganizing or rebuilding the body. Many scholars have emphasized how despite greater freedoms, a wider range of choices and entry into social domains from which they were previously excluded, “women's bodies continue to be subject to high levels of surveillance and discipline” (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 99). The contemporary body is expected to be totally controlled and disciplined, flaws from large to small need to be addressed, perfection should always be pursued. Cosmetic surgery, botox, sport-programmes, diets, all forms of self-discipline are employed to control the body, where control means a body heading for the perfection of prevailing beauty standards. Fat, old or unadjusted bodies are condemned for being out of control. A clear example can be found in the contemporary preference for tight and thin bodies: these bodies display the discipline to exercise and importantly the discipline to make the ‘right’ choices in a context of plenty. A sense of deservingness, a characteristic neoliberal narrative, is assigned to these embodied subjects that have the rationality and self-discipline to achieve this (DuPuis & Guthman, 2006, p. 427).

Women become “sexual entrepreneurs” (Radner in Gill & Harvey, 2011, p. 56) who have to adopt a “technology of sexiness” (Ibid.): contemporary single girls should embody heterosexuality through the disciplined use of make-up, fashion, exercise and cosmetic surgery, this way femininity is linked to consumer culture and heterosexuality. (Gill & Harvey, 2011, p. 56) Constructing a female identity and feminine success begins with controlling and disciplining the body and stresses up to all parts of feminine life.

The neo-liberal panacea of individual improvement in lieu of central intervention, creates a subject who is expected to freely and unrestrained exercise choice and to become responsible for her own risks (DuPuis & Guthman, 2006, p. 443).

Thus, women are presented as autonomous and in control, confidently and willingly embracing female practices, but these narratives “of autonomy, choice and self-improvement sit side-by-side with surveillance, discipline and the vilification of those who make the “wrong” “choices”” (Gill, 2008, p. 442). These narratives are also central to neoliberalism, and indicate a profound relation to postfeminism (Gill, 2008, p. 442)

5.4 Ridiculisation

Another very important effect of the discourse of pleasure is its ability to ridicule itself and this way void any critique through irony, caricatures, playfulness, sexual attractiveness and humour (Gill, 2008; 2011). There is a rejection of feminist critiques on beauty practices, female sexualisation and feminine stereotypes and there is a tendency to go against this critique and also to reclaim so-called girlish things through the discourse of pleasure, often making kind of a gimmick out of it. You see it in girls on (mainly reality) television deliberately acting dumb, superficial, ignorant and dramatically girlish. For example in programs as 'real girls in the jungle' (figure 1) were spoilt girls are brought to a culturally very different context – and not one of plenty- were they show to be still mainly concerned with their clothes, make-up and appearance, act spoilt, and scream with anything they see that they do not know. Or in the shows of 'beauty and the geek' were the geeks have to answer questions about women and the beauty's about general knowledge, proudly playing dumb blond. Or take the show of Barbie in the Netherlands; Samantha, talking in an overly flat-accent and calling herself Barbie, wants everything - even her holiday-caravan- pink, -for its every girl's dream to have a pink caravan- and mainly talks about her new boobs, other beauty treatments and sex. Her husband, whom she shares the show with, meanwhile talks literally mainly about sex, beer and meat. And in all these shows one of the main fun factors are the not-so-smart misses of the girls making 'stupid' statements that are repeated over and over again. This way very strong stereotypical gender characters are played out, and we all laugh about it –probably even watch it to feel ourselves superior- (Levy, 2006) but meanwhile it does reinforce stereotypes of what being a women – or a men- entails, even though in an attenuated form of the presented caricatures.

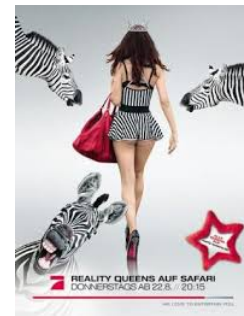


Fig. 1 Promotion poster 'Real girls in the jungle' Germany (Horizont, ND)

Another tendency is a reclamation of sexist expressions by girls themselves. Playboy bunnies, pin-up girls, fun t-shirts with pornographic or sexist texts, they are all celebrated, symbolizing women's newly discovered sexual confidence. Femininity became a power that women are very aware of and that can be deployed for own benefits. "Femininity here is powerful, playful and narcissistic – less desiring of a sexual partner than empowered by the knowledge of her own sexual attractiveness" (Gill, 2008, p. 438). Rosalind Gill pays attention to the example of the Wonderbra advertisement of a woman showing an uplifting bra, with the slogan: 'I can't cook, who cares' in tiny letters positioned in her cleavage. The woman is presented as "a sexy and playful subject, who uses her knowledge of the power her appearance may give her over male viewers to tease them, with humour" (Gill, 2008, p. 437). This draws very explicitly on the idea that a woman's greatest assets are now being beautiful and sexy instead of possessing traditional feminine skills such as cooking, and simultaneously it de-problematizes this.

This acceptance of open sexism seems again on the rise after a short time in which political correctness at this issue seemed to have gained common ground. A recent example can be found in a beer opener in the form of a coloured and very round-

breasted women with the text 'open up bitch' on the front and 'feel free to abuse me' on the back, which clothing chain Coolcat attached to men's shorts (figure 2). The opener was withdrawn under pressure of critique with the argument that Coolcat always searches for the edges –and thus no recognition of any problem-. Thereafter the story was picked up by numerous popular websites and blogs blaming feminists without humour for the withdrawal and celebrating the opener as fun, innocent and now a collectors item. Among the reactions of girls there is some criticism but also a tendency for the statement that people should worry about more important things and stop being so political correct. -Reading the comments of several men makes one's heart sink into her boots-. This resurgence of sexism and sexist expressions is framed and justified through discourses of playfulness, freedom and choice (Gill, 2008, p. 437) and the rejection of humourless feminist critiques. Meanwhile the caricaturisation of femininity functions to play out a stereotypical femininity that disqualifies any critique for being humourless and missing out on the irony. Yet, along the way these caricatures in their attenuated form do reinforce normative constructions of gender and body construction.



Figure 2
Beeropener Coolcat, front and back.
(Geenstijl, 2013)

5.5 The consuming body

We've seen how consumption culture is closely related to postfeminist identity building. The discourse of choice seems to come down to no other choice but to consume, the discourse of pleasure and pampering oneself connects femininity with an entitlement to consumption, feminine success is directly coupled to the construction of the body through consumption choices and finally consumption is packaged as leisure and generally glorified. Ultimately virtually all beauty practices needed to become a 'real woman' come down to consumption.

Consumption is of course the holy grail of neo-liberalism, the capitalist market needs to ever expand itself. This expansion is geographically limited and therefore depends more and more on the sales of goods and services to people who's basic needs have already been comfortably met (DuPuis & Guthman, 2006, p. 443). Capitalism then needs "docile, hard-working, thrifty, obedient and ascetic bodies to run efficiently" (Carolan, 2005, p. 99) and in the same time it is dependent on continual consumption, this dualism of control and self-discipline combined with the freedom and entitlement to the unlimited pleasures of consumption -the ultimate paradox of capitalism- is taken up in the constructions of bodies. It is solved, for example in cosmetic surgery: cosmetic surgery is the ultimate expression of bodily control, but let's not forget: it's control for sale, a commodity; it is "control-through-consumption" (Carolan, 2005, p. 99/100). Also light- and dietary products solve these tensions, in an attempt to combine healthy useful bodies employable in capitalist society and unrestricted consumption, these products promise that you can stay in control and consume unrestrainedly in the same time (Orbach, 2011, p.

390). Thus, the contemporary construction of the body through consumption overcomes the paradoxes of capitalism, it combines the discourses of choice, individual pleasure and autonomy with control, self-discipline and self-management and this way, the paradoxes of capitalism become embodied.

Yet, there is another way in which consumption culture might be embodied. Michael Carolan couples the concept of 'conspicuous consumption' introduced by Thorstein Verben over a century ago, to the construction of contemporary bodies. Conspicuous consumption is the idea that we, at least in part, consume in order to display our social power to others. Carolan argues then how in contemporary times we are not showing off commodities as external things, "rather, we are progressively striving to become the "nice thing" itself—to literally *embody* conspicuous consumption (Carolan, 2005, p. 82).

The neo-liberal panacea of consumption, is not only deeply embedded in our culture, but also in our bodies, were in all kinds of ways and different levels of abstraction –from the silicones that make out parts of bodies to unconscious sentiments that construct how we behave towards bodies- this minion of capitalism becomes embodied.

6. Class and social power

The concept of conspicuous consumption clearly relates social class status with ones ability to consume –usually ones financial position-, a relation that undeniably determines a good deal of daily life in the contemporary world. The exorbitant villas of the rich, excessive cars of both the rich and middle-classes and priceless designer cloths of celebrities, they are all expressions of unnecessary luxury -and dissipation and egoism- mainly deployed to confirm social status. The ability to consume, then, is a function of ones financial status and as we've seen femininity is increasingly constructed through consumption related to the body.

Contemporary beauty ideals are determined by the billion-dollar industries of popmusic, movies, fashion and beauty companies, and mainly embodied by popstars, actresses and supermodels: the models of the target body are constructed by the support of unlimited finances, technologies and attention. It is in the essence of a supermodel -and nowadays for actresses and popstars for a great extend too- to spend a great deal of their time and energy on the body. The construction of femininity, through an entitlement to consume, this way becomes interrelated with class. "The assumption is that a lifestyle (and identity) based on commodity consumption is universally shared and freely accessible to all, when in fact it is a luxury that many cannot afford. Rather, it is the prerogative of privileged middle-class women, who have the means to access retail pleasures and the luxury to focus self-absorbedly on themselves"(Lazar, 2009, p. 397). The aspired body is a body in possession of money: designer cloths, beauty products, gym memberships, tanning sessions, nail saloons, personal trainers, dieticians, botox, cosmetic surgery, they are not freely available, nor usually cheap. Moreover the body also needs to be in possession of time: exercise, beauty treatments, recovery after surgery, they cost precious hours (Carolan, 2005, p. 92). The idea that all parts of life will be more

successful the closer one gets to the ideal body –the American dream that starts with the body- oversees the underlying reality of this fairytale: we're not equally situated: while the majority strives to conform to this ideal body –and the corresponding rewards- "the degrees to which we succeed toward these ends are differentiated by social location—by class" (Carolan, 2005, p. 92).

Yet, the body is no longer merely a *product* of one's class, today class is also derived from the body. Were in previous times the body predominantly reflected one's class; the white skin and soft hands of the elite were a result of their social-position, in contemporary times this relationship is bilateral: One's social position is codetermined by the successful construction of one's body, to involve in the prescribed beauty practices became essential necessities in our quest for love, riches, happiness, and success. This ever present pressure on the production of sexual attractiveness links female social class status to conventionally attractive bodies. Women's social class mobility this way is an ever-present theme of postfeminist rhetoric's, although rarely made explicit, it is always present just under the surface (Press, 2011, p. 118). In the words of Andrea Press (Ibid.) "Women are promised success, glamour and happiness if only they can get the improvement script right. Prince charming, *plus* a well-paid and glamorous carrier, all will follow if you can only pick out the perfect designer shoes, etc. In sum the road to glamour is also, it is promised, the road to riches" (Press, 2011, p. 118). Gill notes in this respect that class, "in this moment of compulsory individuality" (Gill, 2008, p. 442) is no longer based on such 'crude' categories as occupation or social location, rather it is played out on a degree of femininity: women's "bodies, homes, cooking skills and ability as mothers, through notions of good taste and cultural capital" (Ibid.) Think of the countless reality shows where women are educated to upgrade feminine skills: bodies, families, sex life's they are all up for improvement and this way the shows reinvigorate this new class antagonisms (Ibid.). When social status becomes codetermined by successful construction of femininity through the body, this of course has political implications: We've seen how the ability to construct one's body to the prevailing norms of femininity is determined by one's social-economic status, for one needs time and money for it, simultaneously, the successful construction of the body is seen to upgrade one's social – and economic- status. Thus, does this coupling of female sexuality bring us in a vicious circle of inequality based on beauty practices? By all means, class in this way becomes literally embodied, social position a function of the body, indicating profound social and political consequences of the construction of a body. We've seen how the construction of the body and corresponding identity, through making the right choices in behaviour and consumption, marks a body of privilege, and when there are bodies of privilege there must be bodies of subordination. Bodies that for whatever reasons do not meet the high demands and that bear its consequences. Hungry bodies, or bodies stuck in sweatshops, are the underside of the privileged body (Pitts, 2005, p. 244). Next, the connection between deservingness and the successful construction of the body, in a world where body-differences have been central to the denial of rights, has created new cultures of bodily exclusivity. Stigmatisation emerges of bodies that do not fully meet the demands of capitalism, either on the consumption side: the non-

consuming body or the area of production: the fat body, the sick body or the disabled body (DuPuis & Guthman, 2006, p. 436). In the meantime, while complying to beauty standards is presented as fun, freely available, individual choice and innocent, what is ultimately at stake in the politics of the body is “not only appearance, style, and identity, but also material and cultural survival, human equality, and dignity” (Pitts, 2005, p. 245). Thus, the strong postfeminist emphasis on the construction of the body reinforces social inequalities, not merely between genders but also between women themselves.

The above paragraphs have emphasised how postfeminism and neoliberalism are related and which discourses are deployed to construct and justify contemporary ideas of the female body. Then it explored some of the social consequences of this construction of femininity. It focused mainly on what discourses are out there, what is presented to us and we therefore might internalise. Yet, postfeminism does not only involve the thoughts and ideas of the subject, rather it changed the idea of subjecthood itself. The next paragraph will explore this postfeminist subject and place it in a social-theoretical framework necessary to give meaning to the findings of this thesis.

7. The postfeminist subject

Until now I have more than once asserted how involving ourselves in normative beauty practices reinforces repression upon ourselves and others, how we are influenced by dominant ideologies in our society and internalize them and how the discourse created by media and companies determines our image of self. This kind of –implicitly- structural or Foucauldian approaches has frequently been criticized for it would render women passive cultural dopes (Gill, 2011, p. 66) or merely powerless victims of the system. Moreover when we regard these structures total hegemony, determining all parts of our lives, where do we find space for change?

Within feminist utterances the representation of women has been extensively criticized for the objectification of the female body, postfeminism though, precisely reclaims beauty practices and sexualisation of the female body as empowering and fun. Second wave feminists criticism of a society that represses women, by restricting them to a limited number of social rolls, or through the sexual objectification of the body, has transformed itself in contemporary times. Instead, we now see a critique on them that would restrict girls and women choosing these rolls by themselves, that celebrate the object-qualities of their body and that transform and perfect this body in rigorous ways (Press, 2011, p. 120). The concept of objectification therefore indeed might seem outdated in a moment when “far from being presented as passive objects of an assumed male gaze (some) women are increasingly presented as active, desiring playful heterosexual subjects” (Gill, 2008, p. 437) We’ve seen how the arguments of free choice, emancipation and empowerment are frequently deployed to justify contemporary practices. Normative beauty practices and ideals are not represented as externally imposed and coercive, but as internalized and desired by feminine subjects themselves (Lazar, 2009, p. 389).

This shift in popular discourse can also be found in academic work. Marxist, Foucauldian and some feminist works have been criticised for being too totalizing in their accounts of social relations and therewith producing “a patronizing and politically offensive model of the subject as (variously) victim of “false consciousness”, governed “docile subject” or “cultural dope”(Gill, 2008, p. 434/435). The narratives of choice and autonomy function as such power-full bottom-line arguments that attempts to analyse constraints on women’s choices are often interpreted as erasing women’s agency and freedom (Gill, 2008, p. 435; Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 101). We see this in the debates on Muslim Girls wearing a veil (e.g. Duits and van Zoonen, 2006) or girls involving themselves in pole dancing, for instance. The call then is that we should listen to, and respect young women and we do not do so by taking them away any recognition of agency. While this might be true, basing all social phenomena on the arguments of agency, autonomy and choice does not seem to recognise the complex lived experience of girls and young women’s lives in postfeminist, neoliberal societies. When all behaviour is understood within discourses of free choice and autonomy, subjects become “strangely socially and culturally dislocated” (Gill, 2008, p. 435) In this way, through the desire to respect girls’ choices, any notion of cultural influence seems to get evacuated entirely. But how can one explain the sudden popularity of particular garments or colours without any acknowledgements to culture influences. And more fundamentally, Rosalind Gill (Ibid) wonders, “what has happened to social theory when simply acknowledging cultural influence is seen as somehow disrespectful, and when being influenced is regarded as shameful rather than ordinary and inevitable?” This rejection of cultural influence is embedded in postfeminist and neoliberal discourses; we are all expected to present our actions as conscious, autonomous and freely chosen, we are all, as individuals, accountable for our own fates and any acknowledgement of meaningful social or cultural constraints is eschewed (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 101). “The neoliberal subject is required to actively reject any suggestion that his or her actions are compelled by wider social influences and institutions such as media or government” (Ibid.). The subject this way, bears full responsibility for her life biography no matter how severe the constraints upon her actions may be (Gill, 2008, p. 436). One of the problems with this focus on autonomous choices then, is that it remains complicit with, rather than critical of, postfeminist and neoliberal discourses. The construction of the agentive subject “seems trapped within the very neoliberal paradigm that requires our trenchant critique” (Ibid.).

But to reject this neoliberal form of subjectivity, is not to deny any agentive power. I do not believe that we are merely victims of a system that is too strong to beat, nor there is always a simple one-to-one relationship between expressions of culture and individual behaviour, but to deny any cultural influence on the construction of ourselves seems quixotic. How we conceive, construct and experience our bodies is for a part already written by culture (Pitts, 2005, p. 233). Then, what is interesting is precisely this complexity, marking out a space or intersection, personal history, agency, and cultural constructions (Gill, 2008, p. 439). According to Gill the new empowered freely choosing postfeminist subject “highlights the way in which power

and ideology operate through the construction of subjects, not through top-down imposition but through negotiation, mediation, resistance and articulation” (Gill, 2008, p. 438/439). This construction of subjects as dynamic and historical, instead of static, rational, calculating and self-motivating, once and for all formed in infancy, “offers a way of understanding how subjects can be made and remade; in short, it has space to theorize change” (Gill, 2008, p. 439) .

According to Rosalind Gill (2008, p. 433) the complex relationship between subjects and culture was until recently at the heart of critical scholarship; armed with the concept of dominant ideology critics turned to the media to “explore its role in promulgating ideologies that served to sustain and justify relations of domination” (Gill, 2008, p. 433). A critical and political –instead of individual- understanding of subjectivity therefore should emphasise the influence of culture and the consequences of cultural constraints. Culture, as a set of practices that can, and do have real material effects, is too important to ignore (Gill, 2008, p. 434).

We then can not ignore -nor render them coincidental- the similarities of the narratives of neoliberalism with the construction of subject actors as rational, calculating and self-motivating who are fully responsible for all part of their life biographies and have to present all that happened to them as the result of deliberate controlled choices. In the context of beauty practices and the construction of femininity we can emphasis how all ones practices, however painful or harmful they may be, are presented as freely chosen and often even as pampering and pleasure (Gill, 2008, p. 441). This fits the same neoliberal construction of subjectivity which dismisses any critique on forehand. The key challenge then is to explore the “complex relation between culture and subjectivity in such a way as to render women neither passive, docile subjects, nor the fictitious autonomous, freely choosing persons of liberal humanism” (Gill, 2008: 40 in: Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 101). To recognise how we are severely influenced by culture, yet trying to find spaces to break through the normative regulations of dominant ideology, to find ways to reclaim agency as truly empowering and subversive, not as thoroughly individual, but as socially affected and engaged.

7. Choices

7.1 Gender choices

This thesis turns out to be about women, or at least about women’s bodies and the construction of femininity. But that does not mean that I know or want to define what this social category of women is, just as I cannot, and do not want to define femininity, the exact point is that the definition of these categories is changeable and socially constructed by cultural expressions.

But these social constructions of such categories nevertheless do have real-life consequences for real-life people that do, or do not, define themselves as women. Moreover it also has real-life consequences for people that do or do not identify themselves as man: they too are culturally influenced and restraint by ideas of female beauty and femininity and of course by ideas of masculinity that get

constructed along the way, as binary to femininity, they too are under increasing pressure to spend their energy on their looks and construct their identity through consuming practices.

Real life processes do produce gender categories and a social category of women (Emmett, 1998, p. 507) and thus, this thesis aims to be about this social category of women, rather than on a group formed by any biological notion. In practice this culturally defined category in society does draw on anatomy to order people, to decide what is female or male, these physically defined categories then, are not merely used to acknowledge differences but also to maintain power differentials (Emmett, 1998, p. 506). Let's not forget we live "in a world where bodily difference has been central to the denial of rights" (DuPuis & Guthman, 2006, p. 436) and that is "structured by, stark and continuing inequalities and exclusions that relate to race and ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and disabilities as well as gender (Gill & Scharf, 2011, p. 4).

And that is why it is important to think about how these categories "are continually constructed through body practices and the inscriptions of culture, which in post-modern societies are linked to the media and culture industries, to information technology, and to economic and political relations" (Pitts, 2005, p. 235).

In contemporary society it is predominantly the category of women that are called upon to prove their so-called emancipation by self-managing their life's (Gill & Scharf, 2011, p. 7). The –limited- social and political autonomy reached by –mainly white, western, middle-class women- comes accompanied with a new discursive emphasis on femininity as a pathological condition, this time repackaged as a ruthless pursuit for bodily perfection (Tincknell, 2011, p. 83). The body, in contemporary society, does not carry the message, it *is* the message and this provisionally applies more to women than to men. For women the self is emphatically, almost entirely, restructured in bodily and objectifying terms (Tincknell, 2011, p. 86). We still live in a male-dominated androcentric society where deeply ingrained taken-for-granted gender assumptions are very decisive (Sewpaul, 2005, p.105), and as we've seen these ideas of natural sexual differences are on the rise again and even celebrated (Gill, 2011, p. 64; Lazar, 2009). Therefore, these discourses will most likely remain a part of the fabric of society for the foreseeable future (Sewpaul, 2005, p.105) and so does their impact on the unrestricted construction of bodies and identities. As Victoria Pitts notes: "Unless race, class, and gender stratifications actually disappear, individuals can be limited in the ways in which they can imagine themselves and shape their bodies and identities—even within a culture that celebrates such choice and freedom" (Pitts, 2005, p. 231).

Thus, in this thesis, I do refer to the social category of women, for this category does encounter profound real-life consequences of the construction of gender, but I want to leave this category open, because, to follow Bhattacharyya; where is agency, in any form, when we consider the world as formed by forces that appear so indefinite and yet so inevitable? (Bhattacharyya, 2011, p. 309). Leaving the concept open and providing insights in the cultural processes of the construction of femininity, gives us the opportunity to understand the ways in which people get assigned different values and status and how this becomes experienced as a natural and inescapable

process (Bhattacharyya, 2011, p. 309). My aim is to show the arbitrariness and therewith the changeability of constructions of this womanhood and femininity.

7.2 Culture, ethnicity and subjects

I'm very aware that this thesis is about western culture, the fact is that this is my personal context and I didn't feel comfortable to write about contexts I've never been in, and therefore I feel I cannot grasp well. Also this thesis misses profound connections between the construction of feminine beauty and race, -neo-colonial-imperialism or ethnicity. This is regrettable, for there is very interesting and deeply problematic connections in this respect, for instance in the globalisation of the postfeminist beauty-ideal as well as in the ongoing inequalities based on bodily properties including race and ethnicity. But writing a thesis one has to make choices and although I'm not fully sure that these cultural processes are detachable from the content of this thesis, I did deliberately leave questions of race disregarded.

3. Methods

Deconstruction

The deconstruction generates shockwaves, earthquakes that make constructions and hierarchies unstable, shake and reverse. It protests against oppressive and suppressive authorities. It asks questions that subvert established order. In a body to body combat it does the language quiver. It disarrays. It disturbs and disrupts the systematicity of the system. It brings disarray in the order. Its function exists in a disruption, a rapture of the categories that, till now, have limited, bordered and sealed of the event. It breaks out, it mutilates, it attacks, it detonates, explodes and ultimately it even destructs. (Translation of Erik Oger on deconstruction according to Jacques Derrida) (Oger, 2005, p. 59).

Grand words for a bachelor thesis, and however I hold no real pretensions that this thesis will change or disrupt much in the world, still, I do feel that it should be its ultimate objective.

Thus, this thesis does not pretend or try to be an objective research or text, rather it is a politically charged interpretation of texts and their narratives and meanings in the daily life. The methodology is chosen to serve this goal best.

In this thesis is chosen for an interpretative qualitative method, it will draw on Critical Discourse Analysis. This chapter will start with some regard on the goals of Critical Discourse Analysis and its relation to systems of power, hereto some theoretical related concepts will be explicated, in particular the concept of 'ideology'. Thereafter will follow a description of five general theoretical premises of Critical Discourse analysis as mentioned by Jørgenson and Philips (2002). Then there will be attention for the chosen research material. This thesis aims to gain some insights in the available discourses and their narratives in the construction of the female body, thereto it will analyse expressions of daily life as presented to women in Dutch society and also have some attention to the way women perceive these discourses. Paragraph 3.3 describes and accounts for the choices of the selected research material. Thereto it starts with an analysis of the construction of the body and discourse in digital space, then it will go on to clarify the use of Facebook and finally there will be some attention for the gathering of information on the subjective experiences of real life women through interviews.

1. Disrupting the discourse

The deconstruction is a concept coined by Derrida that is very complicated and disputed, not in the least by himself. Derrida was unpleasantly surprised by the sudden popularity the worth captured in academic circles and he strongly criticized its widespread use as a key-word and a method by stating that it was overvalued, wrongly used and above all not a method (Caputo, 1997; Oger, 2005 p. 55). Nevertheless its words and descriptions are very seductive to me and seem to express how I want to give relevance to this thesis. Therefore I'll start out with some worth's on this 'non-method'.

The concept of deconstruction is on the one side structuralistic because it provides a disassembly of a construction -any construction-, for example a text, a law, a building, or anything else. It does this, among other things, to expose its skeleton, its nerves, its creations, or in short, its structure. It shows the interdependences, the ordered nature of all these. But at the same time it is anti-structuralist because it wants to show that the structures that present themselves as closed, rigid and unhistorical entities are always slightly open, changeable and historic (Oger, 2005, p. 46). Deconstruction problematizes assumptions, which in our culture serve as persistent prejudices, but which, until then, were considered evident (Oger, 2005, p. 59). The vigilance of deconstruction is not just academic attention that leaves things undisturbed, ongoing, and usually as they were. The deconstruction, in contrary, problematizes to have a destabilizing, disorganising and disrupting effect (Oger, 2005, p. 60).

To help me deconstruct some of the discourses and narratives that function to preserve a pernicious construction of the female body I've chosen to draw on the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis.

1.2 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis contains various theories and methods that provide a framework to study the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments. It considers language as a determining form of social practice, and thus, draws attention to the ways social and political domination are reproduced in text, image and talk. In other words, discourses, in the form of language in everyday life, reinforce social and political domination.

This theory can be understood through the concept of ideology. Ideology, -or discourse- according to Thompson, is a process in which dominant ideas about the social world are continually defined and reinforced. Thus, ideology is "essentially linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power – that is, to the process of maintaining domination" (Thompson cited in: Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998 p. 323). The narrative structures of this dominant ideology serve to present its unequal social relations as legitimate, inevitable and natural (Ibid.). Therefore, the deconstruction of this seemingly natural, inevitable and logic narratives is a highly political matter and has practical implications in a potential for change.

Katherine Gibson & Julie Graham (1996) for example, make a point out of 'changing the script' or 'challenging the discourse', this way taking back power by not accepting dominant ideas that work in the repression of ourselves and others. In the context of an attempt to queer globalisation they write: "The dynamic image of penetration and domination is linked to a vision of the world as already or about to be wholly capitalist-- that is, a world "rightfully owned" by capitalism" (Gibson--Graham, 1996, p. 2). They question the very idea, accepted so commonly, of the inevitable domination of capitalism. What this sheds light on, is that these grand repressive processes in the world sustain on us believing we are too small and they are too big, on our self-victimization and feelings of impotence. But, as suggested by Gargi Bhattacharyya (2011, p. 309), in times were hierarchies of human worth appear simultaneously variable and yet insurmountable and inescapable, even the reminder that meanings of bodies and cultures can change seems important to hang

on to. Thus disrupting the logic of dominant discourses such as neo-liberalism, post-feminism and ideals of beauty, by the act of refusing their naturalness and inevitability, and the deconstruction of its narratives and discourses, is the beginning of imagining radical change.

1.3 General theoretical premises of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Critical Discourse analysis contains various methods that partly defer in their theoretical premises but according to Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) the school does share five general theoretical premises:

- *Social and cultural processes and structures are partly constituted through discursive practices.* Or in other words: through the production and consumption of texts in every day life (discursive practices), social and cultural reproduction and change take place (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 61). Texts include written text, talk, images and any action that shows meaning. Thus “to study ideology is in some part and some way to study language in the social world” (Thompson cited in: Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998 p. 323).
- *Discourse is both constitutive and constituted.* Meaning the complex dialectical relationship in which discourse contributes to shape aspects of the social world and in the same time aspects of the social world shape the discourse. Thus language-as-discourse is in the same time a form of action through which people can change the world and a form of action that is restricted, for it is socially and historically situated. In the words of Norman Fairclough: “[T]he discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideas in people’s heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social structures” (Fairclough in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 62)
- *Language use should be empirically analysed within its social context.* Concrete texts of social interaction are analysed. (Ibid.)
- *Discourse functions ideologically:* It is claimed in critical discourse analysis that discursive practices create and reproduce unequal power relations between social groups. “Critical discourse analysis is critical in the sense that it aims to reveal the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of the social world, including those social relations that involve unequal relations of power. Its aim is to contribute to social change along the lines of more equal power relations in communication processes in general” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63).
- *Critical Research:* Critical discourse analysis does not identify itself as being neutral; rather it is openly politically committed to radical social change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 64).

Critical Discourse Analysis is a method that has often been used in critical feminist research. Critical feminist texts often deal with abstract ideas floating around, with discourses that shape our world and that sustain and reinforce the unequal -gender-relations feminists want to problematize. Eskes, Duncan & Miller (1998) for instance write that to understand how dominant patriarchal notions of femininity are

sustained, even when they use ideologies of empowerment “a study of ideology embedded in language and visuals is critical” (p. 323).

This thesis draws very much on this critical feminist tradition and many examples of this kind of research are among the used literature and formed its inspiration.

In general the method of critical discourse analysis seems to fit the content, theoretical assumptions and goal of this thesis. The focus of this thesis is in how a neo-liberal discourse is connected with a post-feminist discourse and how this is reflected and reconstructed by beauty practices. These practices can be seen themselves as interpretable texts and in the same time they produce texts in the form of advertising, articles, Facebookposts, available images and everyday body practices. Thus by analysing the texts of beauty practices I’ll try to find parallels between post-feminism and neo-liberalism.

