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FHM "girls": sexy self-representation in contemporary South African media

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Project Title:

FHM "GIRLS": SEXY SELF-REPRESENTATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA

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Thursday 31st July 2014

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Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE TREND OF SEXY SELF-REPRESENTATION 4

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: REPRESENTATION, SELF-REPRESENTATION AND FEMINIST CRITIQUE 10

FHM's history in light of the "new lad's" emergence and growing trend of sexy self-representation 10

The context of self-representation: The sexualisation of contemporary media 12

The representation of glamour models in men's lifestyle magazines 15

Feminist debates regarding the sexual representation of women 18

A post-feminist look at the societal context in which sexy self-representation operates 21

The post-feminist turn: Sexiness as empowerment? 24

Conclusion 27

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: POWER, IDENTITY AND SELF-REPRESENTATION IN POST-FEMINIST MEDIA CULTURE 28

The heterosexual power relations underlying sexy self-representation 28

Self-representation and identity in a sexualised culture 32

Conclusion 37

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH 39

Corpus construction for textual analysis 40

Table 1: Selected amateur model profiles 42

Table 2: Summary of corpus of texts 44

Interviews: Recruitment and schedule 44

Table 3: The interviewed amateur models 45

Analytical framework 49

Conclusion 52

CHAPTER 5: THE EXTERIOR SELF ON _FHM_'S INTERCONNECTED PLATFORMS: BODIES, BEAUTIFICATION AND PRIDE 54

Generic bodies, divergent desires: The participants' opinions regarding sexy self-representation via _FHM_ Girlfriend 54

Confining categories: Class and societal influences on sexy self-representation 62

Body work: A prerequisite to sexiness 66

Exclusivity, imitation and self-critique: The contradictions of body work 71

Condemned desires: Maintaining heterosexual, white femininity on _FHM_ Girlfriend 75

A concluding question of authenticity: What sexy self-representation means in light of the research findings **79**

CHAPTER 6: THE INNER SELF: AGENCY, IDENTITY AND THE IMPACT OF AMATEUR MODELLING **82**

Sexiness, Modelling and Self-esteem: A hapless association **82**

Imitating the sexy stereotype: An internalised and competitive struggle **89**

Genuine expressions of pride? The sexy body as indicative of a somewhat troubled identity **94**

Conclusion **98**

CHAPTER 7: MOVING FORWARD: CONCLUDING REMARKS ON SEXY SELF-REPRESENTATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE IN A SEXUALISED SOCIETY **99**

Environment One: Patriarchy concealed in the *FHM* Girlfriend scenario **99**

Environment Two: Modelling and the associated practice of sexy self-representation **104**

Environment Three: The inner world of amateur models as a result of their self-inflicted control **107**

A necessary intervention: Suggestions for genuine liberation **109**

New questions regarding sexy self representation **111**

Conclusion **112**

REFERENCE LIST **114**

APPENDIX **120**

Draft message to the amateur models via Facebook **120**

Information sheet and letter of consent **121**

Interview guide **124**

Ethical clearance form **127**

Interview transcript **128**

Modelbook profiles and album photographs **135**

***FHM* Cover girls and their feature articles** **176**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE TREND OF SEXY SELF-REPRESENTATION

This project investigates the current trend prevalent among many young South African women of showcasing their bodies in a provocative manner while wearing little. The research gains insight into the experiences, ideas and opinions of certain young, South African women who choose to produce and share sexy, pin-up style portraits of themselves on a given social platform, namely, *FHM* Girlfriend. Why do these women portray themselves this way? To what extent are their self-representations in line with sexual stereotypes? And how do they relate (if at all) to feminist arguments against mainstream representations of women in contemporary society? In light of the selected research topic as well as my own disposition – a South African woman interested in the effects of sexualised representations on a young woman's social identity – this project adheres to a primarily feminist framework when analysing the practice of sexy self-representation in contemporary society.

According to Maria Elena Buszek (2006: 4-5), the "pin-up girl" trend began in the early 1940's, a period when women's sexual self-awareness began to materialise. Pin-up models such as Bettie Page and Brigette Bardot were idolised by men around the world, initiating a trend still prominent in contemporary society. For Buszek (2006: 5), "[t]he [pin-up] genre is a slippery one" in that it doesn't represent sex "so much as suggest it." These suggestive qualities have always lent the pin-up genre "to a commercial culture of which feminists have justifiably been wary." As a result, the pin-up girl as "sexual object and commodity" emerges regularly in debates regarding this trend. In recent years, the pin-up genre has evolved to an additional but related trend whereby young women initiate sexy depictions of themselves which are then uploaded onto various social platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. "Sexy self-representation" is a term I have coined to represent this growing trend. It effectively encapsulates the idea that certain women choose to represent them*selves* in an exclusively "sexy" way. As such, it will be used throughout this project when investigating the above mentioned trend as evident on *FHM* Girlfriend.

While providing individuals the opportunity to upload and share images of themselves with others, most contemporary social platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have certain

privacy settings that can prevent "unknown" browsers from viewing a person's uploaded photograph's and profile. However, in the case of *FHM* Girlfriend, the uploaded photographs and profiles of young, aspiring models are accessible to anyone who has access to the internet. No privacy settings are available on *FHM* Girlfriend, although commenting on a woman's photograph is only permitted once the given user has registered his or her details on the site in order to become an *FHM* Girlfriend member. Despite its lack of privacy, a current total of 617 amateur models have initiated profiles on *FHM* Girlfriend (www.fhm.co.za). Each profile comprises a short description regarding the amateur model (her name, age, location and interests) as well as an online album. The latter constituent entails "sexy" photographs of the amateur model (the number of photographs varies per amateur model). After looking at these photographs, registered *FHM* Girlfriend members can also vote for the amateur models they think are the sexiest and/or most beautiful. By means of a points/ranking system (bronze, silver, gold and platinum), the amateur models are narrowed down by votes until a final winner is chosen on a monthly basis. Her prize is a photography shoot by and interview with *FHM*, both of which will feature in the magazine. According to *FHM*'s website (2013): "*FHM* Girlfriend lets you manage your online modelling portfolio and social pics... Models on *FHM* Girlfriend who are popular with the *FHM* community [ie. those who accumulate the most votes from the audience] could be featured in *FHM* shoots in the magazine and online!" As will be proven in this report, the majority of women who participate in the practice of "sexy self-representation" on *FHM* Girlfriend do so in the hopes of progressing to a potentially lucrative modelling career. Why they aspire to be professional models is investigated in light of the known pressures and negatives pertaining to the professional modelling world.

FHM Girlfriend is a product of the *For Him Magazine* (*FHM*). The latter text is a locally produced but globally syndicated men's lifestyle and entertainment magazine in which depictions of women prevail in addition to a range of articles and advertised products (important to note is that this research project focuses on the South African version of *FHM* only, despite its global editions). In 2011, *FHM* initiated their "ModelBook" website in South Africa, one year after its launch in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia (media24.co.za). The name "ModelBook" changed in June 2013 to "*FHM* Girlfriend" together with the implementation of an upgraded technological platform off which to run

the ongoing model search competition. As indicated, the *FHM* Girlfriend scenario is indicative of a broader social trend relating to self-representation via an interactive online space. In South Africa as well as the rest of the world, hundreds of thousands of women who have access to the internet participate willingly in the practice of "sexy self-representation." According to Nancy Thumim (2012: 3–4), self-representations are mediated by the political dimensions that shape "most, if not all, interactions in everyday life." Practices of self-representation in contemporary society "promise to deliver authentic accounts of individual 'ordinary people'" while offering individuals various therapeutic benefits. "Authenticity and therapy are 'political'... because the meanings of authenticity and the benefits of therapy take shape within human relations structured by race, gender, class, sexuality, age..."

The Facebook phenomenon is an example of the political mediation of self-representation. Many young women belonging to Facebook include photographs of themselves in revealing outfits and seductive poses. In most instances, such photographs mirror what contemporary society deems "acceptable" regarding representations of femininity. If "unnatural" and/or offensive photographs are displayed on Facebook, regulators have the right to delete them as well as the responsible person's profile. Thus, as with everyday life, self-representations via Facebook are associated with discourses that determine the ways in which people are expected to live and interact with each other. The authenticity of self-representation via Facebook thus aligns itself to the rules and regulations of a structured society (Thumim, 2012: 3–4). In this regard the regulations pertaining to "sexy self-representation" via *FHM* Girlfriend are considered. In light of the project's primarily feminist framework, are the amateur models exercising true liberation with regard to their sexuality? What are the conditions, spoken or unspoken, pertaining to their agency? Thankfully, variations to the societal norms as reflected on Facebook do exist. Feona Attwood (2007: 442) notes such a variation in her analysis of SuicideGirls, a website that showcases "alternative" representations of femininity, resulting in the "democratization of porn" and other forms of sexy self-representation "which challenges existing frameworks for representing sex." However, the formation of these alternative online communities remains small in comparison to the proliferation of mainstream sexy self-representations and the channels that support them.

According to Nadra Kareem Nittle (2013), "[s]tereotypes are characteristics ascribed to groups of people involving gender, race, national origin and other factors. These characteristics tend to be oversimplifications of the groups involved..." As a result, "even so-called positive stereotypes can be harmful due to their limiting nature" (Kareem Nittle, 2013). In the case of most contemporary magazines – targeting either women or men – the types of women showcased represent the western stereotype of feminine perfection in that they adhere – in terms of their appearance – to the characteristics of this ideal: they are young, usually white women, slender and toned with flawless skin and radiant hair. On occasion women of other racial origins do feature. Their ethnicity is toned down, however, in that they too adhere to the already mentioned characteristics pertaining to western conceptions of femininity. This particular stereotype branches into notions of overt (hetero) sexuality in that the women are often depicted wearing overtly feminine outfits. In some instances they are featured wearing lingerie while assuming poses that accentuate parts of their bodies often linked to notions of feminine sexuality (their breasts for example). As such, what emerges is a very specific kind of woman whose physical characteristics work to represent a feminine ideal – as specified by western notions of sex appeal and beauty. Whether the models in *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend represent a specific type of woman is investigated in order to conceptualise and understand the category to which they belong. Again, such a finding is related back to this project's theoretical framework.

In light of past restraints (the public display of a woman's sexuality was once deemed inappropriate by western society), the scenario whereby women participate in the practice of "sexy self-representation" in on-line forums such as Facebook might be viewed as positive in that contemporary women are now free to display and celebrate their sexuality in innovative ways. However, if this claim were entirely true, would the result not be a more diverse set of representations of feminine sexuality in mainstream media? Surely different types of women, black, fat, disabled and short, would participate more in this supposed form of sexual emancipation for women? In most instances it seems the contemporary notion of sexual liberation relates to a particular group of women only in that most mainstream representations of sex and sexiness involve a very particular type of woman. Whether *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend reflect this contention is discussed in light of the type of women showcased on these platforms. Do the women of the latter platform regard

themselves as sexually liberated individuals? And to what measures – if any – must they adhere in order to achieve the skin, hair and bodies promoted by the *FHM* brand?

The above questions point to popular feminist debates regarding the effects of contemporary media representations on women as a class. On the one hand, many (primarily second-wave) feminists have fought against stereotyped representations of women, arguing that it naturalises the societal perception that all women should be slender with glossy hair and perfect skin. On the other hand, a post-feminist position argues that such imagery is indicative of a new-found empowerment that contemporary women enjoy. These and other arguments inform this research project in terms of its primary objective: to uncover why certain South African women choose to display themselves in a specific way via the case study of *FHM* Girlfriend. Concepts and topics such as identity, empowerment and objectification will emerge as key to the development of a reading of the practice of "sexy self-representation" in contemporary South African society.

By means of in depth interviews with six amateur *FHM* Girlfriend models as well as a textual analysis of relevant sections of both *FHM* (print edition) and *FHM* Girlfriend, I provide the reader with an in depth account of how and why these women portray themselves in a specific way to a primarily male audience. The context within which these depictions proliferate is also discussed, as the societal acceptance of such activities provide evidence of an environment in which sex and sexiness predominate. In light of this project's theoretical framework, whether the amateur models' opinions and responses align to a primarily second-wave feminist or post-feminist opinion regarding sexy representations of women is assessed. While the latter position contends that sexual imagery can symbolise "the very essence" of a confident and strong woman (Attwood, 2004: 14), the former argues that such representations of women reduce them to mere "objects" (Wisneski, 2007: 105) used for the pleasure of heterosexual men. The nuances of the interview participants' responses and opinions are examined in order to ascertain their true perceptions of "sexy self-representation." How such a practice contributes to the social positioning and self-worth of women as a class is central to this project's findings. What emerges is a compelling end result, one that complicates an exclusively one-sided opinion regarding such imagery and its associated practice. The following chapter entails a detailed review of the relevant literature

pertaining to this study. Here the diverging feminist analyses introduced will be elaborated on in order to build a sound theoretical framework on which to base my findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: REPRESENTATION, SELF-REPRESENTATION AND FEMINIST CRITIQUE

This chapter engages in diverging feminist analyses of the representation of women in mainstream media in order to investigate conflicting interpretations of the proposed male (spectator) versus female (sexual object) power relations embedded in such depictions. For the purpose of this study, my focus pertains predominantly to the amateur models and intended target audience: heterosexual men. That the amateur models themselves form part of the audience is also considered in terms of how this affects them as individuals participating in the practice of looking at one another. Theories pertaining to gender identity, performance and power are introduced in the conceptual framework to further assess the dynamics pertaining to such imagery. A brief overview of literature regarding the current context within which sexualised representations circulate follows prior to a discussion of the opposing feminist debates. I also introduce several existing arguments regarding the representation of women (and men) in contemporary men's magazines, so as to better evaluate this work in terms of its contribution to the study of this media category. But first it is necessary to better contextualise *FHM* in terms of its relevance to this study.

FHM's history in light of the "new lad's" emergence and growing trend of sexy self-representation

In a journalism blog initiated by the University of Winchester, Paul Woods traces *FHM*'s history as well as the contextual factors that influenced it's evolution over the past two decades. Founded by Chris Astridge, *For Him* began in 1985 in the United Kingdom. The magazine's agenda focused primarily on fashion and style, "... its main target was the style conscious male reader" (Woods, 2009). Then in 1994, the men's magazine *Loaded* was launched in response to the emergence of a 'laddish' culture which, according to Woods, "was unconscious and irreverent in style... It [*Loaded*] was to immediately take the limelight from the current batch of fashion oriented men's magazines and created a new genre known as '[the] lad's mag'" (Woods, 2009).

According to Bethan Benwell (2003: 13), the "new lad" was representative of "a return to traditional masculine values of sexism, exclusive male friendship and homophobia." The

"crisis in masculinity" is a popular contextual explanation for the emergence of lad culture in the mid nineties. As Benwell notes in the introduction of *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (2003: 14):

> Commentators both within and outside the academy have argued that recent shifts in patterns of production and employment, as well as the progress made by second-wave feminism, have unsettled traditional gender formations and led to changing gender roles which have tended to be seen as bolstering the social position and psychic security of women at the expense of the confidence and self-justification of men.

The homophobic, sex-obsessed male as represented in *Loaded*, can thus be viewed as a collective reaction to the gender crisis many men were and perhaps still are experiencing in their everyday lives. Soon after the emergence of *Loaded*, *For Him* underwent a major transformation which saw its format change from a once predominant focus on men's fashion to "beautiful women, drinking, sport and humour" (Woods, 2009). The magazine's title also changed, although subtly, from *For Him* to *For Him Magazine* or *FHM*. The dramatic change in content helped catapult the magazine to success: "By September 1999, *FHM* was the top men's title in the UK, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia and Turkey, and was about to appear in France..." (Woods, 2009). According to the Media 24 website (2012), it launched in South Africa in December 1999, celebrating its ten year anniversary in 2009 along with its 120th issue. *FHM* Girlfriend (formerly known as *FHM* Modelbook) launched in 2010 arguably in response to the global popularity of other on-line sites promoting and enabling social networking and the publishing of user-generated content.

Over six hundred women in South Africa have used *FHM* Girlfriend to depict themselves in primarily "sexy" ways. This form of representation is not unique to *FHM*, however. It is indicative of a growing societal trend that situates sex and sexiness in relation to a person's identity (Shilling, 2005: 189). More specifically and by way of example, women using their bodies and sexuality as a means to express their identities is normalised by the proliferation of on-line pornography sites, sex shops and popular TV programmes, all of which refer to a woman whose sexiness is foregrounded in relation to other aspects of her identity. As such, a woman's sexiness (or lack thereof) becomes part of what defines her in contemporary society. In order to gain a better understanding of such a contention – and prior to discussing it in further detail – the context that supports and maintains it must be discussed.

The context of self-representation: The sexualisation of contemporary media

Feona Attwood (2006: 78) points to the proliferation of new forms of sexuality in late modern culture. Drawing on the work of Kenneth Plummer (1995), she notes how contemporary sex "'serves a multiplicity of purposes, including pleasure, the establishing and defining of relationships, the communication of messages concerning attitudes and lifestyles, and the provision of a major mechanism for subjection, abuse and violence.' It 'assumes many forms' and 'is bound up with more things' than ever before" (Attwood quoting Plummer, 2006: 78). She uses the phrase "sexualisation of culture" to indicate, among other things, the contemporary preoccupation with sexual values, practices and identities, and the public move to a more accepting attitude towards sex and sexuality.

Attwood describes how modern narratives of sexuality follow a linear route of development whereby sex is regarded as the end result or moment of truth pertaining to a causal journey. Although still dominant in western societies, the emergence of a postmodern discourse seems to be replacing this traditional tale of sex and its related meanings. A postmodern or late modern discourse "[is] characterized by a move to more permissive attitudes to sex... intimate relationships are eroticized, though at the same time there is a tendency to conceptualise the erotic as a highly individualised form of hedonism which is pursued through episodic and uncommitted encounters and through forms of auto-eroticism" (Attwood, 2006: 80). For Attwood, the proliferation of commercial and other sex services is representative of this shift in sexual narrative. Sex has been connected to consumerism as well as to a "therapeutic" culture which focuses on sexuality and the self as a means to personal growth and fulfilment (Attwood quoting Plummer, 2006: 80).

In light of these emerging sexual narratives, postmodern styles of sexual discourse such as irony and pastiche emerge. For Attwood, these generate a "knowingness" (2006: 82) on the part of individuals regarding the mediated nature of sexuality, thereby betraying our attempts to maintain a common-sense opinion, and allowing for the development of a number of new meanings regarding sex. While noting the emergence of these styles of sexual discourse in today's society, Rosalind Gill (2007: 40) goes a step further by referring to the nature of contemporary media content:

> One of the things that makes the media today very different from the television, magazines, radio and press of the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s is that feminism is now part of the cultural field. That is, feminist discourses are part of the media, rather than simply being outside and independent critical voices...Today, feminist inspired ideas burst forth from our radios, TV screens and print media (alongside many anti-feminist ideas). Indeed, it is probably fair to say that most feminism in the West now happens in the media...

Gill exemplifies her above contention by noting the diverging public opinions generated in response to a sexually controversial Opium perfume advertisement featuring the British model Sophie Dahl posing naked in an overtly sexual position (lying down with her legs and mouth open and eyes closed while she grasps her left breast). Whether positive or negative, all responses to the advert took place via the media (newspaper articles, TV talk shows etc), making it a platform off which to express or condemn feminist opinions and concerns. In light of this scenario, Gill asks the following overarching question, crucial to any feminist analysis of contemporary media representations: "Have the media been transformed by feminism, become – in significant ways – feminist? Or have they incorporated or recuperated feminist ideas, emptying them of their radical force and selling them back to us as sanitized products or lifestyles to consume?" (Gill, 2007: 41).

In their analysis of Jordan, a British glamour model regarded by many young women as "an iconic example of female agency," Marcel Coy and Michael Garner (2010: 657) discuss "how the sexualisation of popular culture positions glamour modelling as a career path within reach of young women seeking a way to be personally and socially powerful" (2010: 658). Drawing on the work of Marjut Jyrkinen (2005), they argue that a context supportive of, among other values, "women using their bodies for profit as a means to power" (210: 658) has led to the globalised naturalisation of sexual explicitness. They use the term "McSexualisation" (2010: 658) to represent this environment, arguing that the praise and support of glamour modelling – by young women and society in general – has resulted from such a context. Glamour modelling, as defined by Coy and Garner (2010: 657) is a form of modelling reliant on the "self-sexualisation" of young women. Thus, rather than mere objects that may include subtle sexual references, participants of this modelling genre are deliberately and excessively sexualised. Typical characteristics of this genre include women

dressed in revealing outfits such as lingerie while posing in positions that deliberately emphasise the sexual parts of their bodies.

In light of its appeal to so many young British women, Coy and Garner ask the following question regarding the glamour modelling trend: "'[h]ow is resurrecting every stereotype of female sexuality that feminism endeavoured to banish good for women?'" (Coy and Garner quoting Ariel Levy, 2010: 659). They discuss how Jordan, despite her rise to fame and economic success by means of glamour modelling, "is also derided as a celebrity 'chav'... a concept [that] represents a distinct working-class identity located in '*excessive* participation in forms of market-oriented consumption which are deemed *aesthetically* impoverished'" (Coy and Garner quoting Hayward and Yar, 2010: 662). As a result of these two opposing identities (the successful celebrity versus trashy chav), Coy and Garner (2010: 663) note the dichotomous struggle experienced by Jordan as she attempts to claim "multiple, contradictory positionings; that the sexualised glamour model (chav) identity can simultaneously be the respectable horsewoman." Here they make reference to a public incident whereby Jordan was refused access to the Cartier Polo International event "because she was 'not the sort of person' the organisers felt should be attending..." (Coy and Garner, 210: 662).

Thus, despite Jordan's glamorous lifestyle due to her successful modelling career, certain "parameters of respectability" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 663) are still apparent in contemporary society regardless of the general celebration and support of women showcasing their sexualised bodies. That Jordan "sells" her body for profit is a scenario that likens her to prostitution, albeit in a subtle and somewhat ambiguous way. As such, what is presented to "young women who aspire to glamour modelling is a double-edged sword, where they can acquire economic power through their bodies but in doing so are ultimately denied legitimate social status" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 664).

In her analysis of the covers of men's magazines, Mehita Iqani (2012: 311) argues that the smoothness of cars and women's bodies "is an important semiotic resource embedded in stereotypical and heteronormative conceptions of gender." To trace the history of smoothness and its opposite, roughness, she points to Edmund Burke's 1756 argument that "smoothness" is a core constituent of "beauty" and vitality whereas roughness generally

represents “ugliness” and degradation. Nearly 400 years after Burke’s statement, Iqani contends that such connotations have, to a greater extent, remained unchanged in contemporary society. Her analysis of the covers of *Arena* and *FHM* (the former being another ‘lad’ mag) leads her to maintain that because the smoothness of a woman’s skin and attire – as depicted on the covers of men’s magazines – connote a stereotyped beauty, they automatically connote “the heterosexual male gaze” (Iqani drawing on the work of Laura Mulvey, 2012: 323). Moreover, Iqani (2012: 323) contends that:

> The central role that smooth and shiny textures play in this sexual objectification can be demonstrated by imagining how different the message ‘‘sexiness’’ would be if the skin was mottled, bruised, wrinkled, blotchy or hairy instead of flawless and smooth; or if the outfits comprised rough, loose-fitting linen instead of tight-fitting, shiny fabrics. As such the two cover portraits set up a sense of fantasised commodification: the women become image-objects that are constructed for visual pleasure and sexual fantasy. They are unblemished objects: young, fresh, ‘‘new’’, virginal. As such, they invite fantasies of consummation.

Direct manipulation to women’s bodies by the media is thus a reality that shows no signs of abating. Most if not all images of young women in the media have been manipulated digitally for the purpose of their “perfection” and desirability in a heterosexual society obsessed with stereotyped notions of sexiness and beauty.

