Harmful scripts.
Raunch femininity as the disguised reiteration of emphasized feminine goals: an exploration of young women's accounts of sexually explicit forms of public expression.

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Abstract

Women are subject to a number of societal recommendations about what it means to be an 'ideal' woman. These recommendations take the form of social scripts, constructing an idea of ideal femininity, which women must perform in order to be socially accepted and successful. 'Emphasized femininity', a white, Western, script of femininity is dominant and has been critiqued by feminists, social theorists, and individual women for the limits that it places on women's behaviour. As a result a number of alternative scripts of femininity have arisen.

These scripts can provide alternatives to restrictive understandings of female sexuality and beauty – they can serve to challenge 'appropriate' feminine behaviour and hence allow women to live more freely. Raunch femininity is a contemporary alternative that uses sexually explicit public performance, and encourages specific body and dress norms, in an attempt to challenge the norms of emphasized femininity.

This thesis looks at raunch femininity, specifically its norms of sexuality and beauty, in the hopes of understanding what the effects of such a script are on women's behaviour. Theoretical understandings and explanations of women's lives are often contradicted by reports that women provide of their lived experiences. For this reason, this thesis investigates the lived experiences of women who self-identify as subscribers to this script in order to assess to what extent superficial expressions of freedom have deeper effects on women's freedom.

The tension between theory and empirical reports is evident. However, in many cases, the reports of research participants reveal that the script of raunch femininity, like other scripts of feminine behaviour, has its own limits that women must abide with in order to be accepted. This thesis argues that these limits outweigh the benefits of this script.

CONTENTS

Introduction.

This thesis argues that women who use beauty and sexuality to appear empowered may in fact be actively advancing their own disempowerment. The thesis proposes that "scripts of femininity" - dominant narratives about the ideal expression of femininity - serve to keep women subordinate to men. Scripts of femininity are often divisive and limit the potential of women to understand themselves as a unified group. Scripts prevent women from exercising their potential to define themselves. Scripts are presented as a-historical when in fact, as Simone de Beauvoir pointed out over half a century ago, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (de Beauvoir 1988: 295).

Women learn to be women by observing other women performing femininity around them. This learning process involves the negotiation between warring definitions of femininity, and an acceptance of particular norms of behaviour and appearance. The sources of the representations of femininity are multiple and diverse, in addition, they are influenced by the social texts surrounding us – our peers, the media, education and movies. From these representations women select particular behavioural patterns, often selecting different elements from various places allowing "a range of discourses ... [to] converge on the female body" (Blood 2005: 51). Hegemonic and dominant discourses have the ability to suppress and control alternatives, by appearing as normal and 'the way it has always been'. At the same time, counter-hegemonic discourses can affect each individual's interpretation of the hegemonic discourse. Discourses influence the meanings that we derive from the action and speech of others (Mama, 1995: 98).

The body influences the way gender can be performed. Biological sex "not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs" (Butler 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 236). Bodies come to acquire meanings based on chosen and subconscious gender performances. Gender then is formed throughout ones lifetime and individuals are "continually in the process of becoming" (Budgeon 2003: 50). Individuals interpret how they should act from the discourses around them. In this way discourses resonate with, transmit, and translate societal power relations into embodied action.

Discourses do not exist in abstraction either (Blood 2005). They form the objects that they speak about but are also reformed and reformulated via the engagement of individuals with the power/knowledge behind them. The more normal or natural a discourse appears, the more powerful it is. Most people's subjectivity is constituted by the dominant discourse at any time. For example, if I saw myself as successful it would be linked to the current ideas around what one needs to have or have done to be a success. Likewise, if I consider myself to be a failure this will be linked to my inability to match the norms and access the key characteristics of success according to the dominant discourse.

A useful way to understand the concept of a 'discourse' is to look at discourses as scripts (Gagnon and Simon 1974 in Connell 2002: 93; Ussher 1997), or ways of performing one's gender, that individual actors subscribe to. The term 'gender', encompasses a series of scripts that require commitment and embodiment, and are performed on a public level. West and Zimmerman (1987) describe this performance as 'doing' one's gender. They argue that each person 'does' their gender as part of their 'situational management'; they perform it to ensure that they are understandable to those around them in relation to common ideas of sex appropriate behaviour and embodiment (West and Zimmerman 1987: 127). So in this way, gender is not an abstract performance but is 'a situated doing'. It is performed for a present or imaginary audience, who are aware of the common rules and accepted ideas (West and Zimmerman 1987: 126).

The process of becoming is not solitary. The scripts of gender are sourced from and censored by those around us. Gender is a social process, not an individual attribute. Irving Goffman (1959: 240) takes a "dramaturgical approach" to gender. Goffman describes "interaction as a performance shaped by environment and audience, constructed to provide others with impressions that are consonant with the desired goals of the actor" (Goffman 1959: 17). Actors are able to consider and calculate their behaviour based on a range of expected impressions and based on the audience they expect to perform for (Berkowitz 2006: 587). Ann Oakley (1972) states that gender then, is formed through social interaction, rather than created by individual people. In addition it is not a fixed attribute; it can change over time and between individuals. Performances of gender create the idea of gender, and without gender performances there would be no 'gender' at all (Butler 1990 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 420).

> [T]o be a man, or a woman, a boy or a girl, is as much a function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals (Oakley 1972: 158 in Brake 1982).

Gender requires constant repetition to be coherent. To achieve these goals, women must perform their femininity in various ways, continually constructing their bodies as projects. A standard performance is formulated by each woman, which is aimed at inducing particular responses to their femininity or masculinity, and allowing the audience to categorise and understand that performance (Goffman 1959: 22). Spectators in the setting are thus able to understand and make inferences about each person, based on "projected character traits that have normative meanings" (Berkowitz 2006: 587).

> To present a compelling front the individual must fill the duties of the selected or desired social role and communicate the activities and characteristics of the role to other people in a consistent manner (Berkowitz 2006:587 - 588).

Gender performances are deemed appropriate and acceptable by the audience based on the expected social roles of performers. Despite the individual's attempts to create an original gender message, societal messages may be dominant; individuals may not be aware that they are

performing a particular script, or of the consequent impressions that they are giving off to others (Goffman 1959: 35, 208). One individual performance which operates outside of the dominant gender norm is unlikely to be able fundamentally to challenge or transform these norms (Haug 1999: 197).

Gender can thus be understood as a project—sometimes continuous and performed daily. "The gender order marks out places for bodies, allocates different resources, provides interpretations" (Connell 2002: 94). Gender is a bodily action and the body becomes a "medium through which ... cultural norms of femininity are expressed" (Budgeon 2003: 39). A set of ideal criteria come to be perceived as steps to 'achieving' femininity, which may be performed consciously (for example pursuing particular career types because they are 'feminine') or unconsciously (particular gestures and ways of moving for example). Behaviour is selected from a spectrum of behavioural traits and existing social roles that have already been gendered (Budgeon 2003: 37). The constant reiteration of common fronts allows spectators to classify and categorise people into particular 'types' of women or men. The actors internalise and repeat these standard 'fronts', which facilitate the perpetuation and reinforcement of the gender regime in place (Butler 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 244; Goffman 1959: 22). Each individual enacts macro power relations upon their own body such that even without overt restrictions, they will come to replicate the norms suggested by these relations (Foucault 1981).

In contemporary society, men and women are viewed as essentially, and naturally, different. By the same token, femininity and masculinity are portrayed as dichotomous. Activities are normatively gendered; some are cast as more masculine (active sports, big movements, loud or brash manners of speaking) and others are portrayed as feminine traits (subservience, passivity, politeness). Judith Butler refers to this as the manner in which the body is 'stylised' via gestures, movements and ways of being, with the aim of producing an "abiding gendered self" (Butler 1990 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 421). These standards around sex and sexuality have the effect of mapping gender onto heterosexuality such that men must act 'masculine' and women must act 'feminine' (Reddy and Dunne 2007: 160). This makes it seem as though sex causes gender, and because of sex differences, heterosexuality is assumed to be 'normal' or 'natural' sexual behaviour (Reddy and Dunne 2007: 162). In a patriarchal context the idea of 'woman' has been created as simultaneously inferior and threatening to men's dominance, thus, there are numerous techniques of the body that serve to keep women under control (King 2004: 30).

> [I]f, in doing gender, men are also doing dominance and women are doing deference...the resultant social order which supposedly reflects 'natural differences', is a powerful reinforcer and legitimator of hierarchical arrangements (West and Zimmerman 1987: 146).

Gender often appears static as a result of the constant repetition of particular performances. Drag, or cross-dressing, parodies this assumption by revealing the arbitrariness of

the distinctions between masculine and feminine characteristics (Butler 1990 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 418). This gender parody reveals that there is not a 'true' gender to which all people can or should subscribe, but rather that there are a number of scripts to select from.

Anthony Giddens describes this as 'reflexive regulation' whereby the body becomes a project with which the individual can creatively engage and shape (Giddens 1991: 14). Shelley Budgeon states that although women have been positioned as mediums through which "oppressive cultural norms of femininity are expressed" (Budgeon 2003: 39) and have thus often been deprived of their agency they are not just passive victims of these norms. She further suggests that when we prioritize the power of representations of the body we "dissolve the active role of the subject in generating the meanings attached to their own embodied identity". We begin to pathologise the way that women read images - as though they blindly accept and apply them to their own bodies (Ibid: 42).

Gender is not a neutral or static identity category, but is a performance. "Dominant forms of subjectivity (or identity) are maintained, not through physical restraints or coercion, but through self-surveillance and self-correction to social norms" (Blood 2005: 55). This process is nevertheless powerfully influential enabling types of gender performances to become solidified so that they appear as objective, achieved realities. But in describing them as performances, we recognize the partial in-authenticity of what we are being presented with (Brook 1999: 113). Emphasized femininity is one of these types. Raunch femininity is another. As women are increasingly more socially empowered, normative controls become crucial to maintaining gender inequality - thus, in contemporary times the ideals of emphasized feminine beauty are increasingly used to control women (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 2003: 713). Women become 'docile bodies' controlled by social norms (Tyner and Ogle 2007: 77).

Emphasized femininity is a script of femininity that requires women to be heterosexual and sexually pure. It encourages the values of caring and passivity in women, and discourages qualities such as ambition or athleticism. Physically, it suggests that the slender, beautiful body is central to femininity. The clothing that women who perform this script wear should cover the body, only revealing enough skin to entice men's attention. The body should only be minimally revealed, to ensure that the emphasized feminine woman does not appear sexual. Women's sexuality, in this script, is for men and for reproductive purposes only. It remains heterosexual to ensure the nuclear family is preserved and it remains pure to avoid the 'dangers' of unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. Chapter one provides a detailed discussion of emphasized femininity.

Raunch femininity is posited as a reaction to or challenge to emphasized femininity by discouraging passivity in women and devaluing the domestic realm. Physically, the slender body remains important, but it is combined with fitness in order to ensure that it is not passive, but

athletic. Raunch feminine clothing is revealing, ensuring that the maximum amount of skin is revealed to entice the male gaze in an attempt to take control over it. Heterosexuality remains the norm, but same-sex sexuality is permitted and encouraged within this script, as part of women's sexual development. Sexual purity is considered outdated and women are able to have more sexual partners, and have sex for their own pleasure rather than for reproduction. Chapters two and three describe the elements of raunch feminine sexuality and raunch feminine beauty in more detail. This script is often performed in a very particular context.

Context

Rhodes University, established in 1904, is a small university in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. With approximately one lecturer per fifteen students Rhodes ensures that all students are given high levels of attention to ensure their academic success. Students at Rhodes are from a diversity of backgrounds, and many students are from the surrounding Southern African countries[1]. There are also a number of overseas students ensuring that Rhodes is multicultural and cosmopolitan. Students are from a diversity of backgrounds including urban, rural, public and private high schools, and families from diverse economic backgrounds[2]. Twenty percent of the student body is postgraduate, and Rhodes aims to increase this number to twenty-five percent in the future. Most (fifty-five percent in 2008) of the approximately 6000 students live in the University's 39 residences, but some students live off campus in houses or flats known as 'digs'[3]. Through the Oppidan committee, digs students are incorporated with the University through various sporting and cultural activities. Rhodes students are thus not a homogenous group. More than half of the students are women. These young women have access to intellectual freedom in ways that women four or five decades ago would not have been able to have. It is this subsection of young women who attend "Dress to Get Laid" parties, which I will now describe in more detail.

Dress to Get Laid parties are held at a digs in Grahamstown where five male Rhodes students live. The house has been named *The Bunker* as the property that it is on has a driveway that slopes down towards the house, making only some parts of the house visible from the street. This house is in a residential area, and is not part of Rhodes property. In 2007 all 5 male residents of *The Bunker* were white. The invitation process for the parties works as follows: The five male residents of the house invite any women that they find attractive to the party. The young women who have been directly invited are then permitted to invite any of their friends who are interested. If neither you, nor your friends, are invited it is possible for you to attend (if you are a female and attractive). The parties are heteronormative with the emphasis being on men inviting women. Non-invited males may not attend the party. As a result, the parties are mainly attended by

[1] International Youth Leadership Network. Accessed September 2008. http://network.civicconcepts.org/index.php/iyln/partner-universities/pu-listing/917-south-africa/82-rhodes-university
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

women. If you do not dress according to the theme, you will be asked to leave by the 5 men in the house.

At the parties a punch is provided but the sheer volume of people attending the parties means that it does not last long; individuals thus bring their own alcohol to the parties and consume it on the property. Grahamstown is a town notorious for drinking to excess and these subscribers embody this lifestyle. As a result of the house being in a residential area, the parties are required to finish by 12 midnight in order to reduce the disturbance to the neighbours. Thus, after 12 midnight, the majority of the attendees leave the party and make their way to the various pubs and nightclubs in Grahamstown. The parties happen three to four times per year. In 2007 there were three parties: *Dress to Get Laid*, *Dress to Get Laid 'Twice'*, and *Dress to Get Laid, For the Last Time*. These titles serve as a dress code for the people attending.

Photographers for party websites are common at the Dress to Get Laid parties. These photographers take photos of party participants and upload them onto the internet, where the photos become available for public viewing. Often photographers have a set number of photos to take at each party in order to meet their responsibilities to their companies, thus encouraging individuals to pose is common. Websites such as www.38.co.za and www.thunda.com are popular sites for viewing the photos of the parties.

In the photographs that were available of the Dress to Get Laid parties some men wore only their boxer shorts and a vest; other men wore only a Speedo swimming costume. In more extreme cases, the young men attending the parties dress completely ridiculously, wearing lampshades on their heads or Spartan warrior outfits. This seems to communicate that the men who are attending these parties do not feel pressured to dress in any one style or in accordance with 'sexual' clothing. In contrast, the women who attend these parties characteristically wear revealing clothing, for example one woman only wearing nipple caps underneath her jacket. Others wear more common 'sexy' dress up outfits, which reference pornographic culture, such as French maid costumes, Playboy bunny ears and bunny suits and cowboy hats with knee high boots. Common activities for women at these parties include flashing and revealing parts of the body in an effort to garner the gaze (Lynch 2007). Kennedy (1993: 98 in Lynch 2007: 186) suggests that the degree of sexiness of clothing is related to the social setting in which the outfit is being worn. For instance, wearing a swimsuit on the beach is different from wearing it to a party. The "best dressed" man and woman win a prize at Dress to Get Laid parties.

The young women who enthusiastically and regularly participate in events like these "Dress to Get Laid" parties can be described as subscribers to what Ariel Levy (2006) has termed 'raunch culture' which entails a very particular script of femininity – 'raunch femininity'. In this thesis I explore the lived experiences of a group of subscribers to 'raunch femininity'.

The Study.

The study investigates how eight research participants negotiate warring scripts of femininity and whether what they describe reflects broader feminist and theoretical perspectives on the subject. The excerpts that I will be using were sourced as follows: The Dress to Get Laid party was recorded on a website called www.38.co.za and possible female participants for a diary study were identified in these photographs. I contacted some 20 young women and ten replied. They were asked whether they felt themselves to be a part of 'raunch culture' and if they did so self-identify then they were asked to keep a diary describing any facets of their lives that might make reference to femininity, or life as a woman. Eight participants agreed to participate, of which only seven fully participated. The participants were all between the ages of 20 and 25 and were all students at Rhodes University.

I selected my research participants because they appeared often in various degrees of undress in the photographs that were freely available on the internet. This suggested to me that they were not ashamed of their attendance at parties with an explicit sexual theme, or of their own bodies or sexuality. The participants were all white young women, four were blonde and four were brunette. They were all slender. In 2007 some of them were completing their first degree and others were pursuing their second (postgraduate) degrees. All of them had been at Rhodes University for the duration of their studies.

I contacted each individual who expressed interest in participating and set up an initial meeting to ensure that each participant was aware of the nature of and comfortable with the project, and to ensure that they signed a consent form so that I could use their writing in my research. During this meeting the explanation of raunch femininity that I provided was brief, as I did not want to shape their writing unnecessarily. At this meeting each participant drew an email address and password from a hat, preserving their anonymity. In this hat were the numbers one to ten, however because there were only 8 participants there is no participant 1, and there is no participant 10.

In a technique described by Linda Bell (1998: 72) as 'solicited diaries', participants were asked to keep diaries over a period of seven weeks in which they described and reflected on occasions when they dressed or behaved in ways that might be thought to exemplify some of the features of raunch femininity. Each week each participant was required to submit (at least) one entry describing her experience as a woman. The aim of solicited diaries is to "tap into material, recorded by the diarist, which may be regarded as private or personal" (Ibid: 73). The diary entries were analysed with the purpose of identifying common and dominant themes. These were then used as the basis for a group interview and themed free writing in order to gain an insight into how the researcher's interpretations of the diaries compared with the interpretations generated by participants in a process of interaction with one another. My interest here was in recording and

providing an analysis of how these women talk about, and understand themselves. In particular I was interested in providing an account of how these self-descriptions and interpretations might be understood as either reinforcing or contesting relations of domination and subordination. As Amina Mama says,

> [i]t is through the process of identifying discourses that we begin to chart the social life of the research participants and elaborate upon this with reference to other sources (1995:99).

The diary entries are thus labelled "participant 2" through to "participant 9". These are labelled "diary entry" within the text. From these excerpts I developed the themes around which I structured my analysis. I hoped that the themes would begin to reveal something about the way that a subscriber to raunch femininity experiences her life and body, with reference to broader theoretical claims about women's freedom.

There are a number of problems with my choice of research process. Solicited diaries are not always wholly reflective of how the individual may feel, because participants were aware that they were writing something that I, as a researcher, was going to read critically. However, many of the diary entries were extremely detailed, both about the participants' feelings and their sexual experiences. Another problem with solicited diaries is that they require a large amount of effort from the research participants, who are not always as interested in the research as the researcher. One participant unfortunately only submitted one diary entry and did not reply to any further contact. Overall, however, I found that most of my research participants used the diary process to openly reveal intimate details about their lives. The volume of material provided by the diary entries provides a useful augmentation to the theoretical analysis of raunch femininity. I feel that performing the study over a longer period of time may have been useful in that participants may have become more at ease in communicating their ideas to me. However, I also feel that for some participants, this may have been seen as too much of a commitment and thus they would have been discouraged from participating at all.

In addition to solicited diary entries, at two further meetings, participants wrote two pieces of free writing - one on 'what sexy means' and the other on 'my favourite outfit'. In these meetings participants were given the theme and were given half an hour to write all that they could on this topic without interruption. The idea was that each person wrote whatever came to mind, and thought freely about the topic. This free writing was also anonymous. For this reason I have labelled these entries as "participant I" through to "participant VIII". These are labelled "free writing" within the text. The themed nature of these pieces of writing arose from the diary entries and thus the participants were able to elaborate in more detail on themes that they themselves had described and introduced.

The final material that was sourced from the participants was a transcript from a group interview. During this interview I was obviously aware of who these participants were and so I will use the first letter of their name, followed by "group interview" rather than their full name. This group interview was semi-structured in that I had again developed several themes that I wanted to ask questions about, but there was a great deal of flexibility in this process. I phrased a question and allowed the participants to talk amongst themselves until each question was exhausted. This allowed for the participants to shape the conversation according to their choices. A limit to this process is that group interviews have the potential to allow one person to dominate the group (Fontana and Frey 2000: 652). In the group interview, A did tend to dominate, which may have discouraged others from describing different feelings.

The analysis of the materials was complex. At first I sought to identify themes in order to structure the way that I went about my theoretical research. I considered the material as a "sociology of stories" (Plummer 1995: 19) and materials were considered as individuals telling stories about themselves. Each story involves the individual telling herself a story about how she experiences the world, and thus involves both truth and fiction (Plummer 1995: 5). These stories, I believe, are reflections of the ways that participants negotiate the world around them. Thus each entry or excerpt revealed a truth about the participant and something about the world as they perceived it. I take a social constructionist position, in that I view individuals as both constituted by and constituting the world around them. Through their constitution of the world, individuals negotiate a variety of scripts of gender, sexuality, beauty and appropriate performance and often reinforce dominant societal scripts without being aware of it (Foucault 1981). Through this negotiation they create meaning, and this meaning is important to assess whether or not raunch enables them to live more empowered lives.

Throughout the process I did my best to use the excerpts in a way that was sensitive to their origin. These were intimate thoughts and I think that the anonymity of the excerpts, in all but the group interview, allowed me to approach them in a sensitive and honest fashion. Although I do not identify with raunch femininity, I am situated within the same social context as these women. I am a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman studying women who are very much like myself. At times this made the process very difficult as I could empathise with the feelings expressed by participants. In addition, at times I found some of their entries very difficult, because of their views about the position of women in contemporary society. However, I do feel that I was able to reflect on, and represent, what they were saying from the position of researcher, because of my theoretical research on the themes that their entries provided.

There are a number of feminist theorists who see raunch femininity as the epitome of progress for women. These theorists argue that emphasized femininity imposed restrictions on women that rendered them immobile, and that raunch can provide women with a way to break free of that immobility. Its emphasis on female-centred sexuality could increase the control that

women have over their sexual encounters. Its emphasis on the celebration of the female body can begin to challenge restrictive understandings of beauty. Using excerpts from the participants, this thesis attempts to show that emphasized femininity provides an extremely narrow and limiting script for young women to follow, but that raunch femininity does not break as far away from these limits as it initially appears to. Women who subscribe to raunch femininity remain passive (both sexually and physically) and dependent on men for their self-esteem.

In order to assess these arguments it is necessary for the thesis to take the following form. First, I will describe and explain emphasized femininity in order to make clear that scripts of femininity are able to restrict and influence women's lives in destructive ways. The chapters that follow will attempt to assess whether raunch femininity is able to break free of the restrictions that the script of emphasized femininity creates. Chapter 2 will focus on raunch feminine sexuality and chapter 3 will focus on raunch feminine beauty. The final chapter will provide the conclusions to this exploration: that whilst raunch femininity provides some challenges to emphasized femininity, it provides an equally limiting script that women feel compelled to follow.

Emphasized femininity.

The ideal, or emphasised, feminine is a particular script of idealised traits that women learn to perform throughout their lives in order to become a woman (Connell 1987: 183). These ideal traits and behavioural patterns are culturally specific and influenced by race, class, ethnicity and sexuality. Within each specific context however, the emphasised feminine appears as universal and overarching (Adams and Bettis 2003: 75). Butler describes this as 'sedimentation' of gender norms, which serve to create the phenomenon of a 'real woman' (Butler 1990 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 420). Those who choose to reject the ideal are still subject to social understandings of the ideal and thus may face social sanctions in the form of labelling ('tomboy') or a restriction of their rebellion ('good girls do not do that').

The concept of stereotyping is useful throughout my analysis of emphasized femininity. Emphasized femininity itself is a mass of stereotypes about the way that women 'should' be. Sandra Bartky (1990), Greer Litton Fox (1977), Michel Foucault (1980) and others have described the ability of stereotypes to control individuals, because of the normalising effect that they have. They do not require reinforcement from an authority or power, but convince their subscribers that they are 'right' and thus are able to be self-reinforced (Bordo 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 253). Power is not centralised but is enforced by these 'normalising' features and regulations (Bordo 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 253). Each person becomes their own prisoner and guard making it very difficult to break free of expected gender roles. Susan Bordo refers to this as social 'normalisation' and suggests that this works "by setting up standards or 'norms' against which individuals continually measure, judge, 'discipline' and 'correct' their behaviour and presentation of self" (Bordo 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 255, Note 2).