2. Research material

As Described, discourses can be theorized as constructed and reconstructed through all actions and communication-events in every day life. According to Foucault these discourses bear and reinforce power within them, power “is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something one holds on to or allows to slip away” (Foucault, 1981: 94). Rather, power is relational and is associated with the mundane practices, techniques and procedures of everyday life” (Crowley-Henry & Donnelly, 2011, p. 5). Thus, discourses shape ideology, and vice versa, and through Ideology unequal relations of power are sustained by being represented as legitimate and natural (Esques, Duncan & Miller, 1998). Important to bear in mind with this respect is that although discourses are created, recreated and lived out in everyday lives “we don’t all get to author the meanings of bodies” (Pitts, 2005, p. 235) and the ability to participate in creating the meaning of discourse is therefore a function of power (Pitts, 2005, p. 238).

The discourses of beauty ideals, neo-liberalism and post-feminism are taking shape all around us in all different forms and authored by different agents. Whether we like it or not, they determine how we see the world and what we feel is normal, beautiful or just. In media-studies and also in lots of feminist work the influence of media on (female beauty) discourses is extensively recognised (for example Gill,). Probably one of the most important and influential media channels in the current moment, especially among young people, is Facebook. Therefore my research design contains critically analysing the expression of post-feminist, neo-liberal and beauty discourses generated in the posts of some of the most popular Facebook accounts. Secondly after critical discourse analysis of the relevant media expressions found, I will try to get feedback and further depth of my findings through interviewing a small amount of women about their experiences. Below will be first an alaysis of the importance of digital space in the construction of the female body and the a description of the methods used and choices made.

2.1 The power of digital space

Over the past few decades the concept of space has radically changed through the rise of technology and the construction of digital space. Digital space, the space that is disconnected from any fixed geographical place and therefore from the physical, offers us space to disconnect the subject from the body. On the internet it becomes possible to express oneself, without the physical constraints of the body; digital space offers two bodies that are geographically distant from each other to communicate, -possibly even be intimate- and it might offer us a chance, finally, to overcome the beauty paradigm that proved that our culturally determined ideas of beauty influence how much we like, trust and desire someone and also how we assess intelligence (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p. 100). Within a society where hierarchies are often based on bodily properties, a flexibilisation of the physical body sounds promising, technology then might free us, not only from our biological and physical inevitabilities, but also from our cultural constraints. The post-modern, high-tech body appears as socially plastic, a space for identity exploration (Pitts, 2005, p. 230). This idea, according to Victoria Pitts, created a lot of excitement because, when bodies become flexible, then so too do embodied categories of identity. "What seems promising about this is that embodied categories of power like gender, race, and sexuality seem less rigid" (Pitts, 2005, p. 230).

But despite this sweet promise, one glance on the comprehensive digital world of the internet, one round of flipping channels, or even listening to the average popular radio show teaches us how this space, though indeed disconnected from physical bodies, is severely punctuated with images of -conventionally beautiful- bodies. Bodies thus are co-determined in digital space; the way we experience, construct and understand bodies is in high-tech society to a large extent defined in this new spaces. The Internet for instance, offers a space "to surf the world's fashions, cultures, and styles for an astonishing range of information about bodies, from medical to cultural to spiritual" (Pitts, 2005, p. 238). Of course the over-exposure of images of particular shapes of bodies and representations of femininity, that bombard us on a daily base, both in real space and in digital space, does matter. In the discipline of media studies, the power of media-expressions on the reinforcement of dominant ideology has long been a core-point of interest for good reason. Critical scholars in this field emphasise "the importance of the media to the emergence and dominance of neoliberalism and to the continued acceptance of the injustices of global capitalism, even by those who experience them most brutally and harshly" (Gill, 2011, p. 68). It is partly through the negotiating power of media, in the same time reflecting and reinforcing prevailing ideas in society, that dominant ideology comes to feel as natural and inevitable. Therefore, access to, and control over technologies are highly political matters (Pitts, 2005, p. 324). Pitts reminds us that in high-tech information society the ability to shape and control knowledge can reflect empowerment, while disempowerment might be reflected by a "lack of control over the creation of meaning, or dependence on the flow of information" (Pitts, 2005, p. 235). In the media-saturated environment of modern society, struggles over framing and defining social problems and group identities are linked to technological practices (Pitts, 2005, p. 324).

Although most corners of the globe do now have connections to the network of digital space, technologies are still differentiated and stratified, by, for example, access, speed and visibility, thus the use of technologies both reflects and creates privileges and constraints (Ibid.). While most people in the world are now connected to the technology of information, this doesn't mean they have the power to organise this space for their own needs, thus, the real domination today is the exclusion from the power of naming (Pitts, 2005, p. 241). In the words of Victoria Pitts: "we don't all get to author the meanings of bodies that circulate in the information world" (Pitts, 2005, p. 235). In addition Imogen Tyler (2011, p.31) argues after Jacques Ranciere that visibility is not only a question of aesthetics but of democracy, the redistribution of visibility is therefore critical to all radical social and political change. In the context of beauty this means that the over-exposure of conventionally beautiful bodies creates a dominant discourse of beauty that could maybe be countered by creating visibility of other possibilities of beauty.

In past years we've seen an unstoppable rise of social media, such as social networking sites, blogs, twitter etc. These new diy-spaces have been celebrated for their democratizing potential and in some cases have indeed proofed their worth in resistance struggles, vigilantism and the reframing of prevailing discourses –both in positive and in negative ways-. But in any case, nowadays we can all send our images into the world. This also blurs the lines between objects and subjects, for there is a clear proliferation of representations that are self-produced and could be considered freely chosen. This way distinctions between producers and consumers increasingly become blurred (Gill, 2011, p. 66).

But whether this actually brings a flexibilisation of the images of bodies remains highly questionable. The idea of social networking tools, such as Facebook, is in the end to show the most beautiful of yourself. Moreover, it offers you the possibility to create and pick out the best –most 'liked'- images. What's more, a self-sexualisation of girls on this social media has been observed; young people now also have to perform their sexuality, by negotiating and choosing the images and words they use, in this semi-public digital spaces (Ringrose, 2011, p. 101).

Yet most digital space is in the end not as DIY as it is often presented, social tools such as you-tube, Myspace and Facebook are severely commoditised and marketized environments (Ibid.). Facebook for example adapts its advertising to 'your interests' that are identified by information about surf behaviour, 'like'- behaviour, word use and the contents of your emails, gathered by cookies and then analyzed by complicated algorithms. In addition all sorts of small and big companies battle for 'likes' that will increase their reach. As usual then, when competition is at stake, you see a monopolization of big companies: In the top-800 of most liked sites you'll find mainly big companies. A phenomenon that must reflect major interests for it stays odd to me that -for instance- Coca-Cola (on the 19th of october 2013) ranges number 8 of most popular Facebookpages. I mean, I might understand people like the taste of Coca-Cola but why would almost 22 million people identify themselves with the trade by 'liking' this Facebook account? Through the highly lucrative system of 'likes' then, commercials creep back inside our digital environments. When you 'like' a page, 'news'posts of this company will appear in your 'news-column', these posts

are of course a thinly veiled form of advertisement, just as the many fashion-blogs and posts of women's magazines that mainly praise new beauty products.

As long emphasised by feminists, these expressions of commerce, which both react on prevailing ideas in society and in the same time reinforce them, do have great influence on the construction of beauty and femininity (Lazar, 2011). Especially posts "that deal with self-beautification have become a productive space for the appropriation of feminist signifiers, interwoven with patriarchal codes of femininity, without apparent contradiction" (Lazar, 2009, p. 374). The postfeminist discourse is therefore regularly picked up and recreated in commercial expressions all over the world. Women are presented for instance as "assertive, in control and autonomous having a strong public presence, while confidently embracing feminine practices" (Lazar, 2009, p. 371). Also the feminist discourse is often co-opted, the cultural energy from women's struggles, is taken up by advertising companies and sold back to women, neutralized from its political content and radical potential (Gill, 2011, p. 63; Lazar, 2009, p. 373). These kinds of commercials build on the idea that change has been effected, but in practice they characteristically leave traditional femininity remarkably intact (Lazar, 2009, p. 373).

In conclusion, the image of femininity in modern society is largely determined through the techniques of digital space, here prevails an overexposure of certain bodies, established by various factors, such as the unequal distribution of the power to determine images, the commoditisation and marketization of these spaces as well as the way in which individuals employ the space to present their most beautiful selves. These processes of visibility determine how, when, where and what bodies are seen (Pitts, 2005, p. 237) and therefore become to feel normal and natural and how this gets connected to prevailing ideas of femininity. Consequently they determine how individuals experience their own bodies and construct femininity.

We can conclude that scholars recognise digital space as a powerful mechanism of producing bodily images and discourses, making it important space to explore. In general, popular culture –on which this thesis focuses its main attention- is increasingly created through this highly contested digital space. The image of femininity in modern society is largely determined through the techniques of digital space, here prevails an overexposure of certain bodies, established by various factors, such as the unequal distribution of the power to determine images, the commoditisation and marketization of these spaces as well as the way in which individuals employ the space to present their most beautiful selves. These processes of visibility determine how, when, where and what bodies are seen (Pitts, 2005, p. 237) and therefore become to feel normal and natural and how this gets connected to prevailing ideas of femininity. Consequently they determine how individuals experience their own bodies and construct femininity. Therefore, I think that in the context of exploring how neo-liberalist discourses shape popular cultures' image and construction of contemporary (female) beauty practices, this digital space can provide a most useful tool.

2.2 Facebook

One of the most popular functions of the internet nowadays seem to be social networking sites, especially Facebook has boomed with over one billion 'active users' worldwide (Schellevis, 2012) and 8 400 000 (10-08-2013) in the Netherlands (found by allin1social tool). Through this tool, -apparently meant for advertisers, reflecting the strong interconnectedness of the medium with commercial forces-, one can find out how many users of any specific target group are using Facebook. This way I found that at 10th of august 2013, four million women between 16 and 30 -out of just over 1.5 million (CBS)- use Facebook in the Netherlands. Thus, given the widespread, and moreover, intensive, use of Facebook in contemporary society, it seems plausible that Facebook has great influence in the construction and imagination of all kinds of discourses, including discourses on female beauty and femininity. Facebook is nowadays a very important space, closely connected to identity building, in the daily lives of -young- people.

Thus the first part of my analysis contains a discourse analysis of Facebook-expressions. As I do not have a Facebookaccount, and intensely don't want one, I decided to make a fake-profile of a girl/women of 20 years old. Who supposedly lives in Nijmegen, went to high-school there, and studies currently at the Radboud University. This is -next to my 'like- and surf- behaviour'- supposed to be the only information Facebook knew about my alias 'Kiekie', for I made sure I always opened a new internet session when using Facebook and cookies and memories were removed after every session. In addition Kiekie did not have any friends even though this is of course one of the main functions of Facebook.

On Facebook not only individual people have Facebook-accounts also companies, magazines and websites make extensive use of this digital space. When you 'like' one of these accounts they will post updates (photo's, columns, texts) in your 'news-overview'. This 'news-overview' is your 'wall' where you get to see what your friends -and profiles you 'liked'- posted on their accounts.

Through allin1Social-tool I found the most popular Facebookaccounts in the Netherlands on the 24th of august 2013. I 'liked' all accounts that according to me might deliver useful content to analyse in the context of this thesis, mainly profiles of beauty products, magazines and fashion-sites. The accounts have between 127,006 (Rituals cosmetics) and 2,637 (bodyboost) fans -or 'likes'-. This is the list of accounts I 'liked' preceded by their number on the list of most popular Facebookaccounts:

35. rituals cosmetics	326 LuxStyle	530 esta magazine
49. loreal	371 vriendin	532 ranstad student
84 fashionchick	381 vrouwonline	539 glossy
110 vichy	390 cosmopolitan nl	578 chicklit.nl
120 elle	398 beautysceneNL	582 I love beauty news
135 mtv nl	431 girlz.nl	583 Inglot cosmetics
202 fashionista	456 fashionscene.nl	618 benefit cosmetics
208 hip voor de heb	487 lush nl	623 sisly paris
219 happinez magazine	519 mairie Claire nl	659 bodieboost
319 misslipgloss.nl	494CosmoGirls meidenglossy	

2.3 Interviews

After the analysis of these different sorts of texts found in popular culture on Facebook, it is interesting to find out how these images are interpreted by other real life women, how they perceive beauty practices and how this influences their construction of femininity. Also it seems appropriate to get some feedback from the everyday world of other women, on the findings of my analysis. Hereto I'll make use of the interview method of focus-groups.

Focus-groups form an alternative to semi-structured interviewing in which the environment is less artificial than in a one-to-one interview. The group can respond to each other and statements challenged and discussed, thus giving rich and in depth data for further analysis. Also it does justice to the way in which discourses are created as it can give insights in how participants jointly construct meaning (Willig, 2001, p. 29).

The women I've interviewed are all acquaintances of a mutual friend who showed interest in the topic of this thesis and recognised certain aspects of postfeminism in female friends around her. She wanted to join and through her 5 other respondents were approached by email. 4 of them responded positively, yet one of them had to cancel the interview because of family circumstances. One other woman was invited to the interview by one of the respondents. There were 2 focusgroup interviews done, which both took about 90 minutes. Both interviews were done in the domestic setting of one of the respondents. The respondents were only very briefly informed about the topic of the interview in order to not influence their thoughts on forehand. The women all knew each other well, the first interview was done with three girlfriends and the second with two sisters. This created a situation of trust that to my feeling contributed to the dynamics and the content of the interviews. Respondents reacted on each other and discussed extensive about the topics I brought in.

All respondents were in the age of 23 to 25 and highly educated. The aim of this thesis is to identify discourses and narratives that feel so natural to us that we are usually not even aware of them; therefore I thought it would be interesting to interview women of an age that they've past adolescent, yet are probably still concerned with constructing their identities, their life's and their bodies. But also women that are in the beginning of a promising carrier, who've had the chances in life to feel empowered and in control. Four out of the five woman interviewed was educated in the social sciences and they therefore could easily relate and be reflexive to the influence of media and discourse.

The interviews were held in the format of an half-open interview. This means I had a list with predetermined questions which I could introduce at if an appropriate moment presented itself. The questions were a useful guide but I also tried to elaborate on the stories the women came up with. In general I've tried to give them a lot of space to express their opinions and withhold myself mostly from critical reactions on their pronouncements.

The used questionnaire can be found in appendix 1 and functional transcriptions of the interviews in appendix 2 and 3.

4. Post-feminism, a politics of confirmation

1. Who's a feminist and who is not?

I've described the different ways in which popular culture relates to feminism; Feminism is in some occasions invoked, in others it is loathed or considered obsolete. Yet in many cases these different approaches are combined to overcome to paradoxes of postfeminism. What feminism entails is nowadays disputed, new forms are invented and new discourses added. Thus feminism becomes a theory and a practice that can be given different substance by different subjects. Feminism this way becomes a fuzzy concept. This is not without consequences: whatever substance is given to feminism by subjects, companies or others that appeal to it, it will in all cases present itself as pro-women and critical, even though the outcomes might provoke the opposite. Feminism is nowadays often met in a way that rather reinforces gender hierarchies then contributes to its demolition. Also the combination of a so-called critical feminist stance with restrictive normative ideas of femininity and beauty, functions to reinforce the latter. Feminism` is used, misused and rejected in confusing ways, lets have a look at the different constructions and approaches to feminism as they emerge on Facebook.

To start with, let us look at who considers itself a feminist and who doesn't nowadays: Katy Perry, a singer receiving a female of the year award at the billboard women in Music event³ says in her acceptance speech: "[...] *starting out my career and trying to fight for my self and my vision when some people had other ideas of what I should be as a female pop star. So I am not a feminist, but I do believe in the strength of women*" Moments later she follows: "*My mantra, especially for the film was: If you believe in yourself, you can be anything!*" (Billboard, 2012). Similarly Taylor Swift, when asked by an interviewer whether she considers herself a feminist, replies: "*I don't really think about things as guys versus girls. I never have. I was raised by parents who brought me up to think if you work as hard as guys, you can go far in life*"(ONTD, 2012). Apparently both of them do not want to be associated with feminism, also both of them do rely on a discourse very familiar in postfeminism: You can be anything, you just have to work hard for it!

Also one of the women I've interviewed was very clear in not being a feminist, even though her sister does consider herself a feminist and gave a quite critical interpretation of feminism. It turns out that the first mentioned woman associates feminism with positive discrimination and therefore she says: *I'm absolutely not a feminist!* She says she totally sympathises with the old struggle for equal rights, although she isn't a protagonist herself, yet she associates contemporary feminism with positive discrimination and is very strongly against that, according to her the men of today have to suffer for the situation 40 years ago, also she says that this struggle mainly is still of relevance in other countries. She says she is pro-acceptation and equal chances for everyone. Also in the struggle against racism she sees the phenomenon of positive discrimination she is so against and she says: equal chances, when they are worse then don't, just equality.

³ Billboard is the American hit chart association.

So there is some interesting things said here that we could analyse on its matches with postfeminist discourse, even though this women does not consider herself a feminist, or maybe precisely because she doesn't; according to her feminism has had its day and is also not that needed anymore in our context, in contrast with other countries. McRobbie (2009) and others have described how "Young women in the west see themselves as fortunate beneficiaries of western sexual freedoms" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 26) in contrast to women in other cultures, with the accompanying gender arrangements, who they can only see as victims (Ibid.). It seems that the opinion of this women is influenced by this panacea.

What she thereafter says is that positive discrimination disrupts the idea of equal chances, it is about the quality that an individual delivers, this ignores all structural inequalities that disrupt this equal chances. In fact she says that in the contemporary situation, were equal rights have been achieved, it is unfair when women are hired over men through positive discrimination. Thus according to her, equality has been achieved and there are no structural barriers for women nor people of colour. This makes it everyone's own responsibility to be 'good enough', to create equal chances and to be equal. Equality isn't relational any longer; it becomes an individual affair, and therefore it becomes a hollow phrase, when it becomes individualised it loses all meaning. Thus the struggle for equality relied upon doesn't have any political possibility or tool left to actually change something, yet it sounds like there is a possibility for struggle while in fact the same inequalities will be maintained.

While these women take distance from feminism, others proudly consider themselves feminists: Miley Cyrus, a pop star who made a video clip in which she is swinging around naked on a wreckingball and who was extensively criticized for her 'overtly sexual' performance at an MTV award show, says in an interview: *"I feel like I'm one of the biggest feminists in the world because I tell women to not be scared of anything"*. When I describe this in an interview the reactions are mixed, the women have some admiration for the fact that Miley Cyrus is secure enough to show her whole body, and also they say that when this is her free choice it could be a feminist attempt to freedom. Yet they also consider that she might well intent to make a feminist statement but this may be not how the rest of the world interprets it. This is a good point understood better by the ideas of Judith Butler (1993). According to Butler intentionality is not the origin of meaning, rather it is a product of it. This means, however subversive our intentions might be, habit, routine and unconscious behaviours are always part of performativity. Thus no bodily performance can operate outside the historicity of force, therefore performativity is not a matter of wilful choice, rather it is shaped by "powerfully gendered discourses of the self that unconsciously inform body practices" (Pitts, 2005, p. 233). Thus, according to Butler, body projects can be subversive in their effects, but this is in no way guaranteed by the intentions of the subject (Ibid.).

In the case of Miley Cyrus the body performance in itself can hardly be considered subversive; objectifying ones body, while in all ways confirming to tight beauty standards is something that was preceded by thousands before her in commercials, in porn, in pop music videos and in popular culture in general. Performing exactly the same way, yet reclaiming the intensions carried out with it, will therefore be a

difficult task, because while Miley Cyrus might be a big star, she cannot perform outside history. She deploys the discourses of individuality and the autonomous subject that is not influenced by culture, assuming that she can perform individually outside any cultural constraints. Even though her intentions might be to make a feminist statement, she is in fact performing exactly the same problematic femininity based on the objectification of the female body and a very narrow set of beauty-ideals that is restrictive for most of us. Combining this with the intention of a feminist critique, deproblematizes and depoliticizes this performativity, in fact it only reinforces these oppressive institutions. It dismisses any possible feminist critique, involving ourselves in these performances becomes unproblematic because it now can be a feminist statement in itself. Michelle Lazar wrote: “popular feminism has been viewed sceptically as co-optative, that is, harnessing feminism to other discourses which neutralize its radical potential, while making it appear as if change has been effected. Co-optation not only takes the ‘bite’ out of feminism, it characteristically leaves traditional femininity remarkably intact” (2009, p 373). This is what we see happening here: instead of aiming for a change the same oppressive institutions are condoned and will persist while any critical questions can be dismissed by the argument of intention.

2. Recognising the postfeminist discourse

The postfeminist discourse reveals itself often very clear in the contributions made on Facebook and also as the guideline for women’s and girls’ magazines. It might give us some insights in how the implicit use of postfeminist ideas are all around us and therefore get internalised. For instance, one in four girls in the Netherlands is a ‘friend’ of Cosmo Girl, -the Cosmo magazine aiming for adolescent girls- according to their own Facebookpage. On this page they also describe their vision: *Gc inspires and gives girls confidence to get the best out of themselves. The message is: get the best out of yourself, take your own responsibility, LIFE IS YOUR PARTY!! Also we answer questions that young girls are concerned with, this can be fashion, boys, celebs, health and beauty. In the issue GC shows what is for sale (literally and figuratively) and makes glamour attainable for you. COSMOGIRL! IS ALL ABOUT FEELING FABULOUS & HAVING FUN* (Cosmo Girl Facebookpage). If I’d had to give a resume of postfeminism I might as well copy-paste this one, it entails almost all described discourses: emancipation, deservingness, own responsibility and it is about you! Also it gives a strangely confirmative impetus to what being a girl is all about; apparently girls are concerned with fashion, boys, celebs, health and beauty rather than with politics, the economy, education, adventures, technology or anything of substance and instead of encouraging any of the latter and this way maybe creating a real emancipative discourse, Cosmo Girl is glad to confirm this narrow definition of being a woman.

A random look at the Facebookpage of Cosmo Girl (2013, Nov. 16) confirms this: An Article on Victoria’s secret fashion show; the quote: ‘anyone can be cool but awesome takes practice’; several options to win packets of make-up; the quotes: ‘I wouldn’t be so scared of spiders if they were tiny shoes’ (because all girls are afraid

of spiders and love shoes) And 'cinderella is proof that a new pair of shoes can change your life'. I wonder how does this is empower girls instead of making them insecure with their looks and their abilities? There is also posts that are meant empowering, such as these quotes for instance: "If you don't like where you are move, your not a tree"; "I figure if a girl wants to be a legend she should just go ahead and be one" and "take your passion and make it come true" etc. etc. While these might indeed be empowering quotes, meant to teach girls they should not let themselves hold back because of their gender, they go side by side the stereotypical construction of femininity through a narrow definition of beauty and shallow consumption. Moreover it is a thoroughly individual form of empowerment it is not about countering patriarchy together it is about individuals that are encouraged to create their own successes no matter the consequences for others. In line with the introduction talk of CG it is this postfeminist concern with the self, instead of anything else in the world, combined with a relentless striving for glamorous bodily perfection that is packaged as empowering. It is a deeply depoliticised form of emancipation, where the narrative of empowerment is deployed to promote the same restrictive rolls for women that were formerly questioned.

Cosmopolitan magazine for mature young women in several cases seems to follow the same implicit postfeminist line. We've seen how postfeminism often doesn't seem to have a problem with the objectification and sexualisation of the female body. Rather there is a counter critique on anyone raising these issues under the argument that it is restrictive to girls and women choosing to celebrate the object-qualities of their body. After an initial wavering article on Miley Cyrus MTV performance, in which they call the performance 'shocking' and ask her to never do anything like it again (CosmoNL 2013c) Cosmopolitan turns around and adopts Miley Cyrus as their new star. She becomes the image of their banner (the picture above the Facebookpage) and they report about her nearly every day, -as well as many of the other pages-. They dismiss any critique on her behaviour and actually embed this in a feminist argument. Any critique gets dismissed by the terms of slut-shaming and twerk-shaming⁴. In one of the first articles on this matter Cosmopolitan clearly connects this to a feminist stance, they write that slut became a controversial word on the internet after "*feminist bloggers finally made the masses see that there is no equivalent insult for men*" (Odel, 2013) and go on to conclude that twerk-shaming is the new slut-shaming because it is an activity mostly performed by women. Thereafter they post several articles concerned with twerk-shaming or the so called slut-shaming of Miley Cyrus. The controversy rolls on and Cosmopolitan reacts later on an article that connects acts like Miley Cyrus' MTV-performance with rape-culture. I do not want to get into the discussion but what is interesting is the way the writer ends the article; wondering about why there is a problem made out of the performance while it isn't that much different than other pop stars did before

⁴ According to wikipedia twerking "a type dancing in which an individual dances to popular music in a sexually provocative manner involving thrusting hip movements and a low, squatting stance" (wikipedia). Miley Cyrus twerked during her MTV-performance and received a lot of critique for it.

she writes: *"Is it because we're uncomfortable with the knowledge that she's choosing to do this as a free agent outside the Disney studio grind she grew up in? That she isn't being "exploited" by old dudes at Warner Records who are forcing her to be smutty to sell albums (certainly a narrative we're more comfortable with when it comes to young female pop stars)?"*

The argument is clear: Miley Cyrus is an autonomous agent that isn't forced by patriarchy to celebrate the object-qualities of her body, it is what she wants herself and therefore there is no problem and it is also not strengthening patriarchy. Anyone arguing that she is exploited (or exploiting herself) creates a narrative of victimization and therewith tries to restrict her by denying her agency.

3. Rebranding feminism

There are also cases in which a more explicit feminist stance is taken up. Elle makes an issue concerned with feminism, which they call 'rebranding feminism'. This could of course be interpreted in different ways; does Elle want to regain attention for feminism, or do they want to change its content? According the announcement, the conversation about feminism and what it means, runs continually at the Elle headquarters. After that the opening of the announcements reads: *"That's why in the November issue, we invited three feminist groups to work with three award-winning advertising agencies to re-brand a term that many feel has become burdened with complications and negativity"*. Thus in the last sentence they create an ambivalent attitude: they do an issue on feminism but they also take distance of a feminism of the past. Then the 3 feminist groups are coupled to advertising agencies, who are touted by the trades they've worked with such as Dior and Nike. Thus a connection between multinational companies and the new feminism is created. Following the embedded link of Nike you are directed to another Elle article about a new pro-women Nike-campaign. Elle concludes the article with: *"Nike is hosting a series of challenges to inspire women to work out harder, run faster and reach new goals"* (Rhodes, 2013), they also quote one of the women featuring the campaign: *"I've been hitting the gym hard already and I hope that in some way I can help inspire more women to take up the challenge"* (Jessie J. quoted by Rhodes, 2013). Here the idea that control over ones female life starts by controlling the body becomes quite literal: Elle couples working out, or in other words shaping the body by discipline, to the inspiration for women to reach new goals and because this is coupled to feminism working out also becomes an emancipator goal. Moreover Elle gets it done to couple feminism to the advertisement industry in general, and specifically a multinational beauty company like Dior and a company that has been basically the symbol of capitalist oppression; Nike. This way feminism is incorporated: it loses all radical social potential because now it can be united with the all-devouring power of capitalist companies and also the ever ongoing pursuit for the perfect female body. Feminism this way is indeed rebranded, it is rebranded to a movement that is complicit to the current system, rather than aiming for any significant change.

Most women's magazines seem to consider themselves feminists, -we've seen Elle's declaration that they are always concerned with feminism- and also Cosmopolitan makes a statement like that when they make a post in which they join a solidarity

action for a specific woman by posting pictures of the women of the redaction holding signs with the text 'this is what a feminist looks like'. Apparently also the redaction of Cosmo (or at least part of the women; aren't there any men working there?) considers themselves proud feminists. Yet, the big letdown of the article comes in the last words: *"Broderick has started a tumblr, We Are What Feminists Look Like, to which the Cosmo girls and I are happy to contribute to...even though I look like crap"* (Breslaw, 2013b). Instead of taking a stance in which women are encouraged to feel confident about their bodies, a feminist message is combined with the continuous caution of perfecting the body, also the first concern of a feminist should –or could- be what she looks like.

The seeming unproblematic combination of a feminist stance with these kinds of restrictive messages of femininity and the tight and controlled construction of the female body, this way normalizes and justifies the latter.

4. Paradoxes that confirm

This does not only happen by relying on feminism, in fact in a lot of cases paradoxical messages are combined as if they can fuse together instead of being opposites. Avelie Stuart and Ngaire Donaghue write about this tendency of magazines: "The absence of conflict between messages about women's freedom and femininity works to normalize a small set of preferred 'choices' for women that continue to tie women to narrow standards of feminine beauty" (2012, p.100). Some clear examples of this can be found in different articles of Cosmopolitan; One day they are agitating against crushing beauty practices, while the next, they post a series of 70 celebrity bikini-bodies, not surprisingly nearly all these bodies have more or less the same shape.

Throughout gathering data from Facebook I actually saw barely any sign of any attempt to shaping the embodiment of femininity in any subversive way. As described in the above paragraphs there was occasionally a notion of feminism, such as for instance by Elle magazine, yet these notions rarely were not accompanied by the same normative ideas of the construction of the female body and femininity. Cosmopolitan posts an article about a new Facebookpage called 'Yeah, she squats' where there is an overload of pictures of women's 'worked-out butts' in g-strings, the writer wonders whether there isn't something objectifying about women sharing photo's of their exposed bodies, but she decides that 'Yeah she squats' gives a positive body image: *Some of the "Yeah, She Squats"-tagged images on Tumblr and Pinterest feature super skinny women with bodies only a select few (or very, very hungry) girls can achieve—but, luckily for self-esteem lovers everywhere, YSS pushes old-fashioned workouts—planks, runs, and, obviously, squats—in a body image-positive light to attain the butts in question. It's a far cry from starving yourself down to a painfully skinny thigh gap model* (Burton, 2013b). Thus having to work-out a lot is presented here as a positive body image. Actually the argument is that at least this body-ideal is reachable for you, you just have to work for it. That this has nothing to do with a body-positive light that leads to self-esteem Burton proves in her last lines: *"Honestly, as someone who has an ample butt, scanning Yeah, She Squats all morning began to have its effect on me. Try gazing at perfectly-sculpted glutes for*

hours on end, and inspiration begins to take hold. Signing off to work on a more enviable butt..." (Ibid.). She makes a clear connection between looking at the images and her own body-image, yet instead of problematizing this connection –she works at Cosmopolitan were they expose these kinds of body-images all the time- she decides it is 'inspiration'. The conclusion is that there is nothing wrong with her in the end feeling uncomfortable about her body and interrupting her activities to head of to 'work' on her body. She is going to do this because she is inspired, that is a positive thing, and she does it for herself.