The representation of glamour models in men’s lifestyle magazines

Tim Edwards (2003: 137) points to the following three forms of masculinity in his analysis of almost three decades of men’s magazines: Old Man, New Man and New Lad. According to Edwards, all three types are defined “according to their attitudes towards women that vary from pre-feminist sexism (Old Man) to something supposedly more progressive (New Man) to the so-called ‘ironic’ sexism and use of mockery and humour in relation to feminism ... (New Lad)” (Edwards, 2003: 137). Echoing Bethan Benwell’s (2003: 14) argument, Edwards regards New Lad masculinity as representative of “a retreat from [and reaction to] the real world where women do exist and may compete with men whether at home or at work” (Edwards, 2003: 138). Magazines aligned to a New Lad discourse create such forms of escapism by “inverting female rather than male obsolescence ... [and] presenting modes of

masculinity that don't even pay attention to, let alone depend upon, the importance of ... long term relationships with women" (Edwards, 2003: 138).

For Edwards, the use of irony and humour in these magazines is problematic as they will not always be interpreted as such. Supporting this contention is the proven diversity of categorised media audiences. There is no guarantee, then, that all targeted men will view the lad magazine as light-hearted and playful in terms of its disrespect for women. The New Lad is often considered part of a reaction to the New Man's interest in non-masculine concerns such as fashion and style. The former's personality, as indicated in the following paragraphs, is arguably more sexist than its predecessors, despite conflicting arguments regarding its intention.

In her analysis of *Maxim* – an international men's lifestyle and entertainment magazine similar in content to that of *FHM* – Kirsten Wisneski (2007: 105) contends that, according to this magazine, "'real' women [i.e., non-models particularly in terms of their physical characteristics] are seen as other. They trap men in marriage (wives are commonly referred to as 'the ball and chain'), always have PMS, and like to nag." For Wisneski, such an attitude positions such women as "impossible to relate to" for men, thereby furthering the gendered dichotomy still dominant in contemporary western society (Wisneski, 2007: 107). In contrast to these "real" women, *Maxim* makes extensive and primarily visual reference to an array of "fantasy" females, all of whom adhere to western standards of female perfection. They are displayed sexually to attract and satisfy the intended target audience: heterosexual men.

For Wisneski, women presented in *Maxim* are evaluated entirely on their appearances. She does, however, point to an additional factor that "goes beyond looks to a certain attitude and personality, specifically one that not only accepts but extols the values embodied by a *Maxim* male" (Wisneski, 2007: 112). Drawing on the work of Ariel Levy (2006), Wisneski points to the significance of a "female chauvinist pig" attitude as depicted by many "B-list" *Maxim* models. Such an attitude is representative of the societal phenomenon whereby women are becoming increasingly supportive of the promotion of sexism, an act generally associated with men. For Wisneski, "...participating in and supporting raunch culture provide an opportunity to distinguish oneself as laidback and different, i.e., 'not like other women'" (Wisneski, 2007: 113), thereby offering females an alternate and potentially more empowered identity.

Despite this seemingly positive dimension, however, Wisneski adheres to her original argument regarding *Maxim's* objectification and limited representation of women. She furthers this with the contention that many B-list models combine their sexually stereotyped appearance with a female chauvinist pig attitude "in the interest of getting ahead with the dominant group [men]" (Wisneski, 2007: 114). In doing so, they bind themselves to a set of male expectations, regardless of its arguably contradictory nature (an ultra feminine body versus a chauvinistic attitude). This depicts an acceptance and support – on the part of these models – of the following opinion: "why try to beat them [men] when you can join them?" (Wisneski quoting Levy, 2007: 113). Thus, although somewhat innovative in terms of the configuration of their identities, such women still reflect the fact that patriarchy dominates in contemporary western society and its artefacts.

In his analysis of *FHM* and other contemporary men's magazines, David Gauntlett (2008: 171, 172) highlights the following assumptions on which these texts base their content:

- Men like (to look at) women...
- ...But don't know too much about them
- Men like cars, gadgets and sports
- Men need help (relationship advice, grooming tips etc)
- Men are fascinated by bravery and danger (hence the regular inclusion of articles on war heroes, one-time assassins etc.)

Gauntlett refers to the work of Imelda Whelehan (2000) who, like Wisneski, argues that magazines such as *Maxim* and *FHM* override feminist issues of objectification and sexism by using irony and humour to trivialise such concerns. For Gauntlett, however, such a contention fails to account for "why men buy these magazines" (Gauntlett, 2008: 164), while ignoring the many contradictions evident in such texts. Drawing on the above assumptions pertaining to men, Gauntlett argues that men who purchase magazines such as *FHM* are in fact insecure in terms of their identities. The magazines provide these men with assistance and advice, with the use of irony and humour as a means "to sweeten the pill" (Gauntlett, 2008: 176).

For Gauntlett, magazines such as *FHM* and *Maxim* praise the notion of a "sexually assertive" – rather than passive – female (Gauntlett, 2008: 165). Their promotion of independence and

disrespect for marriage are viewed by Gauntlett as constructive in that such opinions align to what feminists have tried to establish in society for decades. Furthermore, mainstream magazines targeting women are increasingly loaded with depictions of near naked men, thus extending this supposed sexism beyond that of media targeting heterosexual men. Theoretical critique prevails with the latter medium, however, due to the history pertaining to objectified women. For Gauntlett, arguments relating to sexism should ultimately recede when analysing contemporary lifestyle magazines, as most celebrate rather than objectify attractive people, both male and female. The fact that both types of magazines discuss the opposite sex as different should be regarded as "a way of making sense of reality rather than reality itself" (Gauntlett, 2008: 182).

Gauntlett's discussion exemplifies a rather nonchalant approach to the sexualised representation of women in magazines such as *FHM* and *Maxim*. While ignoring the fact that such depictions normalise a stereotyped heterosexuality, his contention that men's magazines align to feminist endeavours by disrespecting marriage fails to account for the magazines' probable motivation: an anti-marriage stance supports men engaging in unrestricted sexual encounters with numerous women, thus servicing and promoting a chauvinistic attitude towards both sex and women. Finally, Gauntlett's argument that depictions of near-naked men in media targeting women eliminate the relevance of sexism is weakened by the fact that such media forms (*Cosmopolitan* magazine for example) also incorporate stereotyped depictions of women. In this regard, the target audience is still reminded of what women should look like according to western standards of feminine perfection, despite the inclusion of sexy men.

Feminist debates regarding the sexual representation of women

While first-wave feminism concerned itself with women's civil and legal rights in relation to men, the emergence of second-wave feminism brought about intense engagement with gender as a construction (Oakley, 1998: 708). It was argued that the various heterosexual roles ascribed to and expected of men took precedence and control over those assigned to women, resulting in the latter sex's subservience. For example, as a radical feminist, Andrea Dworkin (1987: 122-124) went so far as to argue that with the presence of heterosexual sex,

"[t]here is never a real privacy of the [woman's] body... [t]he vagina itself is muscled and the muscles have to be pushed apart." As such, "[t]he political meaning of intercourse for women is the fundamental question of feminism and freedom." Such arguments – although not all as extreme as Dworkin's – form part of a feminist social movement that acts as a response to the subordination and abuse of women, as well as to "the conceptualisation/language of 'subordination,' 'abuse' and 'women'" (Cronin, 2000: 273).

Feminists belonging to this movement view contemporary social circumstances as governed by patriarchy, a concept which "...is used by contemporary feminists to examine and critique continuing male domination of social institutions, such as the family, the state, the educational system and the media" (Dines and Humez, 1995: 572). The discourse of patriarchy positions men as superior in relation to women, and the media is just one of the many other institutions used to depict and support it. Mac an Ghaill et al (2007: 24) stress the continued significance of patriarchy, despite the fact that towards the end of the 20th century, feminist writing started asking for a more complex picture of male domination. This requirement was due to the assertion that relations between men and women were not as simplistic as represented by patriarchal structures. Rather, such relations are "multidimensional and differentially experienced and responded to within specific historical contexts and social locations" (Mac an Ghaill et al, 2007: 24). While agreeing with this contention, Mac an Ghaill et al point to the "socio-historical amnesia" of many current feminist studies, a common error that is avoided when analysing *FHM's* representation of women. Many scholars such as Gauntlett (2008: 182) focus too exclusively on the emergence of sexual empowerment in relation to contemporary representations of women, often disregarding the still valid concerns of subordination and disempowerment pertaining to the predominantly stereotyped forms of sexuality as initiated and sustained by the media.

Feminist writers have also looked at the contemporary representation of women in terms of race. In an article written for an online magazine publication, Caryn Franklin – a former fashion editor – argues that the modelling and fashion industry is now "more racist" than it was more than two decades ago (Franklin, 2013: 2). For Franklin, the "very thin, very young caucasian woman" is used repeatedly by large corporations in order to advertise their products and/or services. Such corporations are driven by profit, a reality that results in

their continued use of known methods to generate sales. In this regard, use of the above mentioned type of model is an established and proven success. Thus, organisations "are scared of challenging it [the white female stereotype], of doing something different" as it may result in a loss of revenue (Franklin, 2013: 3). Similarly, Ashley Mears (2010: 21) argues that "[a]s workers in cultural production," modelling agents and their clients "face intense market uncertainty when selecting models." As such, "they rely on conventions, imitation, and stereotypes to guide their decisions." Unfortunately, the result is an "excessively thin and exclusively Anglo-looking" (Mears, 2010: 21) group of models who assist the media in naturalising ideas about what all women – regardless of their race – should look like.

The above arguments point towards the workings of a form of cultural hegemony, defined by Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell (2012: 15) as the moment a culture or way of being becomes "common sense" for the majority of a given population. Like Franklin (2013: 3) and Mears (2010: 21), Christy La Pierre (1999) argues that the mass media reproduces "the ideological hegemony of the dominant white culture..." thereby legitimating the "inequalities" still experienced in contemporary race and class relations. Whether the *FHM* platforms analysed support a culture of whiteness is assessed later in this report. The relevant findings are discussed in relation to their possible impact on the amateur models.

For Gill (2012: 7), the term "sexual empowerment" has been over utilised by scholars and the media to such an extent that it "has itself become a compulsory part of normative, heterosexy, young female subjectivity... that has replaced virginity or virtue as a dominant currency of feminine desirability" (Gill, 2012: 7). In light of this contention regarding sexual empowerment, Gill asks an important question regarding the plausible use of such a term in feminist studies: "If empowerment... is normatively demanded of young women in their sexual encounters, how can it also be used to independently assess the feminist quality of such experiences?" (Gill, 2012: 7). Gill thus questions the relevance of sexual empowerment, making it a complex and possibly unreliable term to be used in contemporary feminist studies.

The term "male gaze" (Laura Mulvey, 1975) is used extensively by feminists against mainstream depictions of women to highlight and explore the media's contribution to asymmetrical power relations between men and women in society. This argument holds

that the media objectify women for the pleasure of the implied audience which, according to Elayne Rapping, "is both heterosexual and male" (1992: 451). The (active male) act of looking is accorded power and control over the (passive female) act of being looked at, further naturalising the patriarchal logic embedded in society. By being objectified, women are disempowered by both the media and men. In the case of *FHM* Girlfriend, do the amateur models merely objectify and therefore disempower themselves for the pleasure of men? Or is there more to this dynamic in that the former actively initiate their own representations? As will be described in the analysis of this project's findings, *FHM* depicts a very particular type of woman. Is what she looks like aligned exclusively to what heterosexual men are said to desire and if so are they the only ones who benefit from these sexy representations? Furthermore, in order for the amateur models to look the way they do for their photographs, the preparation and work needed, will be discussed. Whether such imagery depicts an unnatural female subject who requires strict preparation before looking "perfect" and "sexy" is investigated. The western feminine ideal is a repetitive feature throughout contemporary media forms targeting both sexes. What is presented to women in particular is "a body of projected potentiality in which regimes of self-control release that self-expressive potential of the body-to-be" (Cronin, 2000: 277). As such, whether *FHM* Girlfriend represents an oppressive space in which a specific body or "body-to-be" (Cronin, 2000: 277) must first be realised is assessed in relation to the measures required on the part of the amateur models.

A post-feminist look at the societal context in which sexy self-representation operates

According to Gill (2007: 250), postfeminism questions the ways in which feminist theory "relied on dualistic thinking and upon totalizing concepts (such as 'patriarchy')." It (postfeminism) "marks a shift away from a focus on equality to a focus on debates about differences," addressing the previous neglect and concerns of marginalised groups and resulting in the emergence of "'a non-hegemonic feminism capable of giving voice to local, indigenous and postcolonial feminisms'" (Gill quoting Brooks, 2007: 250). Thus, while not necessarily refuting the arguments pertaining to previous feminist discussions, postfeminism does require a more holistic and intersectional approach to debates concerning women's oppression or empowerment in contemporary society. It can and often

does accommodate for a more optimistic approach to displays of female sexuality in contemporary media forms, as exemplified and discussed in the following paragraphs. In fact, the emergence of a sex-positive outlook is also evident in the works of certain second-wave feminists. Betty Dodson (1996: 3-4), for example, argues against the patriarchal perception of female sexuality as a dangerous force in need of (male) regulation. She fights rather for the recognition of female sexual pleasure, viewing it as a necessary pre-condition for women's liberation in contemporary society.

Feona Attwood (2004: 14) notes that for many theorists, contemporary changes in sex and its interpretations have the potential to democratize sexual discourse. In an earlier article, she herself exemplifies this contention. Her re-interpretation of a perfume advert (the same one discussed earlier by Gill) "condemned by the Advertising Standards Authority as offensive and degrading to women," reflects a more optimistic approach to the understanding of contemporary sexual representation. For Attwood, Dahl's, "sprayed legs, closed eyes and open mouth are characteristic of soft-core [pornographic] imagery" (Attwood, 2004: 16). The advert received over 900 public complaints due to its visual parallels with pornography and was banned from billboards as a result. It did, however, receive a number of favourable responses: "In other readings, the image appeared to combine fashion elements which signified feminine pride and confidence with pornographic elements connoting the disorderly, pleasure-seeking female body in a positive and empowering way" (Attwood, 2004: 16). Furthermore, while many interpreted Dahl's healthy body size as characteristic of a "porn body," others saw it as emblematic of sensuality, strength and power: "...her relative fleshiness was taken to signify the very essence of a strong, sexy woman. She was compared favourably to 'superwaif' models like Claudia Schiffer who, it was argued, were the embodiment of female sexual passivity..." (Attwood, 2004: 16).

Attwood stresses the importance of context when dealing with issues of pornography and objectification in the discussion of representation. While pointing to the already mentioned emergence of a more "sexualised culture," she notes that in contemporary culture, an ethic of "fun" and "calculated hedonism" has increasingly worked to "mainstream transgression" and to celebrate a liberated, "sexy" body (Attwood quoting Mark Jancovich, 2004: 15).

According to Attwood (2004: 15), such a context has thus lead to the modification of the significance of the pornographic and of objectification:

> Pornography generally attracts far less censure as a forbidden and harmful set of cultural texts, except where its production clearly indicates actual abuse. Objectification is, perhaps, more likely to be understood as a necessary pre-condition for erotic gazing in a narcissistic culture where the body is widely represented as an object for display and a key component of the marketable self.

In her discussion regarding the sexual representation of women in contemporary magazines, Kathy Meyers (1987: 198) presents an argument similar in many respects to that of Attwood's. She points to the possible mistake of viewing all sexualized imagery as being of a pornographic and thus exploitative nature, arguing that: "an analysis of a sexual image which focuses purely on its content is in danger of falling into a kind of 'reductive essentialism' ...the distinction between pornography and other modes of sexual representation cannot rest on the characteristics of the image" (Meyers, 1987: 198; 199). For Meyers, a woman's sexuality is deployed by the media in a variety of ways, and it is therefore important that images be considered in terms of their context and conditions of production and consumption.

Further theorists who view the sexualisation of culture in a more optimistic light have focused more specifically on its link to technology and consumerism. In his response to the change in meanings about sex in contemporary culture, Brian McNair (2002: 87) terms "pornographication" as the process whereby pornography proliferates in contemporary artefacts such as print and broadcast media. Attwood (2006: 82) concurs:

> In our culture, sex is becoming more and more visible, and more and more explicit. Sexual representations, products and services are becoming more accessible to a wider group of consumers, and the development of new communication technologies to support, replace or reconfigure sexual encounters is increasingly part of ordinary people's everyday lives.

The theorisation of "pornographication" is furthered by McNair (2002: 87) as developing alongside the "pornosphere," a second term used to signify the environment within which increasingly explicit, sexualised texts proliferate. Both terms operate within a wider social context where the boundaries between the public and private are continually disrupted, and this is especially evident in contemporary media trends such as lifestyle, interactivity and

the confessional. McNair describes this shift as the movement towards a "striptease culture," which he views as the latest progression in sexual consumerism and the commodification of sex (McNair, 2002: 87).

The post-feminist turn: Sexiness as empowerment?

Two years post her analysis of the Sophie Dahl advertisement, Atwood depicts a more critical outlook on the representation of sexualised imagery. While she appreciates McNair's insightful contextualisation of recent developments in sexual discourse and representation, she points to certain limitations in his argument: "McNair's characterisation of striptease culture as a capitalist response to 'popular demand for access to and participation in sexual discourse' [2002:87], and as a progressive force for the 'articulation and dissemination of diverse sexual identities and radical sexual politics' [2002: 206] implies a rather too direct relation between radicalism, demand, capitalism and media output" (Attwood quoting McNair, 2006: 82). She argues that McNair's interpretation of such developments fails to recognise the ways in which they allow for the regulation of our sexual practices and identities. Furthermore, Attwood notes that such a contention oversimplifies the ways in which the development of sexual representation and practice are related to different positions of power, "particularly in terms of class and gender relations" (Atwood, 2006: 83).

In contrast to McNair's democratic interpretation of postmodern sexuality, Attwood reflects on the arguments of several feminist writers concerned with the constraints of this thriving discourse. Imelda Whelehan (2000), for example, argues that the strategic deployment of irony and pastiche by contemporary media deceives women into believing that the proliferation of highly sexualised imagery in the media signifies female sexual pride and emancipation. Judith Williamson (2003) notes the emergence of "lad culture" in the 90's, its emphasis being on male hedonism, female objectification and tongue-in-cheek, anti-feminist comments. This, together with the above mentioned techniques, help to conceal the agendas of mainstream media. According to Attwood, many individuals including academics have been fooled by this deceit. As such, they regard sexualised representations as "'cutting edge and radical,'... [and this interpretation is due primarily to] a misplaced theoretical focus on sexuality rather than gender... [as well as] a populist tendency to embrace, rather than critique, popular culture" (Attwood, 2006: 83).

Angela McRobbie (2009: 27) argues that a positive, celebratory regard for stereotyped forms of sexuality often acts as a substitute for feminism in current (western) society. In addition to female emancipation in light of past restraints, this contemporary discourse relies on choice and further comparison to justify its significance. While the former acts as an additional draw card in that women are now free agents who select their own life paths, the latter acts as a further buffer against critique by comparing the social freedoms of primarily western women to that of other cultures still dominant in parts of the world. "Our young women are encouraged to conceive of themselves as grateful subjects of modern states and cultures which permit such freedoms unlike repressive or fundamentalist regimes" (McRobbie, 2009: 27). For McRobbie, the concept of choice is itself a form of constraint in that "[t]he individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices." As a result, new distinctions are drawn between "those subjects who are judged responsive to the regime of personal responsibility, and those who fail miserably" (McRobbie, 2009: 19).

One can argue, then, that in many instances relating to the concept of sexual empowerment, women are deceived by what seems to be a liberating state of being. In fact, they are living in an environment where the rules of constraint have merely shifted and become more obscure. Patriarchy is thus still at play in contemporary culture and it regulates its subjects by the deployment of irony and deceit.

McRobbie furthers the above contention by drawing on the work of Deleuze (1986), who reworks Foucault's (1977) Panopticon as a mode of surveillance to be that of the luminous spotlight "[that] softens, dramatises and disguises the regulative dynamics [of patriarchy]" (McRobbie, 2009: 50). More specifically, because women are no longer dependent on men financially, patriarchy now focuses on the body as a means of control. The media's continuous depiction of a stereotyped femininity overwhelms the female subject. Soft hair, flawless skin and an emaciated body have been normalized by the media for decades. Despite the occasional outcry regarding the depiction of severely underweight young women, such imagery still prevails with no real signs of abating. McRobbie notes how such depictions are more often than not in the form of media targeted directly at women. She focuses in particular on women's magazines, noting that in between such representations of femininity are numerous articles detailing recommended processes of transformation into

the ideal, supposedly confident woman. For example, what foods to eat, clothes to wear and how to apply make-up are common topics pertaining to such magazines.

In addition to such guidelines, "[t]he young woman is congratulated, reprimanded and encouraged to embark on a new regime of self-perfectibility (i.e. self-completion)... [a]nd now that she is able to make her own choices, it seems as though the fearful terrain of male approval fades away, and is replaced instead with a new horizon of self-imposed feminine cultural norms" (McRobbie, 2009: 63). Thus, the already mentioned consequence of choice is furthered in that it relates to an internalised form of scrutiny, arguably more harmful than the scrutiny from others in that the former takes on a more internalised, never-ending criticism that has the potential to dominate and possess a woman's life. Modern women become "bearers" of an "apparatus" (Foucault, 1977a: 201) of self-criticism. They resort to methods of perfection as promoted by the media in order to relieve this personalised scrutiny. Unfortunately, as with their self-criticism, the methods of perfection are never-ending. The cycle of discontentment is thus ongoing. Both constituents (the internalised self-scrutiny and methods of perfection) continue to support one another in that, for example, a new "cure" for wrinkles is bound to be promoted via the media.

McRobbie points to various other societal processes that work in an arguably deceitful manner to justify, among other things, the abolition and disarticulation of feminism. As a result, she notes the emergence of melancholy and illegible rage among women in modern society. The echoes of feminism remain embedded in the minds of women, but must be ignored for a certain quality of life to proceed. Together with the adoption of self-scrutiny, this suppression results in a number of disorders prevalent in contemporary culture. Anorexia, self-mutilation, drug addiction and depression are now common disorders in today's society. The media works to normalise these conditions, especially in relation to women. For McRobbie (2009: 63), the melancholic, distant expressions of the models who populate various media signify this very condition. This, together with the regular inclusion (in women's magazine's) of "self-help" articles relating to pathologies such as depression and low self-esteem further the process of normalising disturbed women. Whether the women of *FHM* Girlfriend adopt this melancholic gaze in their depictions will be discussed in relation to the respondents' opinions regarding sexy self-representation. Again, that such women initiate their own representations must be considered in light of this finding.

Conclusion

The various feminist interpretations of female identity often conflict, exemplifying the acrimonious "sex wars" debate pertaining to the late 1970's and early 1980's (Mac an Ghaill et al, 2007: 9). This historical event made clear the (ongoing) divide in opinion between "sex-positive" and "anti-porn" feminists. While addressing both the positive and negative contentions concerning the contemporary representation of women in mainstream media, I stay cognisant of the "pornosphere" (McNair, 2002: 87) within which these depictions circulate. For Goffman (1969: 5), performance is highly dependent on the individual, the audience and the particular social context in which it occurs, as all three influence its construction and outcome. So, for example, the performing individual may "intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but chiefly because the tradition of his group... require this kind of expression..." (Goffman, 1969: 5). The social conditions in which sexy self-representation occurs thus plays a pivotal role when considering why the selected amateur models participate in this sometimes controversial trend. In addition to their contextual circumstances, the interviewed women's personalities, interests and aspirations are considered in order to better understand their reasoning for presenting themselves to others in a primarily sexualised manner. And finally, who the amateur models display their bodies to – heterosexual men – is considered in light of the women's proposed intentions and social circumstances. It must be stated, however, that the audience of this particular scenario is, to a greater extent, assumed as the research's main focus is on the amateur models who participate in sexy self-representation. There may indeed be individuals other than heterosexual men who look at the images of women on *FHM* Girlfriend. However, for the purpose of this research project, a heterosexual male audience is the main category linked to the amateur models' social circumstances and personal dispositions. Thus, in order to accurately assess whether such representations contribute to the sexual emancipation or confinement of women as a class, all three components elaborated on by Goffman (1969: 5) are considered when asking how and why certain women choose to portray themselves, via *FHM*, in overtly sexual ways.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: POWER, IDENTITY AND SELF-REPRESENTATION IN POST-FEMINIST MEDIA CULTURE

Investigating why certain women choose to present themselves sexually via *FHM* Girlfriend branches naturally into issues concerning contemporary identity formation and its relation to sexuality. Whether such representations contribute to an unequal power dynamic between men and women is analysed in light of the sexualised context within which they circulate. In other words, does the above act of sexy self-representation contribute to female subordination or empowerment in relation to the opposite sex? Or does this particular scenario allow for a more complex interpretation of the underlying power dynamics and associated female identity? In light of such questions, the project's conceptual framework evolves under the following themes central to this debate: power and the body, and self-representation and identity.