The ideal that I will be describing is a very Western, white form of this ideal. In another context, emphasized femininity could be different. Many theorists argue that emphasised femininity is both disempowering and unsafe for women (Reddy and Dunne 2007; Bartky 1990; Young 2005; Wolf 1991). The various traits that have been described as feminine in the Western world have generally reinforced three qualities in women. Historically, these have been purity, passivity and dependency (on men). Inherent within western emphasized femininity is subordination, an orientation towards accommodating the needs and interests of men, domesticity, and an emphasis on compliance, nurturing and empathy (Berkowitz 2006: 586). These have tied into relations of power, where women are defined as subservient to men and viewed as men's possessions. Feminist theorists have argued that constructing women's identities around learning to please men, sexually and visually, is central to the disempowerment of women (Bordo 2004: 182).

In this section of my paper I will elaborate on emphasized feminine norms of sexuality and beauty, and how they have come to weaken women's ability to define their own lives. I will begin

by making clear the central elements of the requirements of feminine sexuality. I will then proceed to show in what way these can be thought to have negative effects on women. Next, I will describe the links between emphasized feminine sexuality and the requirements of feminine beauty, showing that for a woman to be acceptably sexual in the current gender regime, she must be attractive to men. The elements of emphasised, feminine beauty will be discussed in depth as will the negative effects that they have on women.

The chapter argues that emphasized femininity is both harmful to women's authentic self-definition and motility, and that it puts them at risk. Women's difficult experiences of their bodies are not internally created but are formed through interaction with social norms which entail a constant process of self-correction (Blood 2005). Furthermore, emphasized femininity serves to reinforce passivity and dependency. If women comply with restrictive norms of sexuality and beauty they will be unable effectively to use the freedoms that democracy and various feminist movements have granted them. Thus, it will become clear that a new type of 'ideal' is required to grant women the empowerment they desire.

Emphasized feminine sexuality.

Discourses around sexuality help to constitute and define sexual practices and how women come to understand themselves within those practices. The way in which gender is performed and lived is influenced and controlled by the sexual regime or hegemony of a particular cultural context. Foucault argued that how we come to act out and embody our sexuality is by these discourses and the expected social roles based on the gender regime in place (1979: 105). Social constructionist feminism suggests that "people learn rules that tell them how to have sex, whom they may have it with [and] what activities will be pleasurable" (Woodward 1997: 208). Sexual scripts are extremely powerful, because acting outside of them can incur social sanction and labelling. Often then, women and men's sexuality replicates expected gender performances (Woodward 1997: 208). Sexuality is part of the script of emphasized femininity. The individual acting within these regimes of sexuality must make choices based on, and shaped by, the limits of that regime (Connell 2002: 94). Sexuality is therefore not only an individual, but also a social phenomenon.

Emphasized feminine sexuality has two pivotal characteristics, which impose very particular restraints and restrictions on women's sexuality. First, women are expected to be heterosexual, and part of a hierarchic heterosexual schema. They should, at all times, use their sexuality in support of heterosexuality in order to maintain the status quo. Second, women should be sexually pure. Chastity and virginity are admired as emphasized feminine traits, and related to chastity, women should not be sexually desirous, but should be desirable to men. They should not express or act on their own desire, unless it is in a safe, monogamous/marital relationship (and

even then, there are limits). In the script of emphasised femininity, women's sexuality is not for themselves. In the section that follows, I will discuss each of these elements showing that,

> [t]o become and remain subjects [women] must negotiate not only the regulatory conventions of performance but also the ways in which the disciplining male gaze attempts to reduce them to no more than the docile (hetero)-sexualised object of desire (Brook 1999: 112).

Many feminists have argued that this is not an ideal state of affairs. In fact, they argue that it is dangerous and disempowering for women. In every re-enactment of emphasised feminine sexuality, women cement their place as subordinate to men (Haug 1999). Women's sexuality is contradictory in both contesting men's power, and contributing to its continued success, through women constituting themselves as acceptably feminine (Ramazanoglu and Holland 1993: 260). Although women's sexuality itself is a challenge to the heterosexual status quo, emphasized feminine sexuality reinforces it.

Heterosexuality

Heterosexuality and heteronormativity are the foundations of the current sexual regime; alternative sexualities are defined as deviant and 'other'. The 'heterosexual imperative' (Butler 1993) provides a set of (heterosexual) standards against which young women are obliged to measure themselves and to constitute their identities in line with. It allows certain types of gender performances and disallows others (Butler 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 236). In this way, the dominance of heterosexuality influences the way that sexuality and gender become embodied (Butler 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 243).

The current gender regime differentiates men from women, in all elements of their life. Men and women are viewed as different, with distinct biological drives and needs; these 'natural' biological differences are translated into acceptable social and sexual roles. Sexual scripts in this context are thus based on the understanding of differences between men and women, and their intended 'correct' sexual roles. Heterosexual sexual scripts enforce female passivity and male assertiveness, constructing men as dominant and women as subordinate (Woodward 1997: 208). Heterosexuality defines the way that 'good' sex happens, by positioning the male as the initiator and controller of sex, and the female as the passive recipient of sex. Thus sexual acts are defined as those performed by men, on women (Gatens in Price and Shildrick 1999: 232). Heterosexuality orientates women's sexuality around male pleasure and desires.

Women's performance of emphasised femininity requires constant repetition of these heterosexual/heterosexist norms (Butler in Price and Shildrick 1999: 243), and thus requires them to put themselves second in their sexual relations with men. 'Sex', in a heterosexual framework, is inextricably tied to penetration and reproduction – an activity which only provides 30% of women with sexual pleasure, according to Dee Graham's 1994 study (Oriel 2005: 399). It is never aimed

primarily at fulfilling the woman's physical needs, but (for women) is oriented around getting and keeping a man for marriage and reproduction. Ine Vanwesenbeeck argues that women are relatively powerless in heterosexual relationships (in Segal 1997: 171). Conventional heterosexuality enforces a number of 'truths' about women's place in the sexual realm and "expresses male desires and silences female desire" (Ramazanoglu and Holland 1993: 245 and Wilton 2004: 43). Activities such as masturbation, or homosexual sex, are regarded as deviant and considered to be the opposite of what an ideally feminine woman would do (Seymour 1998).

Heterosexuality is not only experienced or enforced as compulsory, but it is also hierarchical. Women must thus compete for men's attention because those women that acquiesce with male defined standards of sexuality are rewarded (by being considered desirable by males) and more able to be successful than other women who do not (Hamilton 2007: 147 and Seymour 1998: 33). This is because men have access to more resources than women in most, if not all, contexts. In order to ensure their access to resources and their place as privileged women, women must perform their gender and sexuality in a way that is pleasing to men (Hamilton 2007: 149). These roles shape the sexual identities of the women who perform them and serve to reinforce heterosexuality as the norm (Jackson 1996: 63). Heterosexuality is not experienced as an actively achieved identity, but rather as a state of being, which reinforces its hegemony and compulsory status (Wilton 2004: 43). Thus, each performance of one's gender within this framework serves to reinforce the division of power between heterosexual and other sexualities, and between men and women (Berkowitz 2006: 587, Haug 1999: 196 - 197). When women perform emphasized feminine sexuality, they reinforce an instrumental view of their sexuality that centres it on accessing men's attention, or reproducing for men (Bhana, Morrell, Hearn and Moletsane 2007: 134).

Women experience pressure to perform to these scripts, which ultimately do little to advance their own needs or pleasure. Emphasized femininity reinforces heterosexuality as the correct, natural, or innate state of affairs. Adrienne Rich argues that heterosexuality is none of these things, but rather is designed to perpetuate male privilege (Rich 1980 in Berkowitz 2006: 587). It does so through its institutionalisation in the gendered division of labour. Cultural gender roles can embed hierarchical relations between genders and cultural norms are often used to police women's sexuality ensuring that it is limited to marriage and motherhood (Bhana et al 2007: 135). Women's sexual choices and sexual identities are limited by this script. Disempowerment becomes "integral to the performance of heterosexual femininity" (Reddy and Dunne 2007: 168). Heterosexual sex therefore establishes and reinforces male domination.

Narratives of heterosexuality tell women three things: women must fight to get and keep a man, they must not trust other women because they will be competing for the same men, and this should be experienced as fun (McRobbie 2000: 85). Women are not always immediately able to be successful in garnering male sexual attention. They must constantly perform in a particular way, and compete with one another, in order to gain competence as a 'heterosexual woman' (Haug

1999: 141). Their competition with one another for men's attention reinforces their position as commodified exchange objects within heterosexuality (Haug 1999: 147). Women are thus pitted against each other and see one another as competitors rather than allies (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 2003: 723). When women participate in this competition, through beauty techniques and gendered performances, they reinforce the creation of themselves as sexual objects, rather than sexual subjects (Haug 1999: 131).

Heterosexual sexuality relies on stereotypes about men and women's places in the sexual arena. Bartky (1990) argues that this is detrimental to women's ability to make autonomous sexual choices. Gendered sexual stereotypes make it extremely difficult to recognise the rights of women to rearticulate the sexual context (Bartky 1990: 24). If women are presumed to have a set sexual role, and this is naturalised to the extent that it becomes 'normal', then women who would like to do otherwise are regarded as deviant, and the sexual regime is not challenged.

Sexual Purity

All female sexuality, including reproductive sexuality, has at times itself been cast as deviant – something that women should do but never talk about (Dyer 1997: 29). Emphasised femininity holds virginity and chastity as extremely important (Reddy and Dunne 2007: 166). The emphasis is on feminine self-control; femininity comes with a duty not to 'let oneself go' (Ferguson 1982: 70). Historically, women have been expected to be sexually pure and chaste in order to avoid shame for their families and husbands. Emphasized femininity does not suggest that women actively search for sex, or sexual partners; rather women should wait for men to find them desirable.

White women's sexuality has been represented as restricted, passive and the most sexually pure. This is in contrast with men's and black women's sexuality which is frequently portrayed as insatiable, deviant and powerful. White women are required to appear racially pure and any sexual desires, or deviance, are seen as destroying that purity and as a move away from whiteness (Dyer 1997: 29). In short, a Madonna/Whore distinction is created where white sexuality is the only pure form of sexuality. White women who do transgress this sexual purity boundary are seen as challengers to idealised feminine purity and the very labelling of their sexuality as deviant can serve to reinforce stereotypical understandings of whiteness (hooks in Dyer 1997: 29).

Women are taught that their sexuality is dangerous (Tolman 2002). The danger in their sexuality is portrayed as twofold - it is both physically dangerous and dangerous to their social position. The physical danger arises through the chance of rape, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), increased chance of cervical cancer (Braun and Gavey 1999) and unwanted pregnancy that can occur if women pursue their sexuality. Sexual purity extends to the avoidance of contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the ideal woman thus does not

have many sexual partners, nor does she have any STDs (Braun and Gavey 1999: 204). The norm of women's purity entails their passivity and ensures that women are not dangerously sexual. The ideological danger is posed by the challenge that sexually desirous women pose to the social order, gendered division of labour and nuclear family (Tolman 2002). If heterosexuality is premised on men as desiring and dominant, then for women to express similar inclinations would challenge the gender order that is based on supposed biological difference. Emphasized femininity entails that women should not know about, or talk about, sex. They should not have sex outside of monogamous (preferably marital relationships) and should not be promiscuous.

The discourse of 'romance' is part of emphasised femininity. Love is associated with sexual purity and romance, whereas desire is associated with sexual deviance. Desire is considered to be masculine. Even talking about sexuality, for women, is seen as something brazen and dangerous. Women are limited by sexual scripts that tell them that they should only be concerned with romance and monogamy, rather that sex for sex's sake. Shakila Reddy and Máiréad Dunne argue that 'love' or the quest for love was used by young women to legitimate their sexual acts and their dependency on men to give love removed their ability to assert their own sexual desires and safety needs (Reddy and Dunne 2007: 163).

All women are encouraged to act out their sexuality in a way that suggests their chastity and purity. Hegemonic masculinity emphasises men's virility and sexual drive, and for women to have these same desires is problematic for the security of compulsory heterosexuality. If women were to have the same desires as men, this would remove the foundations of heterosexuality that suggest a biological difference between men and women. Emphasized femininity suggests that women should not act on their desires, nor should they talk about sexual desire with anyone. To even begin to conceptualise desire, is already to break out of the bounds of acceptable female sexuality. Heterosexuality thus situates the act of desiring with men, and the position of being desirable with women (Wilton 2004: 64). Thus, an important element of the 'ideal feminine' woman's sexuality is her lack of desire, or her control over the little desire that she does have.

The social pressure to remain innocent and chaste, results in the fear of labels like 'cheap' and 'loose' and 'slut' (Reddy and Dunne 2007: 165). A sexual double standard persists whereby women who have multiple sexual partners are viewed as deviant, dangerous and unfeminine and men are viewed as successful for performing the same activity (McRobbie 2000; Ussher 1997: 21). The Madonna/whore discourse draws on understandings of Christian morality to limit women's sexuality so that they are not 'dangerous' to themselves and others (Ussher 1997). Promiscuity is regarded as careless and dangerous. In addition, it is contradictory to the notion of femininity that suggests that women should have long, caring and lasting relationships (Leahy 1994: 54). A reputation as a sexual creature is regarded as something to avoid – it is almost better to be seen as 'frigid' than as a 'slut'.

In Reddy and Dunne's 2007 study, women believed that speaking about sexuality or their sexual needs with their partners would lead them to be perceived as knowledgeable about sex, sexually impure and consequently make them unattractive to their partners (Reddy and Dunne 2007: 164). According to Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland (1993: 253) the ability to reflect on and talk about sexual relationships is linked to the possibility of negotiating change and power within them. Asserting one's own sexual desires is a powerful way to break free of restrictive sexual conditions (Ramazanoglu and Holland 1993: 255), but emphasized femininity does not allow for this discussion or articulation. This emphasis on women's desirelessness in relation to men reinforces the division between active and passive (Berger 1972) - "men are invited to desire women by actively looking at images of them, women to identify with the images passively looked at" (Easthope 1990: 136 - 137). Despite feeling constantly pressured to have sex, women become unable to define the terms under which they do have it (Tolman 2002, Reddy and Dunne 2007).

Emphasized femininity presents us with a picture of women as heterosexual, sexually pure and desireless. It decentres women's sexuality; women's sexuality becomes wholly orientated around men's needs (Levy 2006: 63). Each performance of heterosexual sexuality reinforces women's place as passive and subordinate. The emphasis on their sexual purity reinforces their passivity when it comes to negotiating the way that sex happens. This can lead to sex happening to women in a number of ways that they do not enjoy, or to a feeling of disconnectedness with sexual experiences (Tolman 2002). The lack of allowance for women's sexual desire has the effect of putting men's sexuality at the centre of their sexual identities. Women are therefore very often unable to articulate a sexual identity outside of men (Levy 2006: 63). The sexual double standard, and the lack of discussion of female sexuality, means that women must make a difficult choice between a number of unsatisfying options. They must constantly balance on the tightrope of acceptable feminine sexuality; it is a balance between being depicted as a sex object and thus devoid of sexual desire, and sexually desirous 'sluts' or 'whores' (Lees 1993 in Reddy and Dunne 2007: 168).

Thus the construction of the ideal feminine as one that is heterosexual and sexually pure removes women's power to negotiate the conditions of their sexuality. It becomes male-governed and unsafe. It results in a lack of self-determination and a sense that by definition women are doomed to be a particular way and make specific choices based on that fact. Emphasized feminine sexuality is male-orientated and aimed at male pleasure. It is also linked to, and reinforced by, understandings of feminine beauty.

It is essential, according to emphasized femininity, to be beautiful to be desirable. The tethers between prevailing standards of beauty and feminine sexuality ensure that women are restricted to a small number of things, and are relegated to the performance of stereotypical understandings of their gender. In this section of the chapter I will look at the standards and norms of emphasised feminine beauty in more detail to elucidate exactly how they ensure that

women are unable to have self-esteem, active motility and a sense of themselves as individually worthy.

Emphasized Feminine Beauty.

Emphasized feminine beauty is tied to emphasized feminine sexuality by the requirement of desirability to men. Women's beauty, much like their sexuality, is constructed as ideally for men, not for themselves. Men have control over who is considered beautiful and over the rewards that beautiful women can access. Thus, the requirements of beauty and emphasized feminine sexuality ensure that women must please men.

Beauty, or being beautiful, is an essential part of emphasised femininity. Women must, according to emphasized femininity, mould and remould themselves to achieve these constantly changing beauty norms. Emphasised femininity suggests that women *should* be looked at. Thus, women must look at themselves from the outside in order to assure that they meet the ideals set from the outside (Calogero 2004: 20). They must also internalise these norms in order to perform them properly. Thus, the norms of emphasized feminine beauty become normative through self-reinforcement.

The body is part of the gender project and beauty, like gender, is never a finished project. Beauty must be constantly pursued by women, and the norms and ideals change constantly. Scripts of beauty are interpreted and embodied by women in various ways. Women are bombarded with norms of appearance every day, and in every performance of their gender. These norms are communicated to them through various forms including fairy tales, the media, fashion, movies and romance novels. Women are required to perform their gender in a way that makes them most aesthetically appealing with this understanding of what beautiful is in mind.

Beauty, like sexuality, is hierarchical. Some women are viewed as more beautiful than others and those women are considered more valuable. Women are once again pitted against each other in competition, because no matter how beautiful one is, one can always be less beautiful than someone else (Haug 1999). Conformity with beauty standards provides women with a number of rewards – beauty means they will not be ridiculed, beautiful women have access to social rewards (such as jobs/husbands) that are unavailable to women constructed as ugly, they are desired and they are considered worthy as women (Haug 1999: 200). By supporting standard beauty styles and aligning themselves with ideas about potential attractiveness, women support the sexual order that places them second and positions them in competition with one another.

> Standards of beauty describe in precise terms the relationship that an individual will have to her own body. They prescribe her motility, spontaneity, posture, gait, the use to which she can put her body. *They define precisely the dimension of her physical freedom* ... From the age of 11 or 12 until she dies, a woman will spend a

> large part of her time, money and energy on binding, plucking, painting and deodorising herself (Dworkin 1974 in Bordo 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 247).

Contemporary public beauty discourses suggest that it is 'healthy' to 'take care of' your body and your skin. "The words *beauty*, *fitness*, *health*, and *strength*" have become almost indistinguishable in the messages that the media and health industry present to women (Seid 1989 244). The suggestion is that health is worn on the outside of the body. The emphasis is on *looking* and appearing to be healthy rather than feeling it.

Emphasized feminine beauty has two main elements. First, as part of being desirable to men, emphasized feminine women should be slender. Second, women should dress in a way that reveals their femininity. Clothing should emphasise and reveal the parts of the body that are considered beautiful. Women must dress to ensure that they are desirable to men, and slender bodies are the most desirable bodies. Emphasised feminine beauty is, like emphasized feminine sexuality, not *for women*; it is for men.

In addition, emphasized femininity does not promote a universal conception of beauty, but, like the script of emphasized feminine sexuality, norms of beauty appear universal and unchanging within each specific context. Beauty is culturally specific; the norms that one group subscribes to may be considered ugly and unappealing by people from another group (Popenoe 2004; Mazur 1986). Each culture or period will have its own version of emphasized femininity. The white Western version is culturally dominant because it is the version that expresses the identity of the culturally dominant class/race grouping. Young white women are more likely to associate beauty with success and to define it as an ideal than black women (Redmond 2003: 175). A possible explanation for this is the sheer number of white, thin female bodies in the media in contrast to the number of black female bodies of any shape in the same media.

Slenderness.

For young white women, particular beauty ideals are constantly emphasised as valuable and essential to self value. The media is saturated in images of the thin, healthy, beautiful female body (Redmond 2003: 172) and "the appearance of the beautiful, beautiful-because-thin white woman is an over-determining ideal image" (Redmond 2003: 175). The fact that thinness is associated with whiteness and thus normalised is evidence of the power of whiteness as an unspoken racial category. Thinness, Sean Redmond argues, valorises white womanhood and entails and encourages "self-surveillance and dietary practices" among female media consumers that render them docile and under societal control (2003: 170 - 171).

Previously associated with sickness and ill health, the thin body is now associated with health and control (Redmond 2003: 173). 'Fat-phobia' is prolific and in the media the thin body is everywhere. The obese body is cast as deviant and uncontrolled and obese people are viewed as

needing behavioural modification to 'take control' of their lives (Seid 1989: 169). To be ravenous, or indulgent in food, is to be desirous - something taboo in emphasized femininity (Bordo 2004: 110). To eat then, is to give in to desire - it is to let oneself go. Emphasized femininity proscribes this, thus slenderness is an indication to others that women are in control of their desires, and are ideally feminine.

> The firm, developed body means that one cares about how one appears to others, suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, and the ability to 'shape your life' (Bordo 1993: 195).

This self-control is a classed ideal. The ability to restrict what one eats is a subtle indication of wealth and class status. In the mid-nineteenth century to be overweight was a symbol of your middle class status; it showed that you could afford to eat well and was an "outward manifestation of ... accumulated wealth" (Bordo 2004: 191). In contrast, the thin body was evidence of an aristocratic status, "seemingly above the commerce in appetite or the need to eat" (Bordo 2004: 191). This aristocratic ideal did not need to indicate its relation to food, but rather indicated its power over bodily needs. Thinness is associated with success; women with ideal bodies appear to have ideal lives (Evans 2003: 210). Advertisements and the media construct the thin woman as living a glamorous lifestyle, and Peggy Chin Evans suggests that this may be part of the appeal of the thin body (Evans 2003: 209). Upper and middle class women are encouraged to be thin to exhibit the control they have over their bodies. Part of the desire of average women to be slender, is associated with the belief that the slender woman lives a life worth wanting (Evans 2003: 212). Thus, when working class women restrict their eating it can be seen as a desire for class mobility and a desire for a different life. The life that is sought is one where women are desirable to men. Thus, the desire to be thin is also a classed ideal.

In South Africa, because of the links between race and class as a result of Apartheid, white bodies are more commonly thin and slender than black bodies for these classed reasons. Individuals wanting to emulate the upper-classes use slenderness as evidence of their self-control and worth (Bordo 2004: 191). The class associations of body weight have eroded slightly, but body weight continues to indicate moral worth (and thus class attributes). Redmond suggests that being a fat body is linked to the idea of being a black body (whiteness is associated with thinness) and thus deviant (Redmond 2003: 175). If racial superiority resides in the body, and white racial superiority is linked to thinness, then white fatness threatens this embodied superiority (Redmond 2003: 175). Thus, the body must be trained, in order to appeal to men and for the superiority of whiteness. White women must work at their "body shape" to ensure that it is a white body shape despite no overt acknowledgements of this raced task. This may explain why African-American women experience the highest levels of body satisfaction in comparison to any other race group in America (Evans 2003: 213 and Zucker 2001: 233). Thus, beauty becomes a classed and raced ideal, not a neutral one. White women are situated at the top of a beauty hierarchy and may have more

access to the rewards of being beautiful than women of other races or ethnicities (Hamilton 2007: 148).

Being fat or overweight has been seen as grotesque, lower class and deviant (Brown 2005). Fat is an indicator of a lack of morality and discipline, whereas slenderness and fitness are indicators of commitment, discipline and moral value (Bordo 2004: 195). The large, curvy body of earlier years was celebrated as a symbol of women's commitment to serving home, husband and family. Now women must compete with men in the business arena and thus those curves have been replaced by slenderness and muscles (Bordo 2004: 208). To have a thin body is not enough; even the thinnest body can have fat or cellulite. The ideal body is one that is fit and toned (Seid 1989: 165 and Bordo 2004: 191). Originally, muscled bodies were associated with manliness. Historically, the female body was not muscled because of the emphasis on feminine passivity and weakness. However, as part of the 'tyranny of slenderness' (Chernin 1981) weight training and toning have increasingly come to be part of emphasized femininity. Dieting and exercise are extremely fashionable as means to achieving that body (Seid 1989: 165).

Bordo argues that the reason for the proliferation of this norm of thinness amongst women is linked to the decreased direct control over women by men and the state. Thinness has the effects of weakness and passivity; the celebration of a weak, fragile woman as an ideal means that men remain the stronger sex (Bordo 1993: 190). For many women, in conjunction with this norm of attainable slenderness is the existence of constant anxiety that they will be unable to meet its restrictions (Bordo 2004: 203). Thus, women constantly seek to control their weight and their body shape through regimes of diet and exercise.