There is rare examples were one can find a more structural critique on the construction of beauty. There is a post of Cosmo in the category 'conversation starters' that is about a Tv-personality who revealed she had plastic surgery done to make her 'Asian eyes' look bigger, because it was told to her that this was needed for her tv-career. The post is ended with the text: *"maybe we can look forward to a time when black people aren't lightened on magazine covers, Asian people don't have to have surgery on their eyes to appear more ostensibly Western, and institutionalized racism isn't interwoven into the very fabric of the entertainment industry. That'd be great"* (Lansky, 2013). What is interesting is that sometimes when cases are very explicit and undeniable like this there is made a political point out of it, yet there is often a very big contradiction between the critique in this kind of articles and the policies of the same magazines. Cosmopolitan is agitating against institutionalised racism here, yet when you look to the Dutch Cosmopolitan side, the overwhelming majority of images depict white-skinned people. Cosmopolitan.com gives the same results, yet, they have a special section named 'Cosmo for Latinas', according to the page meant for Latinas and women of colour, which contains the categories beauty, fashion, love&sex, food & cocktails, your job, your life, your dreams and some blogs. But, although there are some posts that might be especially relevant for this target group, -mainly the beauty tips-, even here the grand majority of the images shown contains white-western looking people. Considering the point that women shouldn't be lightened on magazine covers Cosmopolitan has an easy score; Appendix 4 shows the result of a search for 'Cosmopolitan Covers 2013' through Google images, indeed Cosmopolitan clearly doesn't lighten many black people on their covers: there are hardly any! Another point to make is of course that Cosmo does try make a point here against racism, yet they do not make any point against the tight definitions of beauty, which apply for all women of any colour.

Yet there is other examples were magazines do have some attention for criticism on beauty standards. Both vogue and Cosmopolitan report about the concerns Doutzen Kroes –a top model- expressed in an interview with *telegraph* about the impact that photoshopped images of her have on the self- esteem of young girls. The model says she has had a child and does not want to be a 'board', she wants to show a female body. Also she worries about the fact that in real life she doesn't look the way she is imaged at fashion pictures. Cosmopolitan observes a trend in the fashion industry from too thin to



Figure 1 Doutzen Kroes (Cosmopolitan.nl 2013a)

‘curvy ladies’ and they call Doutzen Kroes one of their favourites in this category. Figure 1 shows the picture of this ‘curvy lady’ that accompanies the article (Cosmopolitan.nl 2013a).

In the interview with Vogue (Grunder, 2013) there is also attention for this point. Kroes says again that she finds it problematic that girls want to look like her, because she doesn’t look like that in real life. Yet in the next paragraph they talk about the fact that during the Victoria’s secret show there is no possibility to manipulate the pictures and thus one cannot escape reality. Then the model explains how she deals with this given: *‘There are millions of people watching us, so it is important to sport a lot. I customize my diet to my work for this show [...] for example I quite consuming alcohol and sugar a month before the show. I do still eat carbohydrates though, because it doesn’t work for me to only eat proteins and vegetables’* (Grunder, 2013). Thus what seemingly started as a statement against the tight beauty standards for women turns out to have no

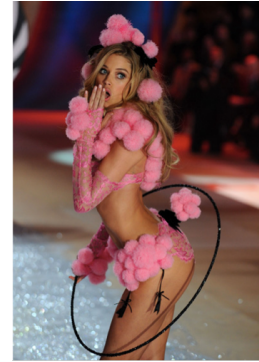


Figure 2
Doutzen Kroes
(Cosmopolitan.nl
2013b)

problems with rigorous diets such as only eating proteins and vegetables, apparently that is not part of restrictive beauty standards. The article of Cosmopolitan in which Doutzen Kroes’ concerns on this topic are described, I found as a hyper-link in an article named: *‘Research: Doutzen Kroes has the hottest ass’* (Cosmopolitan.nl 2013b). In that article cosmopolitan happily agrees with a male magazine who ‘researched’ that according to Dutch people Doutzen Kroes has the hottest ass, figure 2 shows the image with the article, and they ad: ‘and that while she sometimes doubts about the image she gives to young girls’ (Ibid.).

Thus, Vogue combines the critical note on beauty standards with a not-at-all critical message about extensive dieting and Cosmopolitan combines it with an article that basically celebrates the objectification of women. By combining these conflicting messages the apparent absence of conflict between them works to legitimate and normalize some problematic yet dominant ideas of beauty and femininity: Heavy photoshopping of images is worth criticism, but extensive dieting is something very normal, and objectifying women by doing research about who has the hottest ass is also nothing special, you know what let’s put a picture with it that confirms that there is no problem whatsoever with this kind of female objectification.

5. Conclusion

In the theory chapter I’ve described the ability of dominant discourse to incorporate resistance. The established order feeds the idea that what was counter before now is not counter anymore; real change has been made. This leads to the common pronunciation ‘I’m not a feminist, but...’: there is a felt resistance to political feminism yet it’s ideals are individually accepted (Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998 p. 321). But because it is presented as if the ideas of feminism are now widely assumed

and accepted, therefore in the same time feminism can be considered obsolete (Lazar, 2011, p. 38).

Thus while feminism is presented as common sense, it is a feminism that is stripped of all radical power. The conflation of critical messages or a call to feminist ideas with the same narrow constructions of feminine beauty makes it appear as if these conflicting messages don't bite. The resistant discourse of feminism is adapted to fit perfectly well in the dominant system. This way the panacea that change has been realised functions to remain the status quo.

The kind of feminism that is performed draws on dominant neoliberal ideas of agency, equal opportunities and individual responsibility, and strives for the "improvement in the position of women in an otherwise more or less unaltered social order" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 14), while a more radical feminism concerned with structural inequalities, and social criticism is rejected. Postfeminism is mainly concerned with individual freedoms, this way the postfeminist discourse rebrands feminism to a discourse stripped of all radical potential, it functions to dismiss all criticism and remain the status quo.

5. Consume femininity

1. Commercialisation of digital space

With some exceptions there are generally three categories of Facebook pages selected in this analysis; (cosmetic) trades; woman's or girls magazines and pages concerned with fashion. The trades seem to be very careful to make use of the possibility to post something on the newsfeed of millions of people and thus their posts are quite rare, usually presenting a new product, making a (quoted) statement, or asking an open question in an attempt to involve people. For instance L'oreal posts an advertisement of a new eyebrow pencil showing a close-up of a woman with heavily accentuated eyebrows with the accompanying text: "Brows are back" and: *What do you think of the trend that eyebrows are allowed to be seen once again?* (app. 5) This seems an attempt to give their customers the feeling that it is not just an attempt to sell them something, rather they get involved. In general the pages of companies are not very determinative for the content of the newsfeed. Yet, that doesn't mean their products are not obviously present in the newsfeed environment: Both the magazines and the fashion -pages and -blogs function frequently as promoters of new products; these are extensively discussed or reviewed, but also many times simply celebrated and recommended. Scrolling through my newsfeed on a random moment (Sunday morning 16 November) for instance, yields these expressions within the first 20 posts: Cosmopolitan: *Which items did the celebs score of the coveted Isabel Marant Poyr H&M-collection? See it here!*; Fashionscene: *We are to-tal-ly convinced! With the Clarisonic MIA 2 we don't need annoying cotton pads and cleansing milk any more. Read more about this wonderproduct here*; Elle expresses its enthusiasm for the new Jimmy Choo cruise campaign including links; Margriet selects travel offers; beautyscene.nl posts: *what's in you make-up bag? In mine usually Powder, mascara, lipbalm, lipstick and concealer, of course of my favourite trades NARS, Armani and Chanel* and finally Cosmo offers an Item of 9 Things I should put on my holiday wish list, showing images of the products including trades and prices. Thus, through the Facebook pages I've 'liked', and that therefore post on my newsfeed, a lot of products are promoted. I am not a 'friend' of H&M, yet I do get promotion for their new collection, the Facebook page of Cosmopolitan functions as a mediator here and this happens all the time.

This shows Facebook is a heavily commercialised environment and also how pages, that do have some kind of authority, collaborate with commercial interests. This way normative ideas, constructed in the articles posted by the same pages, are coupled to products that can be bought. Of course advertisers always seek chances to couple their product to strong normative ideas – to be feminine you need product X- and Facebook is an exquisite environment for this.

2. Consuming femininity

We are used to be in a deeply commercialised environment and consumer power becomes experienced as an entitlement. According to Rosalind Gill (2008, p. 346/437) discourses of choice, agency and empowerment that now are an important part of the neo-liberal and postfeminist subject –read customers- are smartly taken

into account by the advertising industry. Consumers shouldn't have the feeling that something is promoted or sold to them rather they should feel that by "buying a product, style or idea one is purchasing a sign of one's own individuality and empowerment (Gill, 2008, p. 436/437)

Thereto especially the fashion-concerned pages seem to be sincerely interested in sharing information; what are the latest trends? Where can you get them? Which beauty products deliver the best results and how to best apply or use them?

Respondents in my interviews also indicated that this is a future of Facebook they deliberately use, they do not randomly 'like' pages of companies but select certain pages that they have interest in, especially from certain trades or shops that they like. This way they are kept informed on what's new and on special offers. One of the respondents also says she has quite a lot of lingerie brands in her network although she can still not afford it, but maybe one day... Thus these girls use Facebook to inform themselves about their consumption possibilities, in other words commercials no longer are experienced as annoying temptations, rather they help us to exercise our consumption power based on good informed decisions.

Magazines and blogs actually glorify commercials and campaigns; regularly they post positive 'news items' about the new campaigns of big trades. Elle posts for example an item like this: *"From kate moss' turn for Versace to Malaika Firth fronting Prada and Cara Delevingne for, well, everybody, here's our pick of this season's advertising campaigns"* (app. 6). Advertising and campaigns are presented as news, its important, its fashion, its something one should not miss out on.

Consumption in general in my Facebook environment is highly celebrated and rarely or never questioned, all kinds of posts or articles are used to promote products. The fashion-concerned pages are actually mainly about consumption: The big question is what is there on the market and where can I get it? Consumption is presented as fun, necessary, feminine and inevitable by these pages. The 'quotes of the week' regularly posted by 'fashionista' reflect this discourse very well. One reads: *"shopping is my cardio"* on the image of a women in a short black dress, carrying at least 6 shopping bags of, inter alia, Gucci and Chanel and holding a wallet in her hand closest to the camera (fig. 3). One week later the quote reads: *"whoever said that money can't buy happiness doesn't know were to go shopping"* (app. 7) and another one: *'shopping works therapeutic for me'* (app. 8) which is actually posed as a question. The wholehearted reaction of nearly all respondents? Yes!

But consumption is not only just fun, it is serious business, Elle states: *"Our beauty editors literally cannot live without this hairproduct:"*. (app. 9) Consumption then is presented as something necessary in the construction of -feminine- identity. To be a 'real woman' one has to make the appropriate choices of consumption. It is the post-feminist discourse that narrates women can satisfy all their needs and desires



Figure 3.
Personal communication
24-08-2013

through commodity consumption. Moreover it is through consumption that you can gain acceptance and status as a woman. Femininity this way becomes inseparably linked to consumption.

This consumption is closely related to the construction of the female body and here the concept “conspicuous consumption” of Thorstein Veblen is useful: this is the idea that we consume to a significant extent, in order to display our social power to others. Michael Carolan (2005, p.82) writes that in contemporary times it seems our endeavour became to literally embody conspicuous consumption, to become the nice thing itself. Today you are what you consume and your body is the display.

3. It's about you (r) body

Consumption is simultaneously presented as leisure, it is free-time and it is something that you deserve, this way you become entitled to consume, it is about you! Figure 4 shows an advertisement shared by benefit Cosmetics of a perfumery. The image is clear: it is an insolent celebration of unrestrained consumption, the accompanying text couples this to an entitlement; it reads: *Now, more time to shop [...] the ultimate reward after a day of hard work.* It might also be an important detail that a diminutive is used for the word ‘day’. The advertisement tells you you are always entitled to unrestrained consumption. (and maybe it also demeans woman’s work, because the day of work is presented as a day out).

Also Fashionscene follows this line of entitlement when they write: *The redaction has shopped a lot again this week, here you can see were we’ve spend our well-earned pennies to, accompanied with a picture of a hand with rings and purple nail varnish.*

In other words, they deserved to shop with their pennies and they’ve upgraded their looks with it, on top of that this makes them interesting women: they post an article to a wide public about their activity of shopping and their body care.



Figure 4
Personal communication
28-8-2013

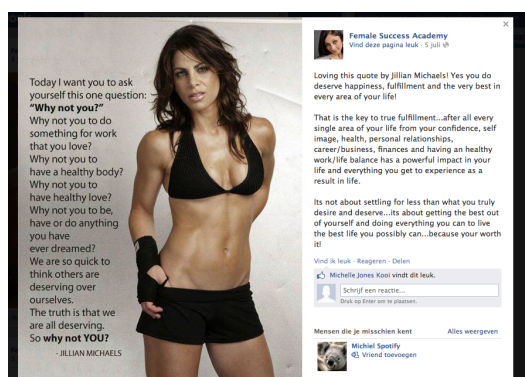


Figure 5 Personal communication
08-09-2013

Actually ‘female shopping’ is in the vast majority of cases about constructing the perfect female body: the right clothes, shoes, perfume, make-up, beauty-products and food and all of this is presented as pampering and pleasuring the self. That ‘it is about you’ usually means ‘it is about you (r) body’ becomes very clear in an environment like Facebook that to a great extend is about images. Figure 5 shows a post of the Female success academy that makes it very clear

that you are entitled to think about yourself first, that the world is about you, including the famous line 'because you're worth it'. There is a remark about having a healthy body, yet, the story is accompanied with a picture of a tight looking woman in her underwear: Success is in the body.

4. The selfie

On the 29th of august Marie Clair reports enthusiastically that 'selfie' was officially included in the Oxford Dictionaries (app. 9). The 'Selfie' is a phenomenon taken very seriously on Facebook, it basically means taking and posting a picture of yourself. There are all kinds of tutorials for making the best selfies, because you cannot post just any picture of yourself. Elle posts an article with tips to make selfies. The last tip tells you that if you want to be taken seriously in the selfie world, you should invest in a camera extender (app. 10), -yet another way to invest in your body-image-. The other tips minutely tell you how to fold all different parts of your face, according to the writer *"this takes tons of practice, but once you perfect it you know Tyra Banks⁵ would be proud"* (app. 11), the implication is now everyone can be its own top-model. One of the other tips also tells you that you have to wear more make-up than usually, even when you want to go for the no make-up look. Because you will not look like the famous women pictured without make-up, in fact you will "look rubbish" (app. 12). In other words you, as a normal woman, cannot afford it to take a spontaneous picture of yourself, this takes a good preparation. Here the 'its about you' discourse gets coupled to the discourse of control: It is about you (r) totally controlled body-image. This also becomes clear in an article called: 'Selfies die echt niet kunnen' (Cosmopolitan.nl, 2013e) which could be translated as 'Selfies that are unacceptable' and interesting from a geographical point of view there are also no-selfie-zones (Cosmopolitan.nl, 2013f). In other words: it is about what you want and what you choose, but you can not just make any choice.

I've described in the theory chapter how the discourse of pampering oneself connects femininity with an entitlement to consume, and how consumption is coupled to the female body, packaged as leisure and generally glorified. Also the construction of the body through consumption is coupled to all other successes in life. Consumption is presented as fun but it in the same time it has a serious undertone: it is also necessary in the construction of successful femininity. The above examples give some insights in how this works in the reality of the Facebook environment.

5. Re-shaping the female body

Until now, my emphasis has been on the construction of the female body in a way that is confirmative to the existing beauty paradigm, on Facebook, as in most media you mainly find images of thin, tight, white, tanned women without any spot. Attempts to construct the female body in a different way are hard to find and,

⁵ Tyra Banks is a supermodel that presented the televisionshow 'America's next top-model'

moreover, do not always have the promised effect. In the next paragraphs some of these attempts are described.

Fashionscene – a Facebookpage concerned with fashion- for instance, has a rubric about girls with tattoos (see figures 6 & 7). What stands out is that the girls in this rubric indeed do have a lot of tattoos and in some cases also a different then normative lifestyle. One of these girls for instance lives according to Fashionscene a 'gypsy- life' (sic.) (Daphne, 2013a) and the other one is vegan and an animal rights activist (Daphne, 2013b), not really lifestyles encouraged by postfeminist discourse, that is so eager on working on the self and usually depoliticizes everything, you would say. Yet, within postfeminism any lifestyle can be promoted as long as it is stripped of all political potential, that is to say it should be presented as nothing more then a lifestyle: an individual construction of identity. The aim is precisely to create your own individual identity. In fact looking at it from this angle, it seems like this is just another way of capital and patriarchy to incorporate the once subversive body-practice of tattoos. Because, in the end, these pictures do not seem to be very subversive in respect of the objectification and sexualisation of female bodies.



Figure 6. Daphne (2013a, Aug, 29)

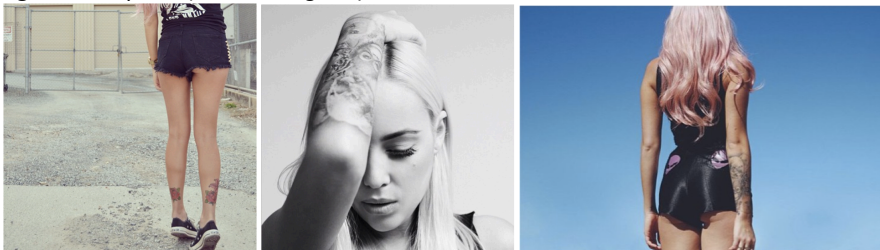


Figure 7. Daphne (2013b, Sept. 5)

What these pictures make clear is that a slight change can be made in beauty standards and in what behaviour can be seen as accepted, but only when other norms of beauty are retained. In the end the only difference in the narrow construction of female beauty on this pictures seems to be the ink on the skin, now sold as rebellious and sexy, another flavour to choose. As long as your main activity is concerning yourself with creating your identity through consumption, both patriarchy and capital have nothing to fear. These girls could be another spice-girl: the rough and weird one, that is just as sexy as the rest. Also in this case the paradoxical combination of a liberal body image with bodies that in every other respect seem to meet up to the prevailing norms of beauty and sexuality functions to reinforce the latter; this is just another way to construct the same body-images. It is the celebration of individuality and niches that makes us feel like autonomous subjects, like we have a choice, while the results do not differ in any meaningful way.

Another well-known example of an attempt to loosen the contemporary narrow construction of beauty is Doves 'women friendly' campaign that aims to boost women's confidence. What I've seen pass on Facebook by Dove is mainly quotes that tell you, you are beautiful, you are strong and you should believe in yourself (app. 13). But in the end of course, Dove is a company that sells beauty products. Therefore they needed to find a message that was able to combine their aim for sales of beauty products with the message that their costumers are beautiful enough like they are. To overcome this apparently paradoxical messages Dove draws on the 'it's about you' discourse, the idea that you are not involving yourself in beauty-practices for anyone else, or that this is an offer: you do it to pamper yourself, to take care of yourself, it is well-deserved relaxation after a hard day, because you're worth it.

Dove's aim might be to break through the very narrow definitions of beautiful bodies, mainly concerning the still prevailing norm of extremely thin models in popular culture, yet they combine this with the message that one can not lower ones guard concerning femininity. Thereto they post messages like a picture of the content of a handbag with Dove deodorant in it, posing the question: '*ladies what can never be missing in you're bag?*' (app. 14) Because every lady still needs a handbag to maintain herself during the day and no women should smell like a woman. Another example is a drawing of a packed wardrobe accompanied with the statement: '*I've nothing to wear*' and the question: '*ladies do you recognise this?*' (app. 15). Because whatever you look like, you still have to look good. Dove also consequently promotes shampoo using this taking care discourse, for example by statements like: '*did you know that playing with your hair is bad, because it will break easier*'. On first sight this might seem a positive way to approach the relation to ones hair: take care of you're hair and yourself, yet of course it still gives the message that your hair should look good. Taking good care of yourself now means taking good care to look good. The function of the body becomes to be beautiful, yet why wouldn't it be a site to play (with your hair)? So in the end the bandwidth of acceptable bodies gets extended a bit, yet femininity is constructed as narrow as ever before and still coupled to spending time and money on ones appearances.

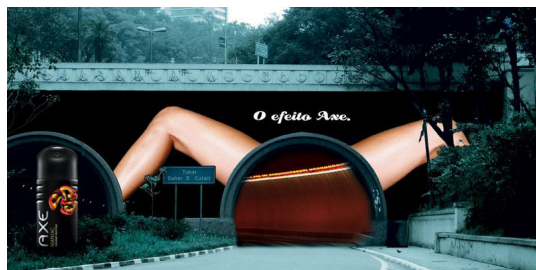
Meanwhile Dove seems actually quite serious and sincere about the self-esteem campaign. They are paying a lot of attention to encouraging mothers to help their daughters feel better in their body. In the first place this is of course a good thing, yet it also seems a smart marketing strategy: Mothers also see the ongoing sexualisation of pop-culture and the trend that girls get involved in the sexual discourse ever younger. I guess few mothers like to see their child-daughter under 12 years imitate Britney Spears arousing dances. Dove is on their page constantly addressing this target-group with quotes like: '*6 out of ten girls are ashamed of their bodies*' (app. 16), which loving mother can resist? This might give us some hope for the future in the respect of the construction of female bodies; apparently there is a considerable group of people –because otherwise Dove would not choose them as their target group- that has their reservations with the prevailing norms of beauty. Yet, of course there is, because the prevailing norms of beauty are so narrow that

only a vast majority of women could ever suffice to them. The danger might be that a widening of beauty norms becomes a new range of the market. This way the existing restrictive norms of beauty might survive next to another discourse that also serves the market. It might create the panacea of a choice and therewith legitimizing problematic constructions of femininity. Let us not forget that Dove is one of the companies that sold us normative beauty standards for years (see fig. 8), and moreover Dove is owned by Unilever, which for instance also owns AXE. Figure 9 shows some ads for this deodorant product.



Figure 8.
Dove commercial
(Dshea, ND.)

Figure 9:



(Cloe Ann, 2010)



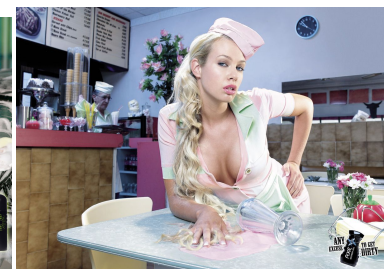
(Niamh77 ND.)



(Hernandez, 2013-12-25)



(Judas the great ND)



(Sharpie51's blog. 2010)

If these images, so clearly objectifying women, can unproblematic exist next to campaigns of the same players that claim to be concerned with the construction of female beauty, and wellbeing of women the problematic aspects of it get depoliticised. Because apparently there is no real friction between these different messages and moreover we get offered a choice: the very narrow definition of beauty is therefore not problematic anymore because you have another option. Yet, is this really a free choice? What Dove cleverly does is targeting the women that feel they can not or do not want to meet up to prevailing beauty standards, yet they still give us the assignment to embody femininity, to control our body with beauty products and to invest both financially and time wise in the construction of our body.

They offer us the 'its about me' discourse and the discourse of control to do so; to do not meet to narrow beauty standards can now be brought as a choice in line with

the discourse of control that makes us present all our actions as in control, as deliberate choices.

That companies and magazines (who are also companies) respond to, and use, normative beauty standards and do not have a lot of interest to break these, should not really surprise us. Internet though is often presented as democratising; it could give us the potential to spread our own messages and images in the world. Yet, also Internet is a heavenly commercialised and hierarchical environment. The sad proof of this comes in an example of Instagram. Instagram is a very popular new medium where people upload photos, this is a digital environment that exists from images, it seems like a wonderful opportunity to alter, change or confirm prevailing images; in this space you are in control. Petra Collins –who is the main-subject of this story writes about the importance of these kind of spaces: *“I consider myself endlessly lucky to have access to the Internet and technology. Through it I've found myself and have been able to join a new discourse of females young and old who strive to change the way we look and treat ourselves. I know having a social media profile removed is a 21st century privileged problem -- but it is the way a lot of us live. These profiles mimic our physical selves and a lot of the time are even more important. They are ways to connect with an audience, to start discussion, and to create change”* (Collins, 2013)

The quote refers to the removal Petra Collins' Instagram account. Her account was indeed removed because she uploaded an image of herself in bikini -just like another 5.883.628 images that are tagged #bikini-. She writes: *“I did nothing that violated the terms of use. No nudity, violence, pornography, unlawful, hateful or infringing imagery. What I did have was an image of MY body that didn't meet society's standard of "femininity.”*”(Collins, 2013). The image Collins posted was a photo (figure 10) from the waste down, wearing a bikini bottom. Yet unlike the other more than 5 million pictures of girls in bikini (figures 11) the photo shows her unshaven bikini line. Thus, Collins account was removed because of her unshaven bikini line. The Instagram guidelines ask people to be tolerant for other ideas and beliefs, they say, if you do not like something we advise you to not go to this page anymore. Yet apparently an unshaven bikini line is something to loathsome to be tolerant to.

Instagram is a company that was acquired by Facebook in April 2012 for 1 billion dollar. Thus, what seems the matter here is that this enormous new space existing from bites and bits that a lot of people now carry with them all day through their telephones and that seems promising as a democratising space, became a highly market-driven neo-liberal environment. The same forces that seem to shape our material world seem to shape this digital space, even strengthen themselves through

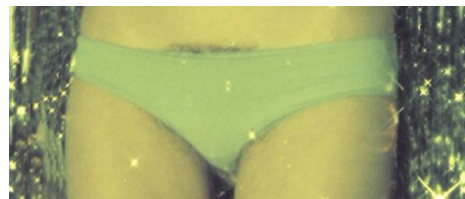
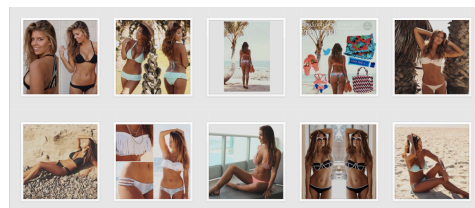


Figure 10
The forbidden picture. (collins, 2013)



Instagram counts millions of bikini pictures that are not forbidden (Instagram 2013)

it. Just like the streets became commercialised places where it is not allowed to give them an interpretation that doesn't fit market-needs, and where market-forces literally shape spaces through advertisements, but also through the implementation of space through shops, terraces and semi-public places, digital space seems to get ordered by market-needs and commercial interests, creating hierarchies of power. And these powers seem to have only too well of an interest in sustaining a narrow standard of beauty based on consumption.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I've emphasised the power of commercial interests and the associated discourse of consumption in the construction of the female body on Facebook. The Internet is an environment where images play an important role and while this space is often promised to be a chance for democratic forces, it is also a space that is thoroughly commercialised. The Facebook pages included in this analysis have a tendency to lavishly celebrate consumption and this is coupled to the construction of female identity, it is through consumption that one can gain acceptance and status as a woman. The consumption of all kinds of body-related products and services is then presented as pampering the self. This pampering is something the modern woman is entitled to; the emancipated woman isn't about taking care for others anymore she is about taking care of herself. Yet, while it is presented as if we are encouraged to create our own unique identity in which all is possible, restrictive principles of femininity are upheld. In the last part of the chapter I've paid attention to how small facilitations of the normative beauty image can actually serve commercial interest, yet it turns out that a 'more radical' modification will not be tolerated. A woman can, or in fact is expected, to create her own identity, yet she has to choose from the available options: One can choose and combine her own flavour, yet it is not done to skip the meal (except for reasons of diet of course).

6. The sky is the limit

A potpourri of deservingness, free choice, responsibility, autonomy and control.

'I think Beyonce is truly feminine, not only in terms of appearance, also because she truly does her own thing, she earns more money than her husband, she totally does her own thing, I think that's cool anyway, but she truly –well of course she had a lot of help- but she truly 'made' herself and she radiates power as a woman and she doesn't satisfy the stereotype of being super-slim, but admittedly she is super-tight'. One of the woman in an interview answering the question what is truly feminine.

1. Make yourself

In the theory chapter I've described the different discourses that constitute a relationship between postfeminism and neo-liberalism in isolation, yet, in practice these discourses are often combined to overcome the paradoxes of neo-liberalism. The American dream is one of the dominant discourses of culture in which some corrosive discourses get combined. Were the fairytale of the American dream is originally associated with class-mobility, its narratives became interwoven in the tissue of society and also in the construction of the female body and femininity.

The panacea of the American dream is based on a sense of deservingness. It draws very much on the (neo)liberal narratives of individual responsibility, control and the idea that chances are equally divided. This leads us again to the neoliberal emancipated autonomous subject who makes rational decisions, the consequences of these decisions are always one's own responsibility, in fact all situations in life have to be presented as the result of deliberate choices. Cultural and structural restraints are denied or considered of little importance; everyone can 'make it'. This narrative of deservingness is a very strong narrative that determines a lot of dominant discourse and its daily expressions. The emancipation message itself also slightly shifted under influence of this discourse; the message, 'women can be anything', was once meant to counter the prevailing ideas in society that women were not suitable for certain tasks, today the message seems to be: don't blame patriarchy, you just didn't work hard enough! In the spirit of the American dream inequalities are downplayed; don't blame it on cultural or structural restraints, blame it on yourself! There is a sense of manufacturability of all parts of life in which the body, once again, plays an important role. In the next few paragraphs I'll try to illustrate this with some examples.

A common phenomenon on Facebook is to post inspirational quotes, graphically designed on an image. Figure 13 gives 9 examples of such quotes posted in my newswire.

Figure 13:



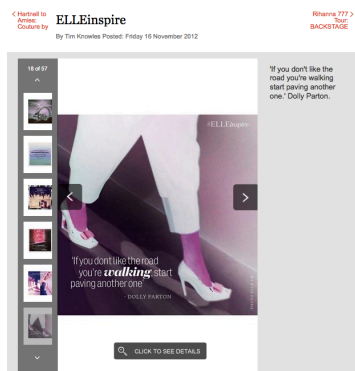
Barbie (Personal communication 22-08-2013)



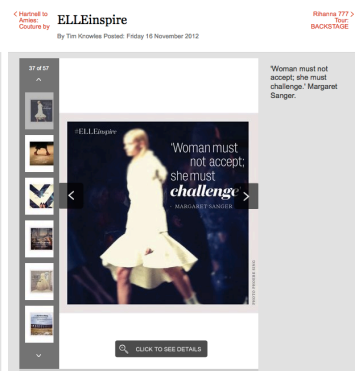
Cosmogirl (Personal communication 09-09-2013)



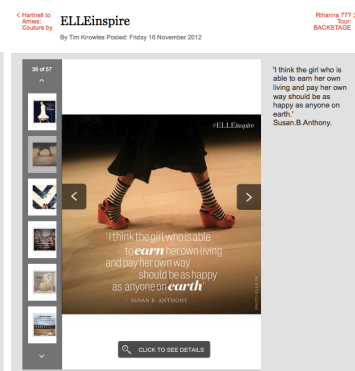
Elle (Personal communication 22-09-2013)



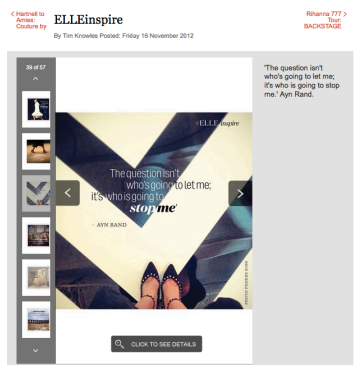
Elle (Personal communication 25-08-2013)



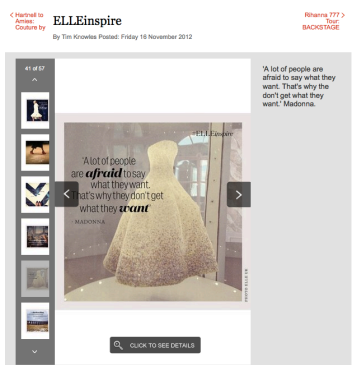
Elle (Personal communication 25-08-2013)



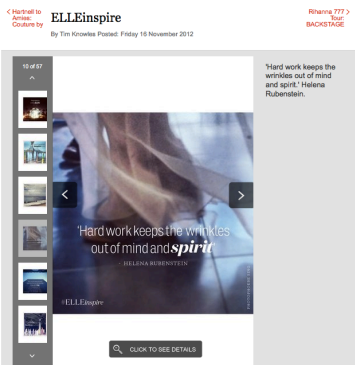
Elle (Personal communication 25-08-2013)



Elle (Personal communication 04-09-2013)



Elle (Personal communication 25-08-2013)



Elle (Personal communication 10-09-2013)

Elle is clearly inspired by the 'all is possible story', in fact they almost seem to adopt this narrative as their motto, yet what this overview also shows is how these narratives are imposed upon us from a very young age. The Barbie Facebookpage for

example posts: *'you can be anything'*. Meanwhile this message is accompanied with a picture of 2 woman and 2 girls in a pink background all wearing pink flowered short dresses, they tell you you can be anything, but in the same time the options given to you are very limited. The story of having a free choice forgets to mention the narrowness of these choices. This story then can be found in our environment in all stages of life: Growing up, when one might shift her attention from Barbie to 'Cosmo girl' – the Cosmo magazine for adolescent girls-, the same message is given: *'dreams don't work unless you do'* they tell you. Next it appears in the corridors of university where I ran into a poster on a clipboard that stated: *'women at the top: the secret of getting ahead is getting started'*. The background of this poster depicted 3 women, in above the knee dresses. Clear links are made between female appearance and success. In all of the Elle quotes the image depicts high heels or other images of female high fashion. These messages are intended to be inspiring and empowering for women, yet the emancipation message is given a slightly new twist: femininity is coupled to characteristic female expressions of fashion: short skirts, dresses and high heels. One's successes are codetermined by the successful construction of one's body, and involving oneself in the prescribed beauty practices is a necessary part of that. The new woman needs to feel empowered by her appearance first to get successful in other parts of life.