The heterosexual power relations underlying sexy self-representation

The concept of power and its relation to the representation of women in mainstream imagery is used alongside Michel Foucault's work on discourses and contemporary power. For Foucault, "modern power is not something that negates and represses so much as it is a force that produces – it produces knowledge, and it produces particular kinds of citizens and subjects" (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001: 97). The knowledge produced about a particular topic, object or thing is not universal, but always historically specific. In his interpretation of official forms of "knowledge" such as medicine and psychiatry, Foucault notes how these work as "instruments of normalisation, continually attempting to manoeuvre populations into 'correct' and 'functional' forms of thinking and acting...[while occluding] forms of knowledge which are different from them" (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 17).

Power as a productive force is always relational. It entails a necessary interaction between two or more people who engage in the roles ascribed to them by various societal "techniques," which, according to Foucault, allow the subject to "'tell the truth about itself'" (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 3). The "techniques" operating in a given societal context act as a set of "processes and concepts" which enable us to consider ourselves as individual subjects while "constraining us from thinking otherwise" (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 3). They shape

how we perceive ourselves and others, thus regulating all interactions according to a set of rules and expected behaviours. Sociologist Nikolas Rose (1999: 1) concurs, arguing that our private thoughts, "personalities, subjectivities, and 'relationships' are not private matters, if this implies that they are not the objects of power." Rather, "they are intensely governed" by society in terms of its various conventions. "...[C]ommunity scrutiny, legal norms, familial obligations and religious injunctions" all work to "alter the visible person by acting upon this invisible inner world" (Rose, 1999: 1).

With regard to the common scenario whereby heterosexual men (active) accesses sexual images of women (passive), the former engage in a role ascribed to them by the societal "techniques" related to the discourse of patriarchy. Sexualised depictions of women are deemed desirable and stimulating for heterosexual men, and are thus used by the subject as a means to "tell the truth about [him]self" (Foucault quoted by McHoul and Grace, 1993: 3). The female subject, on the other hand, becomes a sexualised object exploited for the gratification of men. Her objectification works as an instrument of normalisation, thereby producing and supporting the societal knowledge of women as inferior in relation to men. While many women are "active" in the sense that they participate willingly in the production of their sexualised imagery, it is an arguably deceptive form of productivity in that the end result is, in most instances, a replication of the passive pin-up model used by men for sexual gratification. As such, the women's possible feelings of sexiness deceive them into feeling empowered in relation to men, thus naturalising a once contentious act by means of an internalised rationale that situates self-exposure in relation to self-confidence and pride.

Resistance to the norm, however, is still possible and does occur. According to Foucault, his own objective "...was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (Foucault, 1984: 9). Despite the undeniable criticism of a situation whereby women adhere to sexual stereotypes for the satisfaction of men, one cannot ignore the seemingly genuine feelings of pride obtained by women who participate in the practice of sexy self-representation via various media platforms. Their confident poses coupled with their sometimes cheeky demeanours are unmistakeable. As such, objectification for these women is perhaps "a necessary pre-condition for erotic gazing in a narcissistic culture where the body is widely

represented as an object for display and a key component of the marketable self" (Attwood, 2004: 15). It is possible, then, that this alternate way of thinking exemplifies a form of feminine resistance to the discourse of patriarchy. Perhaps men are merely powerless admirers of women who employ the theoretical "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975) as a means to strengthen their confidence and pride. An invoked homosexuality among such women – when looking at and admiring one another – is another possibility in light of McRobbie's (2009) contention that images of other women in the media are employed to induce a same sex attraction among women who form part of the audience. However, according to McRobbie (2009: 100), such a strategy is a deliberate attempt "on the part of patriarchy" to ensure the repudiation of homosexuality "in favour of the achievement of a normative sexual identity on the part of young women." (McRobbie, 1009: 100). How this repudiation occurs is discussed further in relation to the participants of *FHM* Girlfriend. Nonetheless, the idea of an alternative, homosexual identity emerging from sexy self-representation – via *FHM* Girlfriend – would indeed be a form of resistance against heterosexual patriarchy. The complication lies in how such resistance could emerge untarnished by the constraints of the latter discourse.

For Foucault, the effects of modern power are material, occurring more often than not on the body: "Now the phenomenon of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals" (Foucault, 1980: 55). So, for example, a structure such as the family is regarded by Foucault as "a system of control of sexuality" established over the bodies of children. The result of this type of parental control on the child, however, is an "intensification of each individual's desire, for, in and over his body" (Foucault, 1980: 55). The body thus becomes a site of conflict between parents and children in that the former aims to suppress the desires of the latter.

In a similar vein, Foucault points to the liberation of sexuality in contemporary society, noting how the message to indulge in and show-case your sexuality is initiated on condition that your appearance adhere to certain criteria: "Responding precisely to the revolt of the body, we find a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation. 'Get undressed – but be slim, good-looking, tanned!'" (Foucault, 1980: 57). As such, the body is an essential component in the production and operation of various systems of power, making it a necessary site of

analysis. While it is arguable then that women who pose for *FHM* exemplify an emancipated sexuality, the conditions pertaining to this liberation must be assessed. Indeed, women pertaining to the professional modelling industry must adhere to certain criteria regarding their appearance. So, for example, a model is praised by the media and/or public for exposing and celebrating her body, so long as it's thin and toned. If an overweight, flabby woman were to appear on a modelling runway or in a mainstream magazine, the likely audience response would not be as encouraging. Thus, in contemporary society, the body emerges as "a form of control by stimulation" (Foucault, 1980: 57) in that its positive sexualisation depends on the achievement and maintenance of a prescribed set of physical characteristics. "The repressive element is hidden within the permissiveness... [h]yperreal body imagery [as depicted in the media]... entrenches heteronormative and stereotyped sexuality, whereby only those who are 'slim, good looking and tanned' may expose their bodies and be sexually admired" (Iqani, 2012: 126).

While Foucault's earlier studies focused on the influence of discourses of institutions and how their formalised "experts" worked to constrain certain groups, his later work centred on "the government of the self in a domain officially 'freed' from legislation and external constraint" (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 24). By means of the Panopticon analogy, Foucault describes how modes of power become internalised, thereby inducing states of docility and unconscious adherence: "...this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (Foucault, 1977a: 201).

Many feminist writers have used Foucault's ideas discussed above in relation to women's oppression. Drawing on the work of Sandra Bartky (1990), Liz Frost (1999: 132) argues that a woman "learns to appraise herself first" due to her knowledge that "as a woman she is going to be judged on her looks." As such, women are under continuous scrutiny "from an internalised representative of the [western] fashion-beauty complex, objectifying them and subjecting them to impossible standards and criticisms..." (Frost, 1999: 132). For Naomi Wolf (1990: 285), such internalised beauty standard's to which many women adhere (e.g. radiant, youthful skin and a thin but toned body) often result in practices such as dieting and cosmetic surgeries, some of which are extremely dangerous in that fatalities can and do

occur. Wolf (1990: 285) notes that for many women there is a sense of power gained "from turning oneself into a living art object" by means of these and other socially accepted practices such as the application of make-up and fashion items. However, such a kind of power "is not much compared to the pleasure of getting back forever inside the body... the pleasure of shedding self-consciousness and narcissism and guilt... the pleasure of freedom to forget all about it" (Wolf, 1990: 285).

As such, regardless of the possible feelings of empowerment obtained by women who engage in the practice of sexy self-representation, their bodies are reflective of a contradictory form of power whereby self-regulation, discipline and control are necessary pre-conditions for self-pleasure and liberation. In modern (western) society, "[t]he young woman is congratulated, reprimanded and encouraged to embark on a new regime of self-perfectibility..." (McRobbie, 2009: 63). Furthermore, "[s]ocial norms of beauty and thinness" continue to inform the many contemporary forms of bodily changes such as breast augmentations and liposuction (Shilling, 2005: 189), contributing to the normalisation of such torturous practices.

Thus, although resistance is possible, the naturalisation and internalisation of certain ways of being cannot be overlooked when investigating the power dynamics underlying a given scenario. While many young women depicted sexually by the media exemplify "a highly individualised form of hedonism which is pursued through episodic and uncommitted encounters and through forms of auto-eroticism" (Attwood, 2006: 80), they also signify and support a feminine identity that centres on strict self-regulation and competitiveness – rather than control from the outside forces of patriarchy, a facet discussed further in the following section regarding self-representation and identity.

Self-representation and identity in a sexualised culture

According to Teresa de Lauretis (1987: 68), power is exercised through representations of gender. Similarly, Judith Butler (1990: 136) argues that "the acts and gestures" pertaining to men and women "create the illusion of an interior and organising gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the frame of heterosexuality." Drawing on the work of Foucault, Butler (1990: 136) argues that the normalisation of gendered difference and inequality is also supported and maintained by

the above mentioned acts and gestures that form part of a performance, with both men and women assuming given societal roles that work to position femininity as naturally inferior in relation to masculinity. Thus, for many second wave feminist writers, the heterosexual roles assigned to men (active) and women (passive) work to naturalise the many inequalities still experienced by women in contemporary society. "The organisation of gendered identities was perceived [by second wave feminists] as deriving from a fixed base of social power with the male body identified as the source of women's oppression" (Mac an Ghaill et al, 2007: 155).

Most mainstream, female models depicted in the media align without doubt to Butler's (1990) argument regarding the heterosexual power dynamic. Their stylised appearance and, in many instances, messages of sexual availability form part of a gendered performance strongly indicative of an identity fuelled by heterosexual desire. They dress and act according to what the opposite sex are believed to enjoy. Furthermore – and as already mentioned in the discussion of power – men who accesses sexualised images of women engage in a role ascribed to them by the societal "techniques" related to the discourse of patriarchy. Hetero-normativity – defined by Gill (2007: 71) as "the ways in which particular structures privilege heterosexuality" – goes hand in hand with such a discourse, leaving little room for the emergence of alternative identities for both women and men.

Despite the continuing significance of traditional patriarchy, later feminist work began to focus more on the effects of a modern society on gender and identity. They argued that the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of societal contexts resulted in a more complicated female identity. Leigh Gilmore (1994: 20) contends that "...both the state ideological apparatuses and the micropolitical and sociocultural technologies of gender overwhelm the subject [and] ...disallow its coherence." It is important to note, however, that "the 'feminine' subject immersed in the ideology of gender is not the only gendered construction available to women." Thus, what is the character assumed and enacted by the *FHM* Girlfriend models? Do they merely adopt the role of a sexual stereotype? Or is there more to their represented identities? I analyse the interviewed women's responses in relation to such questions in order to ascertain the extent to which individual or replicated identities are being formed.

Furthermore, the contemporary "sexualisation of culture" as described by Feona Attwood (2006: 80) has led to the blurring of traditional boundaries regarding sexual relationships. The normalisation in society of "uncommitted" sexual encounters (Attwood, 2006: 80) has resulted in a general focus on the individual in terms of what he or she can get out of a sexual encounter. It is crucial for the researcher to assess how such an environment – together with the increasing significance of consumerism and technology – works to influence and complicate contemporary female identity. The idea that women appearing in men's magazines are nothing but sexual commodities is persuasive. But new female identities, emerging as a result of the increasingly complex contexts within which they operate, are pointing towards a negotiated or even optimistic account of the male/female power dynamics embedded in contemporary representations.

The cultural emphasis on individualised sexual pleasure supports a post-feminist opinion that women who initiate depictions of themselves on platforms such as *FHM* Girlfriend do so for their own gratification, immediately complicating the critical feminist view regarding female subordination via sexualised representation. Chris Shilling (2005: 2) states that an analysis of consumer culture points to the commercialized body "as increasingly central to people's sense of self-identity," while Anthony Giddens points to a modern identity characterised by individualisation and self-management. In contemporary society we are now "responsible for the design of our own bodies" (Giddens, 1991: 98). Thus, along with the emergence of innovative technologies, the subject is now able to manipulate his or her body in an attempt for it to better represent their sense of self. The outer (body/appearance) is therefore strongly indicative of the inner (identity) in contemporary western society.

In her discussion of magazines that employ sexualised depictions of women on their covers to help increase sales, Mehita Iqani (2012: 125) argues that "sexiness (looking good, being attractive to others) is represented as a kind of success that is key to contemporary life." By way of example, Iqani (2012: 122) points to a selected cover of the popular 'lad-mag' *Loaded*. It features the hip-hop star 50 Cent "flanked by two women wearing metallic bikinis..." On the one hand, these women are "mere accessories... visual objects presented for the use of the male gaze." On the other hand, their confident poses and sultry expressions suggest an awareness (on the part of both models) that they belong to "an

aesthetic category untouchable by the viewer." As such, "[t]he *Loaded* women are performing their superiority over the viewers... displaying their bodies to tease and titillate the 'lads' and to reinforce their inaccessibility to average men" (Iqani, 2012: 124).

In this regard, men who admire the depictions of *FHM* and other 'lad-mag' models, only further the women's supposed vanity and pride, thereby positioning the active spectator as a somewhat peripheral and interchangeable component. Feminine agency via the performing body overtakes issues concerning subordination in relation to the opposite sex. The women choose to portray themselves in such a way, to a specific audience, as it works to confirm and support their sense of power in a sexualised culture.

In addition to the above mentioned link between appearance and identity, the dual proliferation of consumerism and sex has led to a "striptease culture" (McNair, 2002: 87) whereby the body as commodity operates in and responds to a society obsessed with sex. In this context, the use of various forms of technology is prolific. According to Chris Shilling (2005: 189):

> ...it is clear that individuals use the technological resources available to them in order to develop their own esteem and sense of self, and to increase their physical capital... women who change their bodies in line with dominant ideals of beauty frequently achieve a greater sense of power and control over their physical selves and social life, even though they may be reinforcing gendered norms that are disadvantageous to women as a group.

That models who pose for men's magazines gain a stronger sense of sexual power is thus a persuasive claim. But, in order to achieve the type of body indicative of this feminine prestige, what must the average woman endure? In the case of *FHM* Girlfriend, is a stereotyped appearance a mandatory requirement for women in order for them to feel confident when posing for the camera? And do some of these women go even further than the "normal" regimes of exercise and grooming to embody a supposed ideal? Furthermore and as previously stated, the amateur models pertaining to *FHM* Girlfriend form part of the audience of this platform. In light of *FHM* Girlfriend's ongoing competition mentioned in the introduction of this report, such a practice must be considered in relation Andrea Nagel's (2012: 38) contention that in contemporary society, women look at other women to assess their competition. In an article written for *Grazia* – a local fashion and celebrity gossip

magazine – Nagel (2012: 38) debates the following question related to the above scenario: "Do women really ogle women more than men?" Nagel argues that while the infamous "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975) relates to words such as "'lust,' 'desire' [and] 'sex' ..." the contemporary "'female stare' is about appreciation, envy competition and comparison – and usually a strange mash-up of all of these" (2012: 38). Nagel goes onto propose that – within contemporary society – men look at women in order to gauge whether or not they are attractive. Women, on the other hand, look at other women "in terms of their own insecurities" (2012: 38). As such, it is often under the pretence of appreciation and/or flattery that such a dynamic occurs: "...what we're really doing is sizing up our rivals as potential competition for our mates [men]" (2012: 38). With regard to the *FHM* Girlfriend scenario, the amateur models are already competing against one another for the opportunity to feature in *FHM.* As such, do they merely look at each other's depictions in order to ascertain their competition? Or are there other reasons regarding why they look at and sometimes compliment each other's depictions?

Appearing in and belonging to the "media world" is possibly an objective and/or aspiration for women who participate in the practice of sexy self-representation via platforms such as *FHM* Girlfriend. According to Nick Couldry (2000: 4), "'[m]edia power' – by which I mean the concentration in media institutions of the symbolic power of 'constructing reality' – is a social process, which we need to understand in all its complexity." To elaborate, Couldry notes various boundaries between the media and ordinary world, arguing that both parties (i.e. the media and society) work to establish and maintain this constructed divide. Indeed, the media world is regarded as a spectacle by many, especially when compared to the everyday lives of "ordinary people" (Couldry, 2000: 110). Moreover, people who dominate popular media often obtain a celebrity status, their lives viewed as exciting and glamorous when compared to the lives of the ordinary masses. As such, "crossing into the media world" for ordinary people is "either excluded as 'unthinkable' or... displaced by desire; necessary restrictions are converted into something 'loved'" (Couldry, 2000: 110). It is plausible, then, that women who participate in *FHM* Girlfriend are attracted by the potential fame and power – symbolic and financial – associated with the media world. In reality, however, these women belong to a group of amateur models, most of whom will probably

remain unknown in the minds of ordinary people. Such a dynamic will be discussed in relation to what these women hope to achieve by means of their *FHM* Girlfriend profiles.

Conclusion

In light of the above discussions regarding power, self-representation and identity, whether these amateur models reflect an identity dictated to by self-scrutiny, regulation, imitation and competitiveness is a necessary concern discussed in this project's analytical chapters. Various contemporary feminists such as McRobbie argue that "[t]he young [sexy] woman is congratulated, reprimanded and encouraged to embark on a new regime of self-perfectibility (i.e. self-completion)... [a]nd now that she is able to make her own choices, it seems as though the fearful terrain of male approval fades away, and is replaced instead with a new horizon of self-imposed feminine cultural norms" (McRobbie drawing on the work of Foucault, 2009: 63). Other contemporary feminists, however, view beautification and the depiction of an overt feminine sexuality in the media as indicative of a confident woman who is proud to show off and "celebrate" her body (Attwood, 2004: 16). This project's primary objective, as already indicated, is to determine which of the two feminist "quadrants" best describes sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend, from the perspectives of the amateur models belonging to this site. Of course, it is very possible that the interviewed participant's opinions reflect both feminist accounts of the sexualised representation of women. How this possible overlap – or lack thereof – affects these women is considered, again in light of the project's supporting theory.

This chapter has shown that the construction of gender has a definite influence on the male/female power relations embedded in a patriarchal society as it works to naturalise the stereotyped roles assigned to both sexes. However, the complex nature of modern society has led to inconsistencies in the formation of gender, resulting in new and innovative identities. Indeed, the erotic nature of so many contemporary representations of women is considered "normal" by many in light of our increasingly sexualised society (Attwood, 2006: 82). Such contextual factors may or may not complicate a once clearly defined relationship between (empowered) men and (disempowered) women, a point that is considered when interpreting the opinions and identities of the amateur models. Before assessing this and

other questions in light of the project's findings, a description of how I collected, collated and analysed the research data is discussed in the following methodological chapter.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter describes my approach to research in light of this project's stated objective: to uncover why certain young South African women choose to portray themselves in a "sexy" way on *FHM* Girlfriend. I give an account of how and why the corpus was constructed while noting the details and nuances considered when analysing both the textual and interview materials. The ethical considerations made before and during the research are also discussed in order to reveal a sound platform off which to present the project's findings.

While conducting a series of textual analyses and interviews, my approach to research drew on multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics. While a multimodal discourse analysis notes the diverse modes of communication (a single communicative act often comprising numerous elements such as text, image, sound and texture), social semiotics points to the importance of context when dealing with a given set of signs and signifiers (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). Both assisted me with a detailed analysis of the textual samples and interviews. The research utilised two methods of approach: firstly, a textual analysis was conducted on a selection of relevant extracts from *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend (note that at the time of the data collection the latter text was still called *FHM* Modelbook). I documented my corpus on a spreadsheet according to a chosen breakdown of topics and/or themes such as "Cover girl's name, body type and features" and "Outfits worn by the cover girl" for all depictions on the cover and in the feature article of *FHM*. The findings per text were then inputted under each topic/theme. Secondly, a series of individual, semi-structured interviews were held with willing participants (amateur models who take part in the practice of sexy self-represenation via *FHM* Girlfriend). Due to logistics, three of the participants were interviewed telephonically, a point to be elaborated on later in this chapter. Both research methods described above assisted in uncovering how and why these amateur models choose to portray themselves in specific ways on *FHM* Girlfriend. For the purpose of a focused selection and recruitment process, only models between the ages of 18 to 28 years of age were considered, as such a demographic related to the objective of uncovering why young South African women participate in the practice on sexy self-representation. When browsing through the profiles on *FHM* Girlfriend, the general age of women seemed to correlate with my chosen category. The oldest participant found on *FHM*

Girlfriend was 32 years. It is thus a site on which young women feature predominantly. Furthermore, according to *FHM* Girlfriend's terms and conditions (2012), only amateur models over the age of eighteen are permitted to create their own online profiles. If an amateur model under the age of eighteen wishes to appear on *FHM* Girlfriend, a downloadable consent form must first be filled out and signed by her parent or guardian. As such, to avoid any legal and/or ethical implications in this regard, I only approached women over the age of eighteen (the models' ages formed part of their on-line profile information). A carefully planned process of data collection was undertaken in order to build a reliable corpus for analysis. The process adopted is discussed in the below paragraphs, followed by an account of how I analysed the research findings in relation to my selected theoretical framework.

Corpus construction for textual analysis

When constructing the corpus of texts for analysis and recruiting participants to interview, the project's stated objective (understanding why certain young women choose to portray themselves in a sexy way via *FHM* Girlfriend) assisted in determining what was required for the research to commence (a selection of sexualised depictions pertaining to the *FHM* Girlfriend website, as well as the amateur models who participate in the production of this online text). To better contextualise *FHM* Girlfriend in terms of its heritage as well the type of women it showcases and targets, engaging with *For Him Magazine* was also necessary. As such, a textual analysis was conducted on texts from both *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend, my core focus being on the latter text.

I adhered to the following measures when constructing the *FHM* corpus of texts, so as not to generate an exorbitant amount of data that may have proven irrelevant to my area of interest:

- I selected six *FHM's*, three from 2012 (January, February and March editions) and three from 2013 (January, February and March editions). Such a selection was deliberate in that it reflects this project's allocated time frame of approximately two years (January 2012 – March 2014).
- In each magazine, the following sections were chosen for analysis:

- The "cover girl" and her associated feature article. *FHM* showcases a different woman on its cover every month. The feature article located inside each magazine consists of further visuals of the selected cover girl together with the recount of an interview between her and an *FHM* journalist. Although mostly professional models who are not always South African, these women are indeed representative of the general kind of appearance to which amateur models seem to aspire. They thus provided me with an overall indication of the particular type of woman presented in and praised by *FHM*.

With regard to the *FHM* Girlfriend Website, I adhered to the following procedures in order to construct an adequate and reliable corpus in terms of its depiction of the phenomenon of sexy-self representation:

- Over a period of approximately eight weeks, one profile every five to seven days was accessed, downloaded and saved on a memory stick for analysis, resulting in a total of six profiles over this allocated time. This procedure resulted in regular contact with the website, enabling me to fully immerse myself in the phenomenon and its data.
- For five of the six profiles, I adhered to a predetermined set of steps when selecting each profile (note again that at the time of the collection process, *FHM* ModelBook had not yet changed its name to *FHM* Girlfriend.) I entered "*FHM* ModelBook South Africa" into Google and clicked on the *FHM* Modelbook link in order to access the site. To avoid the influence of subjectivity when accessing the site (herein referred to as *FHM* Girlfriend), I selected the very first profile appearing on the screen, on all six occasions, the exception being if the model did not adhere to the selected age category (18 – 28 years old). When this was the case, the very next profile was accessed, a procedure that continued until a relevant profile was found.
- Table 1 lists the six amateur models in terms of their allocated pseudonyms, age (at the time of the data collection) and race. It allows the reader to familiarise him or herself with the names (pseudonyms) of those amateur models pertaining to the textual data.