The emphasis, in both dieting and exercise, is on self-control. To be fat is to be out of control - out of men's control. It makes it less likely for women to be frail and dependent and indicates an appetite which the weak emphasized feminine women is not supposed to have. Being fat is thus unfeminine. Emphasized femininity prohibits uncontrollable desires for food and instead encourages women to minimize what they eat to assume an appearance of control over their bodies (Bordo 2004). Essentially, the average woman is being encouraged to pursue the lifestyle of an individual with an eating disorder in order to fit the thin ideal (Seid 1989: 171). In South Africa, research has revealed that eating disorders (such as Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia) affect women from all race categories (Szabo and Hollands 1997 in Pienaar and Bekker Forthcoming: 5). Although eating disorders affect men, Bordo states that 90 percent of all anorexics are women (Bordo 2004: 154).

Exercise is seen as more accessible than dieting extensively to lose weight (Seid 1989: 245 and Bordo 2004: 202) and is portrayed as something that people do for their bodies and selves. It is able to provide the individual with more energy, better emotional wellbeing and protect against heart disease, diabetes and other medically dangerous conditions (Seid 1989: 184). "Muscles are

one of the more malleable parts of the human body" and are more able to adapt and change size than actual body shape (Seid 1989: 245). Exercise is portrayed as self directed and thus "reconfirm[s] the notion that people could and should control their body size through self-discipline" (Seid 1989: 180). Similarly, being thin and toned is viewed as a personal achievement to be celebrated, the health benefits of fitness and exercise are seen as positive improvements in contrast to the dangers associated with eating disorders that have been associated with slenderness. "Fitness was for yourself; starving was for the world" (Seid 1989: 179). Thus, the emphasized feminine body is thin, and toned. It indicates control and self-mastery.

Roberta Pollack Seid (1989) argues that the fitness and health industries were once viewed as positive developments in women's lives because they removed the imperative to pursue unhealthy eating practices such as anorexia or bulimia. They transformed women from passive objects to active subjects, determined to live in their bodies in a positive way. However, the positive effects that were anticipated for average women soon had the same effects as the dangerous dieting practices that went before them. According to Seid

> The fitness ethic has affected women even more powerfully than men. It has escalated their war on fat and on their bodies. They struggle for fat-free bodies that surge with energy and strength, yet they try not to feed them; they strive for weightlessness yet weight-lifting abilities, for the celebration of female empowerment through masculinized bodies; for the strength to break any bonds that might chain them by chaining themselves to a ritual of self-control (1989: 256).

Far from being something positive, the obsession with fitness and fitness extremes has done little to embolden women or challenge gendered stereotypes. The focus is still on how much one weighs and whether or not one is slim, trim and in control of your body. Women feel a sense of relief when exercising because they are exercising mastery over their bodies; like fashion, exercise allows women a means of transforming themselves. Yet, exercise does not transform women from objects to subjects because women are forced in these regimes to objectify their bodies and to select body parts and work with them individually as though they are separate from one another (Seid 1989: 252). Indeed, women exercise their bodies as if *they* are separate from their bodies, exerting their will power and self-control over them. They must continue to consult experts (the media, doctors, gym instructors) about the best ways to train and *look* good and thus hand over what ever power they had over their body (Seid 1989: 133). As long as body size is seen as a choice and as something to be controlled and regulated, those women who are outside of this standard will feel like failures (Seid 1989: 249).

> The body holds meaning. A woman obsessed with the size of her body, wishing to make her breasts and thighs and hips and belly smaller and less apparent, may be expressing the fact that she feels uncomfortable being female in this culture ... A woman obsessed with the reduction of her flesh may be revealing the fact that she is alienated from a natural source of female power and has not been allowed to develop a reverential feeling for her body (Chernin 1981: 2).

Charles Taylor (1986) argues that we buy into the process of normalization by assuming that we need to change things and thus having to see someone who knows how to fix them (a specialist for want of a better word). He states that we are dominated by certain images of the norm - "what it is to be a full, healthy, fulfilled ... being"; hence we enable those specialists to continue to form a function of society (Taylor 1986: 78). For Foucault, power is experienced at the level of the body (1981: 100). Foucault claims that one of the most visible effects of power is the way in which things are classified as normal or abnormal (Foucault 1981: 102, 106). Foucault looks at power as something that is exercised in a network and persists through everyday social relations. Through these processes, people are classified in order to make the process whereby they are normalised much easier (Taylor 1986: 74). Through a process of normalization, people perform self-discipline and anyone who is 'other' than the norm is judged and has less power (Foucault 1981: 107). For example, if you are told that a particular sexual desire you have is not normal, or wrong, you may choose to try and understand how you can change it. Or, if you are told that the desire to eat is emotional rather than physical, it becomes your responsibility to control and restrict that desire. Foucault used the term the 'docile' body to refer to the body that results from the processes of normalisation.

In compliance with the restrictive norms on body shape and weight loss, women hand over their power to experts such as the media, magazines and fitness professionals in order to look their best. If they are not in control of their weight and their bodies women feel a general lack of empowerment. Despite the dangers associated with these practices and the eating disorders that solutions like these propagate, it is popular belief that an individual is "better dead than fat" (Seid 1989: 167). Dieting and fitness are necessary, according to advertisements, because they are the solution to the uncontrollable body (Seid 1989: 189). Thinness and over-exercise have the effect of weakness and dependency rather than strength.

The norm of slender beauty is reinforced in the marketing and consumption of particular clothing styles. In order to wear these clothes well, women must practice control over their own bodies (weight etc) to ensure that they do not look poorly dressed (Jantzen, Østergaard and Viera 2006: 179). To dress outside of the norms of clothing is to "risk exclusion, scorn or ridicule" (Entwistle 2001: 33). Virginia Woolf (1992: 179) argued that for women, clothing only has two functions after its function of covering the body: creating aesthetic appeal and attracting men (in Soper 2001: 16).

Clothing.

> In clothes I seek to find the approval of the transcending male gaze; in clothing I seek to transform myself into a bewitching object that will capture his desire and identity ... I take my pleasure from imagining myself perfected and beautiful and sexual for the absent or mirrored male gaze. I take pleasure in these images of

> female bodies in their clothes because my own gaze occupies the position of the male gaze insofar as I am a subject at all (Turim) (Young 2005: 67).

Women must perform their femininity in a way that is considered beautiful within the dominant norms of emphasized femininity in order to be successful. Part of this performance is the way that women dress themselves. Fashion is paradoxical in that it is presented as self-realisation, which can only be realised through submission to social norms around clothing and to the "dictate of a collectivity [one] has neither willed nor authored" (Soper 2001: 27). All clothing and the wearing of clothes takes place under conditions of patriarchy, and thus the embodied performance of gender is performed for a gaze that is normatively male.

Jane M. Ussher argues that fashion is an essential part of the 'feminine masquerade' which women use to construct their image and themselves. Advertising and the media shape women's interests in particular styles of clothing. Dress is the way that we frame ourselves and are framed by others into particular social codes. Clothing assists the formulation of standard gender fronts. Thus, we read people through their clothing, just as they read us. Codes of dress are rarely reflected upon, but are rather unconsciously assumed (Entwistle 2001: 47).

> Insofar as we view the clothing as chosen by or voluntarily donned by a *person* in the normal course of life, we are committed to viewing it as something more than either mere instrumental source of protection, on the one hand, or as *purely* aesthetic addendum, on the other. We are committed, that is, to regarding it as aesthetic index or expression of the moral self, and would have to judge the extent of its 'seemliness' or 'beauty' accordingly (Soper 2001: 20).

Ussher states "we are what we wear whether we like it or not" (Ussher 1997: 47). Clothing allows women to 'fit in' to femininity, successfully completing their performance, whilst standing out as beautiful, something which Georg Simmel argued was crucial to the survival of any fashion (Simmel 1971 in Barnard 1996: 10). Beauty standards restrict women to particular clothes - what they *can* and *can't* wear. Magazines prescribe 'vertical stripes for wide people' or neutral colours for the elderly for example (Twigg 2007). Newspaper articles, like one by Jayne Boccaleone, provide quite clear suggestions for women in the work place including that they should dress in a more reserved manner in order to illustrate their intellectual and business savvy (Boccaleone 2004: 5). Women are thus required to be aware of their clothing and its ties to their acceptance as beautiful.

Certain types of clothing are considered acceptable, whereas others are rejected. The requirement that women be slender is reinforced through the marketing of clothes and clothing advertisements. Thus "the order of dress ... [is] one of the elements...through which women are drawn into the order of sexuality" and learn the ways of becoming a woman (Haug 1999: 146). Clothing forms the cover of our nudity - but unlike its original purpose, clothing is no longer just a protection from the weather. The degree to which we reveal our skin is meaningful within our cultural context and is influenced by cultural conditions and definitions of the body. Cultural

norms dictate which body parts are interesting and should be revealed and which body parts are scandalous or deviant and should be hidden.

The display of skin has been historically gendered. Women have appeared as sexualised bodies through their clothing use. To reveal some skin is to entice the thought of sex and sexuality, but to reveal too much is to become obscene or grotesque. Berger (1972: 54) suggested that nakedness was being unclothed whereas nudity was to be 'on display'. Nudity has been seen as a marker of the 'uncivilized' (Soper 2001:21). The shame of the naked body is more entrenched for women according to Jennifer Craik (1993: 12) and public nudity is discouraged. Shame is one of the most pervasive ways of maintaining and restricting social norms and often, the fear of shame or the desire to avoid it regulates social behaviour of shame or the desire to avoid it regulates social behaviour in conformity with social norms (Elster 1999: 147). The failure to be considered beautiful results in shame. Only in certain defined contexts (strip clubs or nude beaches for example) is women's nudity sanctioned or encouraged. Full nudity however, is restricted and condemned. In Western cultures, women are expected to dress in a way that reveals parts, but not all, of their body. Most women's fashion emphasises the parts of women's bodies that are different or other from men's bodies (breasts, hips, buttocks for example) (King 2004: 34). At formal events, men are expected to wear suits that cover nearly their entire body, whereas women's dresses are likely to reveal the back or neck or legs to varying degrees (Eicher 2001: 243).

> [W]hether externally bound or internally managed, no body can escape either the imprint of culture or its gendered meanings (Bordo 2004: 212).

We create and construct our identities through clothes, but the clothes available to us also fashion the identities we are able to perform and assume. Women's clothing has historically been more elaborate and taken longer to keep presentable than men's, forcing women to concern themselves with the trivialities of cleaning and preening rather than actively engaging with the world around them (Davis 1992: 175). Women's clothes take longer to put on and take off than men's clothes and are often more elaborate to maintain and move around in; they can limit the mobility of women in a number of ways as described above (Davis 1992: 175).

Feminine styles of dress can come to be associated with a 'coded moral language', which allows clothing in its very material to inform the wearer of what they can or cannot do (Twigg 2007: 294 and Sweetman 2001: 66). Dress influences the way that the body can move for example "ways of walking to accommodate high heels, ways of breathing to accommodate a corset, ways of bending in a short skirt and so on" (Entwistle 2001: 55) (See also de Beauvoir in Purdy 2004: 128). The clothing techniques of everyday fashion have sought to enhance women's otherness - stiletto heels make it difficult to walk and entail a particular way of walking, Wonderbra's create a bust-line that is round and accentuated, plastic surgery seeks to literally deny the idea that beauty is only skin-deep (King 2004: 35).

Clothing can ensure the embodiment of a 'feminine' ideal. As stated above, the goal of the feminine ideal is to appeal to men. Ideals around feminine beauty create normative restrictions on feminine behaviour and women are socially, psychologically and materially rewarded for compliance with these restrictions (Fox 1977; Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 2003; Mazur 1986). Young argues that "developing a sense of our bodies as beautiful objects to be gazed at and decorated requires suppressing a sense of our bodies as strong, active subjects" (Young in Bartky 1990: 35). To constantly be looked at, and constantly to have to look at oneself, makes it very difficult to look out into the world.

This links to passivity in a number of ways. First, women often spend more time getting ready and making themselves beautiful (through make-up and clothing) and thus have less time to actively participate in the world around them. Make-up is a sign of inclusion in the adult world of women, and women who do not wear it are often viewed as girls and regarded with suspicion (Scott 2005: 200). In addition, beauty techniques like makeup can be spoiled with strenuous activity and thus women often remain inactive and indoors in order to remain beautiful. Clothing that is heavy and elaborate means that women cannot perform physically arduous tasks because they are unable to move freely. Despite it being more common for women to wear pants in contemporary times, this has not seen a change in the way that women inhabit their bodies (Young 1990: 145).

Restrictions on dress are also used to mark social and sexual hierarchies of power (Soper 2001: 21). The labour of femininity is normalised in a patriarchal society, and is seen as something that all women must do to 'pull off' (or put on) the 'perfect' outfit. When unsuccessful at achieving the desired image with clothes, women experience pain, discomfort and confusion and clothing cannot provide them with the solution to these emotions. Women are thus 'stitched up' by fashion (Guy and Banim 2000). "The order of dress ... [is] one of the elements through which women are drawn into the order of sexuality" and through which they become enslaved to men's desires, exchange system and division of them (Haug 1999: 146). Different female body types have played into passivity at different times but the body types that have been most celebrated throughout history have been those that have enhanced passivity. Dressing women *as women* thus forms a powerful form of social regulation, one that has been present throughout western history.

> Patriarchy constructs women in a double bind. It dictates that women must be beautiful in order to be worthwhile; however, it cannot take women that are fixated on their appearance seriously. Women are thus "well-trained to meet the gaze that evaluates us for our finery, for how well we show him off, we then are condemned as sentimental, superficial, duplicitous (Young 2005: 68).

As a result of this, some feminists argue, clothing forms a restrictive force on women's self-definition (Craik 1993: 13). This is because, as Iris Marion Young (2005) suggests, the only way to achieve success in a patriarchal context is to conform to the dictates of male-defined beauty most successfully (Young 2005). Bartky (1990) reinforces this point when she describes the condition of women in patriarchy as culturally dominated. Bartky argues that in patriarchy, all

elements of culture manifest the regulations of patriarchy such that women have no choice but to participate in reinforcing patriarchy, in order to exist as agents at all; the culture of women *qua* women is an alternative to hegemonic culture (patriarchal) and hence is regarded as inferior and other (Bartky 1990: 25). Although women recognise that in hegemonic culture they are degraded and inferior, they take this culture as our own and the acceptance of the hegemonic culture denies women cultural autonomy. Additionally, it constructs male domination as natural and consequently unchangeable (Bartky 1990: 25). The consent to the regimes of fashion dictated by men means the constant expression of masculine desire and the repression of female desire (Young 2005: 67).

The more women acquiesce to the beauty standards set out for them by emphasized femininity, the less credibility they have as intellectual beings. Women become located in their bodies and denied intellectual abilities and transcendence (Entwistle 2001: 53 - 54). Fashion does not allow women self-definition but rather further enslaves her to the dictates of beauty and attractiveness as set out by men (de Beauvoir in Purdy 2004: 128)

> Through the pursuit of an ever-changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity - a pursuit without a terminus, requiring that women constantly attend to minute and often whimsical changes in fashion - female bodies become docile bodies - bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, "improvement" (Bordo 2004: 166).

Many theorists have argued that emphasized feminine beauty has restrictive standards that make it very difficult for women to exercise their self-esteem, and to live an active life. Women are assigned value based on their beauty and the more beautiful they are the more resources they are likely to access, thus women pursue beauty as part of the ideal feminine. Perhaps women are more susceptible to bodily manipulation by cultural norms because women have been associated with their bodies – indeed, women have historically been seen as bodily creatures (Bordo 2004: 143). If women are equated with their bodies, then it is no surprise that they see bodily modification as essential to their success. Women's bodies thus become the locus of power relations and negotiations. Women 'normalize a pathological relationship to their bodies'. Thus, if they experience discomfort they expect all women to experience it. So instead of the perfect body etc being normal, being unhappy with the body and seeing it as something that could be transformed was normalized (Budgeon 2003: 44). Cosmetics, clothing and exercise were initially touted as ways for women to express their individuality and control - more recently they have been criticised for making the labour of femininity seem natural and thus having negative effects for those who do not wish to wear make-up or slim down to a smaller waist size (King 2004: 35).

> Appearance, not accomplishment, is the feminine demonstration of desirability and worth (Brownmiller 1984 in Feder 1994: 60).

There is a constant awareness of the standards that these young women are expected to live up to, and correspondingly women frequently mould themselves to these standards in order to be accepted (Soley-Beltran 2004: 310). Beauty is presented as objective and something that all women should have and is associated with a number of personality traits which play into the ideal feminine (Wolf 1991, Bordo 1993, Bartky 1990, Thompson and Keith 2001). Naomi Wolf argues that part of the urgency in the call for the control of women is the fact that feminists have challenged male power, and thus the 'beauty myth' is part of the backlash against this challenge (Wolf 1991: 10). One small example of the depth of this backlash is the prevalence of focus on feminine beauty in fairy tales from the latter part of the 20th century (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 2003: 723).

> Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison (Wollstonecraft 1988 in Bordo 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 249).

Women are commonly seen as passive objects of the gaze and men are seen as active gazers (Berger 1972: 47). Ideal women are looked at by men as beautiful objects who themselves are not able to gaze in the same way. The regulations of emphasized feminine beauty teach women that they are objects and as objects they must be appealing to the outside world. Women's constant self-surveillance and awareness of being looked at by others forms the basis of relations between men and women and between women (Berger 1972: 47, Young 2005).

Conclusions - Emphasized femininity is about desirability to men.

> [D]efined and differentiated with reference to man, and not he with reference to her; she is incidental (de Beauvoir in Barker 1997: 187).

Simone de Beauvoir suggests that socially, women are expected to be seen and looked at. They are required to "make a good show" (de Beauvoir 1958: 543). As stated earlier, emphasized feminine beauty is not for women, but for men. Beauty belongs to the realm of sexual attraction (Haug 1999: 198). Women must compete with one another to be considered sexually attractive and thus valuable. Women have been valued according to the worth given to them by men (as beautiful objects) and thus have constantly sought to please men and men's desires in order to be considered worthy.

The combination of the traits of emphasized feminine beauty and sexuality is the effect of becoming desirable to men. Thus, women may use their beauty, or embodied capital, to collect rewards from men. This may include better treatment or access to social rewards (Hamilton 2007: 147). "Gendered-embodied capital is not equally available to all individuals", race, class and the gender regime determine which are acceptable, and which ones are unacceptable, gender performances (Hamilton 2007: 148). White heterosexual, middle to upper class women will have greater access to the rewards of beauty (Hamilton 2007: 148).

Beauty is women's path to success. Models are the embodiment of idealised femininity - they have successfully used their beauty for economic and social power (Soley-Beltran 2004: 320). This message is reinforced by popular media and women's magazines. The images in these magazines tell woman that if they look good, they will feel good and have a good life. They also show that these women are exceptional, and thus should be treated better than other women (by men) (McRobbie 2000: 103). Ordinary women however, are *not* successful against these images and so continue to participate in the process of becoming a woman and continue to purchase the products and seek help from the experts that can get them there. Melissa Milkie (2002: 839) contends that,

> a central way women's disadvantage is created and maintained is through cultural beliefs and stereotypes that provide narrower, more distorted or more harmful images about women than about men.

Feeling good is thus linked to looking good (Currie 1997: 472). This sense of self-failure is worsened by the proliferation of the thin ideal in magazines. Bartky calls this the 'fashion-beauty complex'. Philip Myers and Frank Biocca (1992 in Redmond 2003: 174) found that 33% of all advertisements centred on attractiveness. Advertising is always encouraging women to buy the latest wrinkle cream, concealer, mascara, blusher, wax strips, hair dyes, straighteners and curlers. When the "needs of capitalism and the traditional values of patriarchy are happily married - of course [women] fall short" (Bartky 1990: 28). Women are never good enough just as they are, but can and must constantly purchase things to improve. This consumerism is to women's detriment in that it promotes feelings of inferiority and guilt: inferiority in relation to the women on television, and guilt if they eat the extra doughnut that will reduce the effectiveness of the cellulite cream.

Shared understandings of 'femininity' are tied to social and cultural forms of consumption including fashion and make-up (Currie 1997: 461). Magazines cast this as either a pleasurable activity or as an activity that ensures women's solidarity - i.e. we are all in the same boat, so while we are in it, let us use new lipstick to enjoy our stay. These industries shape social understandings of beauty through advertising. Often, the idealised women within these adverts are white - whiteness is thus associated with beauty, power and success. Amongst black women, those with lighter skin tone are more likely to be successful and be seen as beautiful (Thompson and Keith 2001: 337). Non-kinky hair and less broad noses are similarly associated with whiteness and thus beauty. Light skin is often associated with control and mastery (Thompson and Keith 2001: 344).

Beauty is never fully achieved and thus women must continue to work at it constantly. As a consequence, part of becoming beautiful and desirable to men is consumption - women must consume beauty products, exercises and fitness regimes, clothing and other beauty tools in order to become beautiful. Frigga Haug argues that women "enter the market place as commodities" and so are under a great deal of pressure to make themselves attractive so that they "bump up their market price, or ... make themselves saleable in the first place" (Haug 1999: 131). The

changeability of women's exchange value means that beautifying must be a continual process (Haug 1999: 131). It must be continual, because women cannot only choose to be attractive to one man; they must be attractive to a general, vague, 'masculine' (Haug 1999: 141). Thus, in order to meet the standards of the norms, women self-objectify in anticipation of the gazes of others (Calogero 2004: 19).

The gaze that is most frequently anticipated is the male gaze, and it is this gaze (more than the gazes of other women) that induces body shame and social physique anxiety (Calogero 2004: 16). This gaze does not have to be present, but can be assumed to be present - much like the prison guard in Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon - and thus women pursue self-surveillance to attempt to meet the standards. Acceptance of one's inferiority in comparison to social norms of the emphasised feminine induces women to "chronically monitor themselves" which has a number of negative effects (Calogero 2004: 16). These negative effects can be broadly classed as 'discomfort' and constant awareness of their bodies can lead women to avoid public action and participation.

As Frigga Haug states, under patriarchy, women become objects of exchange, and the participation in the exchange system can result in women having low, or no self-esteem (Haug 1999: 131). Women experience negative attitudes towards their body as a result of the requirement that they compare themselves to other women (Bessenhoff 2006: 239). These comparisons take place between women and women in the media, and between women and their perceptions of the way their bodies *could* or used to look. This in turn can lead to a number of psychological disorders (including eating disorders), and can lead women to lead restricted lives in order to be successful. Every experience of looking good is relative; by living in this world of relativity, women also witness themselves as looking worse than someone else. Thus they simultaneously believe and don't believe that they are inferior.

By buying into the consumerism of capitalism women are unable to be satisfied or whole. In addition, the women often take the source of the problem to be themselves. They are *only* women or *only* average sized. They must continually change because they are ashamed of what they look like or who they are. They are systematically deceived that the problem is with them and the source of their happiness is in wrinkle free skin, or smooth legs that they begin to locate the problem within themselves (the fact that they have wrinkles or hairy legs). The intense focus on being beautiful makes it extremely difficult to question why it is that they are forced to shave their armpits to be successful.

Women cannot see any other option but to get up in the morning, go to gym and 'put their faces on' in order to reduce their inferiority by looking better than someone else. Makeup becomes a mask which women wear to look 'natural' and going to the gym becomes time that you invest in your body to make it more appealing. The problem with this situation is that women are

required to use fashion to express their beauty for male acceptance but are regarded as superficial when they become fashion conformers (Young 2005: 68). Society supports the beautification of women, whilst simultaneously labelling them as narcissistic and not taking them seriously when they do participate (Brownmiller 1984 in Feder 1994: 65).

It is clear that scripts of femininity can have very powerful effects on women. Emphasized femininity renders women dependent on men for their self-esteem and entails their passivity. There is thus the need for a new norm of emphasized femininity - one that encourages action, sexual definition by women and a challenge to the norms of beauty that disable women. Raunch femininity could provide this challenge. Subscribers to this alternative set of norms of ideal femininity negotiate their power using the very social constructs of beauty that feminist theorists believe are a deep source of their oppression. The following chapter will investigate whether raunch feminine sexuality is capable of providing a challenge to women's sexual desirelessness, purity and passivity that this chapter has argued are features of emphasized femininity.

Raunch Feminine Sexuality.

> Normative femininity is coming more and more to be centred on woman's body - not its duties and obligations or even its capacity to bear children, but its sexuality, more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its appearance (Bartky 1988: 42).