2. Successful sexy

The message is that a woman should work hard, but not only in her profession: she should also keep her appearances up. Why would one need high heels to reach the top? But these high heels seem to be part of the commitment, what is notable in this respect is that when latest fashion appears to be flat shoes several pages post the message: *'good news, flats are in for spring'* (app. 17), high heels are not comfortable, they are a dedication. This way the emancipation message gets coupled to a feeling of deservingness based on one's participation in normative practices of beauty. The expectation is that a woman works hard for her appearances and instead of problematizing these expectations and the related efforts, this work gets rewarded. One has to work hard to deserve the accompanying successes in the areas of social acceptance, profession and love. There is a double entanglement in this because in the same time women are expected to work hard, involving in beauty practices, as described before, is presented –and experienced– as leisure, fun and pampering the self. One could see a parable between this work on the body, that is necessary, yet presented as something women naturally like and the inclination of patriarchy to present housework as something women are naturally appropriate for and that is *'not real work'*.

In another article success is coupled to sexiness: Cosmopolitan posts a list of powerful women in which they *"went to the women who upgraded our world this year and asked them their secrets to building and enjoying their power"* all the women in the list are presented with a photo and a quote. Not all of them meet up to the stereotypes and narratives described in this thesis yet, out of the 20 women in the list, in 8 cases the one sentence quotes are devoted to the connection of power and sexiness. Stacey Bandet for instance, is represented by the quote: *"Educate yourself. Power is inspiring...in a gorgeous dress and 6-inch stilettos!"* Michelle Phan

is represented with the line: *"Do you want to be the superhero or the villain in life? I channel the Wonder Woman inside"* accompanied with a picture of her putting on lipstick. Other quotes in the list are: *"Feeling positive is sexy."* *"Especially paired with chic lingerie, killer heels, and a signature scent."*; *Power is like a little black dress—it's all about how you wear it."*; *"I feel powerful when I feel competent, like when I'm editing myself...also, in high heels, because they usually make me about 6'2". Being that tall feels pretty badass!"*; *"Know what makes you awesome, and use it to help others. That's sexy."*; *"Benevolent power is extremely sexy, both in men and women."* (Brounstein, 2013)

It is very clear that female attractiveness is coupled to success and power in this article, a narrowly defined attractiveness that is associated with high-heels and lipstick. The article also breathes what Angela McRobbie (2009) has termed 'the postfeminist masquerade'; McRobbie argues that successful young women have to compensate their strong position in the workplace by presenting themselves as overtly feminine or girlish. They have to mask their rivalry with men in the world of work by endlessly and repetitively sprucing themselves, the quote of Stacey Bandet seems to fit this masquerade very well: the first part: *educate yourself. Power is inspiring* is swiftly followed by the edition: *in a gorgeous dress and 6-inch stilettos!* this last part is like a sign: don't worry I'm still very feminine and concerned with my looks. Of course this kind of (re) constructing ones body appearance is presented as a wilful choice, as part of emancipation, yet in effect, as McRobbie argues, the masquerade functions to sustain women's subordinate position: The post-feminist masquerade "operates with a double movement, its voluntaristic structure works to conceal that patriarchy is still in place, while the requirements of the fashion and beauty system ensure that women are in fact still fearful subjects, driven by the need for 'complete perfection'" (McRobbie, 2013, p. 69).

3. Work Bitch: A postfeminist example

Several pages posted messages in my newswire about the new single and album of pop star Britney Spears named 'Work Bitch'. Elle writes: *"we might just make this our new Motto"* by which they mean the title 'work Bitch' and also Cosmopolitan is very positive. In my naivety I thought maybe the song would contain a critical message, 'work bitch' could be meant cynical and entail a critique on the pressure to work that is so often presented as a free choice. These are the first lines of the song:

*You want a hot body? You want a Bugatti?
You want a Maserati? You better work bitch
You want a Lamborghini? Sip martinis?
Look hot in a bikini? You better work bitch
You wanna live fancy? Live in a big mansion?
Party in France?
You better work bitch, you better work bitch (2x)
Now get to work bitch! (2x)
Bring it on, ring the alarm
Don't stop now, just be the champion*

Work it hard, like it's your profession

And no, also this text is not meant as a critique. A clear connection is made between a women's social status –owning fancy cars- and the construction of one's body, not for nothing the line (you wanna) 'look hot in a bikini, you better work bitch' is included. The video confirms this image, combined with the text is a serious encouragement for women to work hard(er) to keep up their appearance and conquer status-enhancing material products. In fact the message is meant emancipating.

Yet, it also involves the adoption of sexism in the emancipation discourse that was described in the theory chapter: Scanty clothing and sexy moves, well, that is what we might expect in a pop music video and also Britney playing the roll of SM mistress is not shocking. Yet, the video also contains sexclub-like cabins with red neonlights writing 'Bitch'? The video to me is downright misogynist up to the point where Britney has six women on a leash that then explode. In the rest of the video we see repeatedly shots of limbs flying around. This is the whole emancipation discourse reversed; yet it is presented as empowering, by a woman.

Meanwhile, both the single and the video are immensely popular and the message is taken over; In a discussion between two women on the internet the question posed is: 'Is Britney's 'work Bitch' anthem anti-feminist?' Caroline Linton one of the two women answers: *"This song is a feminist call to arms, no? Listen to the lyrics: "You want to live fancy? Live in a big mansion? Party in France? You better work bitch"."* This woman actually experiences these lines as empowering to women. The other woman then comments on the whip Britney uses in the video against other women, the dog leashes and the exploding women, Caroline answers: *"Ok, the whips might be a little much. I can concede that it's maybe not the best message. But I think she is just trying to whip everyone into shape. Listen: "don't stop now, just be the champion.""* Well, this kind of undermines the message of this thesis: apparently being forced into shape nowadays is a good thing, it is even empowering. Finally when the other woman, Adrienne Vogt, comments on the emphasis on a hot body and materialism in the song Caroline answers: *"There might be an emphasis on materialism and a hot body. But we all know, Britney had to work for that freaking body! [...] As for the materialism: we all know she comes from the middle-of-nowhere Louisiana—she's had to work for every single thing she's got. Not only is she encouraging to work, she's also doing it with a catchy background".* (Linton & Vogt, 2013) Any criticism is dismissed using the discourse of deservingness: As long as you've worked hard for it, it is ok. The message: focus on yourself, work hard and you can overcome all structural inequalities of life.

This way the female emancipation message is deployed to promote the neo-liberal panacea of deservingness which functions to justify inequalities both in class and in gender relations. But also female emancipation, in a bizarre twist, is combined with misogynist expressions in the video.

There is no one-to-one relationship between these kind of expressions and practices in real life, yet in this case the story has another layer that gives some insides in the effects of the described new emancipation narratives: Britney declared in an

interview that a lot of footage made during the recordings of the video did actually not make it into the video because it was overly sexual to her. Actually she says that being a mother, she is not happy with the sexual content of the video. When the interviewer asks her: "Are they pushing you further then you want to go?" Her answer is "Yes"(Rodrigues, 2013). Apparently Britney feels her management has made her cross her sexual limits. In another interview, the director of the video reacts on these expressions of Spears. He says: *"There are a lot of misunderstandings about making her doing racy stuff which is 100 percent not true. She does not do anything she doesn't want to do. She's in complete control the whole time. It was easy to make a racier cut only because of the extras and the cutaways, and that's it,"* And he adds: *"we found a great balance"* (Vena, 2013). So Britney says *she feels* she has crossed her sexual boundaries under pressure, yet, the reaction of the one that according to her put her under pressure to cross these boundaries, is: it is not true, she wanted it herself, she was in complete control and there is a great balance between what she wanted and what I wanted. Instead of expressing any regrets about someone feeling her sexual boundaries crossed by him, he actually uses the postfeminist discourses of control and free choice to flatly deny Britney's feelings. Because the narratives he uses are so common his answer seems valid. The writer of an internet article about it, in fact, accepts it without seeing any problem in his attitude, the next sentence after the manager making the above statements is: "with the rumours cleared up....". The story is dismissed, there is no longer any problem recognised.

Here the postfeminist discourse seems to get dangerous: the story tells that individuals are not influenced by outward (cultural) pressures, you always make free choices and you are always in control, thus anything that happens to you must be your own responsibility. Instead of giving girls and women handles to actually improve their control, instead of looking to the pressures that do constrain our choices, instead of looking at the structural misogynist foundations of popculture and how this might influence men and women, all responsibility is put on individual women. This way any cultural and political notion is dismissed, and any problem denied. Thus the emancipation discourse deployed here actually functions to create and to justify exactly the opposite of what it entails.

4. Conclusion

What the examples above make clear is the idea that women are expected to self-manage and self-discipline, to work on and transform the self and, to regulate all parts of their life and to present all of that as freely chosen (Gill, 2008, p. 443). Under this postfeminist improvement rhetoric women's social class mobility is an ever-present theme coupled to the production of sexual attractiveness. This way a women's social class-status conflates with conventionally attractive female bodies (Press, 2011, p.118). There is a strong emphasis on women to carefully build and construct their identities, and above all, their bodies, to 'make' themselves. For an individual woman now, no constraints are recognised, everything is possible.

This neoliberal construction of the autonomous subject, that calls to life the postfeminist emancipated woman, functions to conceal structural unequal relations

of power; because all choices are unrestraint, one becomes fully and individually responsible for all that might happen in life.

7. The (de)construction of femininity

1. Constructing gender

Another generally interesting thing that clearly came to the fore is the construction of gender differences. In my research I included one Facebook page, that aims at a male-audience rather than a female one; Playboy, this because of the reclamation of the play-boy bunny as a desirable identity by many young girls. I will not go into detail about the way Playboy constructs stereotypical female objects in service of stereotypical male desires, because that is what we might basically expect from them, yet I do find it note-worthy that the only images Playboy posted in my newswire apart from images of women was pictures of cars. In the same way it can hardly be a surprise that girls and woman's magazines promote normative constructions of femininity, but it did take me by surprise that anno 2013 Cosmopolitan magazine, aiming for young modern urban women has regular items on cooking. Although it has to be said that this is usually not meant as an encouragement for house mothering (their target group also does not seem to include mothers anyway) yet it's mostly about 'healthy' (don't get fat!) and fast recipes.

There is a column of a woman posing the question whether she should learn to cook so that she will become a fiancée. Her first reaction after this question is: *"The millennial sorta-feminist in me wants to say FUCK THAT, I don't need a ring/ man/ anyone / anything! But honestly, I sometimes wonder if I'm wrong"* (Koman, 2013a). Her final answer on this is that she shouldn't learn to cook in service of any future husband but she should learn to cook to be able to independently take care of herself. That seems a valid point. Yet what is interesting is the way she poses this, she starts with: "Because it hit me that right now, my main priority needs to be me" followed by a lot of it's about me and MYSELF's. This gives us some insights in the changed way femininity is constructed: she is not about taking care for others anymore; she is totally taking care of herself. This leaves out any acknowledgement that nurturing others, taking care of your surroundings is also taking care of the self in a reciprocal way. It is the new I-feminisms that replaces any form of social feminism. The pursuit for female independence this way is used to justify a narcissistic attitude.

It feels like almost needless to say, but although most magazines make a point of showing their gay-tolerance through articles with 'the gay-case' as main-topic –for instance the coming out of a celebrity star–, these articles seem to be islets in the bigger sea of hetero-normative expressions of sex- date- and relationship-advice such as: 'sexmoves he really doesn't like', which are generally always accompanied with a picture of a woman and a man making out.

Clearly, there is no demur to speak for 'all men' or 'all women' and assign them stereotypical properties. Cosmo for example devotes an article on how you can make 'him' fall in love with you. Tip 6 reads: *Ask him for help. Men want to be needed. So ask his help opening jars, repairing your bike and for chores at home.* Tip 7 then reads: *Be confident. Oke men like to be necessary, but it is also not required for you to collapse when he is not there for a moment. So show enough confidence, that's what men find really sexy* (Cosmopolitan.nl, 2013d). Although tip 7 at least is a

bit more empowering than tip 6, the implications are still problematic: the empowerment consists of playing a role, play the role of confident girl, play the role of dependent girl, anyway don't be yourself you need to play out a role for him, you need to adjust your behaviour in service of him. In all kinds of articles Cosmo gives advice like this.

Both the fashion pages and the magazines give extensive advice about all parts of life and along the way they construct a narrow normative of femininity. You are advised in everything and pronouncements as 'must' (not), 'should' (not), 'can not' and 'mistake' are often deployed to make the advice even stronger. What you should and should not wear, what you should and should not do during sex, what mistakes you should not make applying make-up, or making a picture, or what kind of gaffe you can make that make you look older (yep, because looking old is a serious gaffe) and of course which exercises you should do to be able to show yourself at the beach. For instance Marie Clair writes an article titled: "Beauty secrets every woman *must* know" (my emphasis) (Marie Clair, 2013) and Cosmopolitan: "10 pieces of clothing you must NEVER WEAR AGAIN" (app. 17). L'oreal Paris asks: 'what do you think of the trend that eyebrows are *allowed* to be seen again?' (my emphasis and translations) (app. 18).

Also a lot of 'inspiring quotes' are used that mainly reinforce existing constructions of femininity, such as Elle quoting Coco Chanel: "*A Girl should be two things: Classy and fabulous*" with the Coco Chanel logo in the background (app. 19) or: "*if you change a woman's look you change her persona*" with jewellery in the background (app. 20). Or Elle again quoting Coco Chanel: "*A woman who doesn't wear perfume has no future*" (app. 21) and another time Coco Chanel this time quoted by 'glossybox': "Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening" (app. 22). In these quotes, once again, femininity becomes clearly linked with one's appearance, in fact appearance is often so important that it is valued over one's other achievements, as the last quote makes clear it is the essence of life. Cosmo for instance writes a photo caption that reads: "*say what you will about Paris Hilton but she looks lovely and tasteful in this cute bikini photo*" (app. 23). In other words: all gets forgiven as long as you look good in a bikini. Elle writes about Michelle Obama at the 'let freedom ring ceremony', they have no attention for what this ceremony is about, the only thing they find noteworthy is that she looks '*bloomin lovely in her Tracy Reese dress*' and then take '*a look back at her best looks*' (app. 24). Or Vogue who writes about a book presentation: What did Alexandra Chung wear at the launching of her first book? Nothing about the book, or about the writer, except for what she looks like (app. 25). Or Marie Clair that does an interview with the actress that plays the role of Winnie Mandela in a movie (Heyde, 2013), where clearly their main interest is not in the movie or the character she plays, the most part of the interview is actually about the Actress' diet and choice of shoes.

2. Objectification of the subject

Thus femininity is constructed as mainly determined by one's compliance to normative appearance. Yet this compliance, especially for young women, is about more than looking customized; one has to embody sexuality.

In the theory chapter I've described the new postfeminist sexuality as characterized by sexual agency in lieu of sexual objectification. The postfeminist subject embodies a new, confident, powerful, sexy femininity, that is framed in "a discourse of playfulness, freedom and, above all, choice (Gill, 2008, p. 437). Women are now deliberately playing with their sexuality and very aware of their sexual powers, which they use to please themselves. Rosalind Gill calls this new figure constructed to sell to women the "midriff" (Ibid.).

Now that women became sexual subjects instead of objects of an assumed male gaze, objectification became an outdated concept deployed by old-fashioned feminists. Figure 13 is a selection of covers of magazines that popped up at my Facebook account in the last months. Notice that every single one of them references to sex in the headlines to confirm the new sexual confidence of women, the women on the covers are not objectified, they are just sexually confident. Yet the result is that these could all have been lad-magazines of a decade ago, only now criticism is no longer possible because it is all free choice.

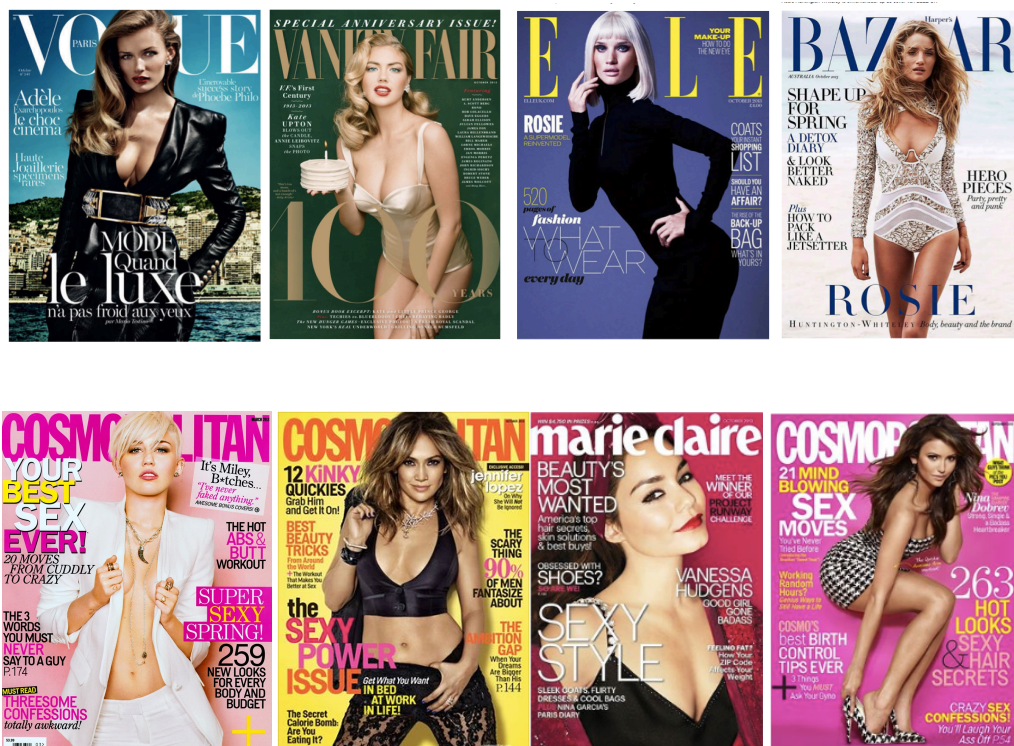


Figure 13. Magazine covers presented on Facebook (Personal Facebook 2013, nov. 17).

This sexual confidence comes back a lot in the expressions of Facebook and quite often the line between what is presented as sexual confidence and downright sexism seems thin. Elle for example makes a post of 'most fashionable female cartoon

characters of all time. They start off with Betty Boob: *"Her kiss curls, sweetheart neckline dress and big watery eyes put her in the league of a silent movie star. Breaking ground in the 1930s as the first sexualised female cartoon character, her style and independent spirit recalls the free-spirited flappers of the Jazz-age"* (app. 26). What happens here is firstly that this figure is celebrated for being the 'first sexualised female cartoon character' a dubious thing to celebrate, second, this sexualisation is quickly connected to independence, making a clear connection between sexuality and confidence. Also Vogue, that presents itself as classy, cannot resist this sexualisation: they organise a 'fashion night out' event for its readers and promote an art project for it: a 'daring video performance' with pole dancers. The accompanying picture shows a Mondrian style image with an extremely high-heeled pole-dancing woman in the style of pin-up girls on one of the lines (app. 27). This is classy because it is art, but it is art that makes use of the very sexualised images of women as pole dancers and pin-up girls. Also several pages post enthusiastically about Miranda Kerr (a famous model) who did a photo-shoot in porn-style (app. 28). And Beauty-lab thinks the name for a certain kind of soap: 'porn star in pink panties' is great (app. 29)..

In another line objectification is turned to male bodies: Cosmo posts very enthusiastically on boobs- and penis shaped jewellery (app. 30), and also they have numerous posts objectifying male-bodies, such as: *"15 times it is 'classy' to look at a naked man"* (app. 31). Or: *"'study of a nude male torso'. Also a fitting title for a college class every woman should take. Prerequisite for life, yo!"* (app. 32).. I do not want to say that sexualisation is something wrong in itself, yet it is this very narrow and flat construction of sexuality that is celebrated and constructed that is disturbing. It is the fact that what would have been called objectification 20 years ago, is now celebrated as empowering.

3. Constructing sexuality

The discourse of sexual agency, confidence and taboo breaking also brought us the rubrics with sex-advice. In particular Cosmopolitan is very active in this area. Breaking the taboo on sexuality should be considered a good thing, and sharing information about it too, yet what I think is problematic is that Cosmo positions itself as an authority in this area, telling you what you (a woman) should do and what he does and does not like. For example Cosmo writes: *"Just when he thinks he's seen it all [...] pull this sexy-bitch sex position out of your pocket"* (app. 33). Firstly the tone of this is bothering to me, yet more important is the fact that Cosmopolitan recommends sex-positions, not in order to explore one's own pallet of possibilities and pleasures, but to keep *him* satisfied. Also they post: *"what dudes really think when they go down on you"* (Kabola, 2013), the answers together give the idea that these guys are distracted and having a hard time. This way the article, instead of celebrating the female body only reinforces insecurities and in general a culture of shame is held up despite talking about sex openly. Number 6 on the list of what guys think during oral sex reads: *"Are we going to have sex soon? (Full disclosure, this one is pretty much being thought the whole time. It's also being thought when a man isn't giving oral, like when he's engaging you in casual conversation, or eating a hot*

dog, or sleeping. Men are thinking this about every woman they come into casual contact with all day") (Ibid.). Of course this is meant as innocent fun, but is it really innocent? I think it normalizes a very problematic perception of sexuality, one that is disrespectful to women and that reinforces the idea that men always want sex and women are the objects to satisfy this ongoing need. Putting this on the page of a girl's magazine makes this discourse of sexuality that might have problematic effects for both men and women, normal and acceptable. The liberated sexuality of the postfeminist seems not much more than a vacuous promise.

Another rubric is named *'sexmoves he doesn't like at all'* with the subtitle: *'Read and learn. Perhaps he doesn't dare saying, yet this he finds a big turn-off in bed. Really, trust us'*. (app. 34) Instead of encouraging to communicate with ones bed partner and trust each other, Cosmo says you better listen to them because they will tell you what he doesn't. In doing so they create a very limited norm of sexuality: apparently all men like the same things, there is not much space either for another interpretation, because when a man tells you something different, you should just not believe him. Most disturbing in this 6 sex tips I find tip number 4: *'Lord it in the bedroom. Oke, occasionally you of course have to take the lead, yet be subtle. If you don't let him contribute nothing he will feel affected in his masculinity, men will be men'* (app. 35). So not only does the magazine act here like they know better about your bed-partner than you do, also they reinforce a very stereotypical interpretation of gender in which the woman is encouraged to adopt a passive attitude. On top of that she should adjust her own sexuality to the presumed male desire.

Postfeminist sexuality, according to Rosalind Gill, is framed in a discourse of palyfulness, freedom and choice. "Women are presented as not seeking men's approval but as pleasing themselves, and, in so doing, they just happen to win men's admiration" (Gill, 2008, p. 437). Yet in the above examples it is clear that Cosmopolitan, does construct liberated postfeminist sexuality to a great extent in service of male desires. Also in the interviews it became clear to me that women are not doing it all for themselves, constructing their bodies they are very aware of the appreciation of a male audience. Talking about how we could change the tight beauty paradigm they say we should also pay attention to the education of men, because even when you try to teach girls they are beautiful as they are, boys still have more attention for the stereotypical playboygirl. Also they say they feel more secure about their body when they have a boyfriend and they feel safer in general when they are protected by a strong men. This goes clearly against the idea that women construct their bodies and their sexuality for themselves and do not care about male approval.

Postfeminism celebrates sexual agency in a way that second wave feminism didn't. We've seen, for example, for example how Cosmopolitan made a kind of political point out of what they call the 'slutshaming' of Miley Cyrus. They also do an article on a woman that made it her goal to sleep with 100.000 men (Burton, 2013) and make a political point out of it. The article starts with: *"While guys craving sex is just 'boys will be boys,' women who unabashedly love—and want—sex are more often than not given sh*t for it"*. Then they go on to celebrate this obvious sexuality by explaining the "lofty Goal" of the woman and they wonder when the 'slut-shamers'

will start, they go on by saying that the mission of the woman is progressive because it is taboo breaking.

An important feature of the midriff, as described by Gill, is that 'she is always up for it'. There are a lot of posts that relate to this dangerous idea: Cosmo for instance posts an article on food you need to avoid before having sex. The underline starts with: *'hot-date ahead? One of the things you should absolutely avoid eating is liquorice: it makes your sexdrive drop to a low, so stay clear of it'* (app. 36). Apparently not wanting to have sex on a date is not a good thing. In the same line of reasoning 'Vrouwonline' posts an article called: *'No sex-drive in winter? This is what you can do about it'* (vrouwonline, 2013) and Cosmo posts an article that states: *'Men don't admit it that fast but he too sometimes has a 'headache'. Thus: easy ways to boost his sex drive'* (app. 37). Having a headache is the obvious euphemism for not feeling like having sex, yet this is not accepted as a valid feeling: you should try to break it; maybe you can change a no into a yes? Also Cosmo posts an article about lazy sex, the article starts promising with a writer of sexbooks explaining *"that there are a lot of reasons for wanting lazy sex as opposed to the sexy(ish) trashing around you see in the movies and compare your own sex-life to"* (Koman, 2013b) also she mentions that if you are just too tired and you don't feel it you should not force yourself. Yet the Cosmo writer kind of twists this message, starting with the subtitle of the article: *"With positions like 'The Couch Potato,' being tired is no longer an excuse for not doing it"*. Why is there no excuse for not doing it? And don't we have to fight the idea that there should be an excuse? Apparently the default option according to this writer indeed is always being up for it. If you don't feel like it, you better come up with a good excuse! This is reaffirmed in the last line of the article: *"You now have no excuse not to use sex to unwind after a hard day"*. What seems to happen is that in the first place masculinity is constructed to always feel for sex and second girls through popular media, popmusic etc. are told they should always satisfy this sex drive. After the no-is-no it is now ok to say: no might be yes. Basically no doesn't exist anymore, not because you cannot say no to him, but because you cannot say no to yourself. Meanwhile girls do not get educated to set their personal borders, rather they are encouraged to have none.

4. Conclusion

Thus in conclusion we recognise that in postfeminist discourse occurs a revaluation of gender-differences. Meanwhile femininity is constructed in a very restrictive way that also is closely linked to bodily performances. We see that the postfeminist sexual confidence does make space for more openness about sexuality, yet this space is once again mainly used to propagate a small, restricted arsenal of possibilities. The articles are characterised by a unilateral celebration of sex that is often still based on satisfying alleged male desires first and construct women as the objects of these stereotypical male desires, placing them in a subordinate position. The articles often draw on insecurities and clearly tell you what you should and should not do, there is few space for own exploration of sexuality, true taboo breaking and open communication. In fact there is no recognition at all of the possibility to construct your own sexuality that contains wishes, desires and personal

borders. What is seen as sexy is prescribed in sex-advises, porn inspired popular culture and the millions of images representing sexy women that fill up our daily environment both in physical and in digital space. Instead of being liberated, the discourse of liberated confident sexuality, based on the narratives of free choice agency and control, in fact only narrows the range of possible sexual expressions.

8. Real life complexities

Writing and theorising about the structures that unconsciously influence our acts, thoughts, our behaviour and our bodies, it becomes sometimes all too easy to be critical towards the behaviour of others. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that these dominant discourses do not only influence our behaviour on the surface, rather they deeply penetrate our sense of self. These discourses operate “not just on how we think, but on how we feel—the very texture of our emotions” (Gill, 2011, p. 66). Until now I’ve mainly concentrated on the discourses constructed ‘out there’. In this chapter I want to pay full attention to the complexities of lived reality as it emerged in the interviews with five young women. I’ve incorporated some of their pronouncements in the previous chapters, yet, picking out chunks of the interviews to illustrate problematic stances feels like doing no justice to the sincerity and complexity of the feelings of these women. The two interviews with five women, took over three hours in total, in the conversations a lot of interesting and also critical things were said. Yet, this thesis tries to give some insights in how discourses of neo-liberalism and postfeminism influence the construction of our bodies, and of course, there is no space to include all. Therefore only a small selection of the opinions of the women finds a place in this thesis, appendices 1 and 2 include more comprehensive transcriptions of the interviews. This analysis is quite critical towards the statements of the women, yet this is not meant as negative judgement; rather it is an attempt to deconstruct the foundations of our own feelings, rationalities and realities.

Thus in this chapter I’ll pay attention to the lived realities and feelings of these young women and distillate some generally interesting points that relate to a postfeminist construction of the body. To my regret the interviews were not held in English and thus the paraphrases in this text are my own translations, I’ve made rather free translations in an attempt to do justice to the indented content of the message as I’ve interpreted it.

1. Realities of beauty

Of course in all cultures in all times, people have appreciated beauty and most people want to feel beautiful, whatever that means to them. What is notable is that basically all respondents indicate that paying attention to their appearance is mostly important in a wider social environment, whereas they feel more comfortable doing less in more intimate surroundings. Being beautiful than is rewarded with positive attention and feeling better and more secure about the self. These feelings can have a profound impact.