Table 1: Selected amateur model profiles

AMATEUR MODEL'S PSEUDONYM	AMATEUR MODEL'S AGE	AMATEUR MODEL'S RACE
Anastasja	**20 years old**	**Indian**
Amy	**19 years old**	**White**
Amelia	**23 years old**	**White**
Anele	**21 years old**	**Black**
Bianca	**22 years old**	**White**
Brittany	**19 years old**	**White**

- The only profile obtained by means of a non-random sampling technique was that of Anele's, a black woman aged 21. In light of South Africa's racial diversity and the research project's inclusion of racial hegemony as a theme, it was necessary to obtain the profile of at least one black woman. Anastasja (an indian woman) was selected according to the predetermined selection criteria described above.
- Upon accessing a profile, the following elements were downloaded and saved offline:
  - The amateur model's profile photo at the time of accessing her profile
  - Her associated "autobiography" (consisting of a self-written paragraph about the amateur model in terms of her aspirations etc.)
  - The first three to four pages of her *FHM* Girlfriend homepage (this includes her activities on the site as well as the comments from other *FHM* Girlfriend members
  - Her photo album

With regard to the final item listed above, I chose the first six images per album, thus aligning with the other textual data in terms of the selected number (Table 2 collates and

summarises all textual corpuses pertaining to this project). As reflected in table 1, when analysing and discussing the *FHM* Girlfriend profiles, I conceal the amateur models' identities by giving each woman her own pseudonym. Although their (presumed) real names are evident on *FHM* Girlfriend, it is a very deliberate media space, chosen and accepted by these women. As the researcher, my "obligation to reflect on the foreseeable repercussions of research and publication of those studied" (Wits Code of Ethics, 2012) makes it necessary to consider the possibility that these women would not want to be depicted or discussed in a project that falls outside of their current media scope. Furthermore, when presenting the associated visuals to the reader, the *FHM* Girlfriend model's faces are concealed and their names replaced with their pseudonyms. This provides a further degree of anonymity and protection to the amateur models in an attempt to avoid possible repercussions regarding unlawful publication of their identities or similar. I also gave anonymity to the *FHM* Girlfriend members who comment on the amateur models photographs (their faces were blurred and names changed to Commentator 1, Commentator 2 etc). With regard to the *FHM* cover girls, blurring their faces and names was not possible due to the fact that all six magazines' are in a "hard copy" format (they cannot be manipulated digitally). Moreover, the media text on and in which these women feature is arguably more "public" than *FHM* Girlfriend. Indeed, the women can be seen – on the cover of *FHM* – in almost every local grocery and book store. Together with their professional (and therefore more public) modelling status, the degree of publicity already obtained by these women nullifies concealing their identities in this report.

All material selected for the corpus of texts is freely available to anyone able to access the internet and/or relevant *FHM* (print edition). As such, there are no direct ethical implications regarding access to and discussion of the materials in that consent from the models is not a prerequisite. As indicated, however, careful consideration has resulted in several measures of caution when referring to each amateur model. Providing anonymity to these women has greatly minimised the risk of any ethical implications relating to the analysis and discussion of their photographs and profiles.

Table 2: Summary of corpus of texts

6 *FHM* MAGAZINES	6 ONLINE FHM GIRLFRIEND PROFILES
PAGES/ELEMENTS FOR ANALYSIS WITHIN EACH TEXT	
***FHM* cover girl (as showcased on the cover of *FHM*)**	**Profile photo**
The feature article pertaining to the cover girl (located inside the relevant magazine)	**Profile Autobiography and homepage (3 – 4 pages)**
	6 images
TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES/ELEMENTS PER TEXT	
Approximately 8 pages/elements per text (48 in total)	**Approximately 12 pages/elements per text (72 in total)**

Interviews: Recruitment and schedule

For the interviews, I approached approximately 18 amateur models from the *FHM* Girlfriend website with a view to securing interviews with at least six, in order to match the number of texts described above (i.e. six texts for both *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend). I interviewed each woman individually in order to gain insight into their practices and motivations. As a result, their responses were uninfluenced by the prompts or opinions of others. The amateur models were contacted via Facebook (as anticipated, all chosen amateur models from *FHM* Girlfriend also had Facebook accounts). That I belong to the Facebook site is an advantage that made contact with these women relatively easy. The participant recruitment process was very similar to that of the selection of the online profiles (the site was accessed on a regular basis and the first profile that appeared was selected and contacted, provided the woman met the required age specification). Unfortunately, not all women willing to be interviewed resided in Johannesburg (my current place of residence). As such, telephonic interviews were proposed and, in most instances, accepted. Several of the women contacted lived in Johannesburg, allowing for a total of three face-to-face interviews to occur. Table 3 lists the pseudonyms of each of the six interviewed participants as well as

their age and occupation, at the time of the interview, and race. The interview method (telephonic or face-to-face) is also listed in this table. Note that the amateur models interviewed were an additional selection of women, over and above the initial six amateur models chosen for the textual analysis. In other words, six *new* amateur models were selected and approached for interviews *after* an analysis of the depictions of the initial six women (chosen for the FHM Girlfriend textual corpus). As such, I did not ever meet or speak to the initial six women whose images were collected and analysed. Only the second group of six women were met individually and/or spoken to.

Table 3: The interviewed amateur models

AMATEUR MODEL'S PSEUDONYM	AMATEUR MODEL'S AGE	AMATEUR MODEL'S RACE	AMATEUR MODEL'S OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW METHOD
Andrea	**21**	**White**	**Secretary/administrator**	**Telephonic interview followed by a face-to-face interview**
Belinda	**20**	**White**	**Student at Wits University**	**Telephonic**
Carmen	**28**	**White**	**Hairdresser and part-time make-up artist**	**Face-to-face**
Christy	**19**	**White**	**Surf shop manager**	**Telephonic**
Donna	**20**	**White**	**Sales assistant at a clothing boutique store**	**Telephonic**
Naomi	**25**	**White**	**Works in the transport industry and is also a part-time make-up artist**	**Face-to-face**

According to the University of Witwatersrand's Code of Ethics for Research on Human Subjects (2012), the aims of an investigation "should be communicated as well as possible to subjects." The message to each participant – via Facebook – was similar in tone and content to that of the draft message attached in the appendix of this report (see page 119 of appendix). It explained the project to them in a clear and simple way. Those women who responded with an interest to participate were contacted again by means of Facebook. Meetings/telephone interviews were set up based on their availabilities. Before commencing with the interviews, ethical clearance from the University of Witwatersrand's Ethics Committee was obtained, their role being "to monitor the ethics of research protocols... looking at critical factors such as the extent to which research could be socially or psychologically invasive or damaging (Wits Code of Ethics, 2012)." The relevant clearance form has been included in the appendix of this report (see page 126 of appendix). As such, my proposed research protocols were ethically sound. The questions asked were not of a psychologically harmful or invasive nature.

At the outset of each interview, participants were asked to read through and sign an information sheet and letter of consent (as stated in the Facebook message). For those participants interviewed telephonically, information and consent forms were e-mailed to them and they were asked to scan or fax these through to me after signing. This proved to be challenging as I had to remind the participants to send these documents back to me before commencing with the interview. While guaranteeing the participants' anonymity, the letter of consent – included in the appendix of this report (see page 120 of appendix) – made reference to my collection, analysis and transcription of their responses, making them fully aware of the situation before they signed in agreement. After reading the letter, I asked each participant to ask questions and/or express any concerns they may have had regarding the research project and its objectives. I adhered to and executed the contention that "[w]here there is a conflict of interest, they [the participants] must [and will] come first" as it is the responsibility of the researcher "to protect their informant's physical, social and psychological welfare and to honour their dignity and privacy" (Wits Code of Ethics, 2012). If a particular question made a participant visibly uncomfortable or if she struggled to give me a complete answer and/or explanation, I moved onto the next question without hesitation. My objective in this regard was to avoid making her feel uncomfortable.

During the interviews, I worked from a pre-prepared interview guide (see copy on page 123 of appendix) developed partly from the preliminary analysis of the corpus of texts, taking brief notes during each interview. While each participant spoke, I was able to capture several key comments that, upon closer inspection, were of significant value to the research findings. I have made reference to these captured comments throughout the following analytical chapters, although it must be noted that several have been altered slightly in order to fit – grammatically – into a relevant sentence. I have done this with caution, however, so as not to change the meaning of what each woman said. For Ericsson and Simon (1984: 27), the "accuracy of verbal reports depends on the procedures used to elicit them..." Documentation of the interview should be as precise and detailed as possible in order to develop a wealth of accurate information from which to draw conclusions. As such, I anticipated tape recording the face-to-face interviews (with the permission of each respondent) to ensure that the details were fully captured. Interestingly, however, the first two women interviewed (Carmen and Naomi) were reluctant regarding the proposed recording. "It feels a bit too official..." stated Carmen while Naomi contended that she didn't want to have to speak too loudly given the interview's location (a local coffee shop in Rivonia, Johannesburg). As such, in order to quell any uncertainty and/or anxiousness on their part, I immediately stated that it was not a mandatory requirement on my part. Andrea, the third face-to-face interview participant was far more relaxed regarding having her interview tape recorded. After an initial telephonic interview, I met with her to engage in a face-to-face interview that was recorded.

Detailed notes of all interviews – telephonic and face-to-face – were made after each session and Andrea's recorded interview was transcribed. The notes, recording and transcript were then stored in a filing drawer in my personal study at home. Only my supervisor and examiner are allowed to access these materials if required. For reference, the transcript from Andrea's interview has been included in the appendix of this report (see page 127). The detailed notes from the five other interviews are available if required. The degree of privacy as indicated to participants in the letter of consent has thus been adhered to. As with the amateur models pertaining to the textual samples, the interview participants have been given pseudonyms. My aim, as previously stated, is to investigate the effects of sexualised depictions on female social identity from the perspectives of those women who

participate, via *FHM* Girlfriend, in the practice of sexy self-representation. Thus, the types of questions asked and included in the interview schedule were similar to the following examples:

- What made you decide to set-up an *FHM* Girlfriend profile?
- What do you hope to achieve from your *FHM* Girlfriend profile?
- How do you feel and/or think when viewing your own *FHM* Girlfriend profile?
- Do you feel pressured to maintain a certain appearance as a result of belonging to *FHM* Girlfriend?
- How do you maintain your appearance, in relation to the above?
- Does the fact that almost anyone can view your profile ever concern you? Please explain your answer
- How do you feel in relation to the men who view your profile?

With deliberately open-ended questions, I generated, in most instances, descriptions, explanations and examples from each participant. I ensured each interview lasted no longer than an hour as I wanted to avoid inconveniencing the participants in terms of their time while ensuring a degree of consistency across all six discussions. Most participants were easy to engage with. Only Naomi was somewhat aloof and hesitant regarding certain questions such as why she first initiated her *FHM* Girlfriend profile. Her answer to this particular question was "...why not?" Furthermore and as already indicated, several of the participants struggled to answer certain questions. For example, when asked if she thought she was portraying a positive femininity, Christy seemed confused by the question. As a result, I moved onto the next question as I did not want her to feel awkward in any way. Upon later contemplation of this occurrence, it is possible that the terminology used for this question was inappropriate and/or too complex given the fact that several of the women interviewed had not enrolled in a tertiary education. This is a learning that I will bring into future research.

To analyse the gathered information, I examined the notes made after each interview in relation to my theoretical and conceptual framework. After engaging with each interview in isolation, I then proceeded to document the similarities and/or differences pertaining to all six, noting key themes as I progressed. So, for example, all participants alluded to feelings of

pride and/or confidence as a result of their engagement with *FHM* Girlfriend. This theme was documented and considered in relation to the theoretical framework and literature review. It is discussed and exemplified further in the following analytical chapters. Furthermore, a significant amount of data was collected from the six interviews. It took me several months – far longer than initially anticipated – to select what I consider to be the key research findings in light of my stated objectives. As a result, certain answers and findings on the part of each participant have been excluded from this report (although they are documented in the transcript and notes). The result is an array of correlating and sometimes conflicting answers and opinions pertaining to the following, interrelated research concerns:

- Why these women choose to adhere to sexual stereotypes;
- What drives them to pose for *FHM* Girlfriend;
- How such depictions contribute to their identities and/or sense of self;
- What their attitudes and opinions are towards and regarding the (heterosexual) men who view their depictions;
- The extent of their relationship to feminist values.

The corpus of texts were analysed in relation to the interview notes and transcript. This was done in order to note the similarities and differences between both the textual and interview findings. To generate possible explanations relating to the proposed research questions, the already mentioned analytical traditions of social semiotics and a multi-modal discourse analysis guided the interpretation process. Both are discussed below in relation to my obtained data and findings.

Analytical framework

According to Gill (2007: 58), a central theme pertaining to the practice of a discourse analysis "is that *language is constructive*." Any communicative resource or act should thus be analysed as a formulation of sorts, with "the assembly of an account" involving "choice or selection from a number of different possibilities" (Gill, 2007: 58). As such, my analysis of both the textual samples and interviews is one of many other possible readings. The suggested interpretations are the result of an investigation that considers the components pertaining to each research question individually before assessing their contribution to the

overall problematic of sexy self-representation. Both the theoretical framework and literature review assist in identifying and discussing the themes that emerge from the corpus of texts and interviews. This link back to theory is exemplified post the below discussion of selected analytical traditions.

For Theo van Leeuwen (2005: xi), the focus in social semiotics has changed over the years "from the 'sign' to the way people use semiotic 'resources' both to produce communicative artefacts and events and to interpret them... in the context of specific social situations and practices." While the practice of semiotics refers to 'signs' and 'signifiers' as tools of communication, the term 'resource' is preferred in social semiotics "because it avoids the impression that 'what a sign stands for' is somehow pre-given, and not affected by its use" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). Social semiotics was thus a relevant method of analysis for me as I investigated sexy-self representation as part of a general shift in societal attitudes towards sex and sexuality. Furthermore, the semiotic resources pertaining to the visuals and text of both *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend are analysed in terms of their context and use. So, for example, how such images are initiated, used and by whom are the types of questions considered when analysing the material and its meaning.

For Norman Fairclough (1995: 33), a critical analysis of media discourse must focus "on how wider changes in society and culture are manifest in changing media discourse practices... [a]nalysis of texts and practices should be mapped on to analysis of the institutional and wider social and cultural context of media practices, including relations of power and ideologies" (Fairclough, 1995: 33). I relate my analysis of both the textual and interview corpuses to the broader trend of self-representation via image and appearance. The "pornosphere" (McNair, 2002: 87) within which such activities proliferate is considered in relation to the following key research concern: what such imagery and its associated activities are saying about women in terms of their identities and social positioning in relation to men. In addition to context, the following key elements are considered when analysing the chosen images:

- The photograph's composition
- The women's bodies
- The women's skin tone and make-up

- The women's poses and posture
- The women's outfits
- The women's expressions

While considering most of these elements when analysing the interview notes and transcript, the following additional factors were analysed with regard to the interviewed participant's responses and opinions:

- The language used by the interviewed participants
- Their hesitations and/or uncertainty regarding certain questions
- Their overall demeanour during the interview (if interviewed face-to-face)
- Their current occupation and/or social circumstance at the time of the interview (in order to relate my findings again to the context within which they emerge)

Such elements pertaining to the textual and interview corpuses are investigated in light of my selected theoretical background. Each relevant constituent is considered in terms of its possible contribution to this research project's questions and thematic concerns regarding sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend. Furthermore, and as indicated in the above lists, Van Leeuwen (2005: 121) emphasises the importance of investigating a live "speech act" as a "multilayered, multimodal communicative act... [the effect of which] ...comes about through the fusion of all the component semiotic modes: dress, grooming, facial expression, gaze [and] gesture..." Such a "combination of different semiotic modes" (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 121) in both the corpus of texts and interviews is considered when formulating the various themes for discussion in relation to the theoretical framework. The aim is to understand and explain the synchronised manner in which each mode or element works to form a communicative act indicative of a particular discourse and theme. The use of certain words, phrases, attitudes and gestures are noted while proceeding with an in-depth discourse analysis of both the textual and interview materials.

So, for example, if an interview participant alluded to feelings of pride in relation to her sexy photographs on *FHM* Girlfriend, such a response is related to the post-feminist contention that certain sexualised depictions of women are indicative of a feminine agency linked to contemporary women's pride and contentment. After analysing the corpus in such a

manner, the correlations and contrasts between the textual and interview material are noted and discussed, again in light of the diverging theories presented in both the theoretical framework and literature review. A somewhat negotiated reading of sexualised representation emerges as I investigate the practice of sexy self-representation in terms of its contribution to the societal positioning of young South African women.

Finally, for Pat Bazeley (2009: 7), relating themes from qualitative interviews back to theory must extend beyond what others have already written about. Other factors such as the conditions under which the given theme – per participant – arises must also be considered in order to generate a sound and reliable report. Again as indicated in the above list of noted elements, the context and individual scenarios of each model interviewed are considered and discussed in relation to their representations and opinions regarding sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend. Questions regarding the participant's current scenarios were asked, although subtly in order to avoid feelings of discomfort and intrusion on the part of these women. In light of their responses, comparisons are drawn to note the similarities and/or variations between all six participants. Together with the textual analyses, relating each theme developed to the theoretical framework is then initiated. Intertextual links between the participants' responses and the corpus of texts are discussed in light of the selected theory, as both relate to the research question regarding why certain women choose to participate in the practice of sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend.

Conclusion

By means of the above methods of analysis, I uncover whether the respondents' opinions correlate with that of a traditional or post-feminist opinion regarding the effects of sexualised representation on women as a class. An account of contemporary "sexy" representation that deals directly with its participants emerges in the following analytical chapters. The result is an insightful description regarding the influence sexy self-representation has and can have on the identities of young South African women. The first analytical chapter introduces the reader to the research findings. The similarities and contradictions between the textual and interview corpuses are noted and related to this project's theoretical framework. The second analytical chapter follows and here the amateur model's sense of agency is discussed, again in relation to this project's chosen

theory. Whether these women conceive of themselves as liberated or constrained individuals is assessed in light of the research findings.

CHAPTER 5: THE EXTERIOR SELF ON *FHM*'S INTERCONNECTED PLATFORMS: BODIES, BEAUTIFICATION AND PRIDE

This chapter introduces the reader to both the textual and interview findings that emerged after completing and analysing the constructed corpus. Various parallels and contrasts are noted between the representations (collected from *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend) and interview notes and transcript (generated from the conducted interviews). The latter data refers to and informs the former in that it draws on the participants' opinions, comments and answers regarding their sexy self-representations via *FHM* Girlfriend. In light of the noted parallels and contrasts, I propose and describe the emergence of several key themes that are the project's findings. These themes are then discussed in relation to a selection of the theories presented in the literature review and conceptual framework. What emerges is a supported description of the often unconsidered factors pertaining to sexy self-representation. Ultimately, such factors contribute to the emergence of an active but possibly disempowered group of women.

Generic bodies, divergent desires: The participants' opinions regarding sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend

The generic body type was the first observation made when reviewing the textual samples collected from *FHM* Girlfriend. All six women analysed are both slender and toned – in varying degrees – with flawless skin. Interestingly, unlike many women belonging to the genre of fashion and/or runway modelling, those of *FHM* Girlfriend are not overly thin or gaunt. Their bodies are more curvaceous and healthy looking when compared to the sometimes skeletal frames of the former models. For example, Bianca's profile picture located on *FHM* Girlfriend (see Figure 29) is a medium close-up that showcases her curvaceous physique. While looking directly at the camera, her bare nipples are covered by her arms as she touches the sides of her face with both hands. Such a position makes the fullness of her breasts more apparent while enhancing her cleavage. This, together with her toned arms contribute to the formation of a strong yet feminine body type that is, for the most part, consistent throughout the *FHM* Girlfriend platform.

To a certain extent, the body type evident on *FHM* Girlfriend is a refreshing deviation from the above mentioned physiques pertaining to fashion and/or runway modelling as it represents an arguably healthier way of life on the part of the amateur models (a point to be discussed in further detail when discussing the ways in which these women obtain and maintain their physiques). However, despite deviating from the genre of fashion and/or runway modelling, the *FHM* Girlfriend participants' bodies are very specific, with none of them diverging – significantly at least – from the consistent physique described above. For example, although Anastassia, a twenty year old Indian woman, is more curvaceous with larger breasts when compared to Amy and Amelia (both more petit with smaller breasts), aspects such as her flat stomach and relatively toned arms and thighs are indeed similar to the five other physiques pertaining to the sample (see Figures 16 and 18). By no means are any of the women analysed on *FHM* Girlfriend overweight or flabby, a factor that – together with the above mentioned physique – contributes to the formation of a generic body type that became apparent as the research progressed. Thus, while the natural builds of each amateur model differs, there is a definite consistency in terms of each woman's overall appearance. All of them are well groomed with smooth skin and substantial amounts of makeup. Some even wear false nails and/or eyelashes. Their portrayed appearance is clearly of importance to them as time and effort would be needed for any woman to obtain this specific look.

With regard to the six *FHM* cover girls, no significant deviations were noted when comparing their bodies to those of the six women analysed on *FHM* Girlfriend. That the latter women aspire to be on the cover of *FHM*'s print edition was confirmed by all six interview participants (they too conformed to the predominant body-type evident on both *FHM* platforms). Being on the cover of *FHM* would get them "noticed" (Belinda) in the public domain thereby increasing their chances of "making it" (Carmen) in the professional word of modelling. *FHM* Girlfriend is thus a stepping stone for most amateur models wanting to progress in a modelling career. They use the site in the hopes of gaining the attention of the editors and/or modelling agents, a possibility that could assist them with achieving their desired occupation. The participants interviewed also admire the *FHM* cover girls in that they have "done well for themselves" (Andrea) in terms of their modelling careers. "I want what they have" stated Andrea when speaking about these other women.

However, although reiterated by all participants, the desire for a career in modelling varied in intensity with each woman interviewed. For example, Andrea seemed completely preoccupied with becoming a professional model as this, in her opinion, would make her famous and wealthy. She spoke of her continuous engagement with *FHM* Girlfriend in light of this desire, arguing that it (modelling) was her primary aspiration in terms of a career. At the time of the interview, she worked as a secretary for an electrical company. She had not pursued a tertiary education post completion of high school and seemed disengaged regarding her current employment: "It's just something I'm doing while I build up the modelling" (Andrea). Donna's level of engagement with her current occupation (a sales assistant at a clothing shop) was also poor. Although interested in becoming a beautician, it was something she would consider "only if modelling doesn't work out... it [modelling] is my real passion..."

Conversely, although interested in the possibility of modelling as a profession, Carmen seemed to have other focuses in terms of her career. She was an established hairdresser and part-time make-up artist, with modelling being "something I do part-time [and] mostly for the fun of it." Similarly, Belinda was a full-time student at a local university. Although she viewed modelling as an appealing career, she was cynical regarding the likelihood of this ever happening: "It's such a cut-throat industry... the chances of a girl becoming the next Heidi Klum are like zero." Modelling was thus a hobby that could possibly assist her financially while studying. Her primary career objective was to become an industrial psychologist. Such divergent intentions regarding modelling as a career are also evident in the textual material collected from *FHM* Girlfriend. For example, Bianca's profile page (see page 162 of appendix) features the following written motivation: "I developed a passion for modelling a while ago and want to take my passion up to the highest of my abilities..." Conversely, amateur models such as Amy list their names, ages and contact details only (see page 141 of appendix). Although debatable, this may be indicative of a less committed desire to progress in a modelling career. Nonetheless, modelling was still enjoyed by all participants. "I love it [modelling]... it's something I would recommend to all girls because it makes you feel good about yourself..." (Belinda). Engaging in a practice whereby the body is portrayed in a "sexy" way thus links directly to "feel[ing] good" about oneself. Belinda's recommendation formed part of a general consensus – on the part of the participants – that

sexy self-representation is a "therapeutic" (Attwood quoting Plummer, 2006: 80) practice that results in their contentment. Similarly, Andrea spoke of the exhilarating "feeling" she obtains from standing in front of the camera for a photography shoot.