Raunch feminine sexuality is "characterized by a breaking down of the traditional barriers between pornography and mainstream ideals of female sexuality" (Lynch 2007: 184). Unlike emphasized femininity, in which women are expected to be passive objects of sex, raunch femininity encourages active female sexuality, often to the point that it appears to be the hypersexualisation of women.

This section will explore whether the script of sexuality encompassed by raunch femininity is as liberating as raunch suggests. It will also look at whether research participants are living out these values at all. Often, "attempts to use sexual agency as an emancipatory tool are limited both in their ability to create conditions of sexual equality and in their ability to transform broader gender inequality" (Wilkins 2004: 329). This section thus attempts to establish to what degree raunch femininity allows for the sexual agency that it projects.

Transgressive Sexuality

> Relaxation of boundaries cannot be read as the end of either dualistic desire or heterosexual hegemony (Hawkes 2004: 166).

Emphasized femininity renders women relatively powerless in heterosexual relationships because these relationships "provide an unequal distribution of subject and object positions for women and for men" (Vanwesenbeeck 1997: 171), with men more commonly occupying the subject roles. The initiation of a sexual encounter is believed to be a job for men, and sexual passivity is common for women. In addition, heterosexuality is experienced as compulsory and is tied to a division of labour that situates women in the domestic realm, and women's sexual power as properly purely reproductive.

Raunch feminine sexuality allows for sexual experimentation with members of the same sex as part of exploring sexuality and having fun. Raunch feminine sexuality would seem to support a female-defined sexual space, whether between females in a sexual encounter, or between female friends, or between raunch feminine women and their male sexual partners. The association of sexuality with reproduction and domestic life is rejected, and sex is seen as fun and something to 'play with' (Levy 2006). Consequently, it entails a broadening of acceptable sexual practices to include masturbation and sex toys. Similarly, many subscribers practise "leisure sex" (Hawkes 2004: 165) or non-monogamous sex. Raunch feminine sexuality initially allows women the opportunity to talk about and have sex on their own terms. In the present research, solicited diary entries revealed two strands of thinking about raunch feminine sexuality. The first strand

suggested that subscribers were in control of their sexuality, choosing when and with whom they had sex. Importantly, it also appeared that they were deciding how sex happened. In contrast, another strand suggested that any sexual experimentation was directed at male attention, and that men still had control over their sexuality, and their sexual desire.

Participants in the present study expressed the idea that their time at university provided a very specific context in which they could experiment sexually. Four of the six participants who participated in the group interview[4] remarked on the 'safety' of their university years for experimentation.

> At Rhodes, people don't judge you that much - you can just experiment (H)
>
> Rhodes is a specialised situation (C).
>
> It's safe here. You know if you go home with someone, it's a friend or a friend of a friend. It's not a total stranger (A).
>
> At Rhodes people are less judgemental (B)

The context allows for sexual experimentation to be seen as fun and acceptable, rather than dangerous (a reference to rape or the fear of a sullied reputation) or deviant. The dangers of unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases were not frequently cited by the participants, and if/when they were, they were not located as primarily women's problems.

The participants indicated that they felt able to experiment sexually on two levels. The first kind of experimentation related to the ability of women to have sex when they wanted. The second concerned experimentation with activities which would have been regarded as deviant in the framework of emphasized femininity, such as same-sex sexuality or experimenting with sex toys.

> Where I am in my life right now I need to experiment with sex, I need to try things out, be with people, have fun with it and not take it too seriously. I've said to myself that my varsity years are for myself. I want to try new things and just experience being young ... I take a guy home if I feel like I'm in the mood to get off and I think its perfectly acceptable behaviour for a varsity girl like myself (Participant 6, Diary Entry, August 7).

This participant is focussed on her own sexual needs, and is not ashamed of them, thus challenging heterosexual norms that emphasise male needs as paramount and female sexuality as passive. Although the norms remain heterosexual the emphasis is on female control. She feels comfortable initiating sexual encounters and does not feel she has to passively wait for someone to find her sexually attractive. Sexual encounters which do not include men were frequently cited including experimentation with sex toys or masturbation. Participant 2 describes sex toys and

[4] There was only one group interview. It took place on the 15th August 2007. These entries are thus not dated.

masturbation as standard practice amongst raunch feminine women. This type of experimentation is seen as safe for women (physically) and challenges the dominant order that suggests that women's sexuality is only for reproductive purposes or necessarily male directed.

> All my friends know that my bottom drawer contains KY jelly, a pink vibrator, condoms and other goodies. The fact that I'm not embarrassed about it makes it less of a big deal, (Participant 2, Diary Entry, 6 August).

Raunch femininity thus provides a framework in which women have the ability to define sexual encounters (particularly the use of sex toys and masturbation) for themselves and to investigate what brings them sexual pleasure. Rosalind Coward (1987) argues that for heterosexual women, sexuality that de-privileges penetrative sex enhances women's ability to experience sexual pleasure and provides the potential for more equal heterosexual relationships (Jackson and Scott: 1996: 45). Many feminists argue that creating a sense of sexual pleasure apart from men is an essential step towards women's empowerment (Vance 1984; Rich 1980; Tolman 2002). However, this experimentation is regarded as an exciting variation on heterosexuality, rather than an abandonment of it.

Heterosexuality is not experienced as compulsory by many subscribers to raunch femininity. Raunch feminine sexuality may provide an outward rejection of compulsory heterosexuality; however it does not really challenge the restrictiveness of emphasized femininity. For instance, with regards to kissing other women, several participants remarked that they had done it, but did not regard it as part of their own sexual experimentation. Rather, as one participant suggests, it is about appealing to the male gaze.

> I remember at a party having done the drugs, done the guys, done the booze ... what was left? Do the girls ... Let's face it, women thrive off impressing guys. I don't know why guys find girls kissing attractive and when I get down to thinking about it, it actually freaks me out. But I did it anyway! And it was purely to impress guys, to get a reaction out of them. Once again, I found myself seeking refuge in guys' acceptance ... That experience I had kissing my friend had nothing to do with experimenting with my own sexuality - it was all about the acceptance (Participant 8, Diary Entry, 5 August).

Participant 8 articulates that, like emphasized feminine sexuality, her efforts were for the male spectator, rather than for herself. It was not something that she would normally do, or something she believed might be part of her sexuality, but rather was in fact something that she continues to view as deviant. She performed this action, and this script of sexuality, because it would make her more desirable to men. This pattern was reiterated by several of the participants in the group interview.

> Once I was so drunk at a party - I was with my ex boyfriend and I didn't even remember coming right. So when he told me that I had, I asked who, and it was with a girl (A).

> I did it for a pretend photo, my friend and I staged it to see how many hits we could get on the internet. But we didn't really kiss. My friends know that and they know it was a joke (C).
>
> I've done it just for the show factor (H).
>
> I've done it, but not on purpose. It was one of those things where the first person to give the barman their bra got a free drink. And if you kissed another girl you got a free drink and I turned around and someone just pulled into me. And then I knew I was definitely straight (B).

This experimentation is not cited as lesbian. Women are more able than men, or are even encouraged, to have intimate relationships with women (whether as friends or in sexual relationships) and are thus less likely to view same sex sexual encounters as 'lesbian' (Wilton 2004: 82). During adolescence women are expected to be close to other women, yet are simultaneously encouraged to map their desire onto the accepted heterosexual norm (Wilton 2004: 83, 87). Thus, despite engaging in same sex sexual activity, homosexuality is still often regarded as 'wrong' or deviant. Instead of posing a challenge to heterosexuality, experimentation of this type merely constructs new versions of 'acceptable heterosexuality' (Hawkes 2004:161). Only one participant stated that she had had more than a once-off sexual encounter with another woman (A). The others used these encounters to harness men's attention.

Pseudo-lesbian sexual encounters are successful at harnessing the male gaze because when a woman pursues lesbian sexuality, she "acquires for herself a member of the class of persons traditionally marked as erotically enticing" (Wilton 2004: 99). Lesbian sexuality thus becomes something to look at rather than something that poses a real challenge to heteronormativity. C says she did it to see how many people would want to see it and H states that she did it for the show. When asked, in the group interview, to elaborate who the show was for H replied "for boys, for the crown. It's for attention seeking".

Women must perform for attention. During these performances women must negotiate the acceptable scripts of femininity as well as the male gaze, which serves to sexually objectify them (Brook 1999: 112). "The term 'performance' captures within its meanings the idea of offering up the body/the self to public consumption, and of being assessed on the adequacy of that performance" (Brook 1999: 113). In their performance for attention, the emphasis is on the assessment as a desirable woman. Luce Irigaray (1985) argues that it is difficult for women to break free of the habit of valuing themselves according to men's desires and needs because of the predominance of male needs in the patriarchal system, something which Bartky calls 'cultural domination'. This pseudo-lesbian behaviour is not a challenge to hierarchic heterosexuality; it is a way of securing their place in the sexual hierarchy.

> For woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men, in other words, a commodity ... How can this object of transaction claim a right to

> pleasure without removing her/itself from established commerce? (Irigaray 1985: 32).

Women trade in their own sexuality, using it to barter the rewards of popularity and male attention. Participant 8 cites an experience she had whilst out at a club to confirm that many women are trading in their own sexuality in order to get the attention and praise of men.

> I was out and was sitting at a table with some friends and across the way two girls started kissing, but not just ordinary kissing - basically mauling each other ... A friend that was with me at the time commented and said 'Shame, I really don't know why those girls do that, they are so pretty and have so much potential.' Interesting, because she was implying that pretty girls have far more to give ... I was thinking about these two girls the following day and what sprung to mind was that they can't be lesbians, they must just be looking for attention and attention they got! So through acting on a type of sexuality (lesbian) they were gaining attention from men ... a little degrading to women don't you think, or certainly lesbians (Participant 8, Diary Entry, 26 August).

Raunch feminine women perform lesbian sexuality in order to be sexually desired by men. Participant 8 recognises that this is a sexual performance, or at least that is what it appears as to her. She also recognises that performing sexuality may benefit some women, but it is degrading to women and lesbians because it limits the ability of their sexuality to be considered authentic. Patriarchy pathologises lesbians (Wilton 2004: 82). It formulates lesbians as scopophilic delights, and essentialises lesbian sexuality. The threat that female homosexuality poses to patriarchy is dispersed by this pathology and is reduced to reinforcing the behavioural styles formulated within emphasized femininity.

The work (of becoming desirable) remains situated with women, and the act of desiring remains masculine. Stereotypical heterosexual gender roles are not challenged because the experimentation is for men. Sex and sexuality is viewed instrumentally, as part of the desire to be loved by men, rather than for the individual's own power/needs (see Bhana et al 2007 for similar research findings).

In her study of heterosexual relationships, Vanwesenbeeck found that, despite outward bravado, a number of women use sex instrumentally and rarely have sex for sex's sake; many women subsume their needs to the needs of men, and consider how their partners feel before themselves (Vanwesenbeeck 2003: 175). Narratives and images of romance can impede participants' ability to negotiate their sexual encounters, because negotiation is viewed as being difficult, putting women's needs before those of men, and thus rendering women unappealing (Vanwesenbeeck 2003: 176; Bhana et al 2007). Making love, or being intimate, was frequently contrasted with 'fucking' in the solicited diaries. Making love involved female passivity, and thus respect as a woman, whereas 'fucking' involved getting the sex you wanted, in an unconnected encounter, and was judged as potentially losing feminine appeal.

Guys don't want girls who've been around the block (D, Group Interview).

They don't want them or they don't want to date them? (H, Group Interview)

They don't want to date them (D, Group Interview).

One participant in particular emphasized the distinction between loving and sex. Loving was forever, whereas sex/fucking was for immediate gratification; something dirty and unfeminine. Participant 9 (Diary Entry, 21 August) says, "I don't want the person I marry to be someone who's been fucking randoms for years, and I'm sure that he would expect the same from me". Her belief in the sanctity of marriage and marital sexual relations is unequivocal. For this reason, she does not allow herself the sexual experimentation that other women participate in. She judges those women as deviant because they are not reserving their sex for love. She says that she "can't help but feeling that one day they'll regret this and that they're deluding themselves" (Participant 9, Diary entry, 21 August). Sex for her is meaningful and tied to intimacy. It is also tied to relations of power that reinforce heterosexuality as the norm, women as chaste and reliant on men.

Other participants seemed to feel that romantic ideas were, in fact, naïve and silly. These participants situated sexual control with themselves and distinguished themselves from women who only had sex when 'in love'. These participants emphasized their ability to negotiate the conditions and outcomes of their sexual experiences. Participant 6 (Diary Entry, 7 August) states that "some girls think that we are brash and perhaps slutty, but I think of them as naïve and boring and living in a box." She disagrees with the idea that she will regret her actions. For participant 6, chastity is not linked to power.

> I don't think that it's disempowering to myself to have a one-night stand with a guy if I know that's all it is. If we both feel like having sex, then why not ... If I took guys home because I was under the delusion that I wanted them to fall in love with me, then yes I would be, but I'm not (Participant 6, Diary Entry, 7 August).

She suggests that to rely on males and to fall in love, would be to give away the power in the sexual situation. She seems tacitly to recognise the inequality experienced by many women in heterosexual relationships and thus distances herself from this power dynamic. Instead she seems to suggest that if women take men home purely for sex they are more able to control the encounter. Emotions, or connection, appear to get in the way of female sexual control. However, in her comments she also situates the power in relationships with men. She makes clear that it is men who may or may not fall in love with her, rather than articulating that this might be a mutual choice, or a choice that she could make. She outwardly projects her security. However she still remains dependent on men to love her, situating herself as a passive recipient of love.

Magazines like *Cosmopolitan* flout women's sexuality as part of their power, whilst at the same time requiring that sex happens with a man (Macdonald 1995: 173). Women's magazines' cover page headlines like "how to please your man" are not uncommon. "Citing mutual consent is

no guarantee of mutual respect for each sexual partner in a society that continues to deprive women of access to real sexual alternatives by labelling women 'frigid' or 'slut' when we do not live up to the male sexual ideal" (LeMoncheck 1997: 42). When women's sexual choices are between being asexual or hypersexual, it is difficult for women to define their own sexuality. Women are expected to be sexual in order to appeal to men and what these headlines suggest is that men remain the centre of women's sexual identities and that men are the ultimate decision makers when it comes to judging whether women's sexuality is good enough. Participant 5 comments on this male power saying,

> I think there is a huge problem for women in society at the moment ... as a woman in today's society our roles are confused enough as it is. We are meant to be able to compete with men, but still fulfil a traditional role in our homes. I think being a very competitive athlete my issues are seriously increased as I also desperately need the approval of men as a woman to feel happy and comfortable with who I am (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 5 September).

Women's roles have been redefined such that fewer women are economically dependent on men, and thus to some extent are on an equal footing materially. Men become the benchmark against which success is judged. Women's traditional roles are experienced as compulsory, thus women are required to decide between being an equal competitor, worthy of men's praise, and not competing at all in order to fulfil the domestic stereotype of the 'good woman'. Heterosexuality may not be experienced as compulsory, but the gender roles that it encourages remain firmly entrenched. This is partly because although women's roles are changing, men's gender roles have not.

> It's maybe not all peachy for guys and they have standards that they have to live up to and they have to deal with the fact that women can compete with them. But I think the fact that they have not had a huge redefinition of the role they are supposed to play leaves them in a much better position (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 5 September).

In order for there to be a real change in women's roles, men's roles need to be supportive of that change. But even for the young, supposedly empowered women in this study, the contrary is much more likely. Indeed, participant 4 (Diary Entry, 6 August) remarks that she feels "like I give and give to the boys that I live with and I get nothing back. If I don't cook, no one eats, they are even unable to make a simple meal ... is it that they think that because they are boys and I am a girl that it is my job?". She could stop performing her gender in this way, forcing the men in her house to make a change, but she does not.

Another gender role which solicited diary entries reveal is unchanged is the role of women as the passive recipient of sex, rather than the active initiator. Although participant 6's comments suggest that women are able to initiate sexual encounters, heterosexuality prescribes particular actions for women and prohibits others.

> I am constantly aware that I am a girl and there is a certain way that I am expected to act around certain people ... On the one hand, I try to dominate, try to be a female sexual creature who is confident and will swear and wear tiny skirts and drink too much; but on the other I feel inside that men want a girl who doesn't swear, and who bakes and giggles and is always, always happy (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 30 July).

Participants feel pressure to perform their sexuality in a way that is pleasing to men. The pressures that young women experience in sexual encounters can be classified in three ways - personal pressure, social pressure and pressure directly from men (Holland et al 1992 in Jackson and Scott 1996: 249). Personal pressures relate to the individual and the way that she organises and understands her own sexuality. Social pressures emanate from the social and cultural context of the individual, particularly its construction of feminine sexuality. These two forms of pressure are influenced and compounded by the pressure from and expectations of men (Holland et al 1992 in Jackson and Scott 1996: 249). Solicited diary entries did not reveal any reference to physical pressure from men, but the participants in the present research frequently referenced or felt censored by men's expectations.

Women are forced, under patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, to make a difficult choice between two unsatisfying options (Bartky 1990: 30). They must either believe that they are inferior, and so live out their lives in shame (because to believe that their inferiority is a function of being female will make them ashamed to be female) or they must believe that they are not inferior, but then they encounter the problem of societal belief in their inferiority. This has the effect of encouraging them to situate their feelings of inferiority within themselves, causing them to censor their own actions and behaviour. According to Bartky (1990: 30) it is psychologically oppressive, or limiting to one's sense of self-esteem, happiness and ability to live a full life, to both believe that one is inferior and not to believe that one is inferior at the same time. Young (2005: 144) articulates this as a tension between immanence and transcendence. It is this tension between being a subject and being an object that women must grapple with in their performance of raunch feminine sexuality.

> I've found someone who will stand up for me, but also let me stand up for myself. He expects me to be independent and expects me to fight with him when he's not giving me his best and it's just so amazingly refreshing. It's also pretty refreshing to not have to be constantly reminding him that he is, in fact, the man of the relationship, because he doesn't really care (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 12 August).

Participant 9 states that she would like to define her relationship, yet when she speaks positively of her new boyfriend, she is still performing the way that he expects. Even when she performs her sexuality in a way that pleases certain audiences, she is under her own surveillance because of her beliefs about what men want, and how women should be (always happy). Her boyfriend's expectations of her independence and right to be angry with him allow her to be independent and feel angry. It is unclear though, whether if he did not want her to, she still

would. Her suggestion that there are appropriate gender roles in a relationship supports a power structure that will ensure that she will remain subject to men's needs and approval.

Her "self-assurance is cosmetic only" (Macdonald 1995: 183), rather than a deep commitment to a more equal heterosexual relationship. It seems unlikely, given her later comments that "I'm not a subservient individual naturally, but somehow in relationships I tend to always be the person more into it, and therefore with less power" (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 27 August), that she will be able to negotiate the type of relationship and sex that she wants. Their relationship is not equal. Heterosexuality under patriarchy does not allow it to be, and thus it seems unlikely that she would be able to have the control she desires.

Heterosexuality makes women weak in relation to men, and subscribers to raunch femininity do not escape this bind. Performing different roles for different people, and the tension between immanence and transcendence that they experience, can leave the subscribers feeling confused about who they are and feeling inferior to men. Subscribers express that they feel censored by other people's opinions of them, particularly men's opinions. They experience this as a weakness.

> A whole lot of my friends, like me, are so strong in so many ways but so weak when it comes to men ... and we somehow turn into desperate creatures that rely on them for everything. It's ridiculous (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 1 September).

Janet Holland, Caroline Ramazanoglu, Sue Sharpe and Rachel Thompson (1992) describe this as the difference between *empowerment at an intellectual level* and *empowerment at an experiential level* (in Jackson and Scott 1996: 258, emphasis in original). The former is when young women are able critically to reflect on their sexual experiences and use their knowledge to make decisions about future sexual encounters. The latter occurs when there is a shift in the male domination of heterosexual sexual experiences.

> [S]imply increasing women's right to enjoy sex does not undo the basic heterosexual relationship that confers men with sociocultural power. Indeed, in the absence of other changes, women's sexual freedom benefits men more than it does women by providing men with greater sexual access to women without altering heterosexual power arrangements (Wilkins 2004:346).

The former does not necessarily entail the latter, and any decisions that young women make about their sexuality are often difficult to put into practice because of already existing power imbalances (Holland et al 1992 in Jackson and Scott 1996: 258). Ideally, to formulate a female defined sexuality, there needs to be integration of both levels of empowerment. At present, subscribers to raunch femininity only have the former.

Sexual (im)purity

> There is no language or model of positive female sexuality for young women (Holland et al 1992 in Jackson and Scott 1996: 251).

White women's sexuality has historically been cast as the most pure of all female sexuality and contrasted with the rampant sexuality of all men and black women (Bartky 1990: 23). White women's sexuality (particularly sexuality non-monogamous sex) has been portrayed as ideologically and physically dangerous. However, while traditional scripts emphasised women's virginity as an attractive feature, new scripts (like those of *Cosmopolitan*) focus on illustrating sexual prowess and knowledge (Macdonald 1995: 167). The sexually 'serviceable' woman remains committed to heterosexual values and is sexually good by being "playful yet submissive, eager, perhaps slightly mysterious" (LeMoncheck 1997: 56, 57). This is contrasted with the sexually 'non-serviceable' woman who is a "bitch-temptress, immodest, coarse and demanding" (LeMoncheck 1997: 57). The sexually serviceable woman is 'good' under patriarchy, whereas the sexually 'non-serviceable' woman, despite being promiscuous, is bad. Men decide and apply the labels arbitrarily, according to their own expectations. The emphasis on sexual purity in the emphasized feminine script leaves women powerless in sexual situations, unable to talk about or negotiate them because of their unwillingness to appear 'non-serviceable'. Emphasized femininity restricts women's desire by preventing them from discussing their sexuality. This is dangerous to their sexual safety because despite feeling social pressure to have sex, subscribers to emphasized femininity become unable to negotiate the conditions under which it happens.

The script of raunch feminine sexuality could provide a more empowering alternative. Female sexuality is celebrated rather than feared, and women are not required to be pure, chaste or virginal. Women are able to discuss their sexuality and thus more able to take control over the conditions that it happens. Raunch feminine sexuality decries fairy tale romance and sees it as naïve. Monogamy is regarded as unnecessary by many subscribers, and women are able to have one-night stands more easily. In addition, raunch feminine sexuality suggests that women are able to have more sex with more partners and still be regarded as acceptable women, rather than inevitably being labelled 'sluts'.

When a woman is promiscuous it can be interpreted, "as both encouraging her subordination by men ready to exploit her sexuality and facilitating her exploration of one among many different ways she may give meaning and value to her erotic life" (LeMoncheck 1997: 29). Subscribers to raunch femininity feel more able to have sexual partners outside of monogamous relationships. Within raunch femininity, promiscuity is a way to get the sex that subscribers want. Promiscuous behaviour is common among participants. As participant 6 (Diary Entry, 7 August) states, "the majority of my friends are sexually active and have had a one-night stand before". This type of behaviour has historically been regarded as unfeminine and is a very different narrative of sexuality from that of emphasized femininity. Masculinity has been linked to sexual

appetites whereas femininity has been linked to restriction. Some women who subscribe to raunch femininity still feel restricted by the script of emphasized femininity, while others do not. Perhaps the strongest advocate for one-night stands was A, who says,

> I'm not ashamed to admit that I've had one-night stands. They were just about sex. I wanted to have sex (Group Interview).

Far from feeling ashamed of having sex for sex's sake, A feels confident about her own sexual needs and situates them at the centre of her argument for one-night stands. The fact that she cites her own needs first is important. It poses a challenge to heterosexuality by deemphasizing men as the initiators of sex, and it poses a challenge to the script of femininity that says that women should not have sex outside of monogamous relationships. For participant 6 it is about having the freedom to choose what she would like to do with her body.

> I don't think that it's disempowering to myself to have a one-night stand with a guy if I know that's all it is. If we both feel like having sex then why not? I have the freedom to choose to do what I want with my body and I shouldn't be judged for it (Participant 6, Diary Entry, 7 August).