One of the women describes that she uses foundation because she has a bad skin. She says: *maybe you also behave differently, at least that goes for me, when I do not wear foundation my face is blotchy and I just want to hide. I also don't feel comfortable then when people are staring at my face, so I'll also avoid deep conversations.* This shows that involving oneself in beauty practices, even a relatively simple one like wearing foundation, can have a deep impact to one's perception of the self. Another woman describes that she feels naked when she is not wearing eyeliner, she feels different. She teaches at a school and says, *When I'm in front of a*

class I'm rather with eyeliner than without, I'm a bit of a softie and it gives me a little more eye, or how do you explain that? These examples show that involving oneself in specific beauty practices is not only about conforming to the standard, these women have quite clear personal reasons for certain practices of which they are very aware. But they also indicate that they would probably be less aware of it if other people would pay less attention to it. The latter woman describes that in the rare cases she doesn't wear eyeliner people tell her things like 'wow, you look tired', 'are you sick?' or 'wow, your appearance is much softer without eyeliner'. Actually all respondents point out that there is a strict social control about one's appearance, even when in most cases this isn't intended in a bad way, the women get comments about their looks all the time and this makes them more aware of it. Also they register differences in behaviour towards them connected to their appearance.

In the above cases there is a clear connection between the performance of specific beauty practices and a felt response of one's social surroundings or one's image of self. Yet, of course we are not always fully aware of the relationships between outside structures and the way we feel about ourselves. Moreover we like to see ourselves as free agents making our own decisions instead of passive recipients of the media. In one of the interviews it was mentioned several times that the tight body image exposed in the media would probably mainly influence 13-year old girls whereas older women are more able to critically reflect on these. Yet, all women in the interviews were very aware of their body-weight and body-shape despite of the fact that they all looked healthy and naturally slim to me.

Because we want to be in control over our own thoughts and feelings, in many cases we adopt presented narratives to explain how we feel about something for ourselves. One of the women talks about her body-weight: *I also notice that I sport less, I used to swim and I would like to do it again, but my bodyshape does withhold me a bit, while it is actually just the way to get stronger again. It's mainly about getting strong again, what used to be muscles is now fat. [...] Sometimes I think I'm fine like I am, yet sometimes I like clothes that do not fit my figure, then I know how I would like to be: more tight. I do not really have to be smaller, but I want to be stronger, to get back that strength, that doesn't have anything to do with my appearance, I just felt healthier then.* Something pinches here, she says two times that she is not worried about her bodyweight, yet in both cases she does refer to feeling not comfortable about her body shape, it even withholds her from going to swim. To explain her worries about her body she draws on the discourses of a strong and healthy body that is very common today. Eskes, Duncan & Miller have described in detail how fitness became part of the empowering discourse. Sports and healthy food-habits are now described as ways to exercise "choice, control and mastery over one's body, and consequently one's life" (1998, p.319). This narrative fits very well in the neoliberal construction of the self in which there is little space to explicitly acknowledge restrictions or social pressures that impinge upon our free choice (Stuart & Donaghue, 2012, p.116), the postfeminist woman adopts the discourse of the strong, self-responsible, emancipated, autonomous woman. Controlling the size

of one's body is no longer an oppressive mechanism of patriarchy; it is now a way of empowered control.

But even when one does explicitly recognise outward pressures and structures that establish a clear overrepresentation of specific kinds of bodies, resisting these feelings is easier thought than done.

One of the respondents says she has the feeling she cannot look

One of the respondents says she has the feeling she cannot look objective at people that are overweighted. She doesn't want to, but she makes all kinds of assumptions about how these people feel. Also she says: *I think I'm more thin than what I think my natural weight would be like, I really pay attention to that, but I just feel truly better when I'm more thin. Yet it's also a reality that you get more compliments when you're slim.* Moments later she says: *I don't think it is a fact that slim is more beautiful, I myself think curves are really beautiful, also for men I think it is more beautiful.* On my follow-up question, so you think it is more beautiful but still you try to be very small yourself, she answers: *yeah, that's it huh.* This woman is very aware of the impact of beauty ideals and she also tries actively to resist them, yet she is still struggling to truly feel empowered by this resistance. She later also indicates that this has also to do with the judgements of other people. One needs a thick skin and a lot of self-confidence to feel comfortable resisting beauty images, because you will be judged by the fact that you don't look adjusted.

Another instance, very recognisable to myself, is the case of body-hair. This same woman says she has a great fondness for body hair and would prefer to not do anything about it. Still when she had a date with someone new in the past she would remove it. She doesn't do this anymore anymore, but she notices that she is always very aware of that and she does shorten it. She says: *while thus actually I'm against that, but I do still do it,* also she would do it when she goes to the sauna or swimming depending of the view of the people she would go with. Yet then she says she decided she was not going to do this anymore, she decided that when she would start dating someone that would disapprove her body-hair she would stop the dating. Next she says: *I'm used to be in places where nobody truly bothers, where it is normal, yet I have to say, in Antwerpen, a new place, when I'm wearing just a tank top then it is a bit awkward for a moment, and then I still do it because I have to of myself, yet I'm not totally going to dance with my hands up into the air.* Thus there is a continuous tension between what would feel best for yourself and the severe expectations of society. Because not trimming your body hair will not go unnoticed, and moreover, it is often condemned. Another interesting point made later on in the conversation is that having armpit-hair is often seen as a radical feminist statement. This fits very well with an argument made by Avelie Stuart and Ngaire Donaghue (2012, p. 113). They explain that conforming to beauty standards is often not framed as a choice, while non-conformance is constructed as an active choice. It is then acknowledged that non-conformance carries a price; this way non-conformance is constructed as an active choice, as a statement, whereas conformance goes often unnoticed and unquestioned.

2. Individual choice

In the above mentioned example of Avelie Stuart and Ngarie Donague (2012) it is mentioned that non-compliance is often presented as a choice that is acknowledged to have a price. This argument of free choice serves to de-problematize the consequences of the choice made; One can choose to not-comply to beauty practices, yet this means one also chooses to bear the consequences, if you don't want the consequences the solution is easy: make another choice.

In this line of reasoning free individual choice becomes a sacred argument that can be deployed to condone any situation. In the interviews it also became very clear to me that the women hold a very individual stance to the subject of beauty practices, they often defend their choices instead of placing them in a structural context that limits these choices. What is interesting in this respect is that nearly all respondents project their own bodily insecurities on others, actually when asked if there is things they find disturbing on other people or that they are very aware of, the answers mostly comply with the body parts or practices they are insecure of themselves. In general beauty practices are defended (against an assumed feminist critique) as an individual choice: *No exactly, when a feminist tells me I shouldn't do stereotypical stuff, when people say you shouldn't adjust to society, then I think yeah I do it because I like it myself, and the reason I like it has to do with the things that are deluded to me, but still, when, in a given moment I started to like something because of that and I feel comfortable with it, then I just want to do that. When I wear a push-up bra I find that pretty and I do know that's just because men have figured out that it's beautiful when tits are hold in that position, yet by now I started to like it myself also, even though maybe something went wrong somewhere causing me to start liking it, I don't care, I will still wear it.*

When I remark that this way she sustains the status quo she replies: *Yes I know, But actually I do not mind very much, at one point I think I should be allowed to decide for myself even though that is not feminist, yet I'm not against feminism, I simply want to decide for myself.*

Rather than objecting to beauty practices the woman objects to an –assumed- feminist critique of her involvement in them because this would limit her in making her own free –although admittedly influenced- choices. The argument of free individual choice is deployed to justify all structural consequences: as long as it's your choice the social impact doesn't matter. Even after several attempts of me to place the behaviour in a social context, the argument is brought back every time to own individual reasons and decisions.

3. Resistance incorporated

I've described how dominant discourse incorporates resistance. Above we've already seen how the problem is in fact de-problematized and depoliticised. The following statement, which is an answer to my question 'so you think the beauty ideal, or how women are represented, yet also represent themselves is a problem but not a feminist problem?' makes that even more clear: *Yes, that is of course a feminist problem, I mean that specifically concerns the representation of women. Yet at the same time there is also a lot of women that also maintain that situation, that's why I think it is very difficult, some women do feel comfortable with it and others don't, I'm*

actually against things that become radical, also when feminism for instance becomes radical. When it wouldn't be ok anymore to become a housewife. It should just really be people's own choice, when they feel comfortable, even when that is a result of their education or something else that supposedly went wrong, or because they didn't have certain chances, that they want that. It is dependent of what people themselves choose that they feel comfortable with, even that might not seem to be feminist, or very feminist, to me it's actually all fine.

Thus this woman does see a problem in restrictive beauty images, yet she still thinks it is everyone's own choice. Even when people 'didn't have chances' suggesting that there is indeed a structural factor, they should just choose individually. Making a statement that goes beyond the individual choice and thus recalls others to behave differently is seen as radical and therefore it is not ok. Thus change can only take place at an individual level and social change will therefore not occur, the structural unequal fact that people get different chances is presented as an individual problem people should personally resolve by making the right choices. This individual feminism in, contrast to a socially inspired feminism has no other real potential then to reinforce the status quo.

That dominant discourse is a factor ever reinforcing itself becomes clear when I ask in one of the interviews whether the women deliberately resist against certain trends or fashions. One of the respondents answers: *yeah absolutely: when I do not feel comfortable with something, short skirts you saw a lot last summer, bare bellies that's really not for me.* And the three women agree about not going along in the fashion of certain kinds of shoes. Another one says she doesn't like something anymore when it becomes wide-spread fashion. Thus for these women resistance can take place through individual consumption choices.

I have to point out that the way this question was formulated, referring explicitly to trends or fashion, and the timing in the conversation makes the answers more logic. Also later on in the interview one of the women makes the point that the commercial industry tries to give you the idea that you can construct your own individual identity through consumption. But still I think these answers contain a point worth mentioning, in contemporary culture it can actually be experienced as an act of resistance to not choose to consume something that is fashion.

What is also of interest then is that the same woman who talks about the short skirts, gave herself the challenge to not buy any clothes for a year. Yet she motivates this mostly through the personal goal of saving money and proving to herself and others she can do it. Becoming more aware of other possibilities is of minor importance to her.

4. Neoliberalism, the unbeatable

Until now I've emphasized how dominant discourses of neo-liberalism and postfeminism torpedo our feelings, thoughts and resistance. Yet dominant discourse functions in another important way: It presents itself as the only possibility, as natural, as strong, in short as untouchable.

On my question whether they see beauty-images as a social-political problem one of the respondents answers: *Yes, but that makes it exactly something that's not easy to*

change. Think of some parts in Afrika where fat is seen as beautiful, or the phenomenon that people in Asia want to be white while we want to be tanned. You can try to adjust it but it is something that is very much established. Another woman replies: Yes when you really want to change something you need years, you know it is bothering and I see it as a problem somehow, and there is also a discussion possible, yet there is also the realization that it's just there, and there is not much you can do about it. You could become mad about it and you could resist, but to me most important is that you can start a discussion, that you can express your opinion and that you can try to do something against it yourself.

The women experience these structural problems as something that they themselves cannot do so much against. It is this big strong system that is inside ourselves and others and that is hard to beat by us small individuals.

In other words the discourse is so strong that people have the feeling they cannot do anything against it. Especially when it concerns neo-liberalism. What is interesting is that several respondents themselves connect neo-liberalism with the construction of the female body, yet in the same time this makes it a problem that becomes too big to feel able to resist it: *It doesn't change, the discussion has been there for a long time, also think about the dove-women, they use all sorts and sizes of women, but still it hasn't changed, the sizes stay.* And another one: *I think the real problem is that we have a commercial market that determines everything and that is the most important and they don't care about this kind of stuff, they think it is subordinate, if they don't want it, nothing is going to change, they are one of the biggest influences. I mean then there is parents and education but that is so relatively small when you're influenced all day by the media.* And when another woman says she thinks economical inequalities are the biggest political problems of the moment the same woman replies: But if you connect that to it, then you're immediately sure it is never going to end, because there will always be power differences. Actually this woman did recognise the problem, yet she thinks it is not productive to concentrate against it, because it is something natural: it is never going to change. Actually only one of the women doesn't feel defeated by this giant beast of neo-liberalism, she says: *For me, the idea that the ultimate goal feels maybe infeasible will never be a reason to give up.* For the others the feeling of infeasibility makes any resistance pointless even before it started.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the real-life experiences of these women make firstly that dominant discourse nests itself deep inside of us and that simultaneously we are its own (re-) producers. All of the women recognised the problem of contemporary crushingly tight beauty images, yet it's not easy to resist against them. The relationship between our own experienced subjectivity and outward structures intruding us creates complex lived realities. Yet to make due of our own feelings often we make use of the discourses available to us. I've emphasised how neoliberal discourses of emancipation, self-responsibility, individualism, free choice and autonomy are deployed in our attempts to explain and justify the often complex relations to our body and that of others. It becomes clear that these discourses function to remain the status quo of dominant ideology through de-problematizing and depoliticising

social problems. Importantly the dominant discourse is also experienced as untouchable. The individualistic narrative helps to strengthen this idea: It tries to convince us that we as individuals cannot make real change. Yet from the interviews it becomes also clear that the construction of ones body is strongly linked to ones social surroundings, the women say they would feel less compelled to involve themselves in beauty practices when others would also pay less attention. Yet, their individualist and pragmatic approach often makes them fail to see the social implications and possibilities of their own behaviour. There were several occasions in the interviews that indicate that their behaviours can have a social impact, for instance one of the other woman says she is also more aware of her consumption behaviour because of the no-consume challenge of her friend. Thus there is a double entanglement: the individualist discourse on the one hand functions to give people the feeling that they cannot change anything and in the same time it reduces all problems to the individual instead of the social.

9. Conclusion

Being a female in the contemporary world it is hard to ignore the pressures of constructing an acceptable, -or better- perfect, body. Yet it seems that most women do not experience this pressure as restraining nowadays. Unlike the feminist fury of the second wave concerning this subject, the ever more crushing beauty-images are now celebrated by women themselves. This thesis aimed to gain some insight in the discourses that are deployed in this contemporary narrow construction of the female body. It became clear that there is a profound relationship between the dominant discourses of neoliberalism and popular postfeminism.

The construction of the female body acquires meaning through neo-liberal narratives. All successes in life become coupled to the successful construction of the body: to gain control over ones body is to gain control over ones life. The body became the display of femininity. Meanwhile the construction of beauty becomes ever more narrowly defined, and the accompanying beauty practices a woman is expected to involve herself in, more extensive. This body is nowadays not only defined by physical space, rather it is also largely determined in virtual space. In this space we see a sheer over-exposure of certain kinds of bodies: bodies that are altered, smoothed and perfected through the technical possibilities of virtuality, the bodies of the rich and famous, who made it their profession to meet the beauty ideal and have all the means to do so. This digital space is largely determined by market-forces, who have a great interest to sustain a narrow definition of femininity through consumption. This way a very narrow and restrictive construction of femininity is established in which women have to spend a considerable amount of their finances, time and energy in the appearance of their bodies.

Yet, instead of taking up a feminist critique against this restrictive definition of femininity and its implications on power hierarchies' contemporary women spend this energy on their bodies with love. The emancipation story is deployed to convince ourselves that we deserve it, involving ourselves in these beauty practices is presented as pampering ourselves, as something women naturally like doing, it is our own choice. The contemporary emancipated woman is constructed as a freely choosing, rational, calculating, self-regulating, autonomous subject. This subject is hold fully accountable for her own life-bibliography, no structural social constraints are recognised: It is all up to you. Because no structural constraints are recognised no social criticism is possible, all becomes individual responsibility. This way feminism becomes reframed to a discourse of individualism that is complicit rather than critical to powers of inequality. Postfeminism makes it appear as if the ideas of feminism have been realised: equal opportunities are now available, this way it gives the idea that change has occurred, while in fact it maintains gender inequalities. Thus the discourse of postfeminism functions simultaneously to normalise and justify contemporary beauty practices through ideas of free choice, pampering the self and natural femininity, and to depoliticise all possible critique: it's all free choice of emancipated agents, there is no structural constraints, it is all up to the individual.

Where movement feminism was concerned with social inequalities, meanings, differences and identities and placed these in structural social deficiencies of the system, postfeminism functions to maintain the status quo of unequal power relations and to discourage any questions or politicizing. Where it claims a concern for the position of woman this is done in an otherwise unaltered order, this way postfeminism strips the feminist discourse of all radical social potential.

The individual approach to feminism that postfeminism takes, in fact functions to maintain and reinforce unequal relations of patriarchy. Postfeminism is rather complicit with forces of neoliberalism than concerned with social inequalities. The analysis also shows that resistance to these constructions is made hard by the tendency of dominant discourse to incorporate resistant ideas, such as feminism, and its property to feel as natural, the only way and untouchable. The crux of dominant discourse, as becomes also clear from the interviews is that it gets insight of us, and fighting something inside you is more difficult than resisting outside forces.

Thus in conclusion, by deconstructing the discourses that play a role in the restrictive construction of female bodies and femininity, this thesis aims to give us handles to better understand the construction of our own bodies and its relation to neoliberal ideology, because when we understand the origin of our feelings it will strengthen us to resist them. It wants to break with the paralyzing discourse of individuality and make us feel that we do matter, our bodies are relational and our actions therefore do matter!

Dreams

In this thesis I didn't aim for objectivity, the contrary, my aim is for change. Objectivity, "the view from nowhere" in the words of Donna Haraway (Yuval-Davis, 2009, p. 3) is to me a panacea that will reinforce rather than change dominant powers in the world. This thesis implicitly draws on anarchist ideology aiming for equality in all spheres of life, and to reclaim power over our own lives in a context of social responsibility. Therefore it doesn't call for –nor shows much interest- in governance intervention to strengthen the position of women. I'm all too aware that this kind of interventions will in most cases not be in the interest of the people but of the powers of capital. Instead this thesis aims for a critical thinking of the way in which we create our bodies and identities and therewith to strengthen ourselves to free us from the constraining power of capital and patriarchy, to make space for our own feelings of beauty and femininity, to break through the conditionings that make us feel these constraints are normal and natural and finally, to de-normalize the constraints of beauty. To open our eyes and define beauty ourselves and to spend our time and energy in revolt, instead of standing before the mirror.

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Appendix 1. Interview questionnaire.

Interview

- Wat doe jij allemaal voor je uiterlijk? (dat kan alles zijn, van make-up tot eten, de sportschool, mode, schoonheidssalons) en welke vind je heel belangrijk?
- Waarom doe je dat?
- Hoe zou je je voelen als je dit niet deed?
- Hoe denk je dat anderen zouden reageren?
- Wat vind jij ervan als anderen dit niet doen?
- Zijn er dingen die je doet waar je eigenlijk moeite mee hebt?

- Wat is echt vrouwelijk? En echt mannelijk?
- Heeft vrouwelijkheid te maken met je uiterlijk?
- Nu is er altijd een bepaald mode-beeld, en een idee van wat mooi of toch minstens normaal is, wie bepaald dat beeld eigenlijk?
- Wie bepaald het voor jou? Laat je je beïnvloeden?
- doe je hier aan mee of verzet je je er ook tegen? En hoe dan?

- Hoe belangrijk denk je dat jou uiterlijk is bij je succes op andere vlakken van het leven?
- Vind je dat een probleem?
- Is dit voor mannen en vrouwen hetzelfde?

- Hebben we eigenlijk wel een keuze?
- en is die keuze voor iedereen gelijk?
- Zijn er geen consequenties voor anderen aan die keuzen? (bevestigen van een bepaald schoonheidsideaal, maar denk ook aan mensen die in sweatshops werken om onze mode te maken)

- Wat vind je van feminisme?
- Willen jullie een omschrijving geven van wat feminisme volgens jullie is?
- Als je denkt dat feminisme een belang kan hebben, wat zou dat dan zijn? Hoe zou het moeten worden ingevuld?
- Vanuit het feminisme is er altijd veel kritiek geweest op schoonheidsidealen en de seksualisering van vrouwen. Hoe denk je daarover?

- Hoe komt het dat er nog steeds ongelijkheid bestaat tussen mannen en vrouwen, of is dat helemaal niet waar?
- Hoe denk je dat vrouwen zich kunnen emanciperen? Wanneer voel jij je empowered?

- Wat vinden jullie de belangrijkste politieke problemen van het moment?

- Je ziet dat vrouwen op het moment hun seksualiteit terugclaimen: meisjes verkleden zich als playboy-bunnies, zakenvrouwen zien er verleidelijk uit

op hoge hakken, miley cyrus maakt een naakte videoclip, het is natuurlijk goed wanneer vrouwen hun seksualiteit opeisen maar is het niet zo dat vrouwen op dit moment een object van zichzelf maken?

- Hebben jullie de videoclip wreckball van miley cyrus of work bitch van britney spears gezien? Wat vind je daarvan? Wat vind je van alle kritiek daarop?
- En het liedje blurred lines, met de bijbehorende videoclip?

Appendix 2. Interview 1, transcription.

Transcriptie interview. 2013, nov. 26 Utrecht

Part1. : 24, sociologie, sociale wetenschappen, werkstage, werkzoekende,

Part2. 24, sociologie, sociale wetenschappen, werkt als HR-assistent

Part3. 24, studeert master orthopedagogiek, laatste jaar.

Doen: part1: sporten, (mooi en gezond), kleding, make-up, voeding,

Part2: sporten (vooral conditie, energie, niet heel erg figuur, niet zo'n moeite mee), standaard make-up elke dag, kapper, mooie kleren kopen, wat voor veel meisjes wel een beetje basis is, maar qua make-up ook niet heel veel, gewoon een beetje mascara

Part 1: o ja nog iets, naar de tandarts gaan en een beugel hebben gehad, ...ik zou het erg vinden, of ja erg, het zou me irriteren als mijn tanden niet mooi waren.

Part.2 gewoon wel dat je er verzorgt uit ziet.

Part. 3 ja als je de mogelijkheid hebt denk ik, want het is wel duur, ik sport ook, ik heb wel wat meer zoiets van als ik eenmaal begin dan vindt ik het wel belangrijk hoe ik eruit zie en dat ik gewoon resultaat zie, maar ook gezondheid, lekker voelen, energie kwijt, ook make-up, voorheen schoonheidsspecialist, fijn en belangrijk, nu financieel niet echt mogelijk, in de toekomst denk ik wel, ook ontspannend. Kapper

Part3 Koopt een jaar geen kleren: vooral financieel, denkt er nu wel meer over na. Ik denk nu niet: goh ik zie er niet leuk uit. Andere redenen? Financieel, familie zei gat in je hand: bewijzen, maar ook bewuster, bewust kijken wat het oplevert, maar ook hoe je dingen anders kan doen. Meer waarde hechten eraan. Als ik nu iets mag kopen, wordt ik daar behoorlijk blij van.

Maar hecht je er niet minder waarde aan?

Part3 Je bent gewoon bewuster bezig, geen impulsaankopen, ruilen, iemand anders gelukkig maken, tweede leven

Part2 wordt wel beïnvloed. Je maakt mensen enigszins bewust.

Als er iets is aan je uiterlijk dat je heel belangrijk vindt waarom dan, en hoe zou je je voelen als dat anders was?

Part2: tanden heel belangrijk, ook omdat ongeluk gehad, daarvoor was ik altijd trots op mijn tanden, nu is het weer op orde en voelt natuurlijk, veel geld neerleggen voor verzorgd gebit, bepalend in gezicht.

Part3 ook dingen in het gezicht: daar kijkt iedereen het meest naar, ik kan me een beetje zorgen maken over een klein plekje of pukkel, stel je zou iets in je gezicht hebben dat anders is, dat zou ik niet zo leuk vinden.

Dus het gaat om mensen die je tegenkomt; niet om jezelf of alleen intimiteit?

Part2: ook solliciteren

Part1: alleen grote afwijkingen, maar inderdaad solliciteren, verzorgd uitzien, betere huid bijvoorbeeld, maar minder gefocust, tegenwoordig, vroeger wel.

Part3 je wordt ook zekerder van jezelf, je komt op een leeftijd dat alles gewoon wat stabiel is en je weet wat je aan jezelf hebt en aan anderen

Part1 je hebt al een bepaalde vorm van bevestiging waar je toch naar op zoek bent in je pubertijd, misschien komt dat gedeeltelijk ook wel als je toch ook een vriend hebt ofzo

Part2 denk ik ook

Part1 als ik nu aandacht besteed aan mijn uiterlijk doe ik dat als een extraatje omdat ik het leuk vindt, niet omdat als ik het niet doe ik me dan heel erg onzeker voel, terwijl een aantal jaren geleden was het wel eerder een soort van noodzaak, anders denk je dat mensen kijken ofzo.

Part1 hoewel, ik vind figuur wel nog steeds heel belangrijk, ja niet dat ik zelf dun ben maar meer omdat ik vroeger wel dikker was en ik wel weet dat dat niet leuk was en ik nu niet wil afwijken van die norm.

Wat was er niet leuk aan?

Daardoor juist minder aandacht kreeg tussen haakjes, het was nog ver voor de pubertijd, niet dat je gepest werd maar ook dat je onzeker was omdat je het zelf niet mooi vind. Maar ik weet ook wel dat het nu eenmaal het beeld is, stereotype, maar daarom zou ik het nu toch erg vinden.

Zijn er dingen die je storend vindt bij anderen?

Part2: meer met ongezond leven dan uiterlijke verzorging

Part3: niet echt storen, maar okselhaar vind ik apart, dan denk ik niet, goh wat leuk, maar iedereen moet zelf weten wat ze willen maar ik vind het ergens wel onverzorgd.

Part2: ik bedoel eten, of roken, tis toch je lichaam

Part1: dom en onverantwoord niet goed voor je medemens en de maatschappij

Part2 ja oksels scheren is misschien voor andere mensen niet zo fijn om naar te kijken, maar

Roken..

Maar vind je oksels niet scheren een last voor andere mensen? Nee echt eigen keuze.

Part1 Ik denk dat ik me niet echt stoort aan uiterlijk, ja behalve, hoe heet dat programma? Hotter than my daughter, o ja tuurlijk, maar dat is meer het stereotype, maar kennelijk heb je toch wel een bepaald plaatje in je hoofd. Oude, niet slanke ordinaire vrouwen, zijn natuurlijk uitzonderingen.

Part2: Uiterlijk is echt je eigen keuze,

Part3: ja dat vind ik ook, maar er zijn wel momenten dat je even smoest over iemands uiterlijk

Part1 Je hebt wel een mening, ook al wil je dat niet en er is ook een verschil tussen dingen waar je je best voor kan doen en dingen waar je niets aan kan doen.

Maar waar jullie zelf onzeker over zijn is dus ook waarover je bij anderen gaat smoezen dus?

Ja eigenlijk wel, helaas wel.

Doen jullie wel eens dingen waar je moeite mee hebt

Part2 en 3: Sporten (maximus), maar wel een fijn gevoel

Part 3, niet meer, vroeger wel de zonnebank, heeft toch geen nut, ben wel jaloers op mensen die mooi bruin worden, nu doe ik het niet meer.

En make-up?

Part. 3 Nee helemaal niet vervelend

Part 1 best wel vaak

Maar doe je het wel?

Ja make-up bijna altijd, de rest eigenlijk altijd. Stom voorbeeld: oksels scheren, is typisch vooropgelegd en ik doe een zwemsport, ik moet daar veel te vaak over nadenken en het is een irritante bezigheid in tegenstelling tot make-up en het kost nog geld ook, het is eigenlijk ook heel raar, maar iedereen doet het en met zwemmen, je wil gewoon niet afwijken

Maar het maakt dus uit of iets leuk is om te doen?

Ja

Maar uiteindelijk kost het allemaal tijd...

Part1 Ja maar je ziet een mooi resultaat, net als met koken, het is een soort beloning, het loont zich wel.

Part2 Maar in de winter scheer ik mijn benen niet, maar ik zwem niet.

Part1 Ja eigenlijk is het raar dat ik dat doe voor die paar mensen die je ook juist al best wel goed kennen.

Hebben jullie een idee van wat jullie echt vrouwelijk vinden en echt mannelijk?

Wat vind je belangrijk

Part2: ik vind beyonce echt helemaal vrouwelijk, helemaal op uiterlijk, nee ook als persoon, dat ze helemaal haar eigen ding doet, dat ze meer verdient dan haar man, dat vind ik sowieso vet maar gewoon dat zij echt zichzelf –nou ja ze heeft natuurlijk wel een heleboel hulp gehad- maar dat ze zich gemaakt heeft en echt kracht uitstraalt als vrouw en ze heeft niet dat stereotype dat ze superslank is, maar ja ze is wel superstrak

Part 1; ik zou aan de vormen denken, ronde vormen

Maar wat jij omschrijft is juist wat heel lang niet als vrouwelijk is geassocieerd

Part2: ik vind dat stoer

Part 3: vrouwelijkheid: ik zie niet echt snel lichamen voor me, wel echt iets zorgends, zorgen voor anderen ,zacht, beyonce laat wel zich zelf zien en haar emoties, maar ze is ook wel een powervrouw.

Part2 : misschien meer wat ik mooi vind in vrouwen, maar wat jij zegt is inderdaad dat vrouwen vaak als de zwakkere zijn voorgesteld, maar dat komt niet bij me op, maar ja ook niet bij mannen, ik denk misschien vooral aan de positieve eigenschappen denk ik.

Vinden jullie dat er per se mannelijke of vrouwelijke eigenschappen zijn?

Nee maar je associeert het wel ...

Part2: ik denk het niet, eigenschappen zijn heel erg opvoeding, wel karaktertrekken

Part1: ik denk dat mannen wel agressiever zijn

Part 2 kan ook opvoeding zijn

Part1 ik denk ook wel dat het opvoeding afhankelijk is, maar ik denk toch dat mannen het meer in zich hebben en dat het wel of niet wordt gestimuleerd en ook dat er uitzonderingen zijn, dat er toch relatief ...

Part3: iets fysieker: ik kom op het woord sterk als ik aan mannen denk

Part1: ja maar ook bij vrouwen, mentale sterkte Fysieke sterkte is haast een gegeven.

Maar vrouwelijkheid wordt dus niet alleen maar bepaald door je uiterlijk?

Nee!

Part1 Maar tis wel lastig te zeggen: ik denk ook aan bewijsdrang, misschien ook doordat je met ambitieuze mensen omgaat, juist veel willen bereiken, van alles tegelijk willen doen, nog harder werken om hetzelfde te bereiken of om meer te

bereiken. Tis wel positief, maar het komt wel voort uit iets negatiefs, dat je je moet bewijzen.

Part3 dus jij koppelt het aan bewijzen terwijl ik heel veel vrouwen om me heen zie die dingen doen waar ze juist heel gelukkig van worden

Part1 ja maar als ik hard werk en studie volg doe ik het ook om mezelf te verrijken en er zelf gelukkig van te worden, ik zou het niet anders willen, maar je merkt wel dat het toch grappig is om te vertellen dat je meer verdient dan je vriend, omdat dat vroeger niet zo was, dus daarom komt er bewijsdrang in me op.

Part2 vooral moeite dat vrouwen vaak minder gaan werken in het geval van kinderen

Part3 Maar wordt daar wel altijd van uitgegaan? Mijn zus heeft daar echt heel erg zelf voor gekozen, die is daar heel blij mee

(30:35)

Part1 ik kan me dat instinct voorstellen, dat je daar aan toe geeft

Waarom is veel werken belangrijk?