In speaking to participants about "acceptable" versus "unacceptable" poses and outfits, another difference in opinion regarding modelling emerged. Firstly, with regard to the clothing worn for their *FHM* Girlfriend photographs, most participants admitted to choosing outfits that showcased their physiques. However, several of the women interviewed were hesitant regarding ever posing in lingerie: "I haven't ever done a lingerie shoot before" stated Christy, "I wouldn't be comfortable with that." Similarly, Naomi argued that wearing lingerie relates too directly to sex, "so no, I wouldn't do it (pose in lingerie)." Conversely, Andrea and Donna depicted a more relaxed attitude towards posing for the camera in lingerie. While Andrea confirmed she had already participated in several lingerie shoots, Donna stated that "I haven't ever done a full lingerie shoot... but I would consider it..." This split in opinion regarding lingerie is also evident when viewing the depictions of both the professional and amateur models. Throughout her feature article, Irina Shayk, cover girl for the March 2012 edition of *FHM*, is never depicted wearing only lingerie. Although still showing substantial amounts of bare skin, she always wears an additional item of clothing such as a loose fitting denim shirt (see Figures 45 and 46). In contrast, Lisa Marie Schneider (cover girl for the March 2013 *FHM*) wears revealing lingerie for her cover photograph as well as the six photographs located inside the magazine (see Figures 49 and 50). She is clearly comfortable with depicting herself in an entirely sexual way.

With regard to the amateur models of *FHM* Girlfriend, Amy wears bikinis for the majority of her uploaded photographs, but never lingerie. Amelia, however, wears black lace lingerie for her profile picture and a pair of black, frilled panties only for the third image located in her album. Her bare breasts are partly cut off by the shot's composition (see Figure 3). As such, personal boundaries with regard to the models' chosen outfits are apparent, with full lingerie being a step too far for some. "I'll show off my body but in a classy way" stated Christy, while Naomi argued that "there are other ways of looking sexy... you don't have to wear lingerie." Overall, however, a degree of consistency regarding the amount of bare flesh exposed by these women is still apparent. According to Christy, this consistency is due to the regulations imposed on women by *FHM* Girlfriend (no nudity is permitted on the site). If

allowed, it was probable, in the opinions of Christy and Carmen that some women would take off more than what they currently wear for their album photographs. As such, the difference in outfits worn is of significance in that it reflects a definite set of instilled limitations per participant. It is likely that some participants would go a step further – if permitted – in terms of their self-initiated exposure: "Maybe I'd show my [bare] boobs or bum... I don't think there's anything wrong with that" (Andrea).

Secondly, what each participant considered "appropriate" (Carmen) in terms of their poses reflects an additional variance in opinion regarding the women's instilled personal boundaries. Upon initial inspection, however, the kinds of poses evident on both *FHM* platforms are, like the body-types and clothing, very similar. More often than not the women are standing or sitting while facing the camera. If featured lying down – a traditionally passive and vulnerable position – they are sure to look directly at the camera, their expressions relaying a knowingness of the fact that their bodies are on display. Indeed, such a finding is in contrast to McRobbie's (2009: 63) contention that the distant stares of contemporary models indicate their melancholy. For the most part, the *FHM* models' faces are included in the frame, although selected body parts are often accentuated – by their poses and clothing – in order to be the focal point of a given image. They enjoy posing for the camera and are aware of the fact that men view their depictions. In fact, when asked whether being exposed to an unrestricted viewership of mostly men concerned them, all six participants responded with a rather nonchalant attitude towards this question. For example, Christy contended that it didn't bother her at all "as long as they [the unrestricted audience] like what they see" and continue voting for her, while Donna stated that "you just make the best of it (male viewership) I guess... it boosts your confidence." Similarly, Belinda regarded male attention "a good thing" in that it made her feel proud of her appearance. Showcasing their bodies on a platform such as *FHM* Girlfriend is thus initiated by the participants as a means to generate pride regarding their bodies and appearance. It is a self-indulgent activity on the part of these women as it allows them to revel in and celebrate their stereotyped appearance while obtaining compliments from the audience – another factor that strengthens their pride and confidence.

The pose of Lisa Marie Schneider on the cover of *FHM* (March 2013 edition) is an example of this self-indulgent demeanour (see Figure 49). The image is a sideways shot of Lisa Marie

leaning her torso forward as she turns her head to look directly at the camera. Her assumed position works to accentuate both her buttocks and breasts while her knowing gaze and open mouth signify a moment of self-induced pleasure. While leaning forward, she holds a piece of light pink chiffon around her waist, a sensual but somewhat playful manoeuvre that helps dramatise her physique and sultry demeanour. In terms of her outfit, she wears a black and pink bra with matching panties. Both items of lingerie reveal and accentuate her smooth, tanned skin and voluptuous form. Clearly she is enjoying posing for the camera whilst embracing her body. She knows she is sexy and is using this to her own advantage as she will gain additional exposure, pride and money by appearing on the cover of *FHM*.

Similarly, the sixth photograph located inside Bianca's *FHM* Girlfriend album (see Figure 35) depicts her from the side while lying down on a red recliner. Her back is propped up against the one arm rest as her smooth, tanned and toned legs – the image's definite focal point – extend until her high heeled shoes push against the opposite arm rest. She places her left hand on her neck while her right arm rests at her side. With her lips slightly parted, she turns her head to look directly at the camera, her expression that of a sultry, confident demeanour. The bright red of her lips together with the red recliner work to dramatise the image while contributing to the sensuality and pride related to her portrayed attitude. Furthermore, her body-hugging, black lace top and matching hot pants work to accentuate her slender physique, a facet she knows is both desirable and sexy in contemporary western society. Although lying down, factors such as her shoes' heels almost piercing the arm rest indicate an undeniable indulgence on her part that is reliant on her sexy self-awareness and pride. Like Lisa Marie, she is aware and proud of her sexiness, using it in a "fun" and "hedonistic" (Attwood, 2004: 15) way.

The topic of "acceptable" poses was introduced to participants after being asked if and why they looked at pictures of women in *FHM*. The standard answer to this question was "yes," on occasion, because such imagery provides them with "tips on how to pose" (Andrea) while showcasing beautiful women "in respectful but sexy ways" (Belinda). When prompted to elaborate on her latter contention, Belinda alluded to the professional quality of *FHM*'s imagery. She spoke of how her cousin – a professional model – had once engaged in a photography shoot for *FHM*, an experience that, according to this relative, was extremely professional and pleasant. Belinda also referred to the relatively conservative poses

assumed by the majority of *FHM* models, comparing them to other men's magazines whereby women "pose in skanky outfits" while assuming positions that are indicative of sexual intercourse. "So like girls sitting with their legs open... that's just gross..." (Belinda). Similarly, Carmen argued that some women (in *FHM* as well as other magazines) "just look like pieces of meat" as their poses and outfits "show almost everything." While agreeing with this argument, Naomi contended that images of women in a bedroom and/or on a bed are also degrading as such locations and props relate directly to sex. "Location is important... it helps tell a story... so if a model dressed in lingerie is on a bed that in my mind means sex" (Naomi).

The above contentions pointed to the significance of context when speaking to participants about their participation in – and opinions regarding – sexy self-representation. What became apparent is that "the characteristics of the image[s]" pertaining to *FHM* Girlfriend cannot in isolation dictate whether the participants engage in an exploitative form of representation (Meyers, 1987: 198). There are other factors that, for the participants, are of importance when deciding if a sexual representation has crossed into the territory of degradation and/or sluttiness. While discussing this topic, both Carmen and Andrea resorted to showing me several of their latest modelling photographs (located on their cell phones). Their objective was to exemplify – by means of their depictions – what they considered appropriate in terms of sexy self-representation. Carmen's photographs portrayed her wearing several skimpy outfits such as short skirts and midriff tops. If an item of lingerie was worn (a bra for example), it would be accompanied by at least one item of clothing (a short skirt for example). She always faced the camera while staring at it directly and, in most instances, she was standing rather than lying down with her legs never opened extensively. When prompted to explain why she felt her depictions were "acceptable" and "positive" in relation to images of women she considered derogatory, Carmen argued that the former were "sexy but tasteful" as they presented her in a manner she felt "comfortable" with. She contended that women wearing lingerie while posing in positions that are indicative of sexual intercourse are "exposing themselves" in a "slutty" manner. "There's a fine line between classy and trashy poses" (Carmen) and as such a woman "needs to be careful" (Carmen) and selective when showcasing her body on a platform such as *FHM* Girlfriend.

When compared to Carmen's imagery, Andrea's representations were more sexually loaded. She (Andrea) wore lingerie for the majority, exposing significant amounts of bare flesh while lying down or, in some instances, sitting with her legs apart while facing the camera. Like Carmen, she was adamant regarding the tasteful but sexy nature of her depictions, arguing that she always felt "in control" of the photography process and would never pose in a way that made her feel uncomfortable. Thus, while both participants shared similar feelings of pride and control related to their imagery, the sexual and erotic nature of Andrea's self-representations was definitely more so than Carmen's. Furthermore, that Carmen would consider Andrea's poses and outfits as being of a degrading nature is likely given her above mentioned comments regarding lingerie and poses that allude to sexual intercourse. It was thus evident that the two participants' opinions differed regarding what factors constituted sexually exploitative versus celebratory representations of women. While Andrea depicted a more accepting attitude towards poses and outfits that were sexual, Carmen was more conservative, adhering to a less explicit form of sexy self-representation. Thus, as with their selected outfits, the women of *FHM* Girlfriend differ in terms of their selected poses. The latter choice – like the former – aligns to what each woman considers appropriate and "sexy."

Finally, the poses evident in the textual data also depict this divergent opinion. For example, Amelia's profile picture located on *FHM* Girlfriend (see Figure 1) showcases her dressed in black lace panties and a matching corset that drapes open from the middle of her breast area downwards, revealing part of her chest and stomach. In addition to this matching lingerie, she wears a pair of black high-heeled boots over black stockings. While her left arm hangs loosely over her inner left thigh, her right hand extends to the side, resting flat against the recliner on which she is sitting. Her legs are opened wide, exposing her crotch which itself is only partly concealed due to the semi-transparent lace of her panties. Indeed, the sexual connotations associated to such a depiction are unmistakeable: by opening her legs while gazing knowingly at the camera, it's as if Amelia is consciously inviting the act of sexual penetration. Conversely, the first photograph located in Amy's *FHM* Girlfriend album is a medium length shot of her standing against a bright pink background (see Figure 9). She wears a blue bikini that, although revealing, does not allude to sex as blatantly as lingerie. While resting her buttocks against the wall, Amy leans forward, her right arm crossed over

her stomach. She tilts her left shoulder downwards, the majority of her hair falling to this side. In addition to her outfit, such a pose enhances her cleavage and collar bones. Her legs cross while her left hand slots in between her thighs, a position that blocks off a direct reference to sexual intercourse. She gazes directly at the camera, her expression confident and self-assured. Clearly she has chosen to showcase her sexiness in a manner that is more conservative when compared to Amelia's already described image.

However, as with the majority of representations analysed, Amy still shows off significant amounts of bare skin, a fact that aligns her representation – and others – to that of Amelia's. Thus, despite the nuances evident in the above analyses, the various similarities make for a repetitive scenario whereby young woman showcase their "sexiness" in a very particular way. Nonetheless, the sometimes subtle differences are of importance as they allow for a more thorough understanding regarding contextual and class factors that may or may not affect the women's decisions and opinions regarding sexy self-representation. This contention – regarding the potential influence of class and context – will become more apparent in the following paragraphs as I draw parallels between the various contrasts already described. What will emerge is a particular type of woman who, because of her willing objectification in a primarily sexual way, is in danger of being undervalued, at least in the opinion of other individuals.

Confining categories: Class and societal influences on sexy self-representation

That the participants of *FHM* Girlfriend use the act of sexy self-representation to confirm and further their confidence is definite. They enjoy modelling as it allows them to show off their sexiness in ways that make them feel proud regarding their appearance. Their self-initiated representations depict an overtly feminine sexuality focused on their specific body types. And yet, in light of the nuances evident in the representations analysed, a definite set of boundaries per participant emerged, with some willing to go further than others in terms of what they wear and how they pose. After synthesising these differences, it became apparent that the instilled boundaries per participant correlate with their ambition regarding modelling as a career. The women, in particular Andrea and Donna, who longed for modelling careers were far more willing than the likes of Carmen and Belinda – both content in pursuing alternative careers – to pose in lingerie while assuming positions

indicative of sexual intercourse. Furthermore, Andrea and Donna were both dissatisfied with their current social circumstances and employment. Their desire to "make it" (Andrea) in the world of modelling was thus intensified in that it would provide them with an escape into the glamorous lifestyle to which they aspired.

The contextual circumstances of each participant thus seemed to influence their decisions regarding how far they would go to be noticed in the modelling industry. To a certain extent, Andrea and Donna reflected Coy and Garner's (2010: 263) opinion that, in contemporary society, "the urban poor can attempt to connect with the social order" by means of their sexualised bodies which become "the ultimate commodity and route to economic/social mobility" (2010: 664). Although their economic status remained unclear (they were not questioned directly regarding this), one can surmise that, based on their current occupations and lack of a tertiary education, both participants were of a class unlikely to have a substantial amount of wealth. They were also adamant regarding their desire to be recognised by the public due to modelling as it was a career that would result in fame and wealth. As such, they used their bodies in the hopes of obtaining a more successful life inclusive of public recognition, praise and economic power. However, as exemplified by Coy and Garner in their analysis of Jordan – the British glamour model discussed in this project's theoretical framework – "acquiring economic power through their [sexy] bodies" ultimately denies such women a "legitimate social status" (2010: 664) in contemporary society. This is because sexualisation and its association to pornography and the degradation of women still conflicts with "older markers of femininity such as 'respectability'" (Coy and Garner, 2010, 664). As a result of this ongoing conflict, participants of contemporary sexual representation must endure the "gendered, classed constructions of respectable sexual norms" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 663), a challenge that, as in the case of Jordan, leaves them socially and culturally bankrupt" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 663).

Thus, sexy self-representation still has social implications that restrain women involved in this practice to a class devoid of feminine respectability. Their empowerment has limitations in that they belong to a "working class femininity" (Renold and Ringrose, 2011: 5) dependent on the contention that sex sells (to heterosexual men). Furthermore, the modelling world to which Donna and Andrea aspired is known for its fickle nature. Several of the women interviewed referred to the common pressures imposed on professional models

– by their agents primarily – to lose weight and/or undergo breast augmentation. Although Andrea and Donna acknowledged these flaws and others related to modelling (they also contended that many models – both professional and amateur – are "bitchy") they were still adamant regarding their intense desire to be part of this materialistic environment. When asked how she thought she would respond if asked by a modelling agent to lose weight, Andrea pre-emptively refused to ever "change" at the request of another individual. Donna's response echoed that of Andrea's. She stated she would only change her body if it was something she wanted to do.

Such pre-empted refusals to submit to the known pressures of a professional modelling career are – upon initial inspection – hopeful. However, in light of the participants' intense desire to progress in this environment, it is possible that their proposed responses could in fact be swayed. Like most of the participants, Andrea and Donna had not yet experienced the coercion associated with professional modelling as they were still amateur in terms of their status. As such, what they believed their answers would be in such a scenario was not based on actual experience. When immersed in such an environment whereby numerous individuals and organisations are involved in the high-profile production of images, the model's say and sense of control – especially with regard to her appearance – could quite easily be disregarded and/or lost.

Despite adhering to stricter limitations, those participants happily involved in alternative careers still engaged – by means of their sexy self-representations – with an environment that connects sexual exposure to a class of woman who lack in feminine respectability. By representing two different "kinds" of women (in Belinda's case this would be the future psychologist versus sexy model) they were required to straddle between both roles. Indeed, the one does not always complement the other. For example, the model's role is reliant on her appearance, while that of a future psychologist requires intellectual training and discipline, factors that are independent of the individual's appearance. Thus, such women actively negotiate the "Madonna/whore dichotomy" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 663) by means of their "tasteful" (Carmen) but sexy poses and alternative occupations. Unfortunately, this attempt to claim "multiple contradictory positionings" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 663) occurs in a society whereby the "classing gaze" (Skeggs, 1997: 3) is always apparent. Despite society's increasingly optimistic interpretation of sexual representation, it (sexual representation) is

simultaneously underpinned by the contention that women exposing their bodies are "cheap," "slutty" and lacking in intelligence. As such – no matter what their full time occupation – women who partake in the contemporary practice of sexy self-representation run the risk of being considered – by others – part of this demoralising classification.

Furthermore, although more conservative than Andrea and Donna in terms of their representations, Carmen and Belinda's objectives were still the same: to showcase their stereotyped bodies in the hopes of increasing their confidence and (possibly) progressing to a more professional – and therefore lucrative –modelling status. If asked to pose for the cover of *FHM* – a scenario that could lead to a successful modelling career – all participants contended, without hesitation, that they would agree. Thus, although varying in intensity, there was a definite correlation with regard to each woman's objectives. They all engage in a specific practice whereby sexiness – in a stereotyped way - is crucial. Their active participation in the process of representing themselves sexually is ultimately what results in their potential classification – by others – as slutty, cheap and shallow. In fact, the divide in opinions regarding "acceptable" poses and outfits shows that the amateur models themselves reflected the workings of society's "classing gaze" (Skeggs, 1997: 3). Carmen's already mentioned referral to the "slutty" poses assumed by other amateur models exemplifies this contention. As such, they positioned themselves – perhaps unknowingly – in an unfortunate scenario whereby pre-conceptions regarding overt sexiness will result in them losing "respectability" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 662) with other individuals, some of whom belong to their same group/category. And yet, each participant seemed to consider herself devoid of "sluttiness." Indeed, none of the six participants spoke of wanting to be regarded as "cheap" or lacking in class. However, this may be the case without them knowing it.

Finally, where all participants display their representations is also problematic in that it (*FHM* Girlfriend) pertains to a brand (*FHM*) supportive of the laddish contention that women are mere sexual commodities used for the gratification of heterosexual men (Benwell, 2003: 13-14). Their sexy self-representations also aligned to the glamour modelling genre which, as alluded to earlier in this report, is a specific type of modelling loaded with heterosexual innuendos. As such, while participants spoke of being in control of the process of sexy self-representation (all of them chose their own outfits and poses),

they seemed to not fully consider that, although interchangeable, the male audience is still getting what *they* want from this particular scenario: depictions of women who are aligned – in terms of their appearance – to the feminine stereotype indicative of sexual willingness and availability. Thus, the participants' outfits and poses combined to form what heterosexual men are said to desire, a fact that situates the latter party in an arguably superior position.

Although adamant regarding their pride and confidence obtained from modelling, the contextual factors regarding class positioned these women in a category still fraught with societal condemnation. Moreover, although professional modelling generally represents a glamorous lifestyle to which most of the participants aspired, the common pressures of such a career had not yet been experienced by any of the women interviewed. As such, their pre-empted opinions regarding not submitting themselves to the pressures of modelling were possibly unreliable. In fact, rather than wait to be subjected to such a scenario, the women interviewed were already engaging – in varying degrees – in practices said, by the media, to give one the body and appearance of a "sexy" model. Such practices – and their underlying dynamics – will be discussed in the following sub-section.

Body work: A prerequisite to sexiness

When asked how they achieved and maintained their physiques, five of the six participants made reference to eating nutritious foods and exercising. Only Christy stated that "I eat whatever I want" while choosing to "sit at home on the couch" instead of going to the local gym. Donna admitted to being "strict" with herself "almost always" in terms of her diet and exercise regime while Naomi spoke of her legs being in extreme pain as a result of her intensive work-out the evening before her interview. The three other participants interviewed seemed less concerned regarding the fact that they "often cheat" (Carmen) by skipping gym and/or eating foods they "know are bad" (Andrea). In this regard, Belinda admitted to "going through phases" of a healthy diet and exercise plan, stating that such activities were by no means constant throughout a given year: "I'm writing exams at the moment so I'm not really doing any of it [exercising and eating healthily]." Carmen concurred, arguing that regardless of how far she progresses with her career in modelling, "I'll never deprive myself of good food... I love it too much!"

Thus, rather than representing a group of women who quite literally starve themselves to be thin, the majority of women interviewed depicted a more relaxed attitude towards the known methods of obtaining a "sexy" body. As contended at the outset of this chapter, their "relative fleshiness" signifies "the very essence of a strong, sexy woman" (Attwood, 2004: 16). However, despite their seemingly nonchalant outlook on "cheating," the fact that they all labelled it as such or similar (Belinda referred to eating unhealthy foods and/or not going to gym as "being naughty") is indicative of their unanimous perception that diverting from regular exercise and a healthy diet is a negative aspect pertaining to their lives. Thus, although the level of concern regarding diet and exercise was generally less intense than initially expected, there was a definite knowledge among the participants interviewed regarding what their activities and habits should be, particularly in light of the fact that they belong to a modelling platform whereby a "sexy" body is the core focus: "You have to always look good [when you're a model]... gym and eating right are part of looking like this" (Andrea).

The link between exercise, diet and the sexy body was also apparent when reviewing the various feature articles written for the *FHM* cover girls. For example, Lisa Marie Schneider (cover girl for the March 2013 *FHM*) states in her interview that "I've been doing tons of Yoga and I'm feeling sexier than ever" (2013: 47). Similarly, Nicole Meyer (cover girl for the January 2013 *FHM*) speaks of having "to watch myself" (2013: 41) in terms of her diet while referring to running as her preferred form of exercise: "I run. I love running!" (2013: 41). While the latter statement places overt emphasis on Nicole's passion for running, the former points to a self-initiated form of control over her diet. Moreover, she *has to* monitor herself because of her participation in professional modelling. And yet, despite the recognised pressures imposed on models *by* this particular industry, Nicole's statement reflects a self-initiated method to obtain – and maintain – a slender physique. She knows she has to "watch" herself in order to continue with her career in modelling. It is up to her to maintain and/or better her appearance as it (her appearance) is paramount to her success in modelling.

The above findings show how exercise and diet links directly to looking and therefore feeling sexy for the models of both *FHM* platforms. Such "techniques" (McHoul and Grace quoting Foucault, 1993: 3) required to be slender and toned were initiated by the women

themselves. Moreover, “being healthy” was considered “a good thing” (Belinda) that should be embraced by all women due to its benefits: “I always feel great after a workout... it helps a lot with stress” (Donna). Unfortunately however, such women seem to adhere to a seemingly beneficial regime for the sake of their appearance rather than wellbeing. As contended by Andrea, while being healthy feels good, “gym and eating healthily” form part of “looking like this.” Thus, exercise and nutrition are considered part of what constitutes a sexy model’s life, thereby naturalising the self-imposed “work” needed by these women in order for them to belong to this category.

Furthermore, when asked if they were happy with their bodies – in light of their general adherence to a beneficial way of life by means of diet and exercise – the response from the majority of participants was “no.” Belinda, for example, thought her legs were fat while Donna spoke of her “cellulite infested” buttocks. Christy felt “self-conscious” regarding her relatively small breasts, admitting openly to taking an oral supplement said to help increase their size. While speaking of this self-induced treatment, Christy’s feelings of inadequacy in relation to other amateur (and professional) models with larger breasts became apparent. She admitted to thoughts of undergoing breast augmentation, stating that if she had the money to pay for the surgery, she “would probably do it” as it would help her feel more confident regarding her appearance. She also contended that a modelling agency had once asked her to lose “two or three kg’s” before they would consider her application. Although she had refused, she kept referring back to this occurrence during her interview, noting also that many *FHM* Girlfriend participants were “skinnier” than her. Being asked to lose weight had clearly affected Christy in terms of her self-esteem. She held onto this past occurrence, bringing it to the forefront of her consciousness when viewing and/or speaking of the depictions of other women.