To suggest that women *should* or *should not* be promiscuous goes against feminist attempts to secure sexual agency for women (LeMoncheck 1997: 28). Participant 6 feels that she has control. She can have sex when she wants to and she feels that she should not be judged for it. Her sexuality is considered a right for her, and for nobody else. This is a powerful contrast to emphasized femininity. The initial feminist movement was centred on providing bodily freedom to women. Battles over contraception and abortion, and the idea that the personal was political emphasized the idea that women are not free unless they have control over their bodies. While the script of raunch femininity offers the illusion of control, in reality women remain trapped in a framework of social expectations which includes compulsory heterosexuality and is invested in women's sexuality as monogamous and reproductive. Patriarchal, heterosexist social norms will impact on the way that women feel about their sexuality, particularly when it transgresses these norms. K says,

> I have a friend who does it all the time and always feels bad the next day ... I think she's doing it cuz she wants someone to hold her (Group Interview).

Despite her friend's outward behaviour projecting the idea that she is comfortable having one-night stands, K understands her friend's behaviour to be aimed at men's affection. Yet K herself sees sexual power as residing in her desirability, implanting herself within an emphasized feminine script of sexuality.

> I think it has to do with sexual power - you're sexy because they (men) want to have sex with you (Group Interview).

Similarly A's later comment pulls her back into the script of emphasized femininity despite her earlier statement that she "just wanted to have sex":

> I think that there's something in a one-night stand. The more you can score surely the more wanted you are (Group Interview).

A's feelings about her one-night stands is linked to a feeling of being wanted by men and successfully satisfying the demands of hierarchic heterosexuality. Studies show that young women often find sex is only fulfilling if the male partner enjoys it and if they are 'wanted' (Vanwesenbeeck 2003: 177). For K's friend, this behaviour pattern appears to be aimed at harnessing men's affection and attention in the hopes that it will become more than just a one-night stand. Many women participate in one-night stands in order to confirm themselves as desirable. They abandon emphasized feminine sexuality, but their sexuality remains outwardly, rather than inwardly directed. H, in contrast, argues that this is the wrong way to go about sex, and that women need "to be clear about the fact that it's going to be a one-night stand" (Group Interview) in order to leave the encounter without getting hurt. Feminists have argued however, that as long as women allow men to govern the terms of women's sexual freedom, sexual liberation cannot be women's liberation (LeMoncheck 1997: 41).

An unsuccessful one-night stand can hurt women in more than one way. Emotional hurt may result from disappointment if the male does not want to pursue the relationship further; and may also be hurt by nicknames or labels after the fact. Labelling women's sexuality as deviant, by calling them 'slut' or 'dirty' is a very powerful way to restrict their actions. One of the participants revealed, in the group interview, that she had the nickname 'Dirty D'.

> When I first heard that I'd been called Dirty D I was shocked. It changed my behaviour. Now I'm almost too scared to let a boy do anything more than touch my boobs because I'm scared that I'll want to have sex afterwards and then he'll tell someone that he was with Dirty D. I don't want people to call me Dirty D, I just want to be D (Group Interview).

The label has limited her ability to pursue the type of sex that she wants. She changed her own sexual behaviour and became afraid of her own sexuality. She constantly wonders about what people will say and how she can act in order to avoid the stigma associated with the label. She feels that with this label, she is no longer in control of her own identity, because she cannot control people's perceptions of her. B expresses a similar tension between her own sexual needs and the fear of being labelled. She wants the affirmation and feeling of success that a one-night stand provides but she does not want anyone to know that she does this.

> I do one-night stands for affirmation, [in order] to be able to say that I can score. But I try my hardest to make sure it's nobody in my circle of friends. I don't want people I know to know (Group Interview).

A second way that one-night stands can hurt women is as a result of possible increased exposure to STDs. Having sex with strangers increases the risks for both men and women of HIV/AIDS infection. In addition, South Africa has some of the highest levels of rape and sexual violence against women in the world (http://www.powa.co.za/Display.asp?ID=2). Women who have casual sex are regarded as sexually dangerous. The dangers associated with promiscuity could lead participants to eschew sex with multiple partners; yet, sexual purity is considered to be an outdated idea of women's sexuality by subscribers to raunch femininity. Women feel tremendous pressure to have sex and be sexual and also to ensure their own sexual safety. Participant 9 confirms this when she says

> [t]here is a fine line between expressing your sexuality and being a slut. I do believe that a woman should enjoy sex ... I think there's also a reason why there are so many STDs out there ... it's natures way of saying "SLOW THE FUCK DOWN!!!!" ... And if sleeping around doesn't make you a slut, then I don't know what does (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 15 August).

She marks out promiscuous women as 'bad' using male, heterosexist terminology. Her earlier comments that she feels she must be the perfect woman, and try to dominate sexually indicate that she is straddling the line between emphasized femininity and raunch femininity which make it very difficult for her to act without censoring herself. Emphasized femininity links women's sexuality to danger and disease and participant 9 has accepted that women's sexuality ought to be monogamous. The struggle between scripts of femininity is clear in this entry where she encourages women to enjoy sex, yet restricts them to a particular form of sexuality in order to be acceptable.

One of the tools that subscribers use to negotiate this 'fine line' is alcohol. Confidence in their sexuality is most common when individuals are intoxicated. Two participants commented on sexual encounters that they had had when drunk, explaining that it made them sexually adventurous. Participant 9 says that being drunk

> does make me over-board dominating and I ... cornered my boyfriend in the bathroom and [being drunk] made me do things that I would love to do when I'm sober but would be too embarrassed ... and he likes that too (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 6 August).

Similarly, participant 5 says

> [w]hen I get drunk I get very very confident about my sexuality and well, maybe it works, because when I'm in such a mood very few people ever say no (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 15 August).

Alcohol releases women from their inhibitions and they are able to have the sex that they want. Deborah Tolman (2002: 140) argues that being drunk allows women to hide their sexual desire, so as not to be sanctioned for having sexual needs (and Corbin, Bernat, Calhoun, McNair and

Seals 2001). Vanwesenbeeck (2003: 176) defines sexual control as being able to get pleasure from sex whilst protecting oneself from risks. The diary entries revealed that participants felt most able to get what they wanted from sex when they were intoxicated, but being drunk in turn impacts on their ability to protect themselves from risks.

> Women who abandon the security of well-defined, though restrictive, social roles have always exposed themselves to sexual exploitation, having surrendered the usual claims of respectability (Lasch 1979: 190).

The fact that they are drunk makes them easy targets for men, particularly within the club/party environment that is a common site for the performance of raunch femininity. Alcohol assists participants in existing in a world where they are "expected to be sexually available but not sexually in charge of themselves" (Wolf 1997: 136). Alcohol also has the effect of decreasing subscribers' ability to remember what they had done, further decreasing their feelings of control. D remembered that, "once I napped with someone and nothing happened. We were so drunk I don't think we even kissed when we got home" (Group Interview). Her negotiation was between yes and no, rather than what and how (Vanwesenbeeck 2003: 177). One participant commented that when she was drinking, she lost control over her ability to recognise dangerous partners from safe ones.

> The problem is when I am drunk ... the guys I do go for [are] arrogant schmucks who really I really shouldn't go near! Maybe that is why I have almost completely stopped drinking - I'm safe from myself behind the bar [as a bar tender] whereas when I am drunk I put myself at the mercy of these guys (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 10 August).

Raunch feminine sexuality encourages women to express their sexuality in a particular way that many of them only feel able to do when drinking or drunk. This feminine script places pressure on women performing alternative scripts of femininity. The prevalence and normalisation of pornographic images has had the result of branding those women who do not relate to or enjoy these images as prudes or 'spoil sports.' Feminists who are sceptical of the libratory potential of raunch culture argue that it invites women to express their sexuality but on terms that are acceptable to, and favourable to, dominant male norms of sexual pleasure (Bartky 1990: 23). Being drunk allows women to absolve themselves of responsibility for their actions and can become a ritual in the performance of their sexual identities.

> I was speaking to a friend of mine ... she said that she used to have drunk sex just about every night she went out, because it's just what you do. It's like the correct way of ending a night out ... In 5 years of being sexually active she had never once been sober at the time (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 15 August).

As articulated by Ariel Levy (2006: 5) "'raunchy' and 'liberated' are not synonyms." This participant's friend based her behaviour on society's expectations of her. These expectations included that she pursue sex as part of the normal course of events for a night out. This is a clear

example of social pressure to be sexually available. Participants frequently cite their friends', society's or men's expectations as the reasons for their sexual performance. What is lacking from their discussions is a concept of their own desires.

Superficially raunch feminine sexual scripts suggest that sexual desirousness is normal and feminine. Women actively gaze at men and other women, as well as attempting to make themselves desirable for the gaze of others. Expressing desire is no longer taboo and looking for sex is not frowned upon. The easiest avenue for talking about their desires is amongst friends, which allows for the negotiation of sexual desire and comfort in talking about sex, sexually transmitted diseases and men.

Friendship groups provide the biggest support for their sexual expression. Part of raunch femininity is talking about your desires. For instance in the popular HBO television show *Sex and the City*, one of the most important elements of the story was the way that the women talked through their sexuality with one another. Raunch femininity allows women to have opinions about sex by making it acceptable for women to discuss sex - whether it be amongst peers or in a sex shop. Increased discussion of sexuality may facilitate the ability of women to be more open and safe in their sexual practices (Jinman 2005). They may be able to say who and when, and also how. Raunch feminine sexuality also allows subscribers to discuss previously taboo topics. Tolman (2002: 192) remarks on the paucity of safe spaces for women to discuss their sexuality. Raunch femininity provides one positive site for this negotiation: the 'girls' night'. The more that female sexual activity is talked about, the less deviant it becomes.

> I spent the night with my girlfriends playing games and drinking ... things got a bit heated ... with the drunker amongst us revealing things that I never thought they had in them. Examples: sex toys, masturbating for boyfriend, masturbating in general (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 10 August).

This experimentation also allows other women to negotiate their sexuality, outside of male influence. In South Africa, thousands of vibrators are bought each month and 95% of all sex toys in South Africa are bought by women (Geldenhuys 2006). The biggest sales of sex toys are made at 'house parties' where salespeople visit groups of women in their homes (Geldenhuys 2006). The 'girl's night' enables women to normalise their sexuality, and to dispel myths about women's lack of desire.

> I think people should all talk about sex more. It shouldn't have to be taboo to talk about it, it should be liberating for people to share and express themselves open-mindedly without being judged (Participant 2, Diary Entry, 6 August).

Participant 6 (Diary Entry, 6 August) later describes how her practice of openness about sexuality allows her friends to be more open themselves. She says that because everyone knows about the contents of her bottom drawer, "my friends feel comfortable coming to me for any

sexual advice whatsoever - from their newest sex position, to their questionable STD, to their bedroom disasters". Similarly, participant 9 feels powerful when she talks about sexuality.

> It does make you feel powerful I suppose. It feels awesome to know that we are allowed to talk about sex, to take charge almost, to not have to be those timid ladies of the 1950s ... I love it (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 10 August).

She locates her ability to talk about sex as a rejection of previous feminine values of timidity. In addition, she suggests that talking about sex allows her to have more control over her sexuality (to take charge). Talking about sex allows women to feel in control of sex and their sexuality. It also could enable them to recognise unsafe sexual situations, and to recognise if/when they have sexually transmitted diseases. Reflecting on sexual relationships opens the possibility to negotiate change within relationships (Ramazanoglu and Holland 1993: 253). One participant describes this as a break down of the distinction between masculine and feminine sexuality. Another describes it as 'normal' girls' sexuality.

> Women's position in relation to sexuality is now closer to where guys were a couple of generations before (Participant 3, Diary Entry, 3 August).

> I take a guy home if I feel like I'm in the mood to get off ... it's normal for girls too, to want to have sex (Participant 6, Diary Entry, 7 August).

A downside to raunch femininity's emphasis on female sexuality is that this script may also place increasing pressure on women to be sexual, despite their own feelings and desires. Girls that do not appear as sexual as expected are negatively labelled and hence sexuality becomes restricted. Labels such as 'prude' or 'boring' enable men to mark out which women's sexuality is most interesting creating the impression that only some types of sexuality are worthwhile. Levy remarks that raunch femininity emphasizes a binary that has been created when it comes to women's sexuality. Women are either embarrassed by their sexuality or over-sexualised. Raunch femininity, then, is a "litmus test of female uptightness" (Levy 2006: 40). There is an astounding lack of diversity in the representations of sexuality that raunch femininity utilises.

Participant 4 feels encouraged by women's ability to pursue sexuality that is considered deviant for many women.

> I really did not know that there were girls out there who went out on the town acting like guys and just looking for sex. Personally I could never do something like that and not feel guilty or ashamed but it is quite invigorating to know that there are girls out there who are able to do that and not feel ashamed of themselves. High five! ... I mean if others can do it, I must pluck up the courage to be who I wanna be (Participant 4, Diary Entry, 20 August).

Although she feels censored by emphasized femininity, and that she would not be able to pursue sex for sex's sake without feeling subject to social sanctions, she is invigorated by the fact that other women do feel able to. She feels inspired by their displays of desire and encouraged to

pursue her own sexuality. However, her heterosexual relationship, and the scripts of femininity that she is expected to play under heterosexuality, form a limit to her courage.

> I've been kissing this really lovely boy for the last month ... I feel like a thirteen year old girl around him. It's pathetic ... I get so shy and can't be myself (Participant 4, Diary Entry, 4 September).

She is unable to be herself in her relationship because of the societal expectations of what women should be like. She likens herself to a powerless young girl, removing her ability to negotiate the relationship on equal terms. Her excitement at the prospect of being sexually desirous is unable to translate to real control over her own desire. As in earlier solicited diary entries, the narratives of romance prevent her from taking control over her own desire, and from being able to negotiate her relationship effectively.

> It is easy to talk of how to empower young women so as to make sex safer or more pleasurable; but it is more difficult to specify what exactly is meant by empowerment in sexual relations when women are subordinate to men (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thomson 1992 in Jackson and Scott 1996: 251).

In addition, narratives of romance may have other negative effects such as the inability for women to negotiate condom usage, or the inability to reject sexual advances, because of their implicit gender roles (Hynie, Lyden, Cote, and Weiner 1998). "The romantic narrative entices and invites girls into trading in the full range of their real feelings ... and knowledge of what is actually happening in relationships and reality, for male commitment, care, and attention" (Tolman 2002: 81). This is reiterated in participant 3's statement that "When I feel sexy ... this is more to do with being desired and wanted by someone else" (Participant 3, Diary Entry, 21 August). Perhaps this is why participant 8 avoids romance altogether.

> The less I feel towards someone, the less I care about how I behave; I care less how I look, act, talk, kiss, or if the sex was great when it's with a random [guy] (Participant 8, Diary Entry, 26 August).

When she has sex with someone she does not know she feels less restricted by scripts of femininity. When she is with someone she knows or cares for she feels overburdened by scripts about how women should act, talk, kiss and have sex. According to Elizabeth Bernstein, a commodified view of sexuality has increasingly permeated society, whereby sex is no longer associated with love or romance. It is now focussed on how many partners one can have and the belief that "one needs to have sex immediately when aroused" (Bernstein 2001: 395-396). It is recreational rather than procreational. This commodified view seems to be a key element of raunch feminine sexuality.

Despite participants 3 and 6's confidence that all are more empowered in relation to sexuality, a sexual double-standard continues to persist. Whilst women may feel able to take men

home, often they feel embarrassed or unwilling to let other people, sometimes even their close friends, know about their desire.

> One of my friends is under-cover sleeping with millions of boys and never telling anyone ... the only conclusion I can draw is that she wants it, but is embarrassed by it (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 21 August).

A process of labelling all women who are perceived as too sexually adventurous persists. Men are praised for sexual voracity whereas women are seen as 'hyper'-sexual or having a problem if they are sexually desirous. The friend that participant 9 describes is embarrassed by her sexuality. She is described as desirous, but is also pressured to keep this desire in check. The slag-drag dichotomy (either women are prudes and boring, or hypersexual and appealing) encourages women to be sexual in order to not be thought of as boring, but discourages active sexuality in women. In other words, women must be sexually available, but shouldn't pursue sexuality themselves. Although the script of raunch femininity opposes this dichotomy, the participants in the present research do not experience this as a lived change in perspective.

> While a lot of people say everything at Rhodes is too casual I really don't think so. Maybe for guys they can get away with casual sex but for a girl it's still one hell of a big deal. This makes it difficult for people who really just want to have fun. Suddenly because you're a girl there's a whole new level of responsibility (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 2 August).

Her lived experience of social pressure to be sexual, but not too sexual is distinctly gendered. Men are still more able to have casual sex without it reflecting on their reputation whereas women are still labelled and considered deviant. In research on male sexuality, it was suggested that men are more likely to view others as the objects of their sexual desires, whereas women are likely to see themselves as the objects of sexual desire (Ellis and Symons, 1990: 529). For this reason, women do not want to be seen as deviant, because it damages their chances of being desirable to men. By acquiescing to social standards of sexuality participant 5 allows herself to be made into a sexual object, rather than using her sexuality to challenge restrictive norms.

Despite the potential for experimentation, sexual experimentation is likely to have ambiguous effects on women's credibility (Attwood 2007: 242). In raunch feminine scripts, the most aggressively sexual women are the most desirable. Raunch feminine women portray themselves as sexually ravenous. As there is increased opportunity for sexual experimentation, the construct of male-as-desirer/female-as-desired is not as important. In fact, many participants cite being able to express their sexuality *like men do* as one of the primary reasons why it is empowering for them (Levy 2006: 32).

Although this expresses a move away from emphasized femininity's desirelessness, many women are still fearful of expressing their desire. Perhaps a reason that they fear expressing their desire is because of the high levels of sexual violence in South Africa. Many participants are aware

of narratives that suggest that if women are sexually active or dress a particular way they are inviting rape or abuse. This narrative has great power in South Africa at the moment, which could lead many women to be afraid of the trouble that expressing their desire will create.

> Until girls can say yes and not be punished or suffer negative consequence, until girls have access to alternatives to the romance narrative - which offers them one line only, "no" - girls will continue to have their "no" mistaken for "token resistance" (Tolman 2002: 204).

Participants do not situate the dangers of sexual desire with men or social conventions, but rather locate their own or other women's desire as the site of corruption. This has the negative effect of making it difficult for participants to consider themselves as a group, and to consider why sexuality is problematic for them as a group (Tolman 2002: 189). Focussing on the self does not allow for effective changes to be made in the social system.

Negotiating desire encounters all of these challenges. Women must make choices about being either sexual or a prude, rather than experiencing sexuality as part of a continuum of bodily and emotional expression. Some participants were critical of the way that other participants' desire was expressed. Not all subscribers are able to distance themselves from the script of emphasized feminine desire.

> Maybe I'm too much of a people pleaser and act as I know society wants me to. Maybe there really isn't anything wrong with being a slut. But when I see girls making absolute idiots of themselves and losing all self-respect because they want sex I can't help feeling a little nauseous, and seriously sorry for them. There are many ways of getting satisfaction (sexual or other) without compromising yourself as a woman (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 19 August).

This expression is not unique. Tolman's 2002 study found that young women experienced the contradictions between being a 'people pleaser' and having one's own desire (Tolman 2002: 107). She stated that this leaves women with "no clear direction about how to deal with [their] embodied sexuality in a landscape that is dotted ... with the possibility of being a "slut" who will always and forever be in danger of being used" (Tolman 2002: 107). By labelling other women, participant 9 secures her place as more virtuous on the hierarchical heterosexual scale, thereby making herself more desirable to men (Attwood 2007: 234). These contradictions lead participant 9 to believe that expressing sexuality too voraciously will compromise her status as a 'woman', which reveals that for her, being a woman is only achievable through following an emphasized feminine script.

> Making love makes me feel sexy and beautiful and like an amazing, amazing woman ... I know this might sound ridiculously old fashioned but before I do anything like that I think that someday I want to find someone who will love me forever, who I can be with completely and marry and stuff ... I honestly believe that every time you sleep with someone your souls connect and you give them a bit of yourself that you can't take back (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 21 August).

She rightly feels that sexuality is part of identity construction and that it can influence the way that she feels about herself. She wants the fairy tale narrative, and gives all the power over her ability to access it to men. In addition, she gives power to men by giving herself completely to them in sexual encounters and allowing the encounter to define her. Her sexuality reinforces heterosexual conventions that situate sexuality in the private realm and link it to marriage. Although she does not want to be the 'timid' lady of the 1950s, she is not ready to be a sexually desirous woman. In contrast, participant 7 argues that because men are able to have many sexual partners without judgement, women should also be able to.

> I'm very open about my sexuality and about how many sexual partners I've had. I feel that if people judge me, they're not worth my time. Besides, a lot of men have had many sexual partners and people never bat a bloody eyelash (Participant 7, Diary Entry, 2 August).

Participant 7 critiques the sexual double-standard and eschews people who want to label her. But many more labels for promiscuous women exist than for promiscuous men. It is impossible to argue that men and women enter the sexual arena on equal terms. What raunch femininity seeks to do is to subvert these meanings when participants pre-emptively label each other in an attempt to re-appropriate negative labels for sexually active women. Within raunch femininity, subscribers often refer to one other as 'slut' or 'bitch', but the meanings that they intend are not about sexual practices, but rather about camaraderie and praise (Jones 2007). By labelling one another, they remove the power of someone else to label them, and remove the restrictions that are implied by those labels. They are more able to have sex without suffering under restrictive labels, because those who subscribe to raunch femininity support one another's desire.

However, Levy argues that the cultural pressure on women to behave in this way is so great that without doing so they cannot feel successful. Similar pressure is not placed on men. This culture creates a new gendered division of labour in that making an effort to seem hot and sexy, in order to have sex at all, is still seen as women's work (Levy 2006: 33). Levy describes women who support such narrow views of sexuality as Female Chauvinist Pigs. The Female Chauvinist Pig (FCP) is:

> post-feminist. She is funny. She gets it. She doesn't mind cartoonish stereotypes of female sexuality, and she doesn't mind a cartoonishly macho response to them. The FCP asks ... Why try to beat them when you can join them? (Levy 2006: 93)

The suggestion here is that if all women act raunchily then it may seem like equality of the sexes because everyone is behaving 'like men'. However, this still allows for masculinity and men's desires to be considered more worthwhile than women's own sexual desires. Trying to have

sex like a man does not do anything to better the position of women. It does not attempt to change damaging stereotypes about men and women and still creates femininity as something to be moved away from rather than embodied in a powerful way (Levy 2006: 115). As Levy says, "if you are the exception that proves the rule, and the rule is that women are inferior, you haven't made any progress" and furthermore, you have not allowed other women to progress either (2006: 116).

Conclusions

The analysis of sexual stories is crucial to understanding sexual politics (Plummer 1995). Raunch femininity presents us with a picture of 'silent bodies' (Tolman 2002) that are wholly controlled and defined by masculine notions of sexuality rather than being self-reflexive. Apart from one or two participants who questioned the sexual standards they are expected to live up to, solicited diaries revealed one startling fact. As in emphasized femininity, part of being able to be sexually active is the ability to be considered desirable, in particular, desirable to men.

The requirement that women make themselves erotic *objects* denies their transcendence from their body and instead leaves them firmly fixed to its materiality. The physical elements of their bodies are also important in harnessing male desire. For this reason the raunch feminine woman, like the emphasized feminine woman, cannot live in just any body. The desirable body remains slender, but is also toned, and this body must be dressed in a way to reveal its appeal to men. The techniques of beauty that raunch femininity encourages are linked to raunch sexuality in their aim of attaining the best possible position on the hierarchical heterosexual scale. The following chapter will make clear how these techniques work.

Raunch feminine beauty.

> No single practice or manner always suggests either power or oppression. Instead, like any other set of symbols, the signs of grooming must always be read in context (Scott 2005: 13).

Raunch feminine beauty has two important elements: the female subscribers are slender and dress in a very revealing manner. Several theorists have equated raunch feminine beauty with negative effects for women. Slenderness has been linked to passivity and weakness and women denying their bodily appetites in favour of being desirable. In raunch culture women must eschew the curvy domestic body as well as the taut masculine body - instead they must resemble a thin, toned teenager. Revealing clothes have been associated with trades such as prostitution and pornography and consequently have also been associated with women's sexual objectification, and with the fact that their identities have been tied to their bodies. However, the present research reveals that theoretical arguments sometimes obscure the extent to which women are capable of self-definition. Sometimes slenderness is associated with strength, confidence and activity. Sometimes clothing is used for creative identity construction and experienced as empowering.

Linda Scott argues that feminism has an anti-beauty agenda which does not serve the interests of the majority of women (Scott 2005: 2). Any argument that women should not strive to look a particular way is also an argument providing a normative idea about the way women *should* look. Demanding that women return to their real bodies or shapes denies their potential to deploy their image in the way that they choose. The 'real' body does not exist; the body is socially produced and performed in relation to social scripts about appropriate behaviour. All cultures have some practices that include decorating or shaping the body in order to make it socially appealing (Scott 2005).