Part1 Nou omdat je daar gelukkig van wordt, maar dan kom ik wel een beetje terug op het idee om waardevol te zijn, om meer te kunnen dan alleen moeder zijn, bewijsdrang, juist afzetten tegen het morale beeld

Maar je wordt gelukkig van meer zijn dan alleen een moeder?

Part1 ja maar misschien wordt je nog wel gelukkiger van moeder zijn,

Ik kan me voorstellen, dat leuke dingen doen leuker is dat

Part1 Misschien verschuift waar je gelukkig van wordt... hebben vrouwen een zorgen?

Modebeeld, idee van wat mooi is, wat normaal is, wie bepaald dat beeld en voor jullie, laat je je beïnvloeden of bepaal je zelf wat mooi is?

Part3: veel onbewust beïnvloed, heel veel media, mode-industrie

Part1 ik kan niet zeggen dat ik me niet laat beïnvloeden, maar ik kies wel mijn eigen kleuren of modellen, het moet bij je passen

Part2 toen je jonger was ging je wel meer mee met de mode. Maar nu weet je wat je goed staat, wat je stijl is, als het modebeeld aansluit ga je daarin mee maar als het niet bij je past sla je het over. We weten beter wat we aankunnen

Part1; wat gek is, dat wat wordt gepromoot, dat je vooral jezelf moet zijn en dat je je eigen look kan creëren maar juist daardoor volg je een modebeeld:

uiteindelijk heeft nog iedereen hetzelfde aan. Er is bedacht dat het heel cool is maar jij denkt met je gelukkige ik dat je je eigen stijl creëert

Part3 ja heb je wel gelijk in dat alles mag, alles kan, je eigen stijl

Maar uiteindelijk...

Verzet je je wel eens bewust tegen een bepaalde trend:

Resp3 Ja absoluut! Als ik me er niet prettig bij voel, niets voor mij, korte truitjes

Dus je maakt eigen keuze

Part1: als het te hip wordt is het ook niet meer leuk, als het te hip is wil het niet meer.

Dus je creert een individuele...

Ja

Facebook....

Wordt je lichaamsbeeld ook bepaald via facebook? Wordt je vrienden?

Part2: bewust bezig met wat ik like, ik heb veel kledingmerken, dingen waar ik ook echt met regelmaat iets koop. Ik heb ook best veel lingeriemerken die ik nog lang niet kan betalen, maar als ooit de dag komt... maar mijn beeld? Ik vind iets al langere tijd leuk en dan like ik het

Part3 Merken, vooral winkels waar je regelmatig koopt... Veel emails verwijderd, ik mag nu toch niets kopen

Part2 Wat er nieuwe is, maar ook aanbiedingen,

Part3 Pagina's inspiratie, misschien ook omdat ik geen kleren koop, armbandjes, zelf maken, Haar, kapsels en nagellak ideetjes

Hoe belangrijk is je uiterlijk bij succes

Is onderzoek naar gedaan, verzorging is belangrijk bijvoorbeeld solliciteren, knappere vrouwen hebben eerder een succesvolle baan, populariteit, succes vriendschappen, betrouwbaarheid. Belangrijk voor diensten dus..

Het kan misschien ook tegenwerken, stereotype, de typische verkoper, een glad mannetje in een pak: vooral zichzelf belangrijk,

Part 1 Misschien wordt je wel minder snel serieus genomen als je knap bent,

Part3 paar keer jongens die niet met een bepaald standaard knap meisje hoefden te praten, zou toch wel niets te melden hebben.

Part1 wordt nog erger wanneer je ouder wordt: ze gaan meer op zoek naar karakter en het vooroordeel is dat knappe vrouwen minder te melden hebben, het kan ook tegen je werken.

Part3 hangt af van je beroep, bij mij op stage maakt het echt niet uit, wel verzorgd, maar geen knappe mensen, in de horeca is het denk ik belangrijker.

Part3 Sommige vacatures: wordt representatief genoeg, dan bedoelen ze toch gewoon er goed uitzien? Als jij een promotiemedewerker wil worden op straat, maar goed dan ben je dus succesvol in die baan er blijft nog wel wat over natuurlijk, het is alleen wel opvallend dat het letterlijk wordt gevraagd, blijkbaar werkt het.

Feminisme:

Part2: abonnement opzij, america gestudeerd, all girls college, ik dacht dat is vast **conservatief maar was de meest liberale plek waar ik ooit geweest ben en dus iedereen was daar best wel feministisch**, dat heb ik er wel een beetje aan over gehouden. Voor mij is het dat je gelijkheid wil, ik heb ook veel feministische pagina's op facebook, daar komen wel stellingen voorbij. Ik vind niet dat vrouwen meer rechten moeten hebben.

Part1 gelijkwaardigheid; dat je niet benadeeld wordt omdat je vrouw bent, dat je in vrijheid kan putten uit je talenten en mogelijkheden en dat je niet wordt belemmert door dingen die vooraf zijn bepaald door een bepaald genderidee.

Part3: eigenlijk heb ik er nooit over nagedacht, maar wel gelijke kansen, dat je als vrouw kan doen wat je wil, dat je genoeg mogelijkheden hebt en dat je niet beperkt wordt, dus eigenlijk hetzelfde

Part1&2: ja

Part1: het is nu wel minder aanwezig, is het gevaar misschien, vroeger was het noodzakelijk, nu hebben we de grootste dingen wel gehaald, maar er is nog zoveel waar nog heel veel aan kan worden gewerkt, en daarin sta ik dus positief tegenover het feminisme, bijvoorbeeld salarisverschillen

part2: ja dat is het grote bewijs.

Welk grote doel hebben we gehaald?

Part1 Baas in eigen buik. Ik had er niet 1 voor ogen, bijv ook meer emancipatie op de arbeidsmarkt, kiesrecht.

Maar jij zegt niet beperkt worden, maar er is altijd veel kritiek geweest op schoonheidsidealen, sexualisering, objectificering.

Part3: ik denk dat je daar gewoon mee dealt, dat je er niet heel erg bewust verder over nadenkt. Dat je bepaalde dingen gewoon niet doet.

Part 1 ik kan me daar wel druk over maken.

Part2: ik werk in een mannenbedrijf, ik merk het bij kleine dingen: waarom regelen de vrouwen het sinterklaasfeest, of koffie zetten...

Mijn leidinggevende krijgt ook vaak de kleinere taakjes,

Part3. Waarschijnlijk zeggen wij als vrouwen dan ook nog eens niet heel snel nee omdat we ons willen bewijzen

Part2, zij doet dat nu juist wel, tis gewoon onzin, ik heb het er wel eens met haar over. Bij gesprekken wordt gevraagd of er nog iemand bijkomt, terwijl zij is gewoon een volle gesprekspartner

Part3 ligt dat niet aan dat ze jong is

Part2 jawel maar ze is manager,.. ze merkt het best wel erg, traditionele vrouwen taken worden op haar afgeschoven

Part3 het is dus vooral de taken, ik zou me wel stoer voelen dat ze denken dat er iemand bij komt terwijl ik het juist wel ben.

Part1 je ziet het toch ook in de verdeling van beroepen

Part2 ik moet ook wel **zeggen ik ben wel heel feministisch** maar af en toe hou ik ook wel van het traditionele zoals dat mannen de technische klusjes doen.

Part3: ja

Part1: tis ook niet erg als de 2 seksen hun eigen ding hebben, prima als vrouwen heel veel praten, ik vind dat niet erg.

Part2 nee maar een vrouw moet ook een beroep kunnen doen.

Part3 ja maar gebeurt dat?

Ja kennelijk wordt je niet serieus genomen wanneer je iets anders doet dan dat er wordt verwacht..

Part2 ja HR manager is wel een redelijk vrouwenberoep. Het is best wel een vrouwenwereld, maar de managers in technische bedrijven zijn dan vaak weer mannen.

Part1: vooral het beeld dat jij het niet kan

Part3 : technisch: ik denk dat mannen er juist ook heel veel respect voor hebben

Part1: ja maar juist omdat ze denken dat je het niet zou kunnen.

Part2: bij ons is laatst een functie gecreëerd om er een technische vrouw bij te hebben, komt misschien ook wel omdat de manager een vrouw is, laatst ook een tijdschrift voor vrouwen in de technische sector en er zijn conferenties en ze proberen meisjes aan te trekken. Maar het is een sector waar echt nog wel ongelijkheid is en seksisme

Terug naar schoonheidsidealen, verwachtingen mannen vrouwen, paaldansen, miley cyrus, terugclaimen seksualiteit, maar maken we geen objecten van onszelf.

Part1: dat je het uitlokt?

Nou ze doet precies hetzelfde wat je vroeger seksisme noemde. Hebben jullie het idee dat er vooruitgang is op dat gebied.

Part2 robin thicke, veel over te doen.

Part1 als het gaat om vrijheid dat je daardoor je eigen seksualiteit kan laten zien zou je kunnen zeggen dat dat feministisch is, maar dat is net zoals met het taboe op seksualiteit, er wordt meer nadruk gelegd op de eigen wil van de vrouw in de seksualiteit en dat zijn eigenlijk wel verschillende dingen die andere mensen toch met elkaar associëren en misschien als seksisme, maar ik zou het juist ook zien als vrijheid nastreven.

Part2: beetje dubbel, als het je eigen keus is en jij hebt er geen moeite mee dan is het inderdaad misschien wel vrijheid, en ook wel feministisch als in je bent trots op dat je zoiets doet, je schaamt je er niet voor. Maar vanbuitenaf hebben mensen misschien toch nog het beeld van je dat je dom bent, net als wat we net zeiden over als je knap bent, dat mensen denken, je loopt zo rond in die clip maar je zal verder wel niet zoveel kunnen

Part1 ik zie het meer als een soort waardering van jezelf: je durft alles te laten zien en je hoeft je nergens voor te schamen

Part3. Je kan daar ook wel een beetje in doorslaan denk ik. Ik weet niet of dat zo goed is. Ik denk vooral aan die 13jarige meisjes die zoiets zien, ik denk niet dat ik erdoor beïnvloed wordt, maar ik denk dat jongere meiden wel.

Par1 maar misschien doen ze het zelf wel, omdat ze zichzelf waarderen en zichzelf willen laten zien (misschien ook op andere gronden he) en vinden ze het feministisch omdat ze zelf vinden dat ze het kunnen doen en dat het niet uitmaakt of ze man of vrouw zijn, maar heeft het juist een omgekeerd effect op 13jarige omdat zij het associëren met seksisme, dus dat de beweegreden van de mensen die het doen wel anders is.

Part2 ja dat is wat ik bedoelde dat het zelf wel goedbedoeld kan zijn maar dat het door de buitenwereld als seksisme gezien wordt, en dat is misschien ook wel een beetje het voorbeeld van miley cyrus. Zij vind zichzelf hartstikke feministisch maar de rest van de wereld misschien niet.

Part 1 wat je zelf denkt correspondeert niet altijd met het beeld dat er in de rest van de maatschappij bestaat, daar is het seksistische beeld denk ik nog steeds wel enigszins dominant, en dan kan je die conclusie snel trekken als individueel burger die zich er niet altijd in verdiept, jij weet niet waarom iemand dat doet, tenzij je je erin gaat verdiepen, maar het eerste wat je ziet is een inderdaad een

naakte vrouw of inderdaad een seksistische ... dan denk ik ook wel meteen aan seksisme. Dan in o wat een feminist.

Maar die keuze is cultureel bepaald toch? Robin thicke feministisch?

Part2 Clip lili allen, feministisch lied, maar wel twerkende vrouwen, ook een parodie op de clip van robin thicke, daar zijn ook discussies over, sommige mensen vinden het juist wel een statement anderen vinden het niets.

Part1 hoe beargumenteert die robin thicke dat dan?

Omdat het vrouwen waardeert, seksualiteit kunnen uitten, alle vrouwen zijn mooi.

Part 2 ja zo kan je alles wel feministisch noemen

Part3 het gaat er volgens mij alleen maar om dat mensen over de clip praten en over de artiest, het gaat alleen maar om image.

Part1 ik denk niet dat dat feministisch is maar het kan feministisch zijn als je zelf zo iemand bent en ik kan me voorstellen dat je dat gaat doen als artiest zijnde uit feministische overwegingen en dan dus het gevoel van vrijheid en waardering over jezelf. Maar ik weet niet of dat heel veel gebeurt.

Lily allen? Feministisch liedje waar gaat het over

Part2 ik vind het een heel leuk liedje, als ik het goed zeg gaat het over het beeld van vrouwen in de media, haar statement is eigenlijk gewoon dat het nergens op slaat, het is eigenlijk een kritiek op hoe vrouwen in de media en in videoclips worden neergezet en het begint er ook mee dat ze zelf op een operatietafel ligt en ze liposuctie op haar aan het doen zijn, en dan hebben ze het erover dat zij, hoe ze het zover heeft laten komen en dan zegt zij, ja maar ik heb 2 kinderen gehad. Het is kritiek op hoe vrouwen worden neergezet en dat als je er als vrouw niet goed uitziet dan moet je maar zorgen dat je kan koken, want anders wordt je niets, daar gaat het over. En de helft van het liedje staat ze dus tussen dansende vrouwen.. nu ja ik vind het een leuk liedje

Part1 ze heeft wel meer feministische liedjes

Part2 ja nooit echt over nagedacht,

Part1 ze heeft toch ook dat liedje dat ... heet, dat is heeft eigenlijk ook wel een feministische inslag, of ja feministisch het gaat eigenlijk over haar rechten in een seksuele situatie

Part2 in bed

Part1 ja

Part2 ja ze zingt ook dat je haar niet in de keuken zult vinden maar in de studio

Part1 ja maar soms heb ik daar ook wel irritatiegevoelens bij, waarom zou je perse niet in de keuken willen staan, is maar een klein voorbeeld maar je hoeft daar niet in door te slaan. Maar die basisrechten en beelden daar mag wel wat aan gebeuren.

Part2 traditionele aannames in de samenleving

Part1 ja er moet vooral discussie over blijven, dat je erover in discussie kan.

Maar uiteindelijk wordt er wel een heel erg een onbereikbaar ideaalbeeld geschapen.

Part3 ja en dat verdwijnt nog steeds niet, die discussie is er denk ik al heel lang en denk ook aan die vrouwen van dove, dat ze alle soorten en maten vrouwen, maar hoe dan ook dat verandert niet, die maatjes die blijven.

Part1 ja in de haute culture, de modewereld, daar maken ze dat beeld en dan kan hunkemuller wel zeggen we doen even wat vollere modellen die dan nog steeds heel slank zijn, maar relatief vol.

Part3 ja rondingen hebben iig ,ja of denk aan hollands next top model, dat die meisjes met een super mooi slank lichaam wordt vertelt dat ze nog wel even af moeten vallen

Part2 ja of dat ze het seizoen beginnen met een iets voller meisje maar die valt dan toch na een paar afleveringen af omdat ze niet kan voldoen aan de eisen.

Part3 ja en niet vol hè, gewoon iets bredere heupen, dan de standardeis.

Part2 ja precies net 1 centimeter meer ofzo dan de standaard eis

Part1 ja maar ik vind het wel raar dat ze daar nog steeds zo veel aandacht aan besteden.

Maar bij dove ze hebben wel verschillende maten... maar maken uiteindelijk reclame voor shampoo omdat je haar er wel goed uit moet zien.

Part1 ja en verder zien ze er ook goed uit, vaak.

Part3 ja maar dat zijn denk ik uiteindelijk ook fototechnieken enzo

Part1 ja en misschien zijn sommige wat molliger maar ze zijn nog mooi mollig, egaal,

strak?

Part1 Ja

Part3: ja maar een vriendin van mij werkte bij marie clair, die photoshoppen er juist geen vet af maar erbij. Ja omdat mc het gewoon niet mooi vond dat ze te dun waren, maar niemand die dat ooit hoort.

Plastische chirurgie op basis van photoshop.

Part2 ja ook van die dingen over beroemde sterren met cellulitis, ja wat verwacht je dan, helemaal als ze net zwanger is geweest. Maar dan kunnen wij dat allemaal wel relativeren, maar er zijn ook nog 13jarige meisjes die denken dat iemand zo is.

Maar wij worden daar toch ook door beïnvloed?

Part2 Ja natuurlijk wordt je wel beïnvloed door het ideaal maar ik denk dat wij het wel meer kunnen relativeren en dat je denkt van oh, was ik maar, weet ik veel een paar kilo lichter ofzo maar we snappen wel bij zo'n cellulites foto dat het niet realistisch is dat zo'n beroemdheid nooit cellulites heeft.

Part1 ja bij meisjes heeft veel meer de psychische impact, dat het niet voor niets is dat je op die leeftijd bijvoorbeeld anorexia ontwikkelt ofzo, dat je daar gewoon psychisch veel meer vatbaar voor bent, iets minder realiteitszin.
[onverstaanbaar]

Maar ik zou zeggen dat jij slank bent, maar je zegt ik zou wel een paar kilo af willen vallen

Part2 ja maar ik doe daar geen moeite voor, nee het is weet je, je hebt natuurlijk wel dat schoonheidsideaal en je hoeft natuurlijk niet superslank te zijn, maar soms denk ik wel was het maar wat minder of was het maar wat strakker, maar vervolgens doe ik er niets aan hoor, als ik er echt mee zou zitten, was het al jaren geleden verandert, ik kan me daar wel over heen, nou ja weet niet, maar iedereen heeft toch wel eens dat je in de spiegel kijkt en dat je denkt oh mwea

Maar we hebben het over feminisme gehad en daarin kwam het eigenlijk helemaal niet naar voren maar ik zou zeggen dat het wel een politiek probleem is dat alle vrouwen het gevoel hebben dat ze er anders uit zouden moeten zien, dan dat ze doen.

Part2 ja of dat nu politiek is? Meer sociaal

Praten over politiek en beleid, maar weten het niet, wel stimuleren van vrouwen en werk.

Ik bedoel ook niet politiek als in de overheid ik bedoel meer sociaal-maatschappelijk probleem.

Part2 ja maar ik denk dat dat schoonheidsideaal ook wel voor mannen bestaat en je krijgt het niet weg, je kan het wel aanpassen, bijvoorbeeld wat ze al jaren proberen dat het net een maatje meer wordt bij vrouwen.

Part1 ja de norm kan je alleen langzaam verleggen.

Part2 ja precies het is niet iets dat je zomaar kan verwijderen maar het is ook wel iets, dat in iedere samenleving bestaat. Denk aan dat in sommige delen van afrika dik mooi wordt gevonden, of dat in azie mensen juist blank willen zijn terwijl wij juist bruin willen zijn, je kan het wel proberen aan te passen, maar het is iets dat ook heel erg gevestigd is.

Part1 ja als je dat echt wil veranderen dan moet je daar wel jaren voor uittrekken, weet je het is wel heel vervelend en ik zie het ook wel ergens als een soort van probleem en er is ook wel een discussie over mogelijk maar het is ook meer het besef dat je weet dat het er nu eenmaal is en dat je er niet heel veel mee kan ofzo, je kan je er wel boos over maken en je kan je er ook nog tegen verzetten maar ik vind het belangrijkste dat je erover in discussie kan gaan en dat je je mening kan geven en dat je wel zelf in ieder geval kan proberen er wat aan te doen ofzo.

Part2 ik denk wel dat ouders en scholen er iets mee zouden kunnen doen. Ouders hebben veel invloed. Bevestigen dat je mooi bent, dat het niet alleen maar om uiterlijk draait, trouwen ook tv-programma's

Part1 ja precies de media, want juist die hebben zoveel invloed dat je er echt compenserende dingen tegenaan moet gooien, of maar eigenlijk beter nog via de media, dat is ook al geprobeerd maar er is bijna niet tegenaan te [onverstaanbaar]

Part3 ja en ik denk dat er op scholen al wel heel veel gebeurt wel, ik weet het niet precies, maar er wordt veel gedaan over pesten en dat heeft ook wel met uiterlijk te maken, maar ik denk dat het in hele kleine stapjes moet. Ook wel opvoeding, maar ook wel dat je je zoons een bepaalde visie bijbrengt, dat je ze laat zien wat, dat mis ik nog een beetje, mannen mogen ook wel wat meer zeggen. Je hoort wel van mannen die zeggen, ja ik hou wel van rondingen en ik hoef niet zo heel slank, maar eigenlijk zie je alleen maar vrouwen en je hoort niet vaak wat mannen nu echt vinden, je leest het wel eens, maar..

Part1 ik zat ook nog te denken, als je het dus via de media doet er zijn altijd wel pogingen maar ik denk dat het echte probleem gewoon veel meer zit in dat er gewoon een commerciële markt is waar alles om draait en dat dat gewoon het allerbelangrijkste is en dat zij echt best wel ja schijt hebben eigenlijk aan dit soort dingen dat ze dat een ondergeschikt belang vinden en dat ja als ze niet willen, dat zijn commerciële partijen als zij niet willen dan gebeurt er gewoon niks, terwijl dat een van de allergrootste invloeden zijn natuurlijk, ja dan heb je alleen ouders en opvoeding dat een beetje tegengewicht kan geven, maar dat is maar zo relatief klein als je de hele dag beïnvloed wordt door media.

Part2 maar je bent toch meer blootgesteld aan je ouders en leraren

Part3 tegenwoordig toch niet meer: computers, telefoons

Part1 ik denk wel dat je door je opvoeding een kritischer mens kan worden en dan sta je natuurlijk automatisch kritischer tegenover dingen die je in de media ziet dus dan beperk je de invloed op een positieve manier. Maar daarom denk ik dat het nooit weggaat zolang we zo'n commerciële inslag hebben deze maatschappij.

Part1 Je kan het niet oplossen maar je er zo positief mogelijk in bewegen en het verminderen van de scherpe kantjes er maar uithalen wat je zelf [onverstaanbaar]

Part2 ja het is denk ik zoals jij zei ook wel heel erg op meisjes gericht is terwijl het ook wel helpt als het meer op jongens gericht is. Dat ook al probeer je meisjes te vertellen dat het niet uitmaakt hoe ze eruit zien en dat ze mooi zijn maar dat als er een stereotype mooi meisje voorbijloopt jongens nog steeds zeggen o mooi meisje en dat andere meisjes gewoon hoe zeg je dat niet aangekeken wordt zeg maar, je moet dan ook het beïnvloeden bij jongens dat ze niet alleen maar naar het standaard playboymeisje kijken.

Terwijl uit onderzoek juist blijkt dat vrouwen veel strenger zijn, dat het voor veel mannen veel minder belangrijk is.

Part1 ik vraag me ook wel af of dingen ook neurologisch verklaarbaar zijn, dat je bepaalde vormen van nature mooi vindt

Part3 volgens mij wel, net als dat je de sterkste man uitkoos,

Part2 ik denk wel dat dat afneemt, het zit er biologisch misschien nog wel een beetje inzit, maar het is niet meer zo dat het sterkste mannetje ook het best voor je zorgt.

Part1 maar voel je je niet veiliger als je beschermt wordt door een sterke man, onbewust?

Part3 ik wel hoor

Part1 ik ook, maar sterk hoeft ook niet per se fysiek te zijn, maar toch is dat wel wat je zoekt als vrouw.

Part1 ik denk dat dat toch ook wel een klein beetje biologisch bepaalt is

Part2 ja maar ik denk dat dat biologische wel afneemt. Dat het nu misschien meer gaat om de zekerheid gaat die een man kan bieden.

Maar is toch cultureel bepaald?

Part1 nee zijn ook verschillende achterliggende oorzaken, je kan ook niet zeggen dat iedereen dat vindt want anders dan kan je ook niet lesbisch zijn, niet elke vrouw is dus op zoek naar een beschermende man, en nog meer van dat...

Belangrijkste sociale politieke probleem.

(part1 al beantwoord: commercie)

part2 zelf met feminisme bezig, maar is wel relatief van belang gezien andere wereldwijde problemen, er hebben nog mensen honger, en recht op onderwijs.

Part1 tis toch een beetje een luxe probleem

Part2 nou ik vind feminisme geen luxeprobleem, ook in landen waar onderwijs niet standaard is zijn het nog vooral jongens die naar school gaan.

Part1 nee laat ik het zo zeggen ik vind het ook wel belangrijk, maar de steeds kleinere probleempjes waar je het dan over gaat hebben. Ik bedoel de basisprincipes die wil je die willen ze ook in afrika voor elkaar hebben maar je gaat steeds meer kijken, bijvoorbeeld, wie er zorgt voor de kinderen dat ze dat daar sneller accepteren maar dat komt misschien ook omdat wij welvarend zijn omdat het niet de eerste basisbehoefte is om gelukkig te worden uit werk of uit gelijkheid, het is wel lastig te zeggen het heeft ook te maken met onderdrukking misschien.

Part2 wat ik wel een belangrijk probleem vind is de 1% zeg maar de hoeveelheid macht en rijkdom die een die ene kleine groep mensen bezit, de verhouding tussen arm en rijk, de macht van grote bedrijven en de onmacht van heel veel andere mensen in de wereld.

Part1 maar als je dat erbij haalt dan weet je ook meteen dat het nooit over gaat omdat er altijd machtsverschillen blijven

Part2 ja er zullen altijd machtsverschillen blijven maar je weet gewoon dat sommige bedrijven bewust mensen domhouden, of achterstellen hoe zeg je dat?

Willen jullie nog iets toevoegen?

Appendix 3. Interview 2. Transcription.

Interview 2 december 1 2013

Part4. xxx, 25, sociologie bachelor Nijmegen, lerarenopleiding Engels, nu Antwerpen Engelse taal en letterkunde

Part5. xxx 23, kunstmatige intelligentie, eerst p geneeskunde.

Part5: make-up, foundation (slechte huid), de rest optioneel, beetje mascara, misschien beetje oogschaduw, wenkbrauwen eplieren anders zie ik er boos uit, benen en oksel ontharen. Let niet heel erg op eten, alleen als ik echt aankom, bijna nooit kapper, nagels lakken, dan voel ik me wel best vrouwelijk, leuk om te doen maar daarna houdt ik het nooit netjes

Part4, behoorlijk wat: altijd eye-liner, vaak lippenstift, haar verven, naar de kapper, ontharen doe ik niet echt aan, nergens want dat vind ik mooier, ik bijt nagels maar als ik mijn nagels lak doe ik dat niet, maar doe ik bijna nooit, ik let wel erg op eten ik snoep bijna niet dat is ook wel om in vorm te blijven ik wil graag een gezond lichaam, ik sport ook wel veel. Mascara eye-liner oogpotlood, wel echt elke dag altijd ik ga bijna niet de deur uit zonder.

Part. 5 gaat het ook over hygiëne? Zoals conditioner en tandverzorging komen er ook nog bij

Part4 ik heb ook wel een hele zoektocht gedaan naar shampoos welke mijn haar het allermooiste maakt.

Is er 1 die je heel belangrijk vind en hoe zou je je voelen als je dat niet doet.

Part5 wenkbrauwen epilieren, ik heb hele grote wenkbrauwen, ik heb heel veel beharing en ik moet dat echt bijhouden, ik vind korte haartjes niet erg, maar als ik het niet bijhoudt is het meteen heel veel. Ik zou het erg vinden als ik dat niet kon doen, zeker de beharing in mijn gezicht, dan zie ik er wel heel boos uit, ik krijg een heel hard gezicht.

Part5 en de foundation eigenlijk ook ik wil niet mijn hele gezicht plamuren , maar als ik het niet gebruik is het helemaal rood dat vind ik erger dan 2 kilo meer of minder.

Part4 de eyeliner, ik voel me anders als ik dat niet doe, het is niet dat ik mezelf niet mooi vind zonder, daar voel ik me eigenlijk ook wel gemakkelijk bij maar gewoon anders, het is een soort kledingstuk, ik voel me naakt als ik het niet opheb, maar ik ben ook blij met mezelf naakt, maar het is toch intiemmer, ik zou het eerder in een intiemere omgeving doen, dan voel ik me er gemakkelijker bij dan op straat of op mijn werk. Voor de klas liever met eyeliner, ik ben een beetje een softie en het geeft me iets meer oog, of hoe zeg je dat?

Je denkt dat je sterker over komt?

Part4 ja, ik denk dat ik sterker overkom ja

Maar voel je het of zie je het

Part4 ook wel hoe mensen reageren, niet alle mensen, maar mensen die zeggen dat ik heel lief en schattig lijk als ik geen make-up op heb.

Part5 misschien gedraag je je ook wel anders, ik heb dat bijvoorbeeld als ik geen foundation op heb, zeker omdat het dan vlekkelig is dan wil ik mezelf gewoon bijna verbergen, ik wil dan liever niet dat mensen naar mijn gezicht staren, dus ik ga dan bijvoorbeeld ook geen diep gesprek aan, dat kan ik wel hier thuis doen dat vind ik niet erg, mijn vriend heeft me vaak genoeg gezien zonder foundation, ik kan er ook prima mee naar de supermarkt, maar toch ik ben dan minder zelfverzekerd.

Part5 ik merk ook dat als meisjes dat niet hebben, ja dan is toch wel het beeld dat ik er ook van heb, die zien er ook gelijk vaak uit aan meisje die daar dus niet omgeven ofzo, als ze dan heel veel puistjes hebben dat ze echt rode vlekken hebben, je hebt toch vaak een verschil tussen meisjes die dat ook niet verbergen en meisjes die dat wel doen, en dat is dan niet eens een verschil tussen meisjes die dat wel hebben of niet, het gaat erom of je er wat aan doet of niet, en ik voel me gewoon fijner als ik er wat aan doe. Ik vind dat ik er verzorgder uitzie.

Part4, ja bij mij is het toch niet zozeer om iets te verbergen.

Part5 nee maar het is gewoon, ja ik voel me dan dus eigenlijk ook sterker. Ten minste ik voel me dan als iemand die ook al heb ik het dat maakt niet uit ik doe er wat aan dus ik heb het idee dat ik er zoveel beter uitzie dat ik ook gewoon meer kan maken misschien wel.

Part4 ik heb het wel echt al heel veel minder nu ik ga wel wel vaker zonder make-up de deur uit. Vroeger was het echt altijd, ik probeer het nu wel echt minder te doen.

Maar jij zegt er is een groot verschil tussen mensen die er wel iets aan doen en mensen die dat niet doen en jij voelt je sterker als je het wel doet maar heb je het idee...

Part 5 het ziet er verzorgder uit, ik zit op een opleiding met veel mannen en je ziet duidelijk een verschil of het meisjes zijn die iets doen aan hun uiterlijk of niet en op die leeftijd heb je vaak nog wel puistjes, meisjes die er niets aan doen zien er heel snel wat onverzorgder uit. Als hun haar een keer niet zit, ziet het er sneller uit alsof het ze niets boeit, ...

Maar heb je dan het idee dat mensen die er wel iets aan doen zekerder zijn?

Part5 nee niet wat ze echt zijn maar wel hoe ze overkomen, gedrag wordt wel wat zekerder als je weet dat je er goed uitziet, ik voel me dan wel zekerder maar of mensen die het opdoen zekerder zijn dat denk ik zeker niet want als je het op doet betekent dat dat je zonder waarschijnlijk onzekerder bent, dus dat bedoelde ik niet nee. Ik ben ook zeker niet zekerder als ik het op doe, ik voel me alleen prettiger dus ik gedraag me zelfverzekerder.