Therefore, despite engaging – to a certain extent – in two fundamental regimes required to look and feel sexy, insecurity and discontentment were apparent when speaking to the interview participants (a finding that was not evident in the feature articles pertaining to the *FHM* cover girls). The majority of interview participants are thus engaging in an additional process whereby they regularly observe and criticise specific parts of their bodies. “There’s always something to be fixed” stated Donna when speaking of the discontentment experienced by “all women” in terms of their bodies. In this regard, the participants’ pre-

empted refusal to change their bodies for the sake of a professional modelling career was further eroded in that pressure was already taking place at an individual level.

Like exercise and nutrition, grooming was considered positive by all participants in that it made them feel more attractive and therefore confident. Each participant alluded to various methods of priming such as monthly nail and hair treatments and the daily application of make-up. “I make sure I have make-up on whenever I go out” stated Andrea, “even if it’s just to the shops.” Similarly, when referring to her heavily applied make-up and styled, blonde hair (apparent on the day of the interview), Naomi argued that “I always look like this.” Thus, in addition to diet and exercise, the above mentioned practices of looking a certain way are also adopted by the participants on a continuous basis. Indeed, such activities are both time consuming and expensive, the average hair treatment, for example, amounting to at least six hundred rand per two hour session.

Such grooming techniques are also undertaken by the models – amateur and professional – pertaining to the project’s textual analysis. For example, while posing in a rustic, outdoor setting, Gabriella Demetriades (cover girl for the January 2012 *FHM*) is by no means aligned to this location in terms of her appearance (see Figures 43 and 44). Her perfectly applied make-up, flawless tan and wavy, blow dried hair are the result of several hours of intense grooming (a contention validated by a strip of copy at the end of her feature article indicating the individuals and brands responsible for Gabriella’s make-up, styling and hair). Similarly, Amy wears heavy make-up for each of her uploaded *FHM* Girlfriend photographs. While her long, jet black hair with a hint of navy blue is the definite result of colouring, her skin’s slightly orange tint indicates the likely application of a spray tan (see Figures 10 and 11). Thus, all models – whether amateur or professional – subject themselves to various grooming techniques in order to further represent the stereotyped appearance synonymous with sexiness and desirability.

Lastly, as confirmed by Michael Knight (a local photographer with experience in lingerie photography), a substantial amount of retouching occurs after a professional shoot: “you have to smooth things out like cellulite” stated Knight, referring also to lighting and colour alterations made to the models’ skins (2013). It is likely, then, that the bodies of women in *FHM* have been – at least to a certain extent – digitally manipulated. For example, the

January 2013 edition features the already mentioned model, Nicole Meyer on its cover (see Figure 51). She stands with her back to the camera at a slight angle, turning her head over her left shoulder to look directly at the camera. Her back and thighs are unrealistically smooth, the definite result of airbrushing – a post-production technique involving polishing out any skin imperfections and/or discolouration. Similarly, a soft shadow falls over part of her face and back, a subtle but unlikely occurrence given the image's location (a deserted beach with no evident features to provide the shadow). It is likely, then, that the subtle shadow was introduced in the post-production phase of the photography shoot, a method used to highlight other parts of the body (Nicole's toned arm and buttocks are better accentuated in this particular instance). When asked if their depictions were altered by means of Photoshop or similar, the majority of amateur models interviewed admitted openly to having their depictions on *FHM* Girlfriend retouched. While Naomi answered yes to this question in a matter of fact tone, Andrea argued that it "made a big difference" to her depictions. This contention was validated by the majority of photographs analysed. For example, Amy's body and facial features appear unnaturally smooth in several of her photographs (see Figures 8 and 9). The same smoothness applies to Bianca's skin (see Figures 30 and 31).

However, the some of the imagery pertaining to Anele's albums seemed raw and untouched, depicting certain "imperfections" such as her slightly uneven skin tone (see Figures 23 and 24), particularly apparent when compared to the retouched imagery discussed above. Unlike professional models, the majority of women belonging to *FHM* Girlfriend do not have access to large budgets and/or expert facilities, the general result being a less professional-looking photograph. It is possible, then, that Anele did not have financial access to a more experienced photographer. Nonetheless, the majority of photographs on *FHM* Girlfriend have, like the depictions in *FHM*, been manipulated digitally, the result being an unnaturally "perfect" appearance. As contended by Iqani (2012: 311), the unnatural smoothness of women's skin in the media as a result of techniques such as airbrushing promote "stereotypical and heteronormative conceptions of gender." Thus, in order to participate in the active commodification of their bodies, the women of *FHM* Girlfriend must first "conform to a notion of youthful, flawless beauty" (Iqani, 2012: 323 - 324) which is achieved through diet, exercise, grooming *and* airbrushing.

Exclusivity, imitation and self-critique: The contradictions of body work

Overall, the above analysis indicates how participants obtain and maintain their stereotyped appearance. While adamant regarding the therapeutic benefits of modelling, such an activity is reliant on the women's adherence to the specific body type pertaining to both *FHM* platforms. Furthermore, when asked what they thought the response would be if an overweight woman posed on *FHM* Girlfriend, all participants alluded to an entirely negative reaction from both the audience and producers of this site. Their answer to this question was immediate, with no prior contemplation whatsoever: "I really wouldn't recommend it (participation on *FHM* Girlfriend) to a girl who was overweight" (Christy). Furthermore, Donna argued that fat women don't deserve to be on the site as "they don't look after or respect their bodies... so they shouldn't show them off." This together with the participants' appearance supports the dynamic of exclusion in that only a certain type of woman is expected to participate in the practice of sexy-self representation on *FHM* Girlfriend. Of course, a woman who diverts from the above mentioned template can try, but she risks being "teased" (Andrea) and humiliated by the other models and audience.

Such exclusion is motivated inadvertently by both *FHM* platforms as the models are praised by the audience and editors for their stereotyped body parts or "bits" (Gill, 2007: 80). For example, the February 2013 edition of *FHM* features an international glamour model by the name of Jessica Fafalowski on its cover (see Figure 47). She faces the camera, her body turned at a slight angle as she arches her back, a pose that accentuates her curvaceous form. Positioned next to her in bold copy are the words "Jessica! Curves Like Kyalami!" This statement compares her body's curves to those of a race car track, thereby linking the former trait of femininity to a traditionally masculine "playground." Located inside the magazine, the feature article relating to Jessica begins with the following introduction: "Once in a while a bum comes along that puts all other bums to utter shame... we are talking about the enthralling derriere of Ms Jessica Fafalowski..." (2013: 38). Such comments are used by the editors and/or journalists as a means to compliment and praise the models – albeit in a laddish, tongue-in-cheek way. That these women conform to a physique synonymous with western notions of sexiness has contributed greatly to them being on the

cover of *FHM*. They are used to assist in selling the magazine to heterosexual men, an objective that would fail if an "unsexy" woman were to feature on the magazine.

Similarly to that of Facebook, members of *FHM* Girlfriend can comment on the photographs uploaded by the amateur models. As a result, compliments (from men in particular) relating to the women's appearances proliferate, a dynamic that indeed confirms and supports the repetitive appearance and body type prevalent on this site. Furthermore, as with *FHM*'s print edition the praise of certain body parts is apparent. For example, while one member compliments Bianca's photographs by stating "Waayy sexy (sic)" (see Commentator 18, page 166), another member states the following in response to the sixth photograph located in Bianca's album: "Wow look at those legs!" (see Commentator 17, page 165). Two comments appear on Amelia's profile page in response to a photograph that showcases her body – dressed in a bikini – from behind (see Commentators 3 and 4, page 138). Both compliments ("Sexy bum" and "Cute bum") relate directly to her buttocks – a body part often focused on in the media's depiction of a "sexy" feminine body. As such, conforming to a sexual stereotype is both supported and praised by the audience of *FHM* Girlfriend. They (the audience) play a key role in motivating the amateur models to continue in the preservation of their physiques (indeed, compliments are a sure way to encourage maintaining what has caused the initial flattery).

Moreover, several of the interview participants were themselves very specific regarding the necessary constituents of a "sexy" feminine body, a finding that furthers the rigid guidelines pertaining to this idealised form. When asked what they considered to be a sexy woman's body, their responses echoed the stereotype portrayed throughout both *FHM* platforms and the media in general. In fact, the detail most participants gave when describing the "perfect" female form is alarming. Belinda, for example, made reference to an array of features such as "thin but toned arms, strong legs, a flat stomach [and] nice but not too big boobs." Similarly, Naomi alluded to a "firm but not too skinny" physique, arguing that a woman who "looks after herself" in terms of exercise, nutrition and grooming is, in her opinion, "sexy." As such, the women were attuned to the specifics related to "sexiness." Like the representations of women on both *FHM* platforms, they dissected the female body into parts, each of which needed to be "perfect" in terms of its formation.

The very specific appearance related to looking and therefore feeling "sexy" was thus embedded in the minds of the participants interviewed. Although in varying degrees, the majority of these women engage in dieting, exercise and self-monitoring because such practices are known to assist one in obtaining a physique indicative of "sexiness." Thus, the positive stimulation generated from showcasing their bodies is dependent on them looking a certain way. Getting "undressed" is, according to participants, on condition that a woman be "slim, good looking [and] tanned" (Foucault, 1980: 57), to mention just three of the embedded specifications regarding a sexy woman's body. Many women are therefore excluded from this contemporary practice unless they adhere to the various methods of control and maintenance needed to look "sexy." As such, rather than unite in the ongoing struggle against patriarchy, such exclusion divides women into categories ("sexy" versus "unsexy") that could result in their estrangement from one another.

Furthermore, the participants' own discontentment with (parts of) their bodies was in contrast to their pre-empted refusal to change their physiques if ever faced with the pressures of a professional modelling career. While the latter assertion fights against conforming to the stereotype synonymous with sexiness, the former reflects a definite desire on the part of the participants to alter at least part of their bodies. Moreover, what they wanted in terms of their bodies' appearance – larger breasts, thinner legs and a cellulite-free buttocks – are features that align to what is generally expected in the modelling industry and, to a certain extent, society. Thus, the participants' proposed ability to resist pressure from other sources regarding their appearance was further nullified by their own, self-imposed criticism. Before even contending with the critiques of an external source (a professional modelling agency, for example), it seemed they had already subjected themselves to a process of self-scrutiny regarding their physiques. It is this process that links directly to the self-imposed work of diet and exercise in that the former dictates the extent to which the latter must be executed: "If I feel I'm getting a bit flabby then I'll try go to gym more often..." (Donna).

Thus, in addition to exclusivity, a definite contradiction emerged as the confidence depicted in the participants' photography was underpinned by their feelings of discontentment regarding their bodies. Moreover, that the professional models of *FHM* acted as role models to the participants of *FHM* Girlfriend is likely in that they have achieved what so many

amateur models want: the recognition and potential fame that may result if a woman is showcased on the cover of *FHM*. The majority of amateur models thus emulate the standardised appearance of the *FHM* cover girls, a dynamic that is by no means positive in that it eliminates any kind of individuality or uniqueness regarding the representation of these women. As such, what emerges from the corpus is a homogenous set of women, all of whom adhere to a particular appearance underpinned by what heterosexual men are said to desire. The theoretical "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975) – thought to be a trivial and interchangeable component by these women – still projects its fantasy onto the female form in that the latter participant is an exact replication of what the former is said to desire.

The patriarchal dynamic whereby women (the passive sexual objects) are looked at by men (the primary spectators) is thus at play in the *FHM* Girlfriend scenario, albeit in an arguably deceitful manner. To explain, society's pre-occupation with sex and sexuality has resulted in a focus on the emotional benefits (sexual pride and confidence) experienced by women who participate in sexual self-representation. As contended by Feona Attwood (2006: 80), sex is now connected to consumerism as well as to a "therapeutic" culture which focuses on sexuality and the self as a means to personal growth and fulfilment. However, such a focus seems to underplay the sexual satisfaction still experienced by many men who view these women on platforms such as *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend. Furthermore, the media's focus on "sexual empowerment" (Gill, 2012: 7) has led to it becoming "a compulsory part" of young female subjectivity. As such, young women engaging in the practice of sexy self representation are expected to feel empowered and confident. To feel otherwise would be to deviate from this "normative" (Gill, 2012: 7) demeanour as it is an expected outcome on the part of these women.

Thus, although the models – both professional and amateur – feel fulfilled when posing for the camera in predominantly sexual ways, it is an exclusive, imitative and normative practice dictated by patriarchy. Furthermore, while sexual objectification can be considered a "necessary pre-condition" (Attwood, 2004: 15) for the pride and confidence experienced by the models (both professional and amateur), their bodies and "sexual parts" (Bartky, 1990: 26) are used as a means to represent their personalities and identity. Certain body parts are emphasised continuously by means of the models' poses and outfits. Their bodies and sexual parts are the primary focus of most photographs, a finding that reduced their

portrayed identities to the status of sexualised objects and/or "bits" (Gill, 2007: 80) devoid of substance. Compliments from the audience – consisting of mostly men – are a regular occurrence that motivates the women in terms of their stereotyped appearance. Interestingly, the amateur models themselves form part of the audience of *FHM* Girlfriend. The dynamics of this scenario, as well as that of racial hegemony, are discussed in the following subsection.

Condemned desires: Maintaining heterosexual, white femininity on *FHM* Girlfriend

When asked if and why they looked at and complimented other women on *FHM* Girlfriend, the general contention was yes because all beautiful women should be celebrated regarding their appearance: "I think if a girl is beautiful you should say something because it makes her feel good about herself" (Donna). This online interactivity is noted when reviewing the collected *FHM* Girlfriend photographs and their associated comments: while compliments from men are apparent, the majority of women have also obtained compliments from other amateur models belonging to the site. For example, Anastasja has received several comments from other amateur models such as "gorgeous!" (Commentator 9, page 152) and "That is a osem pic (sic)" (Commentator 13, page 153). Such comments reflect an arguably positive scenario whereby the amateur models celebrate and encourage one another regarding their stereotyped appearance. Sexiness is appreciated by (heterosexual) men *and* women, a situation supportive of David Gauntlett's (2008: 182) opinion that contemporary culture works to celebrate rather than objectify attractive people in general. Indeed, (heterosexual) women looking at and admiring other (heterosexual) women diverts from the patriarchal dynamic whereby (heterosexual) men are the only benefactors. It seemed plausible then – upon initial inspection – that the amateur models are on display for the pleasure of both sexes. The latter forms part of a supportive audience whom appreciate the aesthetic appeal of the former's stylised appearance.

However, that the women – who both observe and pose for *FHM* Girlfriend – be heterosexual is an unspoken requisite to this given scenario. As contended by Angela McRobbie (2009: 100), a female homosexuality is deliberately invoked by the contemporary practice of women looking at and admiring other women: "[It] is a necessary strategy on the part of heterosexual patriarchy... to ensure its proper repudiation, in favour of the

achievement of a normative sexual identity on the part of young women" (2009:100). While all participants were candid regarding their admiration of beautiful women, none were openly homosexual or bisexual in that all alluded to having had past or current boyfriends. It is possible, then, that the observation and praise of other women is enacted and accepted by participants because of their blatant heterosexuality (the scenario whereby homosexual women look at and admire amateur models on *FHM* Girlfriend may be far less comforting). In this regard, the invoked homosexuality among such women is accepted on condition that it never fully replace their heterosexual identities. Heterosexuality thus "secures its self-identity and shores up its ontological boundaries by protecting itself from what it sees as the continual predatory encroachment of its contaminated other, homosexuality" (Diana Fuss, 1999: 2). Furthermore, although arguably attracted to one another due to their appearance, it (the women's repetitive appearance) aligns to hetero-normative aesthetic standards, a factor that suppresses the logic of their possible homosexuality. In this regard, heterosexuality – as portrayed via *FHM* Girlfriend – encourages women looking at women in order to control and subdue its rival. It's method of control is strategic in that most women (heterosexual and homosexual) simply accept the (exclusively heterosexual) standards of feminine beauty.

The possible homosexual attraction experienced by these women is further defeated by the knowledge that, in contemporary society, such feelings depict "the lesbian feminist" – an almost frightening character initiated by the constructs of patriarchy to ensure the "proper repudiation" of female homosexuality (McRobbie, 2009: 66). All amateur models on *FHM* Girlfriend are overtly feminine in terms of their appearance, an arguably deliberate attempt on their part to avoid resembling the usually butch appearance associated with this homosexual character. And yet, the expected behaviours of the latter stereotype (admiring the sexualised depictions of other women) are performed by the former. As such, a mismatch of these roles is enacted by the amateur models. Unfortunately, such a combination – the heterosexual and homosexual – is destructive, in that both are polar opposites in terms of what they say about the sexual desires of these women. While heterosexuality pre-dominates, the undertones of homosexuality are never completely diminished in that the women continue with the above mentioned practice of looking at and admiring one another. It – looking at and admiring one another – is thus a practice fraught

with further contradiction and disturbance as the full emergence of homosexual desires among these women is suppressed by the instilled fear of becoming a (stereotyped) lesbian. Ultimately, the "ghostly invoking of non-normative sexual desire has a productivity that takes the form of a loss" (McRobbie, 2009: 100).

Furthermore, participants made reference to *FHM* Girlfriend as a platform off which to monitor their "competition" (Christy). To explain this contention, Andrea in particular spoke of how often she looked at the photographs of other contestants. While complimenting these other women, she stated that looking at their photographs allowed her to "see what they [the other models] have going for them" in terms of their appearance. "The competition out there is tough... it helps to know who you're up against" (Andrea). Christy confirmed this contention, stating that "there are some really beautiful girls [on the *FHM* Girlfriend site]... they're better looking than me." In speaking on this topic, Christy's already noted feelings of insignificance in relation to other women were apparent. Looking at "the competition" seemed to increase the insecurity she had regarding her breasts and body-size. Similarly, Donna contended that she felt "a bit crap" when looking at women she thought were more beautiful than herself. Nagel's (2012: 38) opinion that women look at other women "in terms of their own insecurities" was thus apparent when speaking to the women regarding this competitive aspect. As already stated, the ultimate benefactors of such a scenario are heterosexual men in that what these women look like aligns to the proposed tastes of the former. The women critique and compete against each other for the sake of the approving "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975) which is – as already discussed – a strategically peripheral component due to a focus on the (objectified) women and their supposed benefits (rather than the benefits of men). By complimenting and encouraging each other regarding their stereotyped appearance, the amateur models are enforcing the "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975) in terms of what it represents: the reduction of women to mere sexual objects for the satisfaction of heterosexual men.

Thus, upon closer inspection, a more sinister reason as to why these women engage with each other – via *FHM* Girlfriend – began to emerge. That they compete against one another for the opportunity to feature on the cover of *FHM* is a fact many of them have not forgotten. Unfortunately, this competitive aspect contributes to the already mentioned process whereby amateur models are engaging in self-criticism regarding their appearance.

They judge their bodies against other women's bodies in an ongoing, internalised conflict characterised by intense self-scrutiny and discontentment. In this regard, contemporary society's trend of "individualism" (Jancovich, 2001) takes on a deeper and more negative meaning. Rather than independent in a strong and liberated way, many models face an individual scrutiny that could leave them feeling worthless. This, together with the possible stifling of an alternative homosexual identity, could further estrange them from one another, the result being a sense of isolation on the part of these women. The *FHM* Girlfriend "community" to which they belong is both cynical and competitive. It is in contrast to the sense of belonging generally associated with a collective group of similar individuals.

Finally, the predominance of white women on both *FHM* platforms further intensifies the above mentioned dynamic of isolation. As contended by Ashley Mears (2010: 21), modelling agents and their clients merely reproduce contemporary culture "by fashioning femininity along race and class lines..." They do this because it is the safest choice in a commercial environment dictated by revenues and profit (Franklin, 2013: 3). Moreover, the large, often global corporations responsible for the dissemination of popular media content are operated by "white, middle-aged men," the majority of whom believe that only white women can be appropriate role models (Franklin, 2013: 3). As a result, and despite its racial diversity, the majority of popular magazine titles circulating in South Africa still focus predominantly on the "exclusively Anglo-looking models" (Mears, 2010: 21). *FHM*, as described earlier in this report, is a definite example of this form of racial hegemony. The two women of colour – namely Anastasja (indian) and Anele (black) – who belong to the textual corpus are alternatives to the predominantly white women featured on both *FHM* platforms. However, features such as their smooth, straightened hair, toned bodies and outfits are all indicative of white western culture. As such, their ethnicity is toned down in order for them to adhere – as best as possible – to the feminine stereotype which, in addition to overt heterosexuality, is also reliant on whiteness.

The above scenario – whereby the characteristics of different races are subdued – is arguably self-initiated by participants of *FHM* Girlfriend. Like the white amateur models pertaining to this site, they imitate the appearance of the professional *FHM* models. Interestingly, all of the six *FHM* cover girls analysed for this study are white. Moreover,

when looking through each magazine, women of colour were extremely scarce in relation to the predominant group of models (young, toned white women with flawless skin and sleek, long hair). *FHM* thus reproduces "the ideological hegemony of the dominant white culture," an occurrence that helps to "legitimate the inequalities in class and race relations" (La Pierre, 1999). That amateur models (*FHM* Girlfriend) of all races imitate characteristics of the predominantly white professional models (*FHM*) is a scenario indicative of the contention that cultural hegemony – in the form of beauty and sexiness – "goes unchallenged – it's 'The Look' and the whole fashion [and glamour modelling] world absorbs it" (Franklin, 2013: 3). As such, the women of both *FHM* platforms further limit themselves in terms of their portrayed identities, despite South Africa's proposed democracy regarding racial diversity and liberation. They adhere to a stereotype that supports the concept of patriarchy as well as that of white, western supremacy. While women of all races are permitted to participate on both *FHM* platforms, those who do first alter their appearance according to western standards of "perfection." They subdue their own cultural traits, an activity that may isolate them from their heritage which, for many individuals, is crucial to their sense of identity.

A concluding question of authenticity: What sexy self-representation means in light of the research findings

That the trend of sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend was considered positive by all interview participants is a finding supported by many contemporary theorists. Women involved in this trend have used the "technological resources available to them in order develop their own esteem and sense of self" (Shilling, 2005: 89) despite reinforcing a gendered, cultural stereotype that is "disadvantageous to women as a group" (Shilling, 2005: 89). More specifically, sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend is an active process whereby participants continually engage with sexiness in terms of what it looks like. While some of these women look at the depictions of professional models in *FHM*, others look at their fellow rivals on *FHM* Girlfriend in order to adapt and better their own representations. As such, women belonging to the latter *FHM* platform are by no means passive in terms of their engagement with this media form and its associated trend. Furthermore, they view other women's depictions in order to judge and criticise them in light of their own

representations. Although active, such comparison compounds self-scrutiny and doubt, an unfortunate and ongoing cycle embedded in this trend.

Moreover, despite subtle differences in the types of poses and outfits worn by the models on both *FHM* platforms, the stereotyped "look" pertaining to western notions of "sexiness" is consistent throughout. What the interview participants look like in their on-line representations is their main concern, a finding that brings materialism to the forefront of this trend. The bodies of these women are their "physical capital" (Shilling, 2005: 89) used to showcase and market their identities (Attwood, 2006: 82) in a very specific way. By means of their representations, a heteronormative feminine identity characterised also by lust, sensuality and whiteness emerges. Although therapeutic for these women, such a reflected identity limits them to notions of sex. They become a homogenous group whose capital and sense of worth is dependent on a material object (the body) that can and will eventually change to become less appealing. Indeed, if no longer toned with youthful skin, such women would no longer be sexy, a contention that – in all likelihood – would permeate from society to their own sense of self. Thus, although active in their engagement with the concept of sexiness, the interview participants reproduce a destructive ideal regarding what women – of all races – should look like in order to feel proud and content. And yet, their stereotyped appearance results in feelings of inadequacy often concealed and in contrast to their claims of pride and confidence. Such feelings are compounded by the fact that the women's current measures of control – namely diet and exercise – are inadequate for them to achieve the bodies they desired (the majority of women interviewed were unhappy with their physiques). As such, more intense measures may be adopted by some of these women in the near future, especially if faced with the opportunity to progress in a lucrative modelling career.