Bartky argues that particular types of femininity render women psychologically oppressed. "To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self esteem" (Bartky 1990: 22). Those who are psychologically oppressed become their own oppressors – they internalise the belief that they are inferior and believe that it is natural; they are often unaware that they are oppressed at all (Bartky 1990: 22). This type of oppression is not only internal however, but is initially imposed through structural and systematic mystification: "the systematic obscuring of both the reality and agencies of psychological oppression so that its intended effect, the depreciated self, is lived out as destiny, guilt or neurosis" (Bartky 1990: 22). This type of oppression works by making domination seem natural and "rendering [the dominated] incapable of understanding the nature of those agencies responsible for their subjugation" (Bartky 1990: 23). Psychological oppression can take three main forms according to Bartky. These are stereotyping, cultural domination and sexual objectification (Bartky 1990).

Stereotyping involves the allocation of a fixed 'natural' place for a particular group or individual. When someone holds stereotypical beliefs about a particular group or individual, they are unlikely to recognise the rights of that group/person or hold concern for their needs. This is because the stereotyped group/individual has been given a set place and is denied transcendence from that place (Bartky 1990: 24). Secondly, stereotypes that are constantly reinforced make it very difficult for the individual/group to separate themselves from that belief and its implied behaviour and choices. This has the effect of preventing that person/group from exercising choices that actualise their self-interests and additionally it results in their choices being shaped by what the stereotype suggests that they should do (Bartky 1990: 24). It results in a lack of self-determination and a sense that *by definition* the person/group is destined to be a particular way and make specific choices based on that fact. Thus, the existence of stereotypes is a threat to women's ability to make autonomous choices.

In addition, the content of stereotypes is harmful to women in a similar way. Stereotypes become amalgamated with a set of roles that women can and cannot play if they are to be seen as women/feminine. This oppresses women because those who do want to pursue roles outside of the 'womanly' group are consequently psychologically torn between what they want to be and what they have always been told they should be. Thus, pursuing either route of action leads to self-oppression. If they pursue the "feminine" path of action they are suppressing any challenge to that category of stereotypes that they may feel (I say may because it is possible that some women may not feel trapped) and if they pursue the other route of action they are no longer seen as feminine and must deny what they have been raised to be.

The potential for negotiation of harmful stereotypes always exists. Even if women appear to be trapped by discourses about their bodies, they might not necessarily experience themselves this way. Looking at women's bodies as controlled by images and by the male gaze denies them agency - women can and do make active choices based on what they believe to be important information. The obvious question is whether participants attempt to be beautiful for themselves. In order to attempt to answer this, this chapter will explore the ambiguity of raunch feminine beauty, starting with slenderness and going on to the use of clothing by subscribers to raunch femininity.

Slenderness

> To have a body felt to be "feminine" - a body socially constructed through the appropriate practices - is in most cases crucial to a woman's sense of herself as female and, since persons currently can *be* only as male and female, to her sense of herself as an existing individual (Bartky 1988).

Superficially, slenderness appears to take a more positive form within raunch femininity than it does within emphasized femininity. The subscribers to raunch femininity are slender, but

they are also active. Roberta Pollack Seid (1989) argues that the fitness and health industry were once viewed as a positive development in women's lives because they removed the imperative to pursue unhealthy eating practices such as anorexia or bulimia. They transformed women from passive objects to active subjects, determined to live in their bodies in a positive way (Seid 1989: 249). Raunch femininity women seem to embody active values. They go to gym, they socialise, and they are athletic. Using the gym or exercise to fulfil the norm of slenderness can leave subscribers to raunch femininity feeling strong and able.

> When I've been at the gym I feel empowered because my body feels strong and able and I get a strong sense of satisfaction for what my body is capable of doing (Participant 3, Diary Entry 21 August).

The participants reveal an understanding of their bodies as projects - something to be moulded and controlled by their will. This is a distinctly classed understanding of the body (Bourdieu 1984: 212-213 and 1977: 838). The way that an individual prefers her body to look and the values that she believes it is important to embody (capability) are indicators of that individual's class status. Class develops tastes for particular things and lifestyles (Bourdieu 1984: 175-7). Amongst upper middle-class women, and as indicated by the media they consume, there is the belief that your weight and your body shape are your own choice and doing. Thus a fat body is a lazy, lower class body (Seid 1989). The slender body is part of an upper class lifestyle, and thus the pursuit of this body is the pursuit of higher class status. Indeed, the very opportunities to take time away from work and attend the gym are an indication that participants are not working class women. The body becomes marked by, and reproduces, the individual's social class (Bourdieu 1984).

Commonly, those who consider their bodies as projects do so by choosing a lifestyle that is suited to their goals. At the heart of emphasized femininity is control of the body. Raunch femininity is no different. Raunch femininity encourages the use of fitness regimes in order to create the body as appealing to others. Slenderness is a marker of self-control. In addition, because in Western societies women and men are expected to fulfil similar roles, their body shapes have become more similar (Popenoe 2004). Physical strength provides women with a number of benefits (Dworkin 2001 in Weitz 2003: 241). It removes their dependence on men for physical tasks. It may enable women to prevent an attack against them, feel more self-empowered and ensure that they are living a healthy lifestyle. But, physical strength does not exist in abstraction from the women who work on their bodies, and thus must be considered as part of larger discourses concerning the way the body should look. It is a way that subscribers to raunch femininity take control over their lives and bodies (Soley-Beltran 2004: 320). However the need to take control can be experienced as frustrating or restrictive.

> I love to feel feminine and like a woman, but there are times when I (like I'm sure most other women do) want to let my guard down and just act out (Participant 4, Diary Entry, 7 August).

Fitness regimes and diets are pursued alongside binge drinking activities, thus also eliminating the significance of purity so central to emphasized femininity. This constant alcohol consumption undermines the links between health and beauty that are central elements of emphasized femininity. Many of the events that participants attend (parties and clubs for example) pivot around alcohol consumption. Part of being desirous like a man is drinking like a man, thus many of the participants drink to extremes in a bid to out-party their male counterparts. Women then are expected to act like 'men' but this performance and its ensuing inebriation also makes women more available to men's control. Whilst this behaviour is obviously dangerous to their health, and safety, it is part of their rejection of the emphasized feminine norms of passive domesticity. Many women are thus encouraged to pursue previously masculine styles of cultural performance in order to give the impression that they are as free as men. Drinking excessively is seen as being fun, 'out there' and confident.

Their participation in male cultural styles has limits however. Subscribers to raunch femininity feel pressured by the requirement of slenderness and alcohol is associated with weight gain. Thus subscribers to raunch femininity must enter into the cycle of exercising to maintain their weight, and drinking to maintain their social status as fun and desirable.

> Drinking doesn't help much but it's difficult to say no at a university where drinking is such a big part of one's social life. I'd rather enjoy my varsity years, and then put my weight first, but that doesn't mean I don't worry about it (Participant 2, Diary Entry, 2 August).

The way that upper class female bodies are shaped and controlled by their upbringing makes it more common for them to perform small movements in a limited space, rather than big strong movements (Young 2005; Bourdieu 1984: 217-18). Many of the participants choose attending the gym, rather than swimming, hockey, running or other sports which involve large physical action. Membership of a particular class 'fits' the body for particular actions and limits its ability to perform others (Shilling 2003: 118 and Bordo 1993 in Price and Shildrick). Gender plays a similar role in changing the "techniques and degrees of discipline exerted on the body" (King 2004: 30). Muscled bodies are still associated with masculinity, as is strength and large movement. Gym is a space where women may exercise control over their bodies whilst not breaking free of the restrictions on feminine motility. Subscribers to raunch femininity must not train too much, or they will lose the markers of their femininity and desirability.

> Since I've stopped being a macho athlete I've become a lot more feminine. This doesn't mean that I've stopped training in any way but [I train with] different focuses [now] - less need to be strong and butch (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 15 August).

Bordo (1993) asserts that "choices about the body are made within a context that is rife with messages about which bodies are most culturally valued" (Cited in Tyner and Ogle 2007: 92).

Shari L. Dworkin argues that even when women do want to become fit and strong they are likely to encounter an ideological 'glass ceiling' to their muscularity (Dworkin 2001 in Weitz 2003: 244). She suggests that this is prompted by beliefs in the roles that women should play as part of their subscription to emphasized femininity. When women do attempt transcendence over stereotypes, it is ambiguous, fraught with a lack of conviction or a worry that their action will make them unappealing. Participant 5 felt this when she no longer wanted to be a macho athlete, because that made her less appealing to men. Although bodily control is sometimes experienced as powerful and liberating, it can play into already existing power balances that function to keep women in a position of disadvantage. The fact that she does not want to become manly means that she holds back on her training. Acquiescing to the binary of masculine (muscular) versus feminine (trim) action provides subscribers of raunch with self-confidence (created by feeling successful in terms of the gaze) that makes them more able to act freely. Achieving the ideal body, or striving towards it, makes women feel empowered, expressed as a feeling of being 'sexy'.

Thinness is part of women's project to become desirable and sexiness is part of the control that makes raunch feminine women feel powerful. When men desire them, they feel a sense of power at being seen as able to control their bodies. By appearing as a sexy body, they attract the attention of an audience. According to Keila Tyner and Jennifer Paff Ogle (2007: 87), there are rewards associated with conforming to the dominant beauty norms. This power can be achieved in two ways: "(a) by using appearance as capital and/or (b) by transforming the self into the woman I want to be".

Pierre Bourdieu conceived of the body as a carrier of physical capital (Bourdieu 1977 and 1984). Physical capital is similar to status or power, and is linked to access to other types of resources (economic capital, cultural capital and social capital) (Bourdieu 1977). One of the ways of acquiring this capital is to manage one's appearance in order to fit in with dominant social norms and to use dress to indicate authority. When women are appealing they can attempt to control their audience. Taking power over the audience is a technique used in strip shows by many female strippers. According to Hanna (1998: 57) some young women use explicit sexual expression as a feminine act that takes power away from their audience. Whilst they recognise that they might be the object of 'the gaze' they also know how to direct it and hence have some control over it.

Katherine Liepe-Levinson (1998: 10) argues that activities like strip tease can simultaneously reinforce and break down definitions of acceptable sex roles. When dancing, the stripper often plays the sex-object role. She is naked, whereas the audience is clothed, which places her in a more vulnerable position. The stripper is on stage for men's consumption and the men in the audience "buy control over the gaze" (Liepe-Levinson 1998: 11). This is similar to the state of affairs at many of the parties attended by subscribers to raunch femininity. Women wear fewer, or more revealing clothes than men rendering them the object of the male gaze. By having

control over the invitation process, men take the position of active gazers. However, this balance of power can be contested.

In a strip show, when the stripper calls a spectator onto the stage, the roles are reversed. When the stripper asks for participants the stripper has the power over whom she chooses from the audience and chosen participants surrender to the stripper. In many cases, strippers also tease men sexually to acquire bigger tips and free drinks (Liepe-Levinson 1998: 26). So in the context of raunch femininity, selecting particular men to dance with or to flash at can be interpreted as a challenge to the prevailing balance of power. In addition, conformity to the standard of the slender body makes women more desirable to men, and thus more able to control them. If a subscriber is desirable and teases men she can ensure that they are focused on her and can attempt to make them do what she wants them to do. In short, directing and controlling the gaze, rather than merely passively submitting to it.

> Dancing like a 'skank', knowing that I look hot, and watching other people watch me makes me feel like a powerful woman and that is REAL sexiness - Power (Participant VII, free writing, what sexy means).

Sexiness is thus a marker of control. Women who are sexy are able to attract men, and to control them by either giving or refusing their sexuality. Several participants described this as being 'in control' or having 'sexual power'.

> It's about feeling powerful and in control - someone else thinking 'That chick is in control' ... I think it has to do with sexual power - you're sexy because they (men) want to have sex with you ... We base so much of what is sexy on what men want and what they think. Sometimes I've dressed sexily to piss girls off. But it's mostly for the men (K, Group Interview).
>
> Sexy people are those who have control - over men, what they do, how people react to them (B, Group Interview).

Control comes from successfully negotiating the boundaries of acceptable feminine sexuality (they must be sexually desirous but not promiscuous) in order to remain sexually appealing. Thus, individual experiences of power or control may actually be reflections of broader social practices that train the female body to be docile and obedient to cultural requirements (Bordo 1990). Bartky argues that the culture of women *qua* women is an alternative to hegemonic culture (patriarchal) and hence is regarded as inferior and other (Bartky 1990: 25). She claims that although women recognise that in hegemonic patriarchal culture we are degraded and inferior, we take this culture as our own. The acceptance of the hegemonic culture denies women cultural autonomy. Additionally, it constructs male domination as natural and consequently unchangeable (Bartky 1990: 25).

Mystification and fragmentation are important features of male cultural domination. Women's consciousness is fragmented in the cultural sphere as a result of the fact that while

women must remain themselves on one hand, on the other hand they must transform themselves in order to participate in cultural discourse at all. By this I mean that they must internalise the values that the hegemonic culture exhibits as their own despite the fact that these are male values. Women are expected to assimilate masculinist motifs, stories and images in order to play a cultural role at all. By being forced to participate in male supremacist cultural discourse, women are unable to exercise their own capacities and hence are alienated from what it means to be human.

Raunch feminine women do not have access to confidence without being considered desirable. Part of being desirable is being confident, and confidence is dependent on slenderness. Feeling undesirable, or fat, is seen as out of control, and has a debilitating effect on the participants' self-confidence. So, when subscribers to raunch femininity do not feel slender, they do not feel confident, or desirable, or valuable. Their efforts at fitness are less centred around strength and health than appearances would suggest. They have not escaped the cycle of judging their own worth, and expecting others to judge them, by their appearance. The fitness ethic does not allow women any time to stop worrying about their weight (Seid 1989: 247).

> I've been trying to quit smoking and, in the process, have picked up weight. It's the weirdest thing; I know I've only quit for a week, and apparently one can't see the difference in weight in such a short period of time, but already I feel different. I don't get as many second glances as I used to etc. That's why I reckon that it's not my body that's changed that much, it's more my level of confidence (Participant 7, Diary Entry, 26 August).

To feel undesirable is to lose self-confidence. One of the simplest ways to project confidence is to become drunk. Alcohol boosts confidence making women feel desirable. It is part of a raunch feminine lifestyle. As H says, "It's definitely not the quiet sit in the corner types who are seen as sexy" (Group Interview). Similarly, C states that "alcohol can make you feel sexy and so then you're more confident" (Group Interview).

Whilst still aimed at self-mastery, and thus in reaction to compulsory heterosexuality, women who subscribe to raunch femininity remain tied to the debilitating pattern of food and diet obsession. Diary entries reveal that although subscribers perform their femininity in a way that appears strong, internally they are feeling fragile and weak. Standard definitions of heterosexuality entail a subservient, passive and weak female and a dominant, active, strong male. Although the subscribers to raunch femininity are active in their attempts to achieve slenderness, this does not result in an overall feeling of wellness or strength. Instead, women pathologise their bodies, obsess about them and never feel completely at ease. This may not be visible to outside spectators. Because of the gender performances that convey power and strength, the mask of raunch feminine beauty hides the inner battles of subscribers with their bodies. Dieting and fitness regimes are situated on a continuum of self monitoring.

> When people look at me I highly doubt they see these insecurities. Most people assume I am happy with my body because of the confident way that I carry it (Participant 2, Diary Entry, 2 August).

> I have been through enough experiences with eating disorders on both sides of the coin (I've been there done that and had friends who I've had to deal with) to know that a person's dissatisfaction with themselves is sometimes not apparent to others (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 5 September).

Often a confident exterior hides interior vulnerability. Participants work to hide this vulnerability because raunch femininity requires that they appear confident in order to be sexy. Kim Chernin describes this as being alienated from the body and unable to find it pleasurable (Chernin 1981: 23). The body must be maintained, shaped and watched in order to maintain self-confidence; there is no sense of being at ease in the body. Instead, there is only a permanent sense of dissatisfaction.

> I'm sick at the moment which stresses me out because I can't get to the gym. When I don't go to gym for a while I start to feel ugly and flabby ... I'm trying to lose weight this term. Since the end of last year I have packed on 6 kilos which depresses me. I am often pressured by my mother to keep in shape and feel criticised when I'm not keeping up on that (Participant 2, Diary Entry, 2 August).

Despite her illness she feels that her inability to go to gym makes her "ugly and flabby". For many women, "areas that are soft, loose or 'wiggly' are unacceptable, even on extremely thin bodies" (Bordo 1993: 90). When women are believed to be responsible for their body types, then an unappealing body type can open them up to contempt and scorn (Seid 1989: 248). Participant 2 is not immune to the pressure on women to be slender; in fact, she feels this pressure directly from her mother. Yet she maintains a façade of confidence. Appearing weak or narcissistic is unappealing to men and thus avoided in raunch femininity. She must appear appropriately concerned but not obsessed with her body.

Participant 2's use of the words 'packed on' is not unique; participant 9 also describes her weight gain as 'packing on'.

> We were getting ready together and neither could find any clothes that fit us nicely because we've both packed on like 5kgs. It was a bit depressing and at one stage I even considered not going out at all because we felt so crap about ourselves and we were just feeding off each-other's complaints ... there's nothing worse than an insecure night out (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 1 September).

Weight gain is experienced as a burden, something that adds to the heavy load of a body that is constantly judged as inferior. Women experience their body shape as the result of choice, and therefore cannot forgive themselves if their choices have created a 'less-than-perfect' body (Seid 1989: 249). Women's identities have historically been tied to their bodies and this may provide some explanation for the fact that participants are so convinced of their inadequacy (Macdonald 1995: 201). The ideal of slenderness makes participants so conscious of their bodies

that participant 9 and her friend consider not going out. It is not just that their bodies are bigger; it is that they have failed in portraying their identities in the way that they would like to. Participants have bought into what Charles Taylor calls 'the process of normalization' (1986: 78) and are unable to see past their bodies as a source of happiness or success. Women experience pressure to conform to this norm and indeed exert pressure on themselves. Instead of being slender and in control, they experience their bodies as a site of a lack of self-control. In addition, fat is experienced as a step away from the ideal or "perfect" life of raunch femininity.

> My digsmate is on a hectic diet. The girls in my digs are very aware of clothing and what you can and can't wear. I think that's placed a lot of pressure on her to be a particular body shape so she can be like them (C, Group Interview).
>
> I lived with a bulimic last year. It put a lot of pressure on me. If she ate one piece of toast for breakfast then I'd eat half a piece otherwise I wouldn't feel good. It was killing me. We were constantly competing to be perfect - whatever that means (B, Group Interview).
>
> The other day I was measured for an outfit and struggled to look away from the numbers being written down. I'm always comparing myself to how I used to be when I did swimming training and horse-riding daily and my body was incredibly toned (Participant 2, Diary Entry, 2 August).

Slenderness as a beauty norm encourages women constantly to compare themselves with others. Comparisons can take place between individuals and the ideal, or between the individual and her friends (pressure to be a particular body shape so she can be like them), or between the individual and ideas of how she formerly looked or felt. Thus, as in emphasized femininity, hierarchic heterosexuality dictates that in order to feel valuable, women must compete with one another and themselves in order to look the best for men.

The imperative to be fit is tied to the imperative to be thin. It is just another set of restrictions placed on the female body and does little to liberate or empower. In compliance with the restrictive norms on body shape and weight loss, women hand over their power to experts such as the media, magazines and fitness professionals in order to look their best. Being fit and looking good have become fashionable. "Every celebrity and every magazine assures us that exceptional beauty has been achieved through hard work" (Seid 1989: 251). Every individual is seen as having the potential to meet the ideal body type and thus, those who fail to, are regarded as lazy. Under circumstances of illness there is no escaping guilt at failing to exercise. Being fat is regarded as a lack of discipline or effort put in and thus as something shameful and disappointing (Seid 1989: 181).

During the group interview the participants revealed that they felt that there was a 'textbook definition' of beauty that women had to conform to in order to have sex appeal. When questioned about the details of such a definition, the first thing that they said was 'thin' (D) and after that came suggestions about confidence as a woman. This toned, non-curvy beauty ideal is

not universal. It is a western, white-centred understanding of beauty. Individuals feel the gaze of the supervisor (the media, their friends, their mothers) even in the absence of one. Young women feel as if they are constantly under surveillance. They change their actions in order to try and please the gazer, even at their own expense. Failure to achieve the norms of beauty do not often entail a critique of those norms, but rather a critique of one's own body.

Comparisons are entrenched by the media in what Bartky (1990) calls the 'fashion-beauty complex'. Women consume beauty products or pursue beauty strategies (such as restrictive eating or excessive exercise) in an attempt to achieve the glamorous lifestyle of the slender. Fashion photography in (advertising and magazines) often reconstitutes the body in segments - thus when an individual considers herself she does not come to understand herself as a whole, but rather as particular pieces that can be modified and changed to be perfect (Fuss 1992: 718). "The materiality of the body ... becomes a detachable asset, malleable to whatever aspirational purpose postfeminist woman chooses" (MacDonald 1995: 202).

> It really annoys me that my weight can affect me that much, but I do get the distinct impression that I am being judged constantly. CONSTANTLY. (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 2 August) and,
>
> [my ex boyfriend] has honestly made me feel like all I have is my looks and that I have to convince people to like me by being pretty ... and now I've put on weight and I think that it's the end of the fucking world (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 1 September).

Simone de Beauvoir remarked that the more a woman becomes free to control her body, the more dependent she becomes on others affirmation of it in order to feel successful and happy. Women remain dependent on men for affirmation.

> Today, more than formerly, woman knows the joy of developing her body through sports, gymnastics, baths, massage, and health diets; she decides what her weight, her figure and the colour of her skin shall be. Modern aesthetic concepts permit her to combine beauty and activity: she has a right to trained muscles, she declines to get fat; in physical culture she finds self-affirmation as subject and in a measure frees herself from her contingent flesh; but this liberation easily falls back into dependence (de Beauvoir 1988: 549).

The seemingly self-confident women who subscribe to raunch femininity are fighting an internal battle about whether or not they are good enough to wear the clothes that they want to wear and lead the lives they would like to lead. They feel that their bodies will never be completely successful and thus external control and discipline is no longer necessary.

> Although I think my body is beautiful there is always the feeling of never being good enough ... I feel compared to [my friends] and I feel like a failure for the amount of weight I have put on in my three years at Rhodes (Participant 2, Diary Entry, 2 August).

Women restrict themselves and punish themselves for failure. In fact, raunch femininity does little to break away from dissatisfaction with the body as the norm. Despite being framed as, and related to, feeling good, the norm of slenderness has a detrimental effect on women's feelings of self-worth and confidence. Clothing, in contrast, is believed to have the potential to reveal those features of their bodies that subscribers think are their best. Clothing allows for playful negotiation of social and gender norms. But, one must already have some form of cultural/physical capital or power in order to challenge broader categories. Beauty standards restrict women to particular clothes - what they *can* and *can't* wear. The body then can become the enemy if not beautiful enough - it allows or disallows women to wear the clothing that they want. Clothing can ensure the embodiment of a 'feminine' ideal.

Clothing.

> It is not just the fabric and the accessories that indicate a woman's social status; the body itself, reshaped by a corset, also acquires meaning (Thesander 1997: 59).

Beauty, as a value construct, is negotiated through bodily techniques, of which clothing is an important example. Feminism has been associated with the idea of 'bra-burning', originating in the women's liberation movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the U.S.A. What this association reveals is the idea that one way of escaping constricting ideas about femininity was to cease to wear the clothing that formed part of that identity construction (Barnard 1996: 133). Clothing is one of the most powerful markers of subscription to particular types of femininity. Raunch feminine women use their bodies to garner attention. The clothing that they use is not neutral – no item of clothing is. Clothing is not meaningful simply as the result of the designer, wearer or spectator's understandings and intentions. Nor is it meaningful solely as a product of the actual physical elements of that garment. Meaning cannot simply be produced by the garment or the ensemble and nor can it be an expression of designers', wearers' or spectators' intentions (Barnard 1996: 85). Annette Lynch refers to the style of dress worn by subscribers to raunch femininity as 'provocative dress', covering "all female appearance styles that deviate from the acceptable norm of a specific social situation toward the direction of sexual suggestiveness and/or body exposure" (2007: 185).