Ja want ik zou denken dat mensen die het niet doen misschien juist zekerder zijn

Part5 nee het is meer hoe kom je over, hoe wordt hun gedrag ik bedoel

Je vindt dat ze minder zelfverzekerd overkomen?

Part5 niet allemaal maar je hebt meisjes die dat hebben en die ook best wel verlegen en timide zijn maar je hebt anderen die wat ik dus bijvoorbeeld heb, zodra ik het verberg met make-up dan zit het er nog steeds maar het is geen reden meer om mezelf te verschuilen, dus dan gedraag ik me zelfverzekerder, terwijl ik dat natuurlijk niet per se ben, maar dan durf ik gewoon meer, dan durf ik in ieder geval mijn gezicht beter te laten zien.

Het heeft best een heftige impact dus ook?

Part 5 ja dat wel, mascara en dat soort dingen dus niet maar van mijn huid kan ik soms echt best wel balen, het kan ook best wel heftig zijn bij mij en ik vind het wel fijn dat er iets is dat ik eraan kan doen.

Part4 vraag me af wat je er dan van vindt als iemand veel puistjes heeft maar wel zelfverzekerd overkomt?

Part5 ik vind het heel fijn voor die mensen dat ze dat kunnen, maar ik zie het ook altijd bij andere mensen, meestal zeggen mensen tegen je: ach je ziet het helemaal niet alleen jij let erop, maar omdat ik het ook altijd zie bij anderen: er zijn sowieso een paar mensen die het altijd zien. Met make-up zie je het nog steeds maar niet altijd ook van ver af, of op foto's, als ik geen make-up op heb wil ik niet op foto's. Het hoeft niet gefotoshopt maar ik hoef niet overal op het internet te staan met een puist op mijn kin

is het bij jou ook iets zo belangrijk?

Part4 ik denk het eigenlijk niet, in ieder geval niet bij anderen, nagelbijten zie ik wel meteen. Met make-up bij anderen niet. Bij mezelf is het een kwestie van een soort ongemakkelijk gevoel waar ik niet zo mijn vinger op kan leggen, ik zou dat wel minder hebben als ik er niet zoveel opmerkingen over zou krijgen als ik geen make-up op heb. (wow, je ziet er moe uit, ben je ziek, je hebt een veel zachtere uitstraling zonder eyeliner of wow, je lijkt wel 14) dat maakt wel dat ik er bewust van ben, ik probeer het wel naast me neer te leggen

Part5 terwijl ik juist heel veel opmerkingen krijg als ik me een keertje wel optut, met foundation merk ik het wel, soms zie je het erdoorheen, dichtsmeren vind ik dan net zo lelijk, maar ik krijg ook opmerkingen van: wat doe je toch altijd met je huid, ook een keer geen make-up voor een paar uur, klasgenoot ineens: wow, wat is er met je gezicht gebeurt? Mensen zeggen ook: wow je camoufleert het dan wel goed, dus het maakt ook wel echt een groot verschil of het opvalt of niet. Maar je krijgt dus opmerkingen dus dan weet je ook dat het zo is en niet alleen maar in je hoofd zit.

Part4 mensen maken echt altijd wel opmerkingen...

Part5: papa laatst nog toen ik geen foundation onder mijn oog had: hij dacht dat ik een blauw oog had, dus je merkt wel dat het je helpt er fris uit te zien het is niet alleen maar het verbeteren van je uiterlijk, ik vind niet dat ik mijn uiterlijk aanzienlijk verander, het is puur de staat waarin ik ben. Zie ik er vermoeider uit of niet.

Part4 ik wordt ook vaak om make-up tutorials gevraagd. Er wordt wel opgelet, dat maakt het belangrijker.

Zijn er dingen die je storen vindt als anderen niet doen?

Part 4 nee!..... tanden poetsen

Part5 ja maar dat is meer hygiëne, ik let zelf wel altijd op lichaamsbehaaring ook omdat ik het zelf wel veel heb, ook op mijn bovenlip moet ik het soms wel eens weghalen en ik vind het echt niet leuk dat ik dat nu al moet doen, maar als ik zie dat andere mensen dat echt wel flink hebben, dan denk ik het ziet er zoveel beter uit als je dat weghaalt en dan blijf ik ernaar staren. Puistjes vind ik absoluut niet erg bij anderen.

Part4 ik heb dat echt niet bij anderen, ik zie dingen wel maar ik heb er echt totaal geen mening of waardeoordeel over de uiterlijke verzorging wat dat betreft, ja behalve dan als ik kan zien wat je hebt gegeten, dat hoeft niet.

Part5 ja ik gedraag me ook niet anders naar die mensen, zeker met zo'n snor, ik probeer dat bewust niet te doen maar het trekt toch de hele tijd mijn blik. Ik vind dat ook vervelend want ik denk echt niet minder over zo'n meisje. Maar meer omdat ik zelf wel een beetje weet hoe het zou voelen want als ik er niets aan zou doen zou ik het ook hebben maar dan ben ik eigenlijk blij dat ik een moeder had die wel beseftte dat het er mooier uitziet zonder.

Part4 ik denk er echt heel anders over, ik vind het juist wel mooi.

Het is denk ik ook heel erg wat je gewend bent, want omdat jij het weghaalt en zoveel mensen dat doen kom je het bijna nooit tegen.

Part5 ik kom het dus best wel vaak tegen, ik zit echt op een jongensopleiding, veel meisjes letten er juist niet op, maar het valt me op hoe vaak ik het hier tegen kom, daardoor kan ik me ook wel heel erg prettig voelen als je er zelf niet altijd perfect uitziet, *ik bedoel we hebben geen modellen op de opleiding zitten, maar ik wil er nog steeds verzorgd uitzien, dat wil ik wel ook gewoon voor mezelf, ik bedoel die meisjes zijn echt niet minder populair dus maar ik vind dat je er veel mooier uitziet zonder snor als vrouw. Veel vrouwelijker.*

Part4 ik denk er echt heel anders over.

Part5 ja okselhaar beenhaar dat maakt me dan weer niet uit

Part4 okselhaar vind ik ook heel mooi

Part 5 ja ik vind het bij mij puur hygienisch, als het te lang is ofzo, maar ik vind het niet per se lelijk.

Part4 ja je zegt ook wel eens tegen mij dat ik makkelijk praten heb, omdat ik niet zoveel haar heb... maar het is ook gewoon echt niet geaccepteerd.

Part5 nee maar als ik zou hebben wat jij hebt dan zou ik me nooit meer scheren

Part4 ik vind het juist heel mooi, donkere haren bij vrouwen bijvoorbeeld, volle wenkbrauwen ook

Part5 ik vind volle wenkbrauwen ook mooi maar ik heb dan echt een blok en dat vind ik niet mooi, maar ik houdt ze wel bewust wat dikker, ik let er wel op en ik kan wel heel veel verschillende wenkbrauwen waarderen, soms zijn ze van nature echt heel mooi en dat vind ik veel mooier dan iemand die ze heel erg strak geëpileerd heeft, het moet ook bij je gezicht passen.

Maar jij let dus heel erg op de dingen waar je zelf ook mee bezig bent?

Part5 ja

Doen jullie dingen uit sociale druk waar je eigenlijk moeite mee hebt?

Part4 jazeker, zoals ik al zei ik heb een grote liefde voor lichaamsbeharing, en zou daar het liefst helemaal niets aan doen maar als ik een date heb met iemand die ik nog niet lang ken, dan doe ik het wel. Tegenwoordig niet meer, maar ik merk dat ik daar altijd dan over nadenk en dat ik dan in ieder geval alles bij houdt en kortwiek enzo, terwijl ik daar eigenlijk dus tegen ben, dus ik doe dat wel en als ik naar de sauna ga of ga zwemmen ofzo. Nou ja als ik met mensen ga die dat ook doen, dan doe ik het ook, maar niet als ik met mensen ben die daar niet zo over denken en ik zou eerlijk gezegd ook nu ja ik heb tegenwoordig besloten dat als ik ga daten, met iemand en die keurt het af dat ik dan niet wil daten met die persoon. Terwijl ik dat eerder wel aanpaste.

Ja er zit wel echt een soort taboe op he?

Part4 ja echt he

Part 5 eigenlijk gek, ik weet dat ik het bij houdt omdat ik het ook best wel veel heb dus ik wil dat, maar ik doe het ook echt niet altijd. Ik draag bijvoorbeeld vaak een mouwtje, ik heb nu ook minder spieren en ik vind mezelf niet lelijk maar soms moet ik wennen aan het verschil dus dan kan ik het mooier vinden om effe een mouwtje te doen, sowieso houdt ik niet zo van bloot, maar als ik echt een heel kort mouwtje heb scheer ik wel mijn oksels, maar als het dan daarna nog kort is dan draag ik gerust hetzelfde tuitje, dus eigenlijk doe ik het bijna niet en mijn vrienden die accepteren dat eigenlijk allemaal, terwijl ik het juist best wel extreem heb, ik zou er naar mijn idee ook nooit commentaar op krijgen.

Part4 nou ik heb wel eens een jongen gehad die zei: nou ja ik wens je veel succes met iemand te vinden die daar wel op zit te wachten.

Part5 ja maar ik denk dat dat prima te vinden is

Par4 makkelijk

Part5 ik denk dat het voor heel veel jongens juist heel sterk overkomt als je het statement maakt ik laat mijn okselhaar staan, ik heb het ook heel veel gewoon kort, dat vind niemand erg maar ik zou nooit zeggen van, ik ben helemaal feministisch en ik laat mijn okselhaar staan... ja maar zo komt dat over

Part4 ja dat vinden ze inderdaad heel feministisch als je je okselhaar laat staan, een soort van extreem

Part5 terwijl ik het eigenlijk ook doe, maar als ik mezelf een keertje helemaal verzorg van kop tot teen.... maar ik krijg bultjes en dat vind ik lelijker.

Part4 ja het ligt eraan, ik ben gewend op plekken te komen waar niemand het erg vind waar het normaal is maar ik moet wel zeggen in antwerpen een nieuwe plek als ik dan alleen maar een hemdje aan heb is dat toch wel effe een beetje awkward en dat doe ik dan wel want dat moet ik van mezelf, maar het is wel eventjes een beetje van; niet met mijn handen in de lucht dansen.

Part5 maar als het bij mij tijd is om te scheren is het ook wel meteen een bos, ik zou dan niet zo maar met een hemdje gaan lopen.. omkleden op school: bij een beetje maakt het me niet uit maar als het veel is doe ik het wel iets discreter. Maar niemand denkt dat ik er een statement mee wil maken,

Dat maakt uit? Dat wil je niet?

Part5 nou het maakt me niet zoveel uit, maar niemand denkt dat, ik denk dat als je het uitspreekt dat het voor jongens wat radicaler kan lijken ofzo

Part4 ik spreek het ook niet zozeer uit, maar mensen vinden dat wel een statement...

Wat vind je echt vrouwelijk echt mannelijk?

Part 4 echt heel moeilijk.

Part5 kan heel erg verschillen, kort haar kan juist vrouwelijk zijn, dus niet stereotype beelden er is niet veel make-up of lang haar of kleding voor nodig. Kaaklijn zowel mannen als vrouwen, bepaald veel in uiterlijk. Make-up niet

Part4 een man zou het vrouwelijker maken

Part5 ja of een baard bij een vrouw. Mannelijk ook bakkebaarden, maar misschien volwassenheid.

Part4 gaat het alleen om uiterlijk?

Nee, ...

Part4 ja qua uiterlijk vind ik het ook echt heel moeilijk, ik vind dingen bij mannen en vrouwen mooi of juist niet zo mooi, zoals dus lichaamshaar. Maar rondingen, heupen borsten zijn wel vrouwelijk

En los van uiterlijk?

Art5 vind ik moeilijk, ik zit vaak tussen de mannen en ik weet dat die over andere dingen kunnen praten als ik erbij ben maar ik merk niet veel maniertjes.

Part4 ik zie dat mensen zich soms gedragen op basis van die verschillen die er in mijn ogen eigenlijk niet zijn, dat zie ik wel veel en zelf heb ik wel veel mensen in mijn omgeving die daar ook veel mee bezig zijn en die niet willen handelen op basis van dat soort verschillen. En ik handel en voel me anders in een omgeving waar mensen dat wel heel erg hebben als mensen het hebben over wat mannelijk of vrouwelijk is of mannen of vrouwen moeten, dan merk ik dat ik in mijn schulp kruip, ik kan me hier niet gedragen zoals ik me wil gedragen.

Part5 ik maak het bijna niet mee, soms hebben mensen het wel over stereotypen maar ik voel me dan niet zo'n stereotype en de jongens met wie ik om ga voldoen daar ook niet echt aan.... sportjournaal, maar is niet bepalend, je houdt van voetbal

Part4 soms is er toevallig iets dat aan het stereotype beeld voldoet.

Part 5 ik heb denk ik nooit dat ik het idee heb dat ik met het stereotype man omga, in gesprekken we lachen om dezelfde grapjes

Part4 ik zoek mensen daar ook echt op uit, of ze niet denken in dat soort hokjes, ik voel me daar echt niet lekker bij, het stereotype van wat vrouwelijk is wat denk ik wel bestaat daar kan ik mezelf gewoon echt helemaal niet in vinden, ook mensen die ik ken niet.

Vinden jullie gender dus niet aangeboren?

Part5 een deel misschien wel ,iedereen is anders sommige mensen voelen zich misschien juist heel prettig in een stereotype genderrol

Part4 ja het heeft wel iets met testosteron en oestrogeen te maken, maar ook binnen de genders is er zo veel verschil,

Part5 ja verschilt heel erg, maar wij verschillen ook best wel erg daarin en wij komen uit hetzelfde gezin, we hebben dezelfde opvoeding gehad, maar het kan natuurlijk nog zijn beïnvloed in de studie, het is zeker ook van belang wat je hebt aangeleerd, verschillende situaties; ouder verliezen bijv... tis een combi maar zeker ook omgeving.

Part4 ik denk wel dat er een duidelijk beeld is, vrienden die zeggen; dat is niet vrouwelijk, maar je bent toch gewoon een vrouw?

Part5 mij zeggen ze ook heel vaak voor de grap: jij bent geen echte vrouw.... niet stereotype, geen meisje-meisje, als je kijkt in films dan herken ik daar ook niet

altijd wat in ik hou bijv van romantische komedies net als actiefilms.. maar jongens willen vaak geen romantische komedies kijken.

Part4 maar toch denk ik soms bij mannen: dat is een vrouwelijke kant van je, als ik ze bijvoorbeeld emphatisch en gevoelig vind, dat zijn wel dingen die ik denk en dan probeer ik het woord vrouwelijk niet te denken, maar ik doe het toch.

Part5 ja en jongens komen toch ook vaak snel naar vrouwen toe met persoonlijke dingen. Dan voel je je wel niet een van de mannen.

Modebeeld en wat mooi of normaal is, wie bepaald dat beeld in het algemeen? Hoe wordt dat geconstrueerd?

Part4 de geschiedenis heeft dat geconstrueerd, door de hele geschiedenis heeft dat zich ontwikkeld, dat wordt bepaald door de media, van bovenaf, door je ouders.

Beiden praten over genderrollen ouders. Mannelijke vader, vrouwelijke moeder.

Part4 ja maar naar ons doen ze dat niet echt maar ik merk wel bij bepaalde vriendinnen dat hun moeder ze bepaalde dingen zegt hoe ze zich moeten gedragen als vrouw, ik denk dat het er diep inzit, op scholen, speelgoed, kleding, wat er van je wordt verwacht van je als man of als vrouw gewoon een hele lifestyle die daar bij past

Part5 maar toch zijn er dingen die je zelf doet: wij speelden met barbies maar kregen niet het barbie huis, we moesten het zelf bedenken, jij knipte altijd de haren van alle barbies af. Onze moeder vond dat heel mooi. En jij ging daarin mee, maar ik wilde wel barbies met lang haar en mijn kamer roze

Part4 maar waarom dan:

Part5 ik weet niet ik vond dat gewoon mooi en dat is dus niet wat mama zei, ik zag gewoon wat ik zag, misschien ook wel door media

Part4 ja en op school alle meisjes hebben bepaalde dingen en er is ook tot een bepaalde leeftijd een onderscheid tussen jongens en meisjes, hoewel dat bij mij nooit zo was

Part5 nee jij had een veel opener klas

Part4 ja en je merkt dan ook verschil in wat je doet, ik speelde met jongens maar ook met meisjes

Part5 nu bepaald denk ik vooral nog media, maar ik vind mensen heel vaak te dun en dat komt niet alleen door mijn ouders want die vonden voller toch mooier dat vind ik niet altijd maar het moet er nog wel gezond uitzien. Als iemand van nature heel dun is kan ik het wel mooi vinden en met voller ook als het maar niet te ongezond wordt, zelfs met echt overgewicht; zolang iemand er gezond uitziet vind ik het niet erg. Maar als ook de huid of het haar slecht is dan denk ik iemand eet niet goed, dus dat bepaald voor mij wel of het er gezond of

ongezond uitziet, maar ook kleding, modebeeld: vaak vooral geschikt voor heel dunnen modellen, dat vind ik jammer, maar er is zoveel kleding die mij ook mooi staat en dan maakt de maat me niet uit.

Part4 de media bepaalt echt veel en ik heb het idee dat het zo diep zit, heel erg en mannen die ouder worden worden mooier en vrouwen juist niet. Gelukkig zien de meeste mensen om mij heen die dat niet zo maar ik heb echt wel heel veel confrontaties met mensen die wel zo denken en dat komt wel echt hard binnen. 1 keer een man die zei hoe oud ben je? 19 nou dan rook en drink je wel echt veel te veel want je lijkt wel 30 dat gaat nog wat worden, dat vond ik heel heftig. Maar ook wat mannelijk en vrouwelijk is dat zit er bij iedereen zo in, van ja ik ben een man er zijn heel veel mensen die dat soort dingen zeggen.

Smal modebeeld, merk je dat dat je tegenhoudt op andere vlakken in het leven soms?

Part4 ja, dat werkt me wel tegen ik zie daar veel onder lijden veel vriendinnen die eetstoornissen hebben gehad, ik heb het idee dat ik niet objectief kan kijken naar overgewicht.

Want?

part4 nou het is iets wat ik lastig vind maar als mensen echt heel dik zijn dan heb ik daar echt wel heel veel ideeën bij ik maak allerlei aannamen over hoe die mensen zich zullen voelen over. Ja ik maak gewoon echt heel veel aannames terwijl ik dat helemaal niet zou willen, ik ben zelf ook dunner dan volgens mij helemaal mijn natuurlijke gewicht is, ik let daar wel echt veel op en ik vind het bij andere mensen niet zo erg maar ik voel me wel echt beter als ik dunner ben het is gewoon echt dat mensen je gewoon veel meer complimenteren als je dunner bent.

Part5 vertelt over overgewicht moeder, merkt dat ze het niet fijn vindt, daarom wilde ik nooit haar gewicht krijgen. Ik heb een periode heel erg ondergewicht gehad en ik kreeg heel veel complimentjes: zelfs van mijn moeder, iedereen zei dat ik een perfect figuur had en model moest worden. Toen probeerde ik het juist te verbergen; het was in mijn pubertijd, dus ik wilde het ook niet echt laten zien. Toen kwam ik aan en zeiden mensen ja je ziet er gezonder uit

Part4 ja ze zeggen nooit meer perfect

Part5 of ze zeggen dat ik op mijn moeder begin te lijken terwijl alleen mijn figuur is veranderd. Nu zeggen ze ook dat ik figuur heb van haar familie en daar wordt je wel bang voor. Ik merk ook dat ik minder doe, eerst zwom ik altijd, en dat wil ik op zich weer gaan doen, maar het houdt me een beetje tegen terwijl het eigenlijk juist de manier is om weer sterker te worden. Het gaat me wel vooral om sterk zijn. (52:56) mijn spieren zijn nu vet.

Part5: ja en jij kwam ook een beetje aan toen je 16 was dat vond je ook echt niet leuk, dat wist ik wel.

Part4 nee de pil man.

Part5 ja ik ben daar ook door aangekomen, vreetbuiën, moeilijk. Ook al zegt iedereen dat ik een prachtig figuur heb. Als jij dat zegt: dan denk ik soms jij hebt makkelijk praten, jij bent nu dun, maar ik wist dat jij er niet blij mee was.

Part4 nee ik ben vegetariër geworden en niet om die reden maar ik kan niet zeggen dat ik er niet super blij mee ben.

Part5 (55;08)nee en ik kan dat niet door mijn gezondheid, het zou wel fijn zijn als ik genoeg had met het gezonde, dat komt wel echt degelijk door het modebeeld, doordat ik nu minder kleren aan kan of dat dingen af gaan tekenen wat ze eerst niet deden.

Part4 ja ik denk ook dat daar een hele sociale waarde aan zit, boeken als *skinny bitch*, zoveel dingen van dun is beter. Vroeger was dat anders toen was vol beter, teken van rijkdom, *ik denk niet dat het feitelijk zo is dat dun mooier is, ik vind zelf rondingen heel mooi, ook bij mannen veel mooier.*

Maar je vind het eigenlijk mooier maar toch probeer je zelf dun te zijn?

Part4 ja, ja dat is het he... ja ik denk ook wel dat het veel te maken heeft met hoe ongelofelijk het het leven van mijn moeder beheerst maar dat dat ook weer veel te maken heeft met dingen die daaronder liggen, maar, ja het heeft te maken met de positieve aandacht die daar mee gepaard gaat. Mensen zeggen tegen mij dat ik er nog nooit zo mooi heb uitgezien.

Part5 ja en bij mij zegt niemand dat meer, terwijl ze dat wel zeiden toen ik 49 kilo woog, iedereen was jaloers.

Part4 ja dat ze jaloers zijn, en ik hoef dat niet te horen maar natuurlijk krijg je daar een gevoel bij, tuurlijk doet het iets.

Wat voor mensen?

Part 5 ook jongens, ook heel veel meisjes die zijn allemaal jaloers

Part4 nee juist meisjes, mannen zeggen eerder dat ik mager ben en als je wat voller bent vinden ze dat mooier

Part5 qua aandacht tijdens uitgaan ofzo is er niet zo heel veel verandert. Misschien ook omdat ik nu een vrouwelijker figuur heb. het ligt heel erg aan mijn gemoedstoestand, De ene dag ben ik heel trots op mijn figuur en voel ik me heel goed, dan merk ik niet eens of ik zwaarder ben, ligt ook aan hoe kleding zit, de ene dag voel ik me heel aantrekkelijk de andere dag niet.

Verzetten jullie je tegen het heersende ideaal?

Part4 ja daar ben ik echt bewust mee bezig, ik herken het bij mezelf, emotioneel, 1 keer per maand voel ik me dik, ik probeer dat los te laten en in relaties bijvoorbeeld vraag ik ook echt of als mensen me willen complimenteren ze dat niet willen doen op mijn uiterlijk maar op wie ik ben, ik maak zelf ook weinig

complimenten over iemands uiterlijk, ik probeer daar niet op te letten.
Schokkend: nieuw heel leuk vriendje: mensen zeggen dat ik te knap ben voor hem, dat vind ik echt heel erg, ik heb er een aantal keer ruzie over gehad.

Part5 ik verzet me er niet tegen, soms vind ik mezelf prima zoals ik ben, soms vind ik wel kleren mooi die niet passen bij mij figuur ik weet dan wel hoe ik zou willen zijn: strakker: ik hoef niet in de breedte maar omdat ik sterker wil zijn, die kracht terug, dat heeft niets met mijn uiterlijk te maken, toen voelde ik me gezonder. Maar ik verzet me daar niet tegen.

Part5 over nieuwe vriendje part4

Part4 ik vind het echt heel vervelend.

Vind je het alleen degraderend naar hem toe of ook naar jou?

Part4 ja ook naar mij, allebei want mensen stappen er dan over heen hoe blij wij elkaar maken.... nee eigenlijk al die dingen over uiterlijk en wat ik zou moeten zijn ik probeer me daar echt tegen te verzetten en te herkennen bij mezelf, ik moet wel zeggen dat ik er niet helemaal toe in staat ben altijd, maar ik ben er wel heel erg mee bezig ook al wat ik zei over het eyeliner afdoen, ik vind dat echt, ik herken het bij zo veel mensen, zo'n druk ervan, ik heb er zelf ook al veel vervelende dingen in meegemaakt ook heel veel negatieve aandacht gehad om uiterlijk, totaal niet om wie ik ben, ik wordt daar wel een beetje verdrietig van.

Feminisme.

Part5 ik ben totaal geen feminist ... ja iedereen vind dat raar, ik heb er ook vaak met part 4 over gepraat ik ben echt absoluut geen feminist! Als in hoe het nu is, hoe het eerder was, de strijd om gelijke rechten daar ben ik heel erg voor. Als mensen nog steeds strijden om gelijkheid vind ik dat echt heel erg goed. Wat ik heel slecht vind is positieve discriminatie, soms heb ik het idee dat mannen van nu moeten lijden onder de situatie van 40 jaar geleden. Maar als er nu terwijl er gelijke rechten zijn vrouwen eerder worden aangenomen dan vind ik dat sneu voor de mannen die daar niets aan kunnen doen hoe de situatie 40 jaar geleden was. Positieve discriminatie is ook discriminatie. Maar gelijke rechten ben ik absoluut voor maar ik ben zelf geen voorvechter, ik vind het wel allemaal prima, mannen of vrouwen zijn niet beter, maar als vrouwen vinden dat vrouwen beter zijn dan zijn ze echt zelf slecht bezig. Ik merk zelf ook wel positieve discriminatie bijvoorbeeld op mijn opleiding ik ben 1 van de 2 vrouwen in mijn jaar en iedereen vind mij een fantastische student terwijl eigenlijk valt dat best mee er zijn heel veel mensen die het beter doen dan ik maar die niet opvallen. ik heb nu denk ik een scriptieplek omdat ik een vrouw ben. Ik weet ook dat die docent mij knap vindt.

Part 4 euwh, dat zou ik wel heel vervelend vinden.

Part5 maar positieve discriminatie daar ben ik het dus niet mee eens. Dat vind ik heel slecht van feministen.

Part4 nee maar dat is nu ook niet bepaald feminisme. Feminisme is bepaald tegen het aanbieden van een baan aan een vrouw omdat ze knapper is.

Part5 nee het is ook niet daarom dat ik die baan heb... maar ik krijg dus wel kansen, en dat is niet alleen omdat ik knap ben. Ik wil het omdat ik goed genoeg ben maar ik vind het een probleem dat een jongen die net zo goed is misschien minder kansen krijgt, maar dus ik ben gewoon absoluut geen feminist, ik ben bijna gewoon een sexist misschien soms.

Part4 ik ben absoluut wel een feminist, ik denk dat feminisme nog lang niet klaar is, ik snap met jou beeld dat je er niet zo'n voorstander van bent maar je hebt dan ook wel een ander beeld van wat het is in ieder geval voor mij en ik denk ook voor jou (interviewer) ik denk namelijk dat feminisme ook voor mannen is, voor allebei.

Part5 maar hoe is het feminisme voor mannen?

Part4 nou het gaat tegen de genderrollen het is geen strijd der seksen ofzo

Part5 nee precies het is inderdaad ik denk soms heb je gewoon extreme feministen die mannen ook echt slecht vinden en daar ben ik tegen,

Part4 nou die ken ik niet

Part5 maar zeker in andere landen is inderdaad de strijd nog niet gestreden dus daarom vind ik het prima dat het er is maar ik ben er zelf geen.

Part4 nou ik denk niet dat die strijd ergens gestreden is maar ik geloof gewoon heel erg dat al die dingen waar we het net over hebben gehad die er zo diep inzitten dat het verzet dat ik net ook al beschreef, daar heel erg mee bezig zijn en daar met mensen over praten, het is niet voor niets dat ik me prettiger voel bij mensen die daar meer zo in staan, of daarin eigenlijk hetzelfde denken als ik, ik denk toch ik ga wel discussies aan maar dan moet je je toch altijd wapenen en als ik me echt op mijn gemak wil voelen is dat toch met mensen die daar een beetje hetzelfde over denken. En dan heb ik het niet over part5 natuurlijk...

Part5 ja maar ik zou jou ook nooit niet accepteren, ik ben gewoon nog steeds voor gelijkheid absoluut.

Part4 en ik heb ook niet het idee dat jij daarin fundamenteel anders denkt dan ik

Part5 *nee ik ben gewoon eigenlijk voor acceptatie van iedereen en gelijke kansen voor iedereen dus ook voor mannen als die zich niet prettig voelen in de genderrollen van een stereotype man, dat die ook geaccepteerd zijn allemaal. Ik hou gewoon niet van positieve discriminatie en je hebt gewoon in alle groeperingen mensen die daar dan aan gaan doen, die heb je ook bijvoorbeeld bij racisme, gelijke kansen, als ze slechter zijn dan niet, gewoon gelijkheid.*

Jij hebt het heel erg over concrete regels en wetten en gevallen maar we hebben het net de hele tijd gehad over die schoonheidsidealen die heel veel impact hebben kennelijk..

Part5 ja maar daarom heb ik het over acceptatie, accepteer mensen hoe ze zijn, ook vrouwen onderling, maar ik denk dat dat sowieso nooit helemaal weggaat je hebt altijd vrouwen die anderen niet accepteren of mannen die vrouwen niet accepteren, dat is niet iets waar je voor altijd wat aan kan doen.

Part4 voor mij zou dat ik misschien denk dat het einddoel onhaalbaar is zou nooit een reden zijn om daar niet mee bezig te zijn.

Part5 o nee dat niet maar ik ben dus vooral gewoon voor acceptatie van iedereen en dat vind ik niet per se iets van feminsime, het is zo veel breder.

Part4 nee ik zie het ook als een onderdeel daarvan maar het is wel iets waar ik me mee bezig hou omdat ik nu eenmaal hoor bij de minderheid, of minderheid, 'het zwakkere geslacht' en omdat ik ook mannen zie die zich ongelukkig voelen in de rol van 'het sterkere geslacht'. ja ik vind het wel echt heel belangrijk en nee niet alleen maar over het gender of sekse verschil, ook alle andere verschillen op basis waarvan geoordeeld wordt denk ik.

Maar dus jij (part5) vind het schoonheidsideaal of hoe vrouwen worden neergezet maar ook zichzelf neerzetten, wel een probleem maar niet een feministisch probleem.

Part5 ja dat is wel een feministisch probleem natuurlijk, ik bedoel dat gaat specifiek over hoe vrouwen worden neergezet, tegelijkertijd is het meer er zijn ook heel veel vrouwen die dat ook zelf in stand houden en daarom denk ik dat het heel lastig is, sommige vrouwen voelen zich er wel prettig bij en andere niet, ik ben eigenlijk tegen dingen die radicaal worden, ook als het feminisme bijv. radicaal wordt. Dat het op zich niet meer ok zou zijn om huisvrouw te worden. Het moet gewoon heel erg mensen hun eigen keuze zijn als zij zich er prettig bij voelen ook al komt het dan door hun opvoeding of iets anders wat dan verkeerd zou zijn geweest, of dat ze kansen niet hebben gehad, dat ze dat eerder zouden willen waar het ook aan ligt als mensen zich prettig voelen in iets wat ze zelf kiezen ook al lijkt dat niet feministisch of juist heel feministisch ik vind het eigenlijk gewoon allemaal prima.