Furthermore, what such women look like in their photographs is the consequence of preparation and routine maintenance. In most instances their glossy hair and/or smooth skin are the result of digital retouching. Nevertheless, what the interview participants look like in their uploaded photographs is in contrast to what most normal women look like on a daily basis. In fact, those participants who were interviewed in a public setting (rather than telephonically) looked far more "normal" in comparison to what they looked like in their photographs (with the exception of Naomi who wore copious amounts of make-up for her

interview). As such, the appearance adhered to by women on both *FHM* platforms promotes an arguably false sense of what they – and other women – look like in reality. The excessive amounts of make-up, strategic lighting techniques and carefully crafted poses contribute to the formation of a group of "fantasy" (Wisneski, 2007: 107) women, their primary role being to please (heterosexual) men by means of their exposed bodies and stylised appearance. Indeed, what these women have to say about themselves is secondary in relation to what they look like on both texts analysed. Their positioning and worth – as promoted by *FHM* – revolves around the sexual gratification of heterosexual men, a factor that supports the ongoing "heterosexual matrix" (Butler 1990: 136) still prevalent in contemporary society.

While supporting the dynamics of patriarchy, the fantasy women construct a divide between themselves and "'real' women" (Wisneski, 2007: 107). The latter women don't always look so well groomed and appealing while having the capacity to speak directly to and challenge men in real life scenarios. Conversely, fantasy women are passive, sexualised objects that please men visually and by means of their appearance. Such a dichotomy ultimately disempowers women as a class due to its naturalisation of the opinion that women should be looked at and judged by their appearance. In fact, the interview participants are doing themselves a disservice in that their material identity limits them in terms of their categorisation by others. In addition to being considered slutty and/or loose in terms of their morals, they risk being recognised for their achievements as models only, a factor that could impact on other potential opportunities. Furthermore, by adhering to a stereotyped appearance, the women provoke being looked at (by men), a factor that again limits their perceived capacity as individuals. Thus, in light of the discussed dynamics pertaining to their appearance, the amateur models analysed and interviewed are engaging in a process whereby they actively participate in the subordination of women. Their described bodies and appearance – a construction supportive of the dynamics of patriarchy – act as a substitute for their personalities and as a result, such women are emptied of any true substance regarding their portrayed identities. What their arguably concealed identities entail is discussed in the following, penultimate chapter of this report.

CHAPTER 6: THE INNER SELF: AGENCY, IDENTITY AND THE IMPACT OF AMATEUR MODELLING

In light of the research findings, the following chapter begins by complicating the generally accepted contention that modern sexual representations celebrate young, attractive women. While contemplating the possibility of this optimistic stance I consider and in some instances reconsider the various, often unrecognised constituents belonging to the practice of sexy self-representation. I use these constituents to confirm that amateur models are coaxed by patriarchy into believing that sexy self-representation – via *FHM* Girlfriend – forms part of a movement whereby young South African women actively liberate their (hetero) sexuality. How such a belief – as supported by the media – affects the often concealed identities of these women (in light of their portrayed identities on *FHM* Girlfriend) will feature throughout. A somewhat troubled and potentially dangerous identity plagued by constraint results.

Sexiness, Modelling and Self-esteem: A hapless association

The investment all participants had in their appearance was a definite outcome of the research conducted for this report. Their ongoing participation in recommended regimes that assist in achieving and maintaining their stereotyped look was indicative of this investment together with the unanimous contention that looking good on the outside results in feeling good on the inside. While Christy contended that "dressing up" and getting her "nails done" made her feel "good," Andrea argued that such practices were "worth it." Chris Shilling's (2005: 89) opinion that the commercialised body is becoming central to the "sense of self-identity" experienced by individuals residing in contemporary society is applicable to the *FHM* Girlfriend scenario. All amateur models use their bodies to present themselves to the audience of this online site. Like many media forms, *FHM* Girlfriend deploys images as a means to attract and entertain its audience. Its visual composition thus supports the dynamic whereby the body (visual) acts as a means of representing the self. By initiating their own on-line profiles, participants of *FHM* Girlfriend showcase a carefully formulated identity made up of selected images, each of which are the result of meticulous preparation. What emerges is a very specific type of woman whose voluntary focus on her body shows that it is an asset she wants to leverage in terms of "who she is" as a person. As

such, the body was regarded by participants "as an object for display and a key component of the marketable self" (Attwood: 2004: 15).

Furthermore and in light of Mehita Iqani's (2012: 122) contention regarding the use of sexy women to sell magazines, there was a definite understanding on the part of the participants that they belonged to "an aesthetic category" (Iqani, 2012: 122) to which (heterosexual male) viewers can never truly access. Their nonchalant attitude towards men viewing their depictions reflected this awareness together with their predominant focus on what they as individuals derived from belonging to *FHM* Girlfriend (sexual self-confidence and pride). Thus, the audience was an interchangeable component used by the participants to support their creation of an identity characterised by – among other things – a celebration and awareness of their "sexy" bodies. What men obtained from viewing their depictions was not of great concern to these women. Rather, the participant's willing objectification indicated a type of "calculated hedonism" (Attwood quoting Jancovich, 2004: 15) in that their self-proclaimed feelings of pride and contentment were the intended outcome. When asked who their *FHM* Girlfriend profiles were for, all participants referred to themselves as the main beneficiaries. Christy in particular spoke of how she initiated her profile in the hopes of obtaining positive comments from others. This would then build on her "confidence" and "self-esteem" while possibly getting her "noticed" by a modelling agent. Sexy self-representation was thus an activity that entailed an aesthetic and material self-indulgence on the part of its participants. Modelling's link to beauty, confidence and self-satisfaction was foremost to these women while sexual objectification and male pleasure were more likely ignored.

That the women interviewed defined themselves as models was another factor closely connected to their sense of self. They contended that looking good (in a stereotyped way) was pertinent to modelling, whether amateur or professional. Because they considered themselves (amateur) models, always being in shape with smooth skin, perfectly applied make-up and radiant hair was mandatory. While modelling was "tough" (Andrea) given the "bitchiness," competition and pressure, it was a way in which these women increased their confidence and self-esteem. As such, the feminine stereotype was actively initiated by the participants, despite their awareness of its regular association to a "ditsy" and/or "bitchy" (Christy) personality. The positives associated with the practice of sexy self-representation

thus outweighed the perceived negatives for the interviewed participants. Being sexy was of primary importance to them, at least when presenting themselves to others. As a result, the various physical characteristics described above were maintained by participants in order for them to continue belonging to the exclusive world of modelling. The methods of achieving and maintaining their appearances were accepted by these women without critique or concern. When asked if she would ever resort to a cosmetic procedure such as breast augmentation surgery, Donna contended in a nonchalant manner that she would change a part of her body by means of surgery if she were ever "unhappy" with it.

To a certain extent, the above dynamic whereby amateur models assume and maintain the required attributes of "sexiness" diverts from the norms of stereotyping. As discussed in the introduction of this report, stereotyping entails the imposition by individuals or groups of specific characteristics on other people. However, for the *FHM* Girlfriend participants, attributes of a sexy glamour model were self-applied. Their make-up, styled hair, revealing outfits and sensual gestures all moulded into a specific, gendered identity indicative of overt (hetero) sexuality. They were extremely active in the compilation of their depicted identities while reflecting a definite awareness and/or "knowingness" (Attwood, 2006: 82) regarding the mediated nature of their sexuality. Indeed, belonging to *FHM* Girlfriend dictated how they posed and what they wore for each and every photograph. The likelihood of any woman diverting from this sexualised "look" – while belonging to *FHM* Girlfriend – was thus unlikely. It was an appearance they adopted wholeheartedly, regardless of its potential limitations.

As such, it is possible that the participants' knowing acceptance of the feminine stereotype – as presented on both *FHM* platforms – has led to the development of a number of new meanings regarding sex (Attwood, 2006: 82). Perhaps what these women represent is a more complex identity whereby they truly are in control of their self-sexualisation. By means of their participation in a given media form, they have carefully formulated a portrayed identity that, as previously stated, aligns to their proposed values and personal limitations. By showcasing their bodies that, as proven, require work and time, they confirm their sense of self while basking in the complements and praise of others. Their hard work and dedication to their exposed bodies has paid off and they therefore "deserve" (Donna) to be part of a platform that celebrates those women who make an effort to be beautiful.

Moreover, despite acknowledging its negativities, (amateur) modelling was thoroughly enjoyed by each participant. Belonging to this aesthetic activity provided them with an environment in which to explore a type of feminine agency that connected to their sense of sexual power and confidence. Their adherence to specific gestures, poses and looks resulted in a gendered performance (de Lauretis, 1987: 68) that, when complimented, made them feel empowered and worthy of attention. Unfortunately, the problem arose when considering the kind of attention received by these women. As noted in the introduction of this report, heterosexual men are the primary target audience of both *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend, although the latter platform also targets aspiring models. These women are targeted in order to become part of *FHM* Girlfriend's content. Men are then invited by means of *FHM* (each monthly edition features advertisements regarding *FHM* Girlfriend) to view and vote for these amateur models, making the former target audience a determining factor in the latter's success with *FHM* Girlfriend's ongoing modelling competition. Thus, like *FHM*'s content, that of *FHM* Girlfriend is aligned to what heterosexual men are expected to desire in terms of the opposite sex. As a result, the dynamics pertaining to Butler's (1990: 136) "heterosexual matrix" are adhered to by the men and women who participate in the production and consumption of this on line site. Although the behaviour of men who view the amateur models' profiles is presumed (given the scope of this project), that of the amateur models is clear: their assumed "acts and gestures" (Butler, 1990: 136) mimic a femininity that complements the mechanics of patriarchy. Furthermore, by means of its ongoing competition, *FHM* Girlfriend forces these women into competition with one another, a scenario that quells the possibility of a genuinely supportive group of women. While their stylised appearance is what (heterosexual) men are said to desire, their sexually suggestive poses work to invite and entertain the "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975).

Thus, although participants were adamant regarding their passion for (amateur) modelling, men still benefit from this activity due to their status as the entertained audience. Rather than rigorously contemplate the ramifications of this dynamic (they were aware that men – in all likelihood – ogle and admire their bodies), the women of *FHM* Girlfriend seemed too preoccupied with their own resultant pleasures. It is possible that such a scenario is a deliberate attempt – on the part of patriarchal structures – to manipulate young aspiring models into supporting the heterosexual dynamics of modern society. The women's

incessant focus of what they obtained from looking "sexy" overshadowed the realisation that sexiness speaks to more than just the contemporary celebration of attractive people. By conforming to a sexualised stereotype, the models – both professional and amateur – help naturalise the contention that women are supposed to be looked at and judged by men according to their appearance. Thus, although men were interchangeable, they were still the primary audience whose heterosexual tastes dictated what these women looked like. The latter answered to the former, albeit in a complex way in that, as already noted, the amateur models actively assumed an appearance they knew heterosexual men admired. That these women were, in all likelihood, used by men for sexual pleasure was "a bit strange" (Andrea) but "fine" (Christy) in that the former used the latter to their own advantage (the compliments and votes from the audience fuelled the amateur models' self-esteem)

Following on from the above point regarding the participant's active initiation of the sexy feminine stereotype, these women did not view themselves as constrained individuals (despite their acknowledgement of the probability that men ogle their bodies). For example, "FHM MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE" was a posted comment by Anele on her *FHM* Girlfriend profile (see page 158 of appendix). Looking "beautiful" and "sexy" while wearing little was a role assumed deliberately by each participant in her attempt to feel confident and invigorated, which, as stated by each participant, they did feel when engaging in sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend. Thus, amateur modelling, beauty and contentment were, in the minds of the participants, closely connected. While looking beautiful and sexy linked to feelings of pride and contentment, (amateur) modelling was the socially accepted activity that helped to achieve and naturalise this connection. All three elements combined to form part of a constructed identity that used the material body deliberately as a form of expression. Moreover, when asked if she thought her representations on *FHM* Girlfriend were reflective of who she was as a person, Carmen answered "yes," arguing that sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend allowed her to express her "creativity" with regard to her photograph's compositions, styling and her applied make-up. That these women are using *FHM* Girlfriend to reflect and showcase their agency is thus likely.

To a certain extent, the above findings reflected an identity – on the part of the participants – characterised by pleasure, hedonism and self-interest. In light of past restraints, a woman

celebrating her sexuality is an arguably positive finding in that it represents the move towards a sexual democracy whereby women in particular are now free to express themselves by means of their once restricted bodies. Indeed, the participants' self-proclaimed feelings of contentment and pride due to modelling reflected this seemingly liberated sense of self. *FHM* Girlfriend is one of the many technological resources used to support the popularity of sexy self-representation, making it – and overt sexuality in general – "increasingly part of ordinary people's everyday lives" (Attwood, 2006: 82). However and as already indicated, that the majority of interview participants expressed feelings of discontentment with their bodies was in contrast to their claims of self-pride and confidence. Their complaints regarding parts of their bodies in need of change was indicative of an ongoing struggle regarding their appearance, despite them adhering to the stereotype synonymous with feminine pride.

Furthermore, it seemed looking good (Andrea) due to their (amateur) model status had become a rigid requisite for the majority of these women. Sexiness (in a stereotyped way) was a given criteria to which they felt all women had to adhere in order to be included in a category whereby the body is the main focus. As such, a woman who diverged from being slender and toned with radiant skin should not – according to the participants interviewed – feel sexy and/or worthy of attention. The participants' knowledge of the fact that they were observed by others due to their involvement in the practice of sexy self-representation made them aware of their appearance at all times. During her interview, Naomi kept reapplying her lipstick, an indication of her likely desire to look good at all times. Rather than liberating, the want to always look a certain way is conducive to the possible emergence of behaviours that could be harmful to these women. Naomi admitted to having already had "a boob job," while both Donna and Christy reflected and attitude of acceptance towards the possibility of cosmetic surgery. This points to a willingness on the part of at least three of the participants interviewed to expose themselves to physically invasive and dangerous procedures that, if not performed correctly, could result in their death. Unfortunately, an activity whereby the body is the primary focus will inevitably result in a materialistic mindset whereby a person's appearance overrides and/or determines their personality.

The participants' discontentment with their bodies is reflective of Liz Frost's (1999: 132) argument that women endure continuous criticism from an "internalised representative of the [western] fashion-beauty complex." It (the fashion beauty complex) presents a spectacular display – via the media – of youth, beauty, and female sexuality, all of which deliberately target contemporary women. That many modern celebrities adhere to a "sexy" appearance exacerbates the appeal of conforming to this specific look in that people belonging to the "media world" (Couldry, 2000: 10) generally occupy a desirable space synonymous with success, wealth and fame. Similarly, the world of modelling represents a glamorous way of life to which many young women increasingly aspire, as was the case with Andrea and Donna. In fact, for all participants, the prestige associated with modelling was a definite attraction. Although amateur, belonging to this aesthetic category helped each participant define herself in terms of her identity. The women interviewed were proud to be part of the modelling environment, a factor that converted their necessary objectification into a kind of "sexual *subjectification*" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 660) as they felt "in control" (Andrea) and pleased while modelling (rather than exposed and vulnerable). Showcasing their sexy bodies was a form of expression for these women that went beyond the physical to a more emotive meaning. Their embellished (hetero) sexuality was used by them to signify their alignment with the contention – instilled and supported by the fashion-beauty complex (Frost, 1999: 132) – that a woman who cares for and "looks after herself" (Naomi) will resort naturally to measures of beautification which will, in turn, make her happy.

However, the participant's "*subjectification*" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 660) as a result of engaging in sexy self-representation took on an additional, less evident dynamic characterised by their ongoing dissatisfaction. Although they felt sexy when dressed up for a photography shoot, their involvement in modelling seemed to exacerbate their self-criticism in everyday life. Unlike most women, models (both amateur and professional) regularly experience the aesthetic contrasts of both the ordinary and media "worlds" (Couldry, 2000: 10). Such direct experiences are likely to make them more conscious of the differences between "perfect" versus "ordinary" women. What emerges is an intensified awareness – on the part of models – of the necessary constituents required for their continued acceptance into the aesthetic world of media, modelling and glamour. They know that if they were to divert from the generic body-type, banishment from this desired environment

would result. Stress thus results among these women as they must constantly negotiate the boundary between their "ordinary" and "media" lives (Couldry, 2000: 10). In this regard Gill (2003: 137) argues that sexual subjectification, as represented by the sexy and confident women who appear in the media, "has turned out to be objectification in a new and even more pernicious guise."

Thus, while sexy self-representation instilled a degree self-assurance and pride in its participants, such feelings were temporary and dependent on a certain type of appearance. The interview participants' knowledge of the material conditions pertaining to "feeling good" in the modelling world made them too focused and dependent on their bodies. Their belief that looking good produced feelings of pride and contentment was an irony as their idealised appearance resulted in their critical dissatisfaction. As such, their "*subjectification*" (Coy and Garner, 2010: 660) was fraught with contradiction as their proclaimed feelings of control were juxtaposed by their internalised fear of losing control over their bodies and appearance. Such a scenario would lead to their likely exclusion from modelling, an occurrence that could then result in them losing at least part of their identity. The aesthetic requirements of modelling thus acted as a subtle threat to these women in that their sense of belonging to this celebrated group was on condition that they adhere to a stereotyped appearance. Sexiness and modelling led to an instilled sense of "personal responsibility" (McRobbie, 2009: 19) among the participants to continuously better their bodies and appearance. Not striving to do this meant not caring for themselves which, in turn, would represent their failure.

Imitating the sexy stereotype: An internalised and competitive struggle

In light of the above arguments, the feminine identity produced by participants was, to a certain extent, flawed in that "sexiness" was a catalyst for their discontentment and insecurity, the exact opposites of what they claimed to feel when engaging in sexy self-representation. Furthermore, their unanimous claims of pride and confidence were replications of what is portrayed by sexualised women in mainstream media (the near naked and proud woman flaunting her body via contemporary media forms is an all too familiar occurrence). Thus, what emerged from the research was a homogeneous female identity that incorporated the concept of sexual empowerment as an arguably "compulsory

part" (Gill, 2012: 7) of its constituents. While Carmen spoke of how sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend allowed her to explore her "creativity," her resulting depictions were still very similar to that of the hundreds of other depictions on this site. Sexual empowerment was also "deserved" (Donna) by women who "look after themselves" (Naomi) in that its requisite – sexiness – required work and self-discipline. Similarly, the latter requirements brought about pride and contentment as both related to achieving a desirable body which, as indicated, was central to the participants' sense of self. As such, an interrelated set of procedures and feelings were paramount to the practice of sexy self-representation. Rather than unique and innovative, their repetitiveness in the media and society in general have led to an all too familiar type of woman who's claims to liberation and empowerment occur within a compendium of material and aesthetic requirements.

Furthermore, while sexiness – according to the participants – was a construction that needed routine work and maintenance, its expected results – pride, confidence and self-worth – were considered natural and self-explanatory. That participants' did not always feel proud and/or confident despite adhering to the required stereotype is a factor that exacerbated their underlying insecurity. Regardless of their regular participation in sexy photography shoots, the expected outcome – as alluded to by the thousands of advertisements to which women are continuously exposed – is never fully realised. Frustration thus emerges together with the contention that material change – breast augmentation for example – will solve the problem. However, the types of body "problems" experienced by these women will emerge continuously in that, as stated by Donna, "[t]here's always something to be fixed." This struggle is due primarily to the fact that the airbrushed, spray-tanned and re-touched women of *FHM* (and many other mainstream media titles) dictate the participants' interpretation of "feminine perfection." Indeed, when asked what they thought of the *FHM* models, all interviewed participants considered them "beautiful" and/or "stunning." Unfortunately, such an unnatural and constructed form has become naturalised by the media and society in general. Despite their awareness – and, in some instances, pre-empted rejection – of the various techniques used to create these perfect but fake women, the participants still used this bodily template, whether consciously or subconsciously, as a guide in terms of their own appearance. Their intense concentration on the therapeutic benefits of sexy self-representation seemed to

overshadow their realisation of the fact that what is replicated (externally) by the media is a facade that results in them always feeling inadequate (internally) due to their more normal appearance experienced when they are not dressed up for a photography shoot.

Thus, the participants' desire to look "perfect" resulted in their self-criticism which, due to unrealistic expectations imposed on them by society's fashion-beauty complex (Frost, 1999: 132), may never end. While the fashion-beauty complex pertains to contemporary women in general, the self-criticism experienced by amateur models, in light of the research findings, is arguably more intense due to their active participation in a practice reliant on the "perfect" body. The known pressures imposed on professional models by, for example, their agents are replicated – although to a possibly lesser extent – by an internalised desire on the part of the interviewed participants to change according to the generic stereotype of modelling.

Moreover, that at least two of the participants (Andrea and Donna) wanted nothing other than a professional modelling career made additional future changes to their bodies and appearance – according to the requirements of this aesthetic activity – a probable scenario. Their intense desire to become successful models had already contributed to their more relaxed attitude, in comparison to other participants, regarding "acceptable" representations. As such, their willingness to continue adhering to the type of body required for modelling and sexiness was arguably stronger, making their manipulation by means of the internalised fashion-beauty complex (Frost, 1999: 132) more likely. However, that Donna and Ashley – like the four other interviewed participants – actively initiate and maintain their stereotyped appearances makes manipulation by the fashion-beauty complex (Frost, 1999: 132) a less straight forward occurrence. In order to assess the claim that such women will be easier targets of manipulation, their progression or lack thereof in the professional world of modelling would need to be monitored in relation to their actions and reactions.

To maintain their current appearance, all participants were already engaging in various "techniques" (McHoul and Grace quoting Foucault, 1993: 17) prescribed and naturalised by the media and society. Grooming, like exercise, was used to increase the women's feelings of confidence and pride. However, and as stated by Naomi Wolf in 1990, the temporary

feelings of power associated with beautifying oneself are “not much” (1990: 285) when compared to the freedom of being real. Unfortunately, the “censoring” of “real women’s faces and bodies” in the media (Wolf, 1990: 17) only furthers the self-imposed criticism experienced by the participants and women in general. Their natural appearance is regarded foreign and “unnatural” when viewed against women who reside in the aspirational “media world” (Couldry, 2000: 10). As such, continuous change and aesthetic betterment is considered the key to success and contentment, as portrayed by the latter women.

In addition to the temporary state of their contentment and pride (experienced only when looking sexy), most of the women interviewed wanted to change specific parts of their bodies. What they currently did in terms of maintenance was therefore not enough to ensure their satisfaction. Like their body “problems,” the media’s prescribed “solutions” are endless, a scenario that will and probably already does further their ongoing dissatisfaction. Thus, their current discontentment had the potential to proliferate into an uncontrollable force that, if not restrained, could result in an obsessive and self-abusive state.

Furthermore, the competitiveness experienced by several of the participant’s interviewed only compounded their material struggles. That they often compared their bodies to those of other women made them more aware of their supposed “imperfections.” For example, if unhappy with the size or shape of her legs, a participant who viewed the “ideal” legs of another amateur model was likely to feel inadequate in relation to this other woman. Such a scenario was apparent when speaking to Christy regarding the size of her breasts. She wanted a larger bust size despite her extremely petit frame. Looking at the larger breasts of other models – professional or amateur – exacerbated her discontentment and possible jealousy towards these other women. Thus, that each individual’s body is structured differently did not seem to matter to the majority of the women interviewed. The idealised features of a “sexy” feminine body were sought-after, despite each woman’s unique build (a short woman such as Belinda wanting thinner, longer legs, for example). Similarly, there seemed to be no acceptance or tolerance on the part of the women interviewed regarding what they would look like without the assistance of make-up, styled hair and/or exercise. Rather than welcome their natural appearance, such women alter it continuously by means of various methods of control as recommended by the media. For example, while Carmen

spoke of dying her hair on a regular basis, Christy alluded to always getting her nails "done." Such women do this to improve on their appearance because, as stipulated by so many contemporary media texts, looking good will result in an improved sense of self-worth. All women interviewed believed wholeheartedly in this assertion, as portrayed in their opinions regarding grooming and/or "look[ing] after themselves" (Donna).