Alison Guy and Maura Banim (2000: 314) divide the two dominant approaches to women's clothing into categories they call 'stitched up' and 'gaping seams'. Under the category of 'stitched up' they place theories that suggest that fashion and clothes are used to restrict women. They remark that there are a number of ways that using and wearing clothes is a 'negatively powered' experience. This is primarily because "the structural positioning of women in patriarchal, capitalist societies generates distorted self-perceptions and, in terms of clothes use, defensive and inauthentic presentation." Women's clothing use and relationship with clothes is framed by the dominant patriarchal discourses and representations of the way they should look from the media and the fashion system. In the second category, 'gaping seams', are those who argue that clothing

can often be used as self-realization and furthermore, that this occurs through the agency of the women wearing the clothes. This agency becomes pleasurable in its very exercise and is one of the ways that women can explore things that pleasure them. They argue that any interaction with, and interpretation of, the social structure means that participants experience power plays between compliance, resistance and subversion. Some theorists (see for instance Twigg 2007; Davis 1992; Entwistle 2002; and Ussher 1997) move away from suggesting that women can 'represent themselves' through fashion. Rather they argue that this search for an authentic *self* is inauthentic; there is no one true or false identity within which one can be positioned.

Kate Taylor (2006) argues that if a woman is spending time making herself look good (going to the gym or dressing to look good) it is not, as some feminists argue, time better spent in a university library. The dress sense of participants is about "feeling comfortable, sexy and showing personality" rather than compulsively revealing one's body (Author not stated 2006). Furthermore, most women involved in this culture are not dressing in a revealing manner in order to be empowered because most young women "already see themselves as equal to men: they can work, they can vote, they can bonk on the first date. For younger women, raunch is not about feminism, it's just about fashion" (Taylor 2006). The clothing is only the tip of the ice-berg however; the women who dress this way are using their bodies to make a very particular statement about who they are. The unspoken communication that clothing facilitates allows people to make statements about themselves without saying a word. Clothing enables spectators to "translate cues into meanings whether intended, unconscious, or imagined, from another's appearance as well as his or her dress" (Johnson, Schofield and Yurchisin 2002: 125).

Clothes are read as part of an ensemble, not as individual units and the same clothes may have different meanings when worn in different combinations (McCracken 1990 in Craik 1993: 9). Clothing is tied to meanings created by context, and by the actions of those who commonly wear particular clothing types (models/actress/porn stars for example). From this translation, spectators make judgements about the person including observable behaviour, background information and history and general assumptions about that person's personality, reputation, goals and ideals (Johnson, Schofield and Yurchisin 2002: 125 - 126). Kim Johnson, Nancy Schofield and Jennifer Yurchisin's study on the way that clothing was used as a form of qualitative data indicated that most people make two types of inferences about people from their clothes (2002: 126). The first is an inference about the general traits of the person which Bromley (1973 in Johnson, Schofield and Yurichisin 2002) referred to as an 'interpretative inference'. The second type of inference that was made was an 'extended inference' where the perceiver infers a number of other forms of information about the person wearing the clothes based on an extension of the interpretative inference. Clothing becomes an indicator to the outside world – an indicator of each person's attempt to define themselves. As Haug says,

> if a woman represented herself over a sufficiently long period of time as a particular type, then that representation, we assumed, took on the character of a habit, and qualities initially taken on from outside became fused with the person (1999: 133).

Fred Davis argues that clothing exists as an aesthetic code. Unlike traffic signs for example, one symbol does not only have one meaning or required response. Aesthetic codes are aimed at exploring and changing links between signifiers (item of clothing) and signifieds (meaning originating with an item of clothing) and playing with them (Davis 1992: 11). Through wearing the clothes, the wearer is associated with meanings but can also attempt to reinterpret and interact with them to create new meanings. However, the ability to change the meaning of the code resides with the powerful. If it is not in the interest of the powerful to change the code, it is unlikely that it will change (Davis 1992: 12). This does not mean that individuals do not attempt to change codes.

> Clothing to me is also a way of communicating. Our clothes give off energy, messages and signals (III, free writing, my favourite outfit).

Although the meaning of clothing is not fixed, what Craik calls the clothes-body complex works such that particular clothes are deemed (in)appropriate for particular cultural contexts (Craik 2005). The limits of the language we use to describe the codes of connection mean that although across time and culture a single object can come to have different meanings, in that time or culture the meaning is very nearly fixed and conventional meanings are beyond individual control (Barnard 1996: 85).

Similarly, the presence of what Davis calls 'perfect sign codes' can also influence the interpretation individuals in a particular context (Davis 1992: 11). A 'perfect sign code' is something like a traffic sign that cannot be interpreted as ambiguous or unclear. The research participants all attended Dress to get Laid parties where there was a sign stating 'dress to get laid' at the entrance to the party. The presence of the sign "Dress to Get Laid" outside of this particular site of raunch feminine performance is indicative of a particular culture where clothing is intimately linked to sex and desire. When entering this domain, the women that do 'dress to get laid' will be performing their sexuality and beauty in a way that invites men and other women to perceive them as 'up for it' and desirous of sex in any way they can get it. In addition, the presence of an actual sign stating this aim limits the possibility of other women to make possibly ironic statements.

The sign is associated with a very specific context, that of a party where young people are dressed to entice the idea of sex. The gendered divide between acceptable dress for men and women means that women must enter a realm of using clothing to be hyperfeminine and conform to a prescriptive and limited notion of femininity. The burden is not on men to dress to appeal, because they are not required to. Conversely, women are expected to. Dressing women *as women*

thus forms a powerful form of social regulation, and requries that they depend on men to appraise and approve of them.

Raunch feminine dress code can take on a quasi-uniform-like status. Craik (2005: 4) defines a quasi-uniform as "people dressed individually but in similar ways". Uniforms are used as coherent and clear signs, indicating a set of values and identities and removing the ambiguity that can occur in clothing communication as described above. Uniforms come with a set of normative behavioural statements; there are rules of wearing particular things and not wearing others. These statements are accompanied by social rewards for compliance and social sanctions for transgression (Craik 2005: 4). Appearance generally - and uniforms in particular - prescribe a range of responses: "identities are placed, values appraised, moods appreciated, and attitudes anticipated" (Stone in Craik 2005: 5). There is however, a constant interplay between the intended symbolism ("sameness, unity, regulation, hierarchy, status and roles") of a uniform and the way in which a uniform is worn, which can lead it to be interpreted differently ("subversion, individual interpretation and difference") (Craik 2005: 7). So uniforms shape people's expectations, but individuals in uniform may act in a way that attempts to challenge stereotypical meanings.

The rejection of fashion as self-expression in feminist analyses derives from the fact that the images of women portrayed as successful are deemed, in reality, to be restrictive and limiting. If the uniform of raunch feminine beauty renders women powerless or removes their credibility, it cannot be considered to be liberatory. The predominant theoretical positions on clothing and meaning negotiation suggest that the potential for participants to make self-defined meaning with their clothes is limited (See for instance Twigg 2007; Davis 1992; Entwistle 2002; Craik 2005 and Ussher 1997). Within the context of raunch femininity, there is never full freedom to choose what meaning or code you would like to wear when dressing because of the necessary social element of wearing clothes. When clothes make reference to particular meanings, and others are aware of those meanings, it is difficult for the individual to create a new meaning. If those meanings are reinforced by overt references ("Dress to Get Laid"), this possibility for play or irony is further decreased. So when someone is dressed like a Playboy bunny, the societal meanings surrounding her outfit may overshadow her ability to create a sexually liberating meaning.

The power over dress code and stereotypical meanings would seem to reside with men in the contexts that I considered. By virtue of being the ones who invite women to parties (like Dress to Get Laid) they have the power over who can attend, and which women are seen as worth asking to get dressed to get laid. Clothing oneself to look a particular way has historically been women's duty and remains so. Participant 8 allows herself to be controlled by the scrutinising male gaze. She changes her outfits in order to be attractive for men.

> I bought a dress/top that clearly makes me look bigger than I am ... but it is so comfortable. I was going to wear it out on Friday but stopped myself on the basis of 'I don't want to look big in front of guys' so I substituted it for a skimpy little number ... perfect example of my idea of sexy! (Participant 8, Diary Entry, 2 September)

Participant 8 is unwilling to wear something comfortable at the expense of her aesthetic appeal to men. This is because, as Young (2005) suggests, the only way to achieve success in a patriarchal context is to conform to the dictates of male-defined beauty most successfully. Thus, women *could* use fashion to show *who* they really are *if* who they really are is what Levy (2006) calls a "female chauvinist pig." 'Appropriate' clothing is male-defined and orientated. In addition, the relatively small population of men compared to the large population of women in this culture means that men have a choice over which women to have sex with, whereas women must compete to be considered as a possibility. Women's beauty, like their sexuality, becomes about men, rather than about themselves. Participant 9 says that

> The competition between girls to get more attention, to look better etc is one thing but the whole throwing yourself at people is ... just wow. So even when I do compete, I'm trying really hard not to throw name (Participant 9, Diary entry, 2 August).

She is aware that there are expectations of competition, and in order to not be excluded entirely she must compete, even if she thinks that it is silly. She must not try too hard in case she embarrasses herself (throw name) because it will remove her appeal. So the clothing worn within this culture reinforces heterosexist power balances in favour of men. Hierarchic heterosexuality ensures that, a) women are inferior to men and b) that they must therefore compete to be considered worthy by men. Participant V described her favourite item of clothing:

> My favourite item of clothing is this little denim dress and I like it because it makes other girls envious (they want the dress) and I like the way guys react to me in it (very favourably) (free writing, my favourite outfit).

She liked it because it enhanced her ability to compete with other women, and placed her higher up on the scale of hierarchic heterosexuality. The effect of this to undermine women's ability to consider themselves as a unified group, and their ability to act without considering whether they will appeal to men. Craik (1993: 2) suggests, "women wear their bodies through their clothes." This constraint on clothing often results in a constraint on the space that a woman is able to inhabit. "[T]he less physical (male-controlled) space a woman occupies, the more (abstract/social) power she is accorded by men" (Tyner and Ogle 2007: 88).

Women come to view themselves from the outside, thus becoming the object of their own scrutinizing, controlling, critical gaze. Participant V (free writing, my favourite outfit) says "If I think I look good then I can deal with other people looking at me." Young women are subject to constant pressure to look a particular way, from peers, men and the media, and thus limit their

action (walking/movement/choice of career) in accordance with norms of beauty. Women's clothing use and relationship with clothes is often framed by the dominant patriarchal discourses and representations of the way they should look from the media and the fashion system. The clothing that marks out raunch femininity exercises similar restrictions – it marks out who is considered worthy of being invited to raunch parties and who is considered worthy of sex. Women remain sexualised bodies through their attendance at themed parties and the clothing that is the required 'uniform' at these gatherings.

Raunch culture uses very little clothing, but it is similarly restricted by way of constant awareness of the gaze. Subscribers to raunch femininity wear revealing clothing - it reveals body shape and particular body parts deemed beautiful and/or enticing. Evening wear resembles the clothing worn by soft-porn stars and strippers. Particular forms of clothing only allow particular types of activity, and different clothes can influence the way the body moves when performing the same activity (Sweetman 2001: 66). Materials such as elastic and spandex allow for body movement whereas heavy dress materials and forms prevent large movement. For example, a short skirt requires that one act and move in a particular way in order to not reveal too much of one's skin. In addition, it does not allow for large steps or movements but rather requires small dainty steps. Thus the clothes we wear can physically limit our action, as well as limit the action to which we are attracted. Clothing is used to conform to common beauty ideals, and to access the attention of men. The effect of constantly emphasizing beauty and clothing is that women become unable to participate in other elements of their lives.

Bourdieu, in his analysis of French high fashion, argues that the capital (or power) that one gains from knowledge of particular ways of dressing or styles of clothes is a specific form of capital that is very rarely transferable to other domains (Bourdieu 1997 in Rocamora 2002: 343). The capital that women gain from being beautiful may translate into a loss of capital elsewhere. For example, many women who are beautiful gain cultural capital but lose out on symbolic capital (i.e. the right to be listened to) because they are not taken seriously.

> Wearing very revealing clothes is likely to get you noticed - which is in itself empowering, although you may not be appreciated for qualities other than your appearance which is why I believe it is **more**[5] empowering to be noticed and admired for qualities such as personality or intellect - which are not necessarily dependent on looks. (Participant 3, Diary Entry, 15 August)

Ideas about what is appealing are not self-created. Fashion photographers provide the specialist knowledge on which bodies are valued and which aren't. The beauty industry is what allows women to "better prepare themselves for male gaze and desire" (Lynch 2007: 187 and Bartky 1990. They make clear the bounds of acceptable styles of clothing and provide the parameters around how much skin can be revealed. Clothing thus becomes one of the ways that

[5] Participant's own emphasis.

we restrict and discipline our bodies. It becomes an enactment of power and self-discipline on our body. For example, particular prints are restricted to particular women. "Wide hipped women shouldn't wear horizontal stripes" for example. Thus women are taught to discipline their bodies through dieting and exercise in order to 'fit' fashion. The body thus becomes the slate upon which cultural and power dynamics inscribe themselves and sustain themselves (Bordo 2004: 227).

It is clear that fashion photography, described earlier in this chapter as reconstituting the body in segments, plays a role in these dynamics. Young calls this the "slit aesthetic" (Young 2005: 67). Thus when advertisers use images of women they can come to influence understandings of women in South Africa by choosing which images are dominant and which are suppressed and which body parts are desirable. When we see just a head or just a leg in an advert it

> phantasmically constructs an unthinkable body - a body without identity, a body without a face or surface to convey any distinctive identifying features beyond the class- and gender-inflected signifiers of clothes themselves (Fuss 1992: 718).

Clothes are left as the only way to understand the person in the photograph. In many of the photographs of subscribers to raunch femininity, this is indeed the case. Single elements of the body are exposed and revealed leaving the spectator with no other cultural markers of meaning than their clothes. The result of this is that the clothes that they are wearing are interpreted beyond their own intentions but rather "the interpreter of clothing examines an outfit not for a new message but for an old one fixed by convention" (McCracken 1990 in Craik 1993: 10). Thus, although young women subscribing to raunch femininity may wish to use Playboy bunny ears ironically, it is very difficult for them to do so successfully. So when we see *only* breasts, the only signifiers we can use in order to make some sort of inference about the woman are the clothes that she is wearing and the style in which she is wearing them. Thus, a young woman wearing only nipple caps would be understood by reference to other representations that include nipple caps (including striptease dancers or porn stars).

Redmond (2003: 170 - 171) argues that images in the media construct normative ideals of beauty and furthermore, that they valorise particular ideas of femininity that entail self-surveillance on the part of women. In short, they reinforce prescriptive norms about women's roles in society as aesthetically pleasing objects rather than intellectually engaging subjects. Participant 3 (Diary Entry, 3 August) shows awareness of the influence of the media, saying that "even though [when] I go out to parties I dress according to what makes **me**[6] feel attractive and good about myself, I think that this idea that I hold in my own head is inherently informed by the media that I consume".

Images of clothing can be used then, to harm or aid women. The way that women are displayed and portrayed in photographs is different from the way that men are, largely because the

[6] Emphasis in original.

'ideal' spectator of images is male (Berger 1972: 56).[7] Foucault argues that through a process of normalization, people perform self-discipline and anyone who is 'other' than the norm is judged and has less power (Foucault 1980: 107). Clothes mark out social difference. "Clothes act to define and naturalise gender, rendering what is constituted and performed as if it were natural and self-evident. They make gender visible and obvious, reproducing it as a form of body style" (Twigg 2007: 291). Thus, unless women rebel through clothing they are conformers to an andocentric system that entails their oppression; and if they do attempt to rebel, efforts can be stunted by prevailing norms on dress. When women's performance is controlled by patriarchal norms clothing can become a restrictive force - restricting their movement and sense of power. "Clothes can indeed be expressive of individuality and agency; they do have personal meanings that are distinctive to the individual. But their choice and the meanings that attach to them are to a large extent determined by the social, economic and cultural contexts" (Twigg 2007: 297 - 298).

The clothing worn by subscribers to raunch femininity reinforces women's immobility, in the same way that emphasized femininity did. Shame is one of the most pervasive ways of maintaining and restricting social norms and often, the fear of shame or the desire to avoid it regulates social behaviour. The desire to avoid shame regulates social behaviour in conformity with social norms (Elster 1999: 147). The failure to be considered beautiful and/or sexually appealing results in shame. When women fail at getting the attention of men, they feel like they are failures.

> I went out on Friday ... and I thought I was sexy - ok maybe it was the large quantities of vodka I had consumed but anyway. Then as I do when large quantities of vodka have been consumed I tried to come right. But I didn't or couldn't or all the guys I was chasing were smart enough to realise that I was far from sober! But I got very bleak with myself and them because I had thought that I was sexy and attractive and would come right (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 28 August).

Guy and Banim (2000: 313) found that women use clothing to attempt to express three main facets of their identities and their study provides a useful framework for considering my participants' comments on clothing and their identities. The three facets were: 'the woman I want to be', 'the woman I fear I could be' and 'the woman I am most of the time.' 'The Woman I Fear I could be' included all remarks about clothing that expressed regret, embarrassment or dissatisfaction (Guy and Banim 2000: 318 -9). In addition, when their participants reported that their bodies hindered or negatively affected their relationships with clothes, these reports were also included in this category (Guy and Banim 2000: 319).

The majority of these instances occurred either when their respondents experienced reactions to their clothes from others that were negative or unexpected or when women used clothing to conceal, hide or constrain the pieces of their bodies that they did not like. What this

[7] For a different analysis, see Diana Fuss who assumes that women look at women in fashion magazines in a homosexual way. Diana Fuss. 1992. "Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look." *Critical Inquiry*. Volume 18, Number 4.

illustrates is that "self-presentation is experienced as precarious" and that clothes are essentially a social phenomenon, leaving much of the control over them beyond the control of the person wearing them.

> I was wearing a dodgy low cut top ... [I] ended up accidentally having a huge night that ended with a whole lot of people that I'd never even met before rating my boobs (in my bra at least) without me even realising it ... people [noticed] because they kept on walking up to me and saying '10 out of 10'. My first thought was "Not a bad rating" but then I figured that I should at least be offended. Not because they saw my bra ... it's more because I really don't want them to know that I'm ok with it (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 2 August).

Bartky (1990) describes this process of rating as sexual objectification. If a person's sexual parts (the breasts in this example) or functions are separated out from the rest of that person's personality and considered instruments or if a person's sexual organs are considered capable of representing that person, they have been sexually objectified (Bartky 1990: 26). Examples of women who have been sexually objectified then would be prostitutes, models or actresses for pornography and erotic dancers. Sexual objectification is regarded as oppressive when other people compulsively sexualise the person. What this means is that if the identification of that person with her sexual organs is extended to every area of her experience where it is no longer appropriate (for example, she is in public and people rate her breasts) then the person is oppressed by this objectification.

It is not only in stereotypically sexual roles that women are subjected to sexual objectification. "Much of the time, sexual objectification occurs independently of what women want; it is something that is done ... against [their] will" (Bartky 1990: 27); it impacts their behaviour and psychology. In raunch femininity women are expected to perform this type of surveillance at all times. Participant 9 says,

> [t]he expectations of what a woman should be are pretty consistently there regardless and every now and then, even when I'm just walking, I feel every step that I make as if someone's looking and saying that I don't walk properly. The worst thing is that I generally believe them (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 7 August).

In a patriarchal context, women are commonly seen as passive objects of the gaze and men are seen as active gazers (Berger 1972: 47). Participant 9 struggles to move without considering how people (read men) are looking at her and judging her. Her own self-awareness makes her less able to act freely and instead gives all control over her body to the spectators. An example from Bartky makes this process clearer. An example of a woman walking down the street that is catcalled at or whistled at is evidence of the pervasiveness of sexual objectification. Not only do the men see the woman as an object - for instance a nice bum or piece of ass as Bartky calls it - but by whistling the men ensure that she too is forced to see herself in this way (Bartky 1990: 27). This impacts on the woman both physically and mentally. She is made to feel like an object and hence cannot inhabit her body unselfconsciously; in addition it denies her the ability to transcend

her sexuality in this case (Bartky 1990: 27 and 36). She is denied transcendence from her body and "developing a sense of our bodies as beautiful objects to be gazed at and decorated requires suppressing a sense of our bodies as strong, active subjects" (Young in Bartky 1990: 35).

Young describes the breasts as frequently being the site of inquiry and as being problematised. Breasts are many women's signifier of their femininity (Young 1992 in Weitz 2003: 152). Young locates the breasts as among primary elements of women's objectification (Young 1992 in Weitz 2003: 152). By focussing on her breasts, the crowd that rates them situates participant 9's identity as firmly tied to her body. Her identity is so intimately tied to being appraised that she did not consider it as ridicule, but rather as "not a bad rating". Magazines and the media create an understanding of what the 'perfect' breast looks like: an unattainable goal of both large and round yet firm and pointy (Young 1992: 153). Dressing breasts up or down is a way for women to attempt to control their audience. When efforts at dressing for appeal fail, this is not only experienced as a disappointment of the particular contextual performance of norms, but rather it is experienced as a threat to that person's "capacity to remain part of mainstream society" (Twigg 2007: 295). In cases where women feel that they do not have this capacity, they attempt to conceal their weakness.

Most often this attempt at concealment happened when participants felt that they did not meet the prevailing standards of beauty such as slenderness. When 'the woman I fear I could be' is materialised through clothing it becomes 'the woman I don't want to be' and thus individuals must use other clothing to hide this aspect of their being/personality. Participant VI suggests that by being able to hide one's flaws, one can come to have a level of confidence.

> Clothing can either help or hinder people in feeling sexy in the sense that, if they look shit on you and you know it, you will feel less confident. However, clothes can also give you confidence and a confident woman is a sexy woman (Free writing, My favourite outfit).

When women use clothing to hide the parts of their body that they do not like, it is rarely experienced as something powerful - rather, as something that must be done to decrease the possibility of being marked as a failure (Guy and Banim 2000: 320). Dress is a bodily action. Body shapes can change and in order for success to be achieved, clothing has to reflect and enhance changes. Participants evince an almost constant fear that this process of concealment would be unsuccessful. The pressure that is placed on women to conform to particular ideals of clothing and beauty is felt very strongly by women who fall into this category. Clothing creates our sense of our body. This is most acute when we no longer fit into our clothes - the feeling of them on our skin and constraining our body makes us aware of our own bodily space and limitations (Entwistle 2001: 44).

> Sometimes you can use clothing to cover up too. Like when I dress in something that covers my love handles (A, Group interview).

> I often rely on and hide behind my clothes and my hair etc ... it makes me feel good (II, free writing, what sexy means).

The desire to hide the body is created from the desire to appeal to men. To fail in appealing to men is to fail at being a woman. When respondents received negative reactions to their clothes the experience that they described was one of a lack of control - differing significantly from the control experienced over clothes when they felt they were successful (Ibid). It is important to note that these experiences did not result from intentionally wearing an unusual or inappropriate outfit and thus controlling/predicting the responses more easily, but rather wearing an outfit that was expected to produce success but did not. Clothing is something which creates our sense of body. Clothing forms "the visible envelope of the self and ... serves as a visual metaphor for identity" (Entwistle 2001: 37). When women's clothing does not fit, their identities or selves don't fit.

It is difficult for women participating in raunch femininity to take control over their clothing use at Dress to Get Laid parties, and in light of the historical meanings associated with raunchy clothing. As Malcolm Barnard states it is dubious whether one can change gender categories or "step outside of gender identities" by choosing or refusing particular clothes (Barnard 1996: 135). There is a constant awareness of the standards that women are expected to live up to, and correspondingly women frequently mould themselves to these standards. Dress is thus not only acted upon by social forces and meanings, but is constitutive of discourses.

Although, as the chosen excerpts illustrate, there is evidence of this feeling of disempowerment, another strand of entries reference the power and pleasure that women find in dressing up. The requirement that women meet the standards of the male gaze is not always experienced negatively. According to several feminist theorists (see for instance Liepe-Levinson 1998; Weitz 2003) the choice between conforming to stereotypical norms and rejecting them is part of the way in which women can exercise power. Through the negotiation of which clothes to wear (and when) individuals can come to feel a sense of power. The choice between items of clothing can be seen as a creative construction of the self - something that provides pleasure in the experience of it and through the development of an identity (Chattaraman and Rudd 2006: 47). What this illustrates is that women do not always just blindly and mindlessly let their clothing dictate what they are saying, rather they use clothes directly to try and make meaning.