Part4 ja nou ik moet ook zeggen dat ik niet veel heb met mensen die dingen voor mij gaan vinden of bepalen hoe ik iets moet vinden, ik heb dat niet met mensen die anti-feminsitisch of patriarchisch zijn maar ik heb dat ook niet met feministen die mij gaan vertellen hoe ik wel of niet een goede feminist moet zijn.

Part 5 nee precies als een feminist tegen mij gaat zeggen, bepaalde dingen, bijvoorbeeld als ik iets doe aan mijn uiterlijk, dat stereotypisch vrouw is als mensen dan zoiets hebben van je hoeft je niet aan te passen aan de maatschappij ofzo, dan denk ik nog steeds ja ik doe het omdat ik het zelf mooi vind en waarom ik het mooi vind heeft natuurlijk te maken met al die dingen die mij worden voorgespiegeld maar nog steeds als ik het op een gegeven moment daardoor iets mooi ben gaan vinden en me ergens prettig bij voel dan wil ik dat ook kunnen doen. (1:15:00) als ik een push-up bh draag vind ik dat mooi en ik weet wel dat dat puur is omdat mannen hebben bedacht dat het mooi is dat de tieten zo staan, inmiddels ben ik het zelf ook mooi gaan vinden, ook al is er misschien ooit iets fout gegaan

waardoor ik dat mooi ben gaan vinden, dat maakt me niet uit ik draag hem nog steeds.

Maar daarmee houdt je het ook in stand

Part5 ja dat weet ik, maar dat vind ik dus niet heel erg eigenlijk, op een gegeven moment denk ik ik moet het ook zelf mogen weten ook al is dat niet feministisch, maar ik ben niet tegen feminisme, maar ik wil het ook gewoon zelf bepalen.

Ja dus het gaat heel erg om zelf bepalen maar uiteindelijk en om de keuze die je zelf maakt maar de vraag is wel of je wel een keuze hebt en of je wel zelf kan bepalen.

Part5 ja precies maar ik denk toch wel dat het erg afhangt van iedereen en hoe je zelf bent... ik heb ook cup E.... voor mij is het ook fijn.... anders doe ik ook iets wat niet fijn is, het hangt er ook vanaf, als je cup b hebt heb je ook wel makkelijk praten.

Part4 ik wil eigenlijk gewoon een wereld waarin iedereen helemaal maar ook niet vanuit de maatschappij al ingebakken kan zijn wat die persoon wil zijn en dat als daaruit komt dat je een push-up bh wil dragen zonder dat je daartoe wordt gedwongen door wat voor sociale druk dan ook vind ik dat helemaal prima. Maar (onverstaanbaar)

Part5 maar ik denk er zal altijd een soort algemene mening worden uitgeroepen ook al kan dat eigenlijk niet, maar als de meerderheid een bh dragende vrouw mooier vindt dan wordt dat toch een schoonheidsideaal dat is het gewoon, dat hou je altijd, dat is door de hele geschiedenis zo geweest, ik denk dat dat onvermijdelijk is maar nog steeds ook al is er een ideaal iedereen mag gewoon doen wat ie zelf wil, dat vind ik gewoon.

Ja maar op het moment dat dat ideaal schadelijk is voor mensen, lijnen, tijd geld, we benadelen onszelf en houden het ook zelf in stand. Wat jij doet is niet alleen een individuele keuze.

Part5 ja maar misschien valt dat me ook niet zo op, mijn vriend besteed meer aan zijn uiterlijk dan ik... kost ook allemaal geld... scheren, kapper... je kunt het best wel veel zelf bepalen hoe veel geld je daar aan uitgeeft,

Part4 nou ik denk dat dus niet, ik denk niet dat je dat zelf kunt bepalen, echt niet ik denk dat je dat geld kwijtbent voor de middelen die je nodig hebt die we aan het begin hebt beschreven, wij allebei....

Part5 ja maar bijna elke man heeft aftershave

Part4 ja dat is ook zo maar daar gaat het niet om

Part5 ja maar daarom denk ik niet dat vrouwen daarin per se meer worden benadeelt, ik denk gewoon dat de hele mensheid daarin wordt benadeelt.

Part4 ja dat denk ik precies ook,

Maar op dit moment zie je ook een seksualisering, ook door vrouwen zelf trouwens paaldasen...bunnies...

Part5 ja wij doen elk jaar paaldansworkshop daar doen zo veel mannen aan mee.

Part4 ... ja tis ook sport ook lapdance... maar wat wil je vragen

Of jullie dat geen probleem vinden, is dat een vrije keuze, van dat uiterlijk kan je uiteindelijk zeggen ja maar ik doe dat omdat ik het leuk vind en eigenlijk is er dus geen probleem aan, maar die seksualisering zie je veel meer bij vrouwen, facebook, covers magazines.... juist gericht op vrouwen zelf

Part5 best apart, aan de ene kant vind ik sommige beelden minder erg, ik vind anorexia beelden minder storend, maar ik ben blij dat rondere vrouwen vaak als sexier wordt gezien, maar inderdaad soms gedragen mannen zich alsof alle vrouwen hoeren zijn of juist andersom ook veel vrouwen gebruiken mannen als lustobject, daar ben ik natuurlijk op tegen. Maar nog steeds als ik me een keer sexy voel vind ik het niet zo erg als ik zo overkom ik vind een grens of ik er zo uitzie en mensen dat denken of dat mensen zich ernaar gedragen en dat een wildvreemde je in je kont knijpt ofzo, dat vind ik heel erg, dan denk ik hé er zijn grenzen, ook als ik er aantrekkelijk uit wil zien voor mijn vriend, ik vind dat ik daar het recht toe heb. Soms als ik thuis ben dan doe ik het voor hem of voor mezelf en niet voor een vreemde op straat.

Part4 ja maar enerzijds is het heel normaal om elkaar mooi te vinden en elkaar te bewonderen, dat vind ik heel normale dingen maar ik hoef niet allerlei intimiteiten met vreemde mensen, als het over mijn lichaam gaat vind ik dat wel ja intimiteit met vreemde mensen, ongevraagde opmerkingen over mijn uiterlijk of als heftigste geval dat iemand je in je kruis grijpt ofzo,

Part5 ja dat heb ik ook wel eens meegemaakt, dat is echt super naar

Part4 ja dat is verschrikkelijk ,maar ik denk wel dat dat te maken heeft met dat je wordt gezien als lustobject, ik denk dat het daar alles mee te maken heeft en ik heb ook wel eens iemand een keer een dreun verkocht omdat iemand maar aan me bleef zitten en toen kreeg ik als opmerking terug, ja dat zal ik ooit nooit vergeten, hij zei, ja en nu loop je te piepen dat ik je aanraak en als je 40 bent loop je te piepen dat ik je nooit meer aanraak. En dat is erg, echt heel erg.

Part5 ja of mensen die zeggen , dan moet je er maar niet zo bij lopen, dat doe ik voor anderen of voor mezelf en niet voor een willekeurig persoon en *kan ik er wel iets te sexy uitzien op school.*

Part4 te sexy, hoezo?

Part5 feestje, ik vind het ook helemaal niet erg wat mensen denken, als mensen denken dat ik erbij loop als een hoer vind ik dat niet erg, maar als ze me dan bijvoorbeeld ook echt zo gaan behandelen, dat ze dingen aannemen wat ik zou willen, gaan aanraken. Dat wil ik niet maar ja er wordt dan inderdaad ook

wel gezegd van het beeld dat er is , *maar inderdaad je houdt het ook zelf in stand want ik draag soms wel erg korte rokjes*

Part4 ja ik vind dus dat het niet geseksualiseerd moet worden, dat een vrouw of een man, je moet het lichaam van mensen, tuurlijk iedereen houdt van seks, vandaar dat het ook overal te zien is maar het gaat wel om de manier waarop het is geen mooie seks, van mij mag er overal aandacht zijn voor seks, liefst zo veel mogelijk geen taboes....

Part5 ja maar het is toch moeilijk hoe je dat dan anders kan doen, seks wordt toch gezien met typisch vrouwelijk en mannelijk, borsten heupen, daarom laten ze daar meer van zien

Part4 dat hoeft niet per se

Part5 het hoeft ook niet bloot te zijn, bedekte borsten zijn nog steeds vrouwelijk en kunnen ook sexy zijn, maar ik denk dat het niet heel erg verandert kan worden. Maar het is meer hoe mensen daarop handelen en dat hangt natuurlijk af van het individu.

Part5 ja ik heb natuurlijk in een pornowinkel gewerkt en als je daar werkt dan zie je sowieso dat de media de porno reflecteert tegenwoordig maar de porno wordt daardoor ook wel iets meer hardcore enne wat je ziet is wel gewoon dat is seksueel gedrag, ik denk wel dat dat invloed heeft op hoe je benadert wordt in de wereld en ik denk wel dat dat de standaard wel een beetje bepaald de manier waarop met het lichaam wordt omgesprongen, waarop met seks wordt omgesprongen en dan zie je gewoon zoveel hele heftige seksuele gewelddadige daden, want dat vind ik het wel, die normaal en erotisch worden en dat vind ik wel een beetje heftig. En je ziet dat ook terug in clips ofzo het daggeren...

Part5 ja maar ik ken eigenlijk helemaal geen mensen die daar naar kijken, ik kijk er zelf ook niet naar, als ik langszap mtv ofzo daar is alleen maar jersey shore en iedereen vind dat ook juist hele trashy mensen, die mensen hebben ook niet het idee dat dat het normale beeld is ook al zijn dat soort mensen er echt, wij hebben ook niet zo'n gebied waarin iedereen zo is en dat soort programma's vind ik heel erg raar inderdaad, dat is dan sensatie, mensen die heel veel seks hebben, maar als ik iemand ken die daar iets over zegt is dat meer over hoe dom die mensen zijn, maar ik weet niet mensen die dus kijken naar die clips ik weet niet hoe het mensen nu nog beïnvloed.

Ik denk juist dan zo'n caricatuur juist ook een slap aftreksel daarvan heel erg normaliseert.

Part5 Ja tuurlijk dat kan wel, maar ik ken dat eigenlijk helemaal niet, ik ken ook helemaal niemand die ook maar in de buurt komt van dat soort mensen, dat klinkt raar maar, ik ga ook niet zo vaak uit dus ik merk het natuurlijk ook niet meer zo veel. Het enige wat ik merk zijn allemaal hoog opgeleide mensen die zich gewoon normaal kleden en niet heel overdreven.

Part4 ja maar ik vind wel, desnoods loop je naakt op straat niemand mag daarom aan je komen, gewoon niemand mag aan je komen

Part5 ja dat vind ik dus zeker

Part4 als je dat ziet in van die clubs waar iedereen aan elkaar zit, dat zal op sommige plekken misschien ook wel iets moois kunnen hebben, I don't know, maar. Ik heb nooit decolletés en ik kleeed me wel heel erg gekleeed

Part5 ja maar bij mij lijken mijn borsten juist weer groter....

Part4 maar wat ik bedoel ik heb wel het idee dat als ik me op bepaalde manieren kleeed dat ik dan meer negatieve aandacht krijg dan op andere manieren.

Part5 ja maar ik weet dus niet altijd wanneer...

Maar negatieve aandacht is aandacht die eigenlijk seksueel positief bedoeld is?

Part4 ja zo zie ik dat wel . ongevraagde positieve aandacht ik vind aanraken altijd negatief maar ik vind ook opmerkingen heel vervelend, op straat, ik zit daar niet op te wachten.

Part5 ja maar ligt er ook aan, laatst liep ik in het donker over straat, korte broek, toen zei iemand: zo waar gaan die mooie beentjes naartoe. Maar dat vond ik best wel een compliment, maar dat vind ik ook niet grof.

Part 4 nou ik zou daar wel aanstoot aannemen

Part5 ja maar ik kan dan wel denken iemand hoeft dat niet te roepen maar die deed niks, die liep gewoon door, het was niets ik denk dat is eigenlijk dan gewoon een compliment, dat hoef ik niet eens vervelend te vinden, het ligt er gewoon heel erg aan wat ze zeggen als ze grove dingen zeggen wat ook heel vaak gebeurt is, dat is sowieso negatief, maar ook al gaat het over het uiterlijk, ik ken zo'n persoon ook niet, dus die kan ook niets zeggen over mijn persoonlijkheid, dus dan is het gewoon puur een compliment over mijn uiterlijk eigenlijk, dat vind ik niet per se heel erg verkeerd.

Kan ik zeggen dat het gaat om respect,

Part5 ja

dat je wordt gezien als een mens en niet als een object?

Beiden: ja

Part4 ik vind eigenlijk mensen die niks over mij weten behalve hoe ik er uit zie die aandacht hoef ik niet.

Dus ook niet als iemand gewoon met respect zegt: he ik vind dat je hele mooie ogen hebt?

Part4 houdt ik eigenlijk ook niet van nee, dat, ik mooie ogen heb, of een vrouw ben of een bepaald lichaam heb dat zijn dingen waar ik helemaal niets aan heb gedaan. Waar niemand iets aan heeft gedaan, mensen die dat niet hebben krijgen dat nooit, als je hele lelijke ogen hebt volgens de norm, krijg je dat nooit te horen.... als je me een compliment wil maken zeg dat ik grappig ben ofzo.

Part5 maar jij kan ook heel vaak tegen mij zeggen dat ik mooi ben

Part4 ja maar dat is ook heel normaal maar ik ben daar wel best wel anders over gaan denken en als ik dat tegen mensen zeg dat ze mooi zijn bedoel ik wel iets meer dan het uiterlijk, dan bedoel ik de hele persoon. Maar ook mensen die ik helemaal niet ken kan ik wel van denken van wauw je hebt zo'n mooi uitstraling, zo'n mooi lag zo'n mooie ogen maar ik denk dat ik daar niet zo snel iets van zou zeggen. Ik zou het in ieder geval niet naar mensen gaan roepen op straat.

In het algemeen wat vinden jullie de belangrijkste politieke problemen van het moment, ben je daar mee bezig.

Part4 ja dat woorden als individu ondernemersklimaat en vrije markt allemaal een ontzettende waarde hebben, dat we daar best wel diep in zitten en dat het heel moeilijk is om daar iets aan te veranderen, en dat het de overmacht voert, dat vind ik het belangrijkste politieke probleem.

Part5 ik hou me eigenlijk niet zo bezig met politiek, echt heel weinig ik krijg alleen een paar dingen mee die heel erg in opspraak zijn, zoals het hele gedoe over zwarte pieten. Ik ben wel betrokken bij studenten, gaat natuurlijk over mezelf dus dan wil ik wel weten wat er aan de hand is en daar zitten wel wat problemen, niet per se dat de maatregelen slecht zijn, maar vooral hoe ze worden uitgevoerd, super plotseling, dat kan gewoon niet. En in het algemeen de crisis en dan een snelle fix, dat gaat nooit goed en dan wordt er altijd iemand de dupe, dat soort dingen, maar verder heb ik eigenlijk geen idee wat er allemaal speelt.

Zou je dat nog kunnen koppelen aan het beeld van vrouwelijkheid en schoonheidsidealen, of wat is daar uiteindelijk het grootste probleem aan, denken jullie?

Part4 ik denk wel dat het eigenlijk allemaal neerkomt op vraag en aanbod. Als er heel veel vraag is naar een dun lijf dan is het fijn om te voldoen aan de vraag, ja ik denk dat dat wel heel diep zit. En we hebben eindeloze mogelijkheden en een daarvan is dan het juiste en mooier zijn wordt belangrijk en daar is dan een hele industrie omheen, steeds meer producten voor dit en voor dat om maar zo perfect mogelijk te kunnen zijn en ik zie dat wel heel erg gekoppeld aan dingen als marktwerving, die ik heel problematisch vind.

Part5 ja maar tegelijkertijd denk ik als ik alles zou willen doen dan moet ik eigenlijk 10 verschillende shampoos gebruiken elke douchebeurt, ja dat gaat ook niet, er zijn altijd grenzen aan dus ik heb zelf eigenlijk denk ik altijd ja laat maar, weer nieuwe mascara's voor nog langere wimpers, op een gegeven moment worden ze niet langer.

Part4 ja maar je hebt ook heel veel mensen die zijn daar niet verzadigbaar in en ik denk hoe meer welvaart en hoe rijker je bent denk ik dat je daar al helemaal niet verzadigbaar in bent en dat zijn dan ook weer de mensen die het dominante beeld vormen en die bepalen ook voor ons hoe wij moeten leven terwijl wij al die dingen toch niet kunnen kopen en niet kunnen zijn en ook niet zouden moeten willen zijn.

Part 5 ja maar ik zou ook helemaal niet willen kopen, ik heb best wel geld voor mascara, maar ik doe heel vaak lang zonder omdat ik geen zin heb om dat uit te zoeken... ik zou nooit denken nu heb ik meer geld, dus dan koop ik het wel

Part4 ja maar de rich en famous kunnen met heel veel middelen heel erg perfect zijn en daar moeten wij toch in zekere zin ook een beetje aan voldoen ik denk wel dat mensen daar, nu ja je moet daar grenzen aan stellen binnen je mogelijkheden, dat ze zo'n onhaalbaar beeld neerzetten dat is ook omdat ze alle welvaart hebben.

Part5 knopen haar, geen borstel, ik ben daarin misschien een extreem geval, maar heel vaak bezit ik niet eens een haarborstel.

...

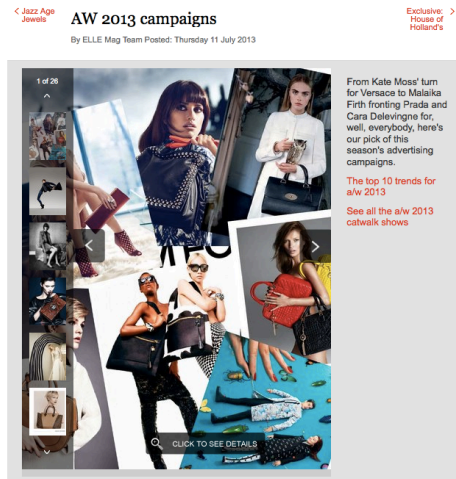
A collage of 30 covers of Cosmopolitan magazine, arranged in three rows of ten. The covers feature various celebrities and models in different outfits, with headlines such as 'Crazy Sexy', 'Love Yourself', 'Super Hot', 'Sex Toys', 'Fashionista', 'Men Talk', 'Hot Sex', 'Glamour', 'Summer', and 'New York'. The magazine's masthead 'COSMOPOLITAN' is visible on each cover.



Appendix 5

L'oreal post (2013, Sept. 13)

Appendix 6



Elle celebrating advertising campaigns (2013 Aug. 28)

Appendix 7



Fashionista quote (2013, Aug. 28)

Appendix 8



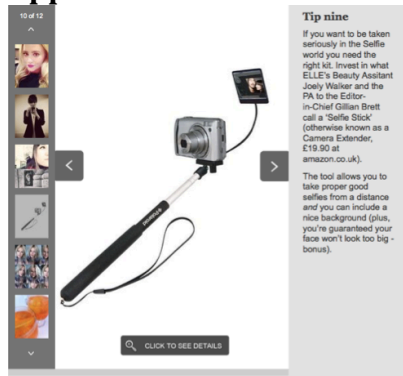
Fashionista quote (2013, Sept. 10)

Appendix 9.



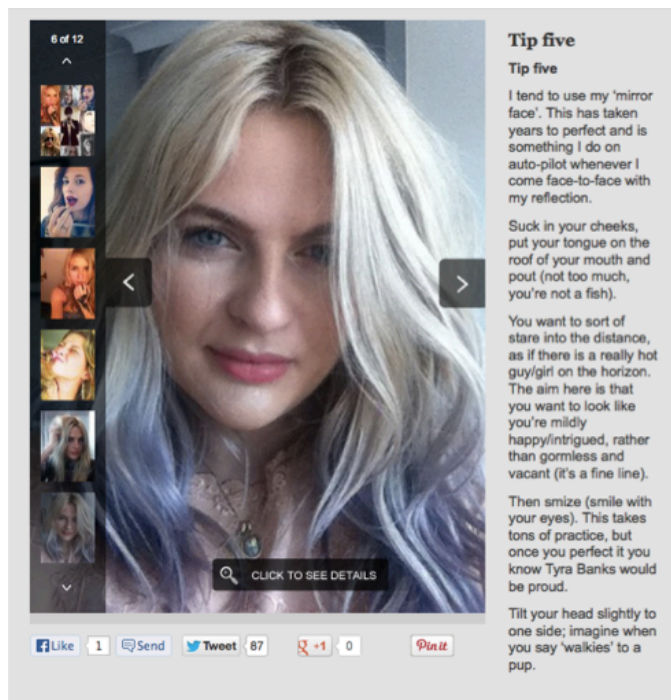
Marie-claire (2013, Aug. 13)

Appendix 10



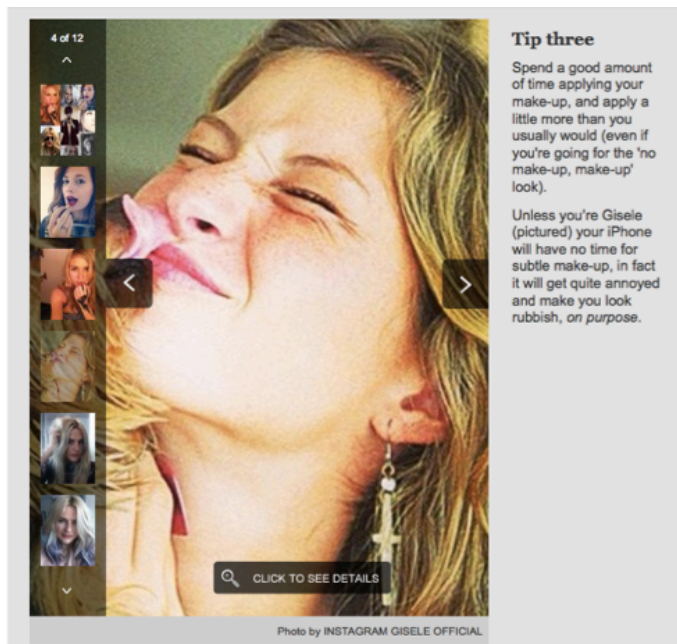
Selfie camera extender (2013, Sept. 10)

Appendix 11



Selfie Tyra Banks would be proud. (2013, Sept. 10)

Appendix 12



Selfie look rubbish (2013, Sept. 10)

Appendix 13



Dove

Vul aan, ladies!

[Vertaling bekijken](#)

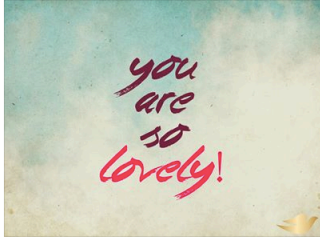


Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen · 364 132 26 · 1 september om 10:00 ·



Dove

Deze delen wij graag met jullie! Geven jullie het ook door aan bijzondere mensen om jullie heen?



Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen · 422 10 124 · 11 september om 10:10 ·



Dove

JE BENT STERK GENOEG
JE BENT SLIM GENOEG
JE BENT MOOI GENOEG

Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen · 1.200 57 117 · 9 september om 15:10 ·



Dove

Heb jij nog ergens een leeg schrijfboekje? Gebruik deze om elke dag 3 goede dingen over jezelf te schrijven. Zo ben je veel bewuster bezig met wat je goed vindt aan jezelf. Ben jij hier al mee bezig?



Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen · 340 7 61 · 26 augustus om 11:42 ·

Dove (several posts)

Appendix 14

Ladies, wat mag er nooit ontbreken in jouw tas?



Dove: ladies what can.... (2013, Nov. 23)

Appendix 15

Dove
10 oktober

Hoewel uit onderzoek is gebleken dat vrouwen ongeveer 107 stuks aan kleding in hun kast hebben hangen, is dit nog steeds het geval bij veel vrouwen thuis. Ladies, is dit ook ZO herkenbaar?



Dove: nothing to wear (2013, Okt. 10)

Appendix 16



Marie Claire

Good news! Flats are so "in" for Spring 2014: <http://marie.cl/6189wgmR>

Vertaling bekijken

Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen · 63 3 4 · 9 september om 19:30 ·



Good news! Flats are in... (2013, Sept.9)

Appendix 17



Appendix 18



allowed to be seen (2013, Sept. 13)

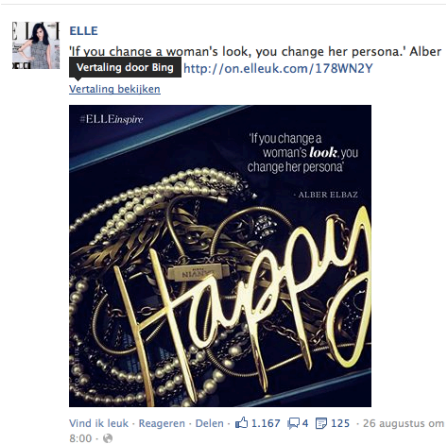
Cosmopolitan: you must never wear...
(2013, Nov. 6)

Appendix 19



A girl should be two things
(2013, Aug. 28)

Appendix 20



If you change a woman's look....
(2013, Aug. 26)

Appendix 21



A woman who.. (2013, Aug. 26)

Appendix 22



Fashion is... (2013, 18 Sept.)

Appendix 23



Pasris Hilton looks... (2013, 17 Aug.)

Appendix 24

 **ELLE** heeft een foto van 30 augustus 2013 toegevoegd aan zijn/haar tijdlijn.

Michelle Obama looks bloomin' lovely in her Tracy Reese dress at the Let Freedom Ring ceremony. We take a look back at her best looks to date <http://on.elleuk.com/17r0NMq>

Picture: GETTY
Vertaling bekijken



Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen ·  1.858  48  79 · 30 augustus om 12:55 · 

Michelle Obama looks bloomin lovely (2013, 30 Aug.)

Appendix 25

 **Vogue Nederland**

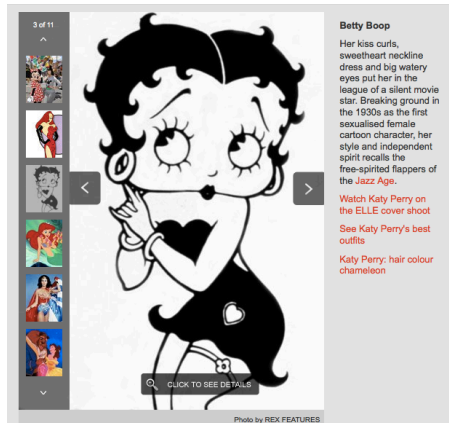
Wat droeg Alexa Chung voor de lancering van haar eerste boek 'It', gisteravond in Londen en wie kwamen haar feliciteren? <http://www.vogue.nl/people/partys/gallery/it-s-alexa-boeklancering>



Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen ·  31  2 · 5 september om 9:24 · 

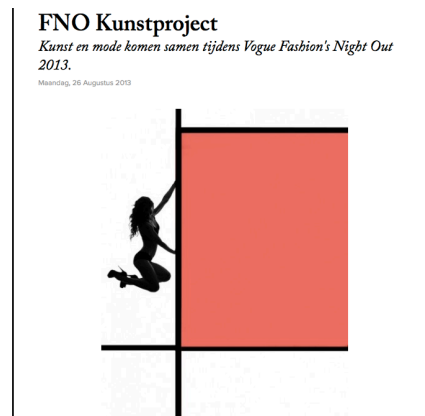
What did Alexa Chung wear for the launching of her first book? (2013, 5 Sept.)

Appendix 26



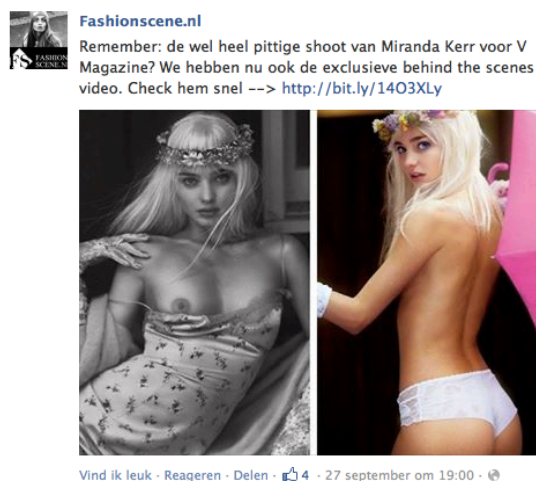
Celebrating the first sexualised female cartoon (2013, Aug.24)

Appendix 27



Vogue fashion (2013, Aug. 28)

Appendix 28



Porn style photoshoot (2013, 27 Sept.)

Appendix 29



Soap porn star in Pink panties
(2013, 30 Aug.)

Appendix 30



Jewelry (2013, 28 Aug.)

Appendix 31



Male objectification (2013, 22 Sept.)

Appendix 32



STUDY OF A NUDE MALE TORSO

Also a fitting title for a college class every woman should take. Prerequisite for life, yo!

Male objectification (2013, Sept. 22)

Appendix 33

**Cosmopolitan Magazine**
Just when he thinks he's seen it all...pull this sexy-bitch sex position out of your back pocket: <http://cosm.ag/6035wUoD>
[Vertaling bekijken](#)
Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen ·  285  41  21 · 14 september om 6:30 · 

Sexadvises (2013, 14 Sept.)

Appendix 34

[HOME](#) / [SEX EN LIEFDE](#) / [SEXMOVES DIE HIJ HELEMAAL NIKS VINDT](#)
Sexmoves die hij helemaal NIKS vindt
Lees en leer. Wellicht durft hij het niet te zeggen, maar dit vindt hij dus een grote turn-off in bed. Heus, geloof ons.

Bron: cosmopolitan.com.au



Cosmopolitan knows best (2013, Nov 8)

Appendix 35



Foto: Nick Onken

4 v/d 6

De baas in de slaapkamer spelen

Oké, zo nu en dan moet je natuurlijk wel het voortouw nemen, maar wees subtiel. Als je hem helemaal niets in laat brengen voelt-ie zich aangetast in z'n mannelijkheid. Men will be men. Wees dus dominant, maar laat hem nog steeds een beetje Christian Grey zijn. Als je begrijpt wat we bedoelen ;-).

Men will be men: be submissive. (2013, Nov. 8)

Appendix 36



Foto: Jeffrey Westbrook/Studio D

5 v/d 8

Drop

Vreemd genoeg is uit onderzoek gebleken dat het eten van drop hormonale veranderingen bij mannen en vrouwen teweeg brengt. Deze veranderingen zijn volgens een recente Britse studie zelfs zo heftig dat je sex-drive zakt naar een enorm dieptepunt. Ver van wegblijven dus.

Don't eat licorice (2013, Sept. 11)

Appendix 37



Cosmopolitan NL

Al geven mannen het niet zo snel toe, ook hij heeft weleens 'hoofdpijn'. Daarom: makkelijke manieren om zijn sex drive een boost te geven > <http://hrst.me/o>

Vind ik leuk · Reageren · Delen · 4 2 · 19 uur geleden in de buurt van Amsterdam ·

Headache (2013, 5 Nov.)