Guy and Banim (2002) describe two other categories that suggest that the wearing of clothes can be positive and can feel powerful. These are the 'woman I want to be' and the 'woman I am most of the time'. In 'the woman I want to be' women used clothes to try and create images of themselves that they believed were successful (Ibid: 316). Success was felt when the wearer experienced coherence between the person she wanted to be and the person that she was through the use of clothing (Guy and Banim 2002: 316 - 317). In this way, choosing which outfit

best maximizes your capital is seen as empowering. This success was felt in two ways; first it was a positive feeling which resulted from the belief that the wearer looked good and second it was the ability to use clothing to look good. Clothing can thus be experienced as something positive, that allows the wearer to have a feeling of control over her life. Making an active decision about how you would like people to respond to you is seen as powerful. It is "presented as a calculated and savvy undertaking that is under a woman's control" (Tyner and Ogle 2007: 88).

> Instead of thinking in terms of sexy - I'd rather say when I feel most confident, happy and feel good about myself which is generally when I'm wearing something that is awesome and looks good on me (VIII, free writing, what sexy means).

Clothes affect our bodies through their ability to change how we feel and how we act in the world. Shelley Budgeon uses the notion of 'embodiment' to understand this process. If we do choose our clothes we choose them based on their stereotypical meanings and thus the way we want to act (Sweetman 2001: 67). "Many women would rather miss an occasion than go badly dressed, even if they are not going to be noticed as individuals" (de Beauvoir 1949: 551). In addition, in the act of choosing, women find power – even if the options for choice are ones that are invested with previously disempowering meanings. It is more empowering to have a choice than to not have a choice. Clothing has an element of fantasy associated with it. People can imagine who they want to be and choose the clothing that best suits this image. In her discussion of the striptease dancer, Katherine Liepe-Levinson says,

> [e]ncrusted as the representation apparatus may be with dominant signification, it cannot be construed as an inherently male or hegemonic device, since its very structure encourages many kinds of bi-gender, cross-gender, and cross-cultural identifications (1998: 24 - 25).

Even clothing that has been used in what would have been considered oppressive contexts for women then, can have the opportunity to be used to make women feel more powerful. There is the possibility of gender manoeuvring via micro practices that then create "an alternative, collective set of rules and meanings for gender and social relations" (Schippers 2002: 16, in Wilkins 2004: 333). VII (free writing, what sexy means) experiences power when she conforms to the patriarchal gaze and it is the negotiation of this gaze that gives her power. When she is subjected to the gaze her success in meeting its demands makes her feel powerful.

> Dancing like a 'skank', knowing that I look hot, and watching other people watch me makes me feel like a powerful woman and that is REAL sexiness - Power.

Women are also able to meet the demands of the gaze through their ordinary clothing. 'The woman I am most of the time' includes instances of the use of clothing for everyday wear that are outside of the tools of identity construction. This includes the ordinary way of being with clothes and the wearing of clothes to clothe the body, rather than negotiate power or identity. These instances reveal that women have multiple and shifting self-images between which they use

clothing to create a balance. Participants I and 8 use clothing to explore sides of themselves, and 'play up to' the identities that they use clothing to communicate.

> I love dressing up 'cause it allows me to explore sides of my personality that I wouldn't normally (I, free writing, my favourite outfit).

> I guess on the one hand when I am comfortable in what I wear I am completely relaxed and can be myself and when I do wear something sexy I play up to the sexy confident part of my personality. I think that some of us dress to the type of part of our personality we wish to tap into and then these clothes allow us to give off a certain image ... so I think that our clothing allows us to express different sides of our personality and that's ok (Participant 8, Diary Entry, 2 September).

> Although it may not be 'conventionally sexy' I like my bright blue top because it shows a side of my personality rather than showing off my body (I, free writing, my favourite outfit).

Clothes provide ways of coping with bodily changes and transitions (ageing, increasing body weight, disability etc) through their facilitation of taking control of the image that each woman has of her self (Guy and Banim 2002: 320). Young also argues that this allows women to subvert the order by playing with its meanings (Young 1994: 208 - 209).

> I think this outfit (a boob tube and black netted tutu style skirt) best suits my personality. It is feminine, sexy and eccentric. I feel like a beautiful doll when I wear it and I enjoy knowing that it is unique and because of this, I stand out ... [another top] is also boob-tube style and it really sucks my tummy in and is slimming (IV, free writing, my favourite outfit).

Participant D likes boob-tubes because they are slimming. She takes control over how she looks in order to complement her 'curvy body'. The body cannot be easily changed to meet the standards that people sometimes feel themselves to be tied to (Budgeon 2003: 35), but clothing provides the outer layer which can mask or disguise this disconnect - in so doing it becomes a means of negotiating the world, something that women use to give themselves power and self-esteem. Participant 5 indicates that a change in identity can mean changing one's clothing to mirror this change. The change in identity is experienced as fixed, and clothing is used to cement the change.

> I definitely noticed it when I stopped training all the time - suddenly it was very nice to actually dress nice when I left the house instead of just wearing manky[8] track pants and a t-shirt. Now I wear make-up a lot more often and I do enjoy dressing up more (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 15 August).

Clothing here marks her change from athletic (and thus 'unfeminine') to a more feminine self. Although this control is sometimes experienced as powerful and liberating, it can play into already existing power balances that function to keep women in a position of disadvantage. If

[8] Dirty/Old/Unattractive

women are to be accepted, and achieve measures of success in terms of their femininity (male attention), then they must alter all elements of their life to conform with prescriptive standards.

> I wore a beautiful lace dress and felt beautiful and had other people tell me I looked beautiful and I felt seriously, overly feminine, but in a good way. It's funny how the way you dress changes the way you act because suddenly I didn't swear and I even sat like a lady. I also noticed that I got quite quiet (as I do when I feel I'm being like a 'lady') but as soon as I realised I made myself intentionally louder (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 30 July).

This quote shows that the participant is aware of the historical conditions and restrictions around women's behaviour and experiences a feeling of discomfort with them. However, participant 9 has internalized them to such a degree that she has to intentionally force herself to become loud and un-'ladylike' in order to allow her clothes to communicate the meaning she wants them to do. She also recognises that whilst women can attempt to play with the gaze and with previously oppressive styles of action, this may not have the desired effects.

> It all boils down to the question of power. On the one hand, by dressing sexy (I'll be specific: short skirts, low-cut tops) a woman gains a certain amount of individual power over a man or men. She can get them to think things, to do things for her. But the truth is...the one woman will gain power, but only at the expense of many other women (or 'womanhood' in general,) who are trying to be taken seriously as people and not only as the sexual feminine. I suppose this is why, if I can at the time (i.e. my weight permitting) I will try and dress sexy and I'll enjoy knowing that men look at me and that I have power over them. But it annoys me so much. It annoys me when I do it and it annoys me even more when other people do it because I suppose in the end I'm just a sell-out (Participant 9, Diary Entry, 18 September).

She recognises that sometimes playing up to the gaze can have benefits, but benefits are rarely general. There are "political dangers inherent in mistaking individual play for social intervention' (Mandzuik 1993 in Schwichtenberg 1993: 8). Attempts do no more than scratch the surface of gendered oppression and prevent the real issues from being challenged. Fashion is paradoxical in that it is presented as self-realisation, but one can only realise themselves through submission to the "dictate of a collectivity [one] has neither willed nor authored" (Soper 2001: 27). Occupying a position whereby you use what oppresses others to 'liberate' yourself does not aid any other women who are still oppressed by this phenomenon. The women in raunch culture may challenge ideas of the quiet, passive femininity that participant 9 adhered to in her lace dress but it does not deconstruct the binary between masculine and feminine action.

> I think what it comes down to is that I so infrequently operate in a feminine sphere that when I do not get accepted in that role I get very upset and it just makes me try harder to achieve in the more masculine roles that I set for myself - I go and train harder, try to run faster - prove that if they won't have me as a woman - then I'm at least as good as them when it comes to other things (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 28 August).

When participants believe themselves to be breaking the boundaries of 'woman' or 'feminine' they could be doing so *for men* at the expense of women. Women use clothes to gain power but this power is already pre-limited by the fact that they are women and not men and thus are commonly objects of the male gaze. They find power in acceptance by men.

> I think it has to do with sexual power - you're sexy because they (men) want to have sex with you. Sometimes I've dressed sexily to piss girls off. But it's mostly for the men (K, Group Interview).

> Well obviously if you put your cleavage out there it's for attention (H, Group Interview).

> When a friend says 'girl that's a little short' you think in your mind 'who cares! Guys will love it' (Participant 8, Diary Entry, 5 August).

And,

> When I think ... about when I feel feminine or empowered [it] is often when I feel accepted (Participant 8, Diary Entry, 5 August).

Women are expected to assimilate masculinist motifs, stories and images in order to play a pre-defined cultural role. The acceptance of the hegemonic culture denies women cultural autonomy. This is something that Bartky (1990: 26) refers to as the fragmented consciousness of women. To experience power under patriarchy women must give their power away. When they experience power through dress it is experienced as ambiguous - they gain a particular form of power at the expense of their self-definition. Consent to the regimes of fashion dictated by men means the constant expression of masculine desire and the repression of female desire (Young 2005: 67). Thus, clothing supports raunch feminine sexuality, in that it centres women's desires around men rather than within themselves.

> We complement our friends on all the things that support objectification for example ... great tan! Nice boob job! Great cleavage! And I thrive off these comments from friends (Participant 8, Diary Entry, 14 August).

Participant 8 participates in a sexist discourse in order to access the rewards of fulfilling its requirements. Clothing ensnares women within a cycle of wanting to both fit in and stand out (Simmel 1901). Clothing is thus linked to social obedience. When she chooses and outfit and its associated meanings, she may feel powerful because of her association with a group of women who are attempting to do the same thing. This feeling is temporary however, and does not leave women feeling that they have control over their lives.

Ussher argues that fashion is an essential part of the "feminine masquerade" which women use to construct their image and themselves. It forces women to select elements of their personality and stick with them, in order to create an intelligible message to the men around

them. One participant feels that she must make a decision between elements of her personality and use her clothing to fix her identity. She says,

> I think that the only way that a woman will be able to [get comfortable with herself] is by picking one role and sticking to it. I.e. deciding to be feminine and then being girly the whole time. Or being sporty 24/7 and not asking people to accept you in a different role because when they don't that makes you upset and miserable. It's really not a cool situation to be in and continuously trying to define what you are is exhausting. I have so many roles I play for so many people that sometimes I actually need to take time off from everyone just so I can be myself (Participant 5, Diary Entry, 5 September).

Participant 5's self-restrictions and restraint ensure that "dominant forms of subjectivity (or identity) are maintained, [without] physical restraints or coercion" (Blood, 2005: 55). The clothing she uses means that she is constantly performing to the point of feeling disconnected with her self and the selves she is performing. Woman's essence is associated with her appearance. Participant 5 has learned that it is more important to be beautiful and appealing to men than to appear intelligent or sporty (Ussher 1997: 50). The lifestyle associated with raunch femininity encourages women to downplay other features of their identity (academic qualifications or sporting ability) because beauty is widely defined as the way to success. Reducing a woman to her appearance "is an effective means of ignoring what she has to say" (Ussher 1997: 72). Clothing marks her commitment to either role - it reveals her identity. She feels exhausted because being beautiful takes time, labour and energy. This is made even more exhausting by the fact that she has little control over the success of her efforts at beauty, and thus must remain dependent on others' appraisal of her.

Success in terms of the gaze is experienced as precarious - to reveal too much is scandal, but to reveal too little is unfeminine. Participant II (free writing, what sexy means) suggests the same thing when she says that there is "a very fine line between slutty and sexy - especially when it comes to dress code". The fine line is not controlled by the participant, but by her audience. Thus both participants can make their appraisal easier, and their success more likely, by restricting themselves to being one way or another (picking one role and sticking to it). It also allows her to feel a sense of control. In committing to one role, she is able to feel that she has mastered that element of herself.

De Beauvoir (1949) states that this "stylization of the self" (cited in Nuttall 2004: 432) renders women unable to live fully; they remain in a permanent state of painful dependence, and can never just be themselves. However, identity is more than changing appearances and participant 5 recognises this: "sometimes I actually need to take time off to be myself". Her clothes allow her to take this time off, but also ensure that she must return to the particular characters she plays.

> [Her] entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity: she is to be the beautiful object of contemplation (Irigaray 1985: 25 - 26, in Jackson and Scott 1996: 81).

Conclusions.

If women who subscribe to raunch femininity are using their beauty to try and break the mould of acceptable female behaviour, then this is a challenge to patriarchy and its restrictions on women. To assume that all beautiful women, or those women who try to be beautiful, are dupes involves prioritizing the power of representations of women, over women's ability to critique and negotiate images of beauty. We "dissolve the active role of the subject in generating the meanings attached to their own embodied identity" (Budgeon 2003: 42).

Feminist analysis suggests that when women say that they feel empowered by clothing, they are merely dupes of an overarching system that constantly attempts to put women 'in their place'. Most attempts to challenge gender norms are appropriated by popular culture so that they reinforce the stereotypes. "A pragmatist would support a woman's right to choose the clothes she wants to wear, whilst understanding that there is a reaction to every action and wearing "f*ck me" shoes gets an obvious one" (Taylor 2006). Sometimes women deny their own desires in order to maximise their potential in a masculine world, however, prioritising the power of the media and the gaze over women prevents us from seeing the way that women interact with clothing and power in both small and significant ways. Posing for photographs or wearing particular styles of clothing can allow the wearer to shape the understanding people have of her, by ensuring that the links between signifier and signified are clarified and intelligible.

Women use clothing to actively construct and constitute their identities and to avoid feeling disempowered. Whilst all acts of embodiment exist within patriarchal boundaries, it is not fair to women as credible subjects and agents to therefore deny them any agency at all. The potential for meaning creation *is* limited, but this *does not* mean that it is non-existent. Clothing is an important way that women come to understand their bodies. They use it to negotiate power, their identities and the prevailing restrictive understandings of beauty. It is something which many of them experience as an escape from or means of control over beauty standards and thus a tool of their empowerment rather than their disempowerment.

Ussher describes this as the body becoming both captor and saviour. She argues that when women are able to control their bodies they feel able to control their lives. However, when this control slips from their grasp they feel feeble and unable - they reprimand themselves, tell themselves they should "choose one role and stick to it" or feel that all they have is their looks. The body becomes their scapegoat for the frustration they experience when confronted by their lack of power relative to men. Participants are aware of what they are doing with their bodies but sometimes they are not fully aware of what the effects are of what they are doing.

Conclusion.

> The new permissiveness in sexual conduct, body exposure, and gender roles certainly has eroded traditional external controls, but culture, as though following some primal law of balance has exacted a price. They have been replaced by new, more potent, internal constraints. The empowered woman is to have none of the traditional feminine, or human, needs for physical and emotional nourishment: food, protection, financial support, children, security or love (Seid 1989: 256).

One's gender performance impacts on one's entire life. Gender performances outside of the norm are deemed deviant and are unable to access the social rewards (for instance jobs, credibility and desirability) available for compliance with the norm. Emphasized femininity encourages women to embody a particular script of sexuality and beauty aimed at garnering male attention in a world where men have control over social and economic rewards. I have argued that although raunch femininity, from the outside, does not look like emphasized femininity, it continues to encourage women to use their bodies and their sexuality instrumentally, as commodities to get ahead in an androcentric world. Whilst superficially appearing as a challenge to the disempowering traits entailed by a performance of emphasized femininity, it does little to empower women or to challenge harmful sexist stereotypes. The question that must be asked now is whether subscribers to raunch femininity are committed to challenging these stereotypes at all.

Participants live in a context that encourages emphasized femininity as the norm, and thus there is pressure for them to subscribe to its regulations. In addition, participants make reference to performing different scripts at different times for different audiences – a characteristic of gender performance. Scripts are socially formed and socially reinforced and the force behind social reinforcement is based on the ability of the audience to impose sanctions on the performer. In raunch femininity these sanctions take the form of labelling that has the effect of restricting female behaviour and bringing it back in line with the accepted emphasized feminine norms. Despite cosmetic rejection of labels, participants restrict their actions to avoid them, or pursue the actions in the hope that nobody will discover their deviance. In addition, the rewards for compliance to norms are extremely appealing for women who are trying to compete in a masculine arena. Commonly, those who can hide behind the accepted script of femininity whilst still wanting sex are those who will be the most successful. This means that a particular performance of sexuality or beauty scripts may not reflect the individual's real feeling about that performance type – a single performance may not reflect the whole of an individual's identity.

Raunch femininity may sometimes be experienced by subscribers to it as liberating, but it is impossible for this liberation to occur in a vacuum. Contemporary South Africa is not a place where women are free to make their own meanings with their bodies. Violence against women, legitimated based on the clothing they wear, continues daily (Mcetywa 2007; Mfusi 2007; Mhlongo 2007; Vincent 2008; Packree 2007). The threat of social sanction and the coherence and apparent

stagnation of social norms makes it extremely difficult to challenge the status quo, particularly when patriarchy remains dominant and men's roles remain unchanged.

The common meanings of particular behavioural (dancing erotically) or clothing styles (the playboy bunny costume) mean that attempts at pastiche are often read without irony (Schwichtenberg 1993: 161; Macdonald 1995). The fact that the most common context of raunch feminine performance at Rhodes University is at Dress to Get Laid parties shapes audience understanding of the clothes participants wear. However, when the young women leave the parties and move to pubs or clubs in town, their revealing clothing is taken at surface value. Dominant norms of acceptable feminine dress frame these women as 'sluts' and it is difficult to escape this branding. "The escape from the limits of convention for those who participate is not necessarily replicated for those who watch" (Macdonald 1995: 219). Instead, audiences are likely to draw on common meanings associated by particular types of clothing. Thus, even if subscribers to raunch femininity were wholly committed to changing norms of feminine behaviour, and solicited diary entries reveal that they are not always that committed, it is a very difficult task.

Beauty norms appear as universal requirements, but as I have made clear, they are heavily contextual and embedded within power relations that seek to retain men's dominance over women. The fact that the parties that participants in the present research attended were labelled "Dress to Get Laid" is evidence of the control by men over the definition of beauty or sex appeal. Beauty norms are rarely within women's own control. Ideals of beauty create a female body that is unable to act in a fulfilling way because it is "paralysed by either too little or too much weight, by inconvenient attire or the 'rules of propriety'" (King 2004: 34). Whether people value women's beauty is dependent on others' reactions to them, thus they are deprived of agency (Tyner and Ogle 2007: 85). A real challenge to hierarchical heterosexuality is thus stunted by the commitment of many participants to the goal of being desirable for men.

Yet the research materials (solicited diaries, group interview and free writing) reveal that participants are aware of "the system of values and rewards that they are responding to and perpetuating" (Bordo 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 250) and are not merely controlled by scripts of femininity. They actively select raunch femininity through performing their gender in a particular way. In short, whilst they are aware that this system of values and rewards is flawed, "they insist on their right to be happy on its terms" (Bordo 1993 in Price and Shildrick 1999: 250).

Dichotomizing sexuality into male dominators and female subordinated risks ignoring the very real ways in which women use their sexuality to feel empowered (Liepe-Levinson: 1998: 33). Tolman argues that not feeling sexual desire can put women at risk because of the separation of what happens in their body from their identity, and because it makes them vulnerable to the power of others to define what they can and cannot feel (2002: 21). Raunch femininity encourages women to talk about their sexuality openly amongst themselves, making them more aware of their

own wants and needs and increasing the possibility that they will learn to have sex safely – whether safety means protecting themselves from STDs or from hurt resulting from unexpected rejection. This increases their ability to define sexual encounters for themselves. Lynne Chancer (2000: 82) suggests that if some women find power in the performance of raunch feminine roles, then there is little use in suppressing this form of expression. "Even the perfect performance of femininity may mask resistance or transgression" (Ussher 1997: 5) and thus have the ability to subvert the expectations of the audience.

Many participants experience their clothing as a way of reclaiming this agency. Clothing is thus often used and experienced as something powerful for women. The freedom to shape and define their personality and identity through clothes is often experienced as pleasurable and fun. Trying on a new outfit can feel like trying on a new self and the associated control over the fantasy is something that women experience as empowering. These instances, where women experience success, are experienced as fulfilling and creative.

The scripts of emphasized femininity and raunch femininity may be slightly different in terms of detail, but they form the same restrictions on women's behaviour. In fact, the presence of both scripts in many solicited diary entries make it clear that subscribers to raunch femininity are living out a delicate balancing act between the two scripts that often results in their own unhappiness. During relationships and sex subscribers to raunch femininity do not stop performing. Sex itself is scripted into a narrative of romance, ensuring that women remain unlikely to initiate sexual encounters and remain dependent on men to love them in order to feel complete. The links between sex and this script of romance are formed by raunch femininity's commitment to heterosexuality as dominant and 'normal', despite a number of participants participating in pseudo-lesbian encounters. In addition, the persistence of sexual labelling for women ensures that they are unable to be sexual on their own terms. As Douglas (1997: 21) states

> girls today are being urged, simultaneously, to be independent, assertive, and achievement oriented, yet also demure, attractive, soft-spoken, fifteen pounds underweight and deferential to men.

The use of clothing to harness the gaze, be creative or feel powerful is not an option for all women. The raunch feminine woman, like the emphasized feminine woman, cannot live in just any body – the body must be slender, taut and toned. This process of self-reshaping requires constant focus on oneself, performing appropriate restrictions (whether it is through dieting or over exercise) and a commitment to never 'letting oneself go'. The feeling of control over the body cited by participants is, Haug (1999: 81) argues, part of women's inability to escape being dominated by men; it is "taking pleasure in the very process of being trained into particular dominant structures rather than feeling tyrannized by them" (Haug 1999: 81).

This thesis argues that the raunch feminine woman and the emphasized feminine woman are subject to the same restrictions that ensure the same behaviour. Women's subscription to raunch femininity does not free them from restriction; rather it places them in control of their own restriction. The happiness that they experience as a feeling of success is placatory, and serves to keep women in second place and translates into their further participation in their own disempowerment. Women who keep themselves, and who keep other women, under surveillance are women who are obedient to the demands of patriarchy (Bartky 1988: 42). Keeping within the limits of acceptable action provides freedom within restrictions, but not freedom from them (Haug 1999: 148).

> It is also a reflection in woman's consciousness of the fact that *she* is under surveillance in ways that *he* is not, that whatever else she may become, she is importantly a body designed to please or to excite (Bartky 1988: 42 in Weitz 2003).

This has two implications for women. Raunch femininity ensures that women continue to shape their interests around men. Raunch femininity commits women to a focus on appearance and acceptability rather than a commitment to changing restrictive emphasized feminine norms. Women's broader interests (social and economic empowerment) thus remain in second place. Raunch femininity involves a commitment to women's passivity and dependence on men for a feeling of comfort with their identities. Since the standards of female bodily acceptability are impossible to realise fully, requiring as they do a virtual transcendence of nature, a woman may live much of her life with a pervasive feeling of bodily deficiency. Hence a tighter control over the body has gained a new kind of hold over the mind (Bartky 1988: 42 in Weitz). Raunch femininity entails a trade in women's bodies at the expense of their possible participation in a movement to change the unequal conditions they face.

Second, by participating in this oppression, women make it more difficult for other women to move away from it by making it extremely difficult or 'psychologically costly' (Kotzin 1993: 170) to negotiate alternative scripts of femininity. By continuing to compete with one another for men and for men's attention, these women make it difficult for other women to reject the status quo for fear that they will be alienated or outcast. Women who reject raunch femininity are also subjected to labelling, often known as 'prudes' or 'spoil sports', lessening their ability to challenge it. The script of raunch femininity alienates these women, as the script of emphasized femininity alienated subscribers to raunch femininity, leaving them without recourse or ontological resistance. South Africa currently has the highest levels of sexual violence against women in the world, and a script of femininity that encourages women to regard themselves as inferior to men can have implications for the strategies and action that women seek to take against this violence, if they pursue any action at all. The inability to view another woman as anything other than competition dissolves what the initial women's movement found to be a fundamental asset - women's solidarity.

Raunch femininity is divisive. It renders women unable to view diversity as valuable, rather creates another set of universal requirements that is damaging to women's progress. It prevents them from seeking change in patriarchy. If subscribers do seek change, efforts are made more difficult by the unwillingness of women to move away from dominant standards of desirability. These problems are not new; they are the same problems that women's movement activists faced more than half a century ago. The script of raunch femininity thus cannot be seen as progress for women. It is regression.

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