However, as already described, being part of such a materialistic dynamic does not bring about complete and lasting fulfilment. That the participants engaged in bettering themselves by means of bodily changes and/or enhancements merely intensified their entrapment in the ongoing cycle of discontentment. Furthermore, the majority of activities said to better their appearance and therefore self-esteem demanded regular maintenance (colouring ones hair, for example, is by no means a once off treatment). Thus, once embarked upon, it would be difficult for these and other women to stop such procedures. There is, perhaps deliberately, no once-off treatment that will secure their everlasting beauty. It is an ongoing struggle that requires conformity and dedication from its bearers. And yet, the time, effort and even pain experienced for the sake of beauty "is trivial since it is assumed that women freely choose it" (Wolf, 1990: 257). Beauty's constituents are thus a series of concealed "political weapons. Through them, a widespread political torture is taking place among us [women]" (Wolf, 1990: 257). This instilled torture is compounded by the rivalry experienced among participants of *FHM* Girlfriend. Although complimenting one another, the fact remains that the women are contestants competing for the same title (winner of the monthly model search competition) ultimately determined by the obscured "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975).

For Naomi Wolf (1990: 14), such competitiveness "has been made part of the [beauty] myth so that women will be divided from one another." The practice of looking at one another "takes in the picture but leaves out the person... Women can tend to resent each other if they look too 'good' and dismiss one another if they look too 'bad'" (Wolf, 1990: 75). A degree of isolation, rather than unanimous support and celebration, is thus likely to be felt among these women as they continue to judge themselves and each other by means of their bodies, poses and outfits. Their rivalry with one another only exacerbates their ongoing frustration, resulting in an insecure and potentially volatile attitude. Furthermore – and as stated in the previous chapter – the women's admiration of the same sex is

acceptable so long as they are overtly heterosexual. Such a dynamic may further disrupt the psyche of these women in that their admiration of the same sex could result in an innate attraction that, due to their exaggerated heterosexuality (as depicted in their representations on *FHM* Girlfriend), is continuously suppressed. Moreover, that the majority of amateur models on *FHM* Girlfriend are white is problematic in that it shows little diversity in terms of race, despite South Africa's cultural melange. As such, young aspiring models who are not white may feel compelled to tone down their natural ethnicity before competing on *FHM* Girlfriend. As contended by Maya A. Poran (2002: 67) in her analysis of how black and latina women respond to stereotyped depictions of women in the media, "a person's conception of the self is strongly guided and shaped by the culture in which s/he is developing." Although a surmise given the scope of this research project, the possible effects of such a scenario should at least be considered in light of the increasing popularity of sexy self-representation via online platforms such as *FHM* Girlfriend. Fitting into the mould of the sexy western stereotype, regardless of one's cultural heritage, may mean straddling between two divergent roles for some women, as is the case with the participants (Carmen and Belinda) who engage in alternative careers. This may lead to confusion and additional self-doubt among certain participants in that a culture of whiteness legitimates the "inequalities" (La Pierre, 1999) still experienced in class and race relations. When combined, the competitiveness with one another, self-critique and potential suppression of alternative identities could result in a lonely, isolated state on the part of these women.

Genuine expressions of pride? The sexy body as indicative of a somewhat troubled identity

In light of the above discussion, what participants of *FHM* Girlfriend present to the audience is an arguably flawed identity realised only when considered in relation to the various constituents of contemporary sexy self-representation. Unfortunately, modern society's hetero-normative positioning makes it difficult for these and other women to assume identities devoid of the given roles enforced upon women as a class. A toned, slender body, radiant hair and smooth skin are just three of the features needed before a woman is considered appealing and successful. And yet, rather than feel suppressed, women who engaged in the act of sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend made reference to feeling

empowered due to their active initiation of the repetitive feminine stereotype. They chose to be "sexy," a fact that they claim contributes to their sense of "control" (Andrea) and certainty. However, as contended by Angela McRobbie (2009: 19), the discourse of sexual emancipation and pride justifies its significance by means of choice. The concept of choice is itself a form of restraint in that women are expected to make "the right choices" (McRobbie, 2009: 19). With regard to the participants, choosing to be sexy was considered the correct choice. Conversely, women who chose to deviate from the stereotype were failures not worthy of celebrating their sexuality.

Thus, the freedom of choice practiced by the women interviewed was somewhat deceptive. Society's contention that being sexy results in pride and contentment is, as proven in previous paragraphs, a fallacy. Participants were too concerned with their appearance and bodies, an occurrence that led to their carefully concealed insecurities. Their choice to be sexy was laced with contradiction in that this "correct decision" resulted, at least to a certain extent, in the opposite of their liberation and empowerment. While they believed that sexiness leads to success and happiness, as portrayed by the media, this was not fully the case when speaking to them regarding their insecurities. As such, what is presented to the audience of *FHM* Girlfriend is a woman whose sense of self depends on the material dictates of patriarchy. Rather than constraint by means of social and financial boundaries, patriarchy now focuses on the female body as a means of control and possible manipulation (McRobbie drawing on the work of Foucault, 2009: 50). Moreover, while it seems the "fearful terrain of male approval" (McRobbie, 2009: 63) has, to a certain extent, receded, the "new horizon of self-imposed feminine cultural norms" (McRobbie, 2009: 63) acts as its substitute. Women judge themselves – and each other – in their attempt to be sexy and therefore successful. What they seem to not fully consider, however, is that men still benefit from their self-objectification. Their self-imposed scrutiny and control over their bodies is thus an arguably calculated manoeuvre on the part of patriarchy that operates under the pretence of choice, liberation and pride. By means of the media's constant promotion of sexiness and its link to contentment, young South African women are persuaded into a hetero-normative structure that positions men as the ultimate benefactors. It is, however, not as straightforward as this in that, as already discussed, the amateur models interviewed obtain seemingly genuine feelings of pride when engaging in sexy self-representation on

FHM Girlfriend. A certain amount of agency on the part of these women is thus undeniable when considering their knowing engagement in a practice that focuses exclusively on the "sexy" body.

Nonetheless, the "particular kinds of [female] citizens and subjects" (Sturken and Cartwright quoting Foucault, 2001: 97) that emerge from the *FHM* Girlfriend scenario are, although in varying degrees, troubled individuals constrained by the tastes of a heterosexual and male-dominated society. The societal "knowledge" regarding a sexy woman (successful, popular and desirable) works as an instrument of "normalisation" (McHoul and Grace quoting Foucault, 1993: 17) that manoeuvres many women into choosing this "correct" state of being. After choosing to be "sexy," women then engage in the various "techniques" (grooming and exercising, for example) that assist them in "tell[ing] the 'truth'" about themselves (McHoul and Grace quoting Foucault, 1993: 3). This adoption of naturalised "techniques" enables these women to consider themselves as individualised subjects while simultaneously constraining them "from thinking otherwise" (McHoul and Grace quoting Foucault, 1993: 3). As such, sexiness becomes a crucial part of their identities. If and when lost – an inevitable occurrence given, for example, the material effects of ageing – the women interviewed are likely to feel disillusioned, a result that could then extend to a severe state of depression.

That feelings of depression, anxiety and discontentment are naturalised by the media (McRobbie, 2009: 60) only furthers the likelihood of this occurring at some point in a woman's life. In fact, for those interview participants determined to progress in a modelling career, the self-scrutiny already adopted has the potential to worsen sooner given the known pressures of professional modelling. Such a scenario could be disastrous and even deadly, although, as already stated, the women's reactions to their progression or lack thereof in the professional modelling world would need to be monitored in order to prove this surmise. Women who engage in modelling, whether amateur or professional, are at risk in that their current reliance on their bodies and appearance is a hapless scenario entailing torment and the possibility of obsession. Thus, although claiming to feel proud and satisfied due to their engagement in the practice of sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend, the material effects of modern, patriarchal power (Foucault, 1980: 57) underpin the participants' sense of empowerment. They feel proud only because they have succeeded in

achieving an appearance dependent on their self-constraint and discipline. Ironically, their self-government occurs in a society "officially 'freed'" (McHoul and Grace quoting Foucault, 1993: 24) from the external control of patriarchy (that women no longer need men is a common claim in contemporary society). However, the latter form of control has become internalised by these women, thereby inducing their conscious adherence to its restrictive mechanics (Foucault, 1977a: 201).

As such, participants of *FHM* Girlfriend "are themselves the bearers" (Foucault, 1977a: 201) of a regulated way of life. Although not as rigid as anticipated with their diet and exercise, they assumed similar lifestyles deliberately in order to look a certain way. Unfortunately, what they worked towards looking like results in a generic type of woman who lacks in individuality. Indeed her self-representation does what it is supposed to: she is portrayed to others as a provocative and sexually assertive young woman. However, any other aspect pertaining to her identity is excluded, thereby reducing her to a sexualised role only. Conveniently, such a scenario works to maintain male domination in contemporary society. While many young men work towards participating in the political, economic and legal spheres of society (to mention just three of many professional territories) thousands of young women aspire – above all else – to look sexy. Nonetheless, such women seemed happy to concentrate on and better their "sexiness" as is contributed in a positive way to their sense of self. Thus, one cannot contend that the amateur models interviewed are merely deceived by patriarchy and the media into the practice of sexy self-representation. Indeed, they are more than just the "passive" female subjects who satisfy only heterosexual men in a patriarchal society. Moreover, the likes of Belinda and Carmen provide further hope in terms of their alternative career interests, a point to be discussed further in the following chapter. It remains, however, that the attention such women give to their appearance could jeopardise their potential development in other – possibly more fulfilling – roles. Like the other four amateur models interviewed, they run the risk of becoming superficial, at least in terms of their interests and/or "knowledge" regarding women as a class (Sturken and Cartwright quoting Foucault, 2001: 97).

Conclusion

Although active in initiating and depicting their agency, participants of *FHM* Girlfriend still rely on the infamous gaze (and online votes) of heterosexual men. The individualistic freedom often associated with sexy self-representation is thus not entirely genuine. Looking "sexy" is initiated by these women for the pleasure of other individuals as well as themselves. The latter form of pleasure requires work as such women must continuously maintain or better their appearance by means of numerous, sometimes painful and potentially dangerous measures. Only then will they feel content and proud, at least for a short period of time. The discontentment will and does seem to always follow. As such *FHM* Girlfriend's amateur models have positioned themselves in a myriad of interconnected, societal dynamics that both increase and decrease their feelings of pride and contentment. The following final chapter concludes this research project's findings in relation to the three core environments, both literal and figurative, in which sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend operates. I propose possible solutions to the negative aspects underpinning this trend while also reflecting briefly on future research questions that were unable to be elaborated on due to this project's indicated scope.

CHAPTER 7: MOVING FORWARD: CONCLUDING REMARKS ON SEXY SELF-REPRESENTATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE IN A SEXUALISED SOCIETY

This chapter summarises the project's key findings by positioning and discussing them in relation to their respective contexts/environments, namely patriarchy and the modelling industry. While discussing both environments in light of the research findings, I issue final conclusions regarding sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend. The third and final (figurative) environment is that of the interviewed participants' (inner) identities. This is discussed in a similar manner to that of the first two environments. I end this project by proposing several possible interventions that could, in time, minimise the unfavourable aspects of sexy self-representation as reflected in the amateur models' responses. I also introduce several new research questions in light of what this project did not investigate due to its given scope.

Environment One: Patriarchy concealed in the *FHM* Girlfriend scenario

The research findings pertaining to this project do, in various ways, reflect the post-feminist contention that women's progress in modern society has "unsettled traditional gender formations... bolstering the social position and psychic security of women..." in relation to the growing insecurity of men (Benwell, 2003: 13). That the interview participants initiated their depictions in order to strengthen their own confidence was, upon initial inspection, indicative of this opinion. Such women actively engage in the compilation of their (depicted) identities, the result being a portrayed sexual assertiveness that, in light of patriarchy's past suppression of women both sexually and socially, is indeed hopeful. Furthermore, in terms of the medium off which this particular practice operates (a digital/on-line space), the thousands of heterosexual men who look at the amateur models' depictions can do only that: look. In this regard, the former participant is arguably disempowered as true, physical/sexual access to the latter participant will probably never occur. *FHM* Girlfriend positions men (the spectators) in the "real" world, while placing women (the amateur models) in the "media" world (Couldry, 2000: 10). Both environments, as contended by Couldry (2000: 10) are separated apart by society (literally and figuratively), a dynamic that complicates the straightforward suppression of one gender by another. As a result, men

could be regarded as helpless spectators who will – in all likelihood – only ever be able to fantasize regarding these beautiful, sexy women.

It is easy, then, to accept the belief held by many contemporary women and feminist theorists alike that sex now "'serves a multiplicity of purposes, including pleasure [and] the establishing and [re]defining of [heterosexual] relationships...'" (Attwood quoting Plummer, 2006: 78). The *FHM* Girlfriend scenario is definitely more complex than the simplistic male audience/female object dynamic that was and still is criticised by many theorists. Thanks to "the development of new communication technologies to support, replace or reconfigure sexual encounters" (Attwood: 2006: 82), women who pose on *FHM* Girlfriend have been able to rework this dynamic. The focus is now on their individual pleasures as sexy participants. Furthermore, the desires of heterosexual men are secondary to these women thereby redefining, at least to a certain extent, the traditional heterosexual relationship and/or mediated scenario whereby women are passive objects used by the active male audience. The former is now a "sexually assertive," independent woman who aligns to what feminists have tried to establish in society for decades (Gauntlett, 2008: 182). That this supposed liberation is taking place via *FHM* Girlfriend is reflective of Gill's contention that "feminism... now happens in the media..." (2007: 40). The content on *FHM* Girlfriend depicts aspects of the popular post-feminist movement in that it entails the active, self-sexualisation of contemporary women. They – the participants of *FHM* Girlfriend – use this media platform to be part of the current celebration of sexy, liberated women, a trend that continues to grow throughout South Africa.

However and as questioned by Gill (2007: 41) in light of her contention regarding feminism in the media, has it (the media) become "feminist?" Or has it "recuperated feminist ideas, emptying them of their radical force and selling them back to us as sanitized products or lifestyles to consume?" (Gill, 2007: 41). As proven in this project's research, the "sexually assertive" (Gauntlett, 2008: 182) women depicted on *FHM* Girlfriend are laced with contradiction. Rather than develop unique identity portrayals, such women emulate the repetitive appearance of professional glamour models because such a look is saturated with notions of sexual empowerment, prestige and success. Furthermore, as with the stereotyped sexiness required of these women, "empowerment" – the result of sexiness – has become "a compulsory part of normative, heterosexy, young female subjectivity..." (Gill,

2012: 7). It ("empowerment") has also been used extensively by advertisers to sell – via the media – an array of consumer products and services (Gill, 2012: 7). This together with its compulsory incorporation into modern female subjectivity makes "empowerment" an unreliable term for the analysis of sexy self-representation. It has been overused by the media, becoming a mere trend among young women in contemporary society. As such, its true potential with women has ultimately been lost. Genuine empowerment among women cannot be achieved in an environment whereby sexual objectification, underpinned by constraint and insecurity, occurs.

To a certain extent, *FHM* Girlfriend is such an environment. It has "recuperated feminist ideas" of empowerment in a way that is arguably deceitful to the women it targets (Gill, 2007: 41). Such women buy into this trend because it is supposed to empower them sexually at least. It is arguable that what they are doing by means of their sexualised appearance and representations is conceding to a form of empowerment emptied of its significance by the disingenuous mechanics of contemporary patriarchy. As contended by Attwood (2006: 83), the media's intense focus on female emancipation and pride has helped conceal its true, patriarchal agenda: to suppress women by means of their desire to achieve and maintain a stereotyped appearance. But, as proven by the research's findings, the amateur models are not merely victims of the patriarchal dynamic whereby men (the active spectators) obtain power and control over women (the passive objects). The latter are genuinely content to pose in a sexy way for men, despite a heightened awareness of their supposed imperfections due to participating in amateur modelling. Patriarchy does still operate in this scenario, however. Rather than overtly in terms of its subordination of women, it functions in a way that is hidden by the interrelated discourses of "sexiness" and empowerment. Patriarchy's recent focus on women's sexual empowerment is adopted by the media as well as many feminist theorists, an occurrence that has led to a "socio-historical amnesia" (Mac an Ghaill et al, 2007: 24) regarding the still valid issues of disempowement.

Furthermore, many analyses of sexual representations indicate a "too direct relation between radicalism, demand, capitalism and media output" (Attwood quoting McNair, 2006: 82). The various platforms for sexy self-representation are not just a reaction – by the media – to the increasingly explicit "pornosphere" (McNair, 2002: 87) in which we live.

Rather, most of these media platforms deliberately initiate and sustain the sexual stereotype pertaining to women because it is destructive to women as a class. *FHM* Girlfriend is no exception. That it initiates competitiveness among its participants – the amateur models – makes for an even worse situation in that such women critique themselves as well as each other. As such, an inevitable but well concealed divide among these women occurs. A possible retaliation – against the material constraints of patriarchy – becomes difficult in that, besides being their own worst enemies (constantly critiquing themselves in terms of their appearance), such women are likely to alienate themselves from one another. As a result, the compliments from heterosexual men seem to be the only genuine appreciation obtained by these women. They continue in the maintenance of their "sexy" appearance because it is what heterosexual men are presumed to enjoy. Thus, although interchangeable, the theoretical "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975) still influences these women in terms of what they look like and how they act. It does so in a cunning manner as the women concentrate on looking the way they do for their own gratification (rather than the gratification of men). Furthermore, that some women may be using their bodies on *FHM* Girlfriend due to current financial constraints is a possibility that would again exacerbate the physical requirements of patriarchy. Although none of the participants interviewed spoke of being financially restricted, most did allude positively to modelling as a lucrative career. As such, that certain young woman desperate for money would push themselves to align to a stereotyped appearance is a plausible scenario. In this regard, patriarchy would be partnering with capitalism to control its subjects. Indeed, the latter structure initiates the never-ending material and financial wants of so many individuals. As contended by Chris Barker (2002: 175), the consumer culture in which we live in "is producing more discontentment than happiness for its appeal to us works on the assumption that we are not good enough nor can we ever have enough."

FHM Girlfriend's depiction of an empowered (hetero) sexuality is thus a deliberate attempt on the part of patriarchy to continue dominating women. As contended by Franklin (2013: 3), the conglomerates responsible for the creation and dissemination of media texts such as *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend are, more often than not, "white middle-aged men." While this results in racial hegemony – as discussed in previous chapters – it also shows how society's influential corporate structures still function by means of male domination, the cornerstone

of patriarchy. Furthermore, although media corporations in South Africa have made black appointments at executive levels, the many global alignments that occur – as is the case with *FHM* – allow for little diversity over and above western perceptions of acceptable content. For example, the current global CEO of Bauer Consumer Media – the international corporation responsible for the creation and dissemination of *FHM* – is, as anticipated, a white man by the name of Andreas Schoo (media24.co.za). *FHM* South Africa adheres to Bauer Consumer Media's western standard regarding "sexiness," because the latter owns and therefore dictates – to a greater extent – what the former is permitted to depict. And yet, the overarching structure of *FHM* and many other corporations remains hidden from the South African women who participate in sexy self-representation via *FHM* Girlfriend. By promoting self-indulgence and pride on the part of these women, *FHM* Girlfriend diverts attention away from the male audience and owners of this practice. Moreover, if an amateur model were to obtain a professional modelling contract due to her participation on *FHM* Girlfriend, the financial benefits – a stated motivation for most of the interview participants – would probably never amount to the income shared among the executives of Bauer Consumer Media.

The above dynamic entails the regulation of gender, race and, to a certain extent, the monies earned by *FHM* models. It is reflective Bell Hooks' (1981: 2) contention that a "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" governs our society. All three components of this phrase work together in order to subjugate women, especially those who are not white. The components are "interlocking systems of domination that define our reality" (Hooks, 1981: 2). As such, they should not ever be viewed in isolation.

The vested interests of other, often unconsidered individuals and organisations thus influence sexy self-representation in terms of what it looks like in South Africa. Women who belong to the glamorised environment of *FHM* Girlfriend have first aligned their appearance to the dictates of a somewhat concealed patriarchal, capitalist and racially hegemonic structure. After initiating and sustaining the feminine stereotype, the latter then benefits from the objectification of the former either financially or by means of entertainment. Such an environment is therefore destructive in terms of its positioning of women in relation to men. It's near invisibility together with the focus on pride and confidence among women is deliberate in that it makes women oversee the fact that they are supporting patriarchy –

and other limiting discourses – by means of their participation on *FHM* Girlfriend. In a sense, then, the women join in the chauvinistic celebration of sexiness, a situation that, as contended by Wisneski (2007: 113) binds them to a contradictory way of being (an ultra feminine body versus a chauvinistic attitude).

Environment Two: Modelling and the associated practice of sexy self-representation

The modelling industry to which many of the amateur models aspire is an environment plagued with self-critique and dissatisfaction, making it the spawn of patriarchy. As contended in this report, the known pressures of professional modelling can and do result in obsessive behaviours on the part of young women. Its exclusivity in terms of the very specific type of women it "allows" is further evidence of its – and patriarchy's – attempt to distance women from one another. Furthermore, despite the noted physical differences of fashion/runway versus glamour models (the latter often associated, by the media, to a healthy lifestyle), the two "types" of women are very specific in terms of their bodies' shape, tone and size. In fact, both modelling categories reflect conformity and restraint regarding what its participants look like. While being underweight is a good thing in the fashion/runway modelling industry (models must aim to be ultra skinny), glamour models must be careful not to cross over into either the "too fat" or "too skinny" territory. Glamour models must always be aware of the two opposing types of bodies because neither is considered appealing. Rather, it is the curvaceous but toned look – a kind of middle ground – that is desired. It creates further conflict in that glamour models, both professional and amateur, must position themselves somewhere in between two opposites. It is possible, then, that the proposed health benefits of a curvaceous but slender and toned physique – as depicted in the media – are an additional ploy on the part of patriarchy to naturalise the work required of women. Although thoroughly enjoyed by the participants, modelling can be a destructive environment that should be entered with caution and awareness.

Despite its specificity, the "positives" of modelling continue enticing women to pursue it as a career. As with the supposed therapeutic benefits of sexy self-representation via platforms such as *FHM* Girlfriend, the modelling industry is glamorised by the media, an occurrence that overshadows its negatives. Many young women want to be part of a group or category that will assist them in establishing their identities. That professional models

gain the attention and praise of others while earning money is an additional draw card that makes modelling as a career so appealing. Such factors (the sense of belonging, attention from others and money) combine to support an industry worth millions of South African Rands. Due to its appeal, aspiring models emulate the modelling scenario on *FHM* Girlfriend as well as many other social platforms. As such, *FHM* Girlfriend is a replication of the modelling world. Amateur models obtain a sense of belonging to this replicated world while receiving the attention and praise of others, a situation similar in many respects to that of professional modelling.

However, due to their amateur status, the models of *FHM* Girlfriend are not paid by the producers of this platform. In this regard, the chance of winning *FHM* Girlfriend's ongoing model search competition attracts them because such a scenario may then lead to a lucrative career. But, as contended by Belinda during her interview, the likelihood of progressing to a professional career in modelling is slim for most young women. Despite its instilled regulations – those embedded in the psyches of the amateur models – modelling for *FHM* Girlfriend is easier than modelling for a professional agency. The latter "world" (Couldry, 2000: 10) is far stricter than the former in terms of its material requirements (the shape, size and facial features of its participants). And yet, several of the women interviewed remained hopeful if not certain regarding their future participation in the professional world of modelling. It was their primary ambition regardless of its noted pressures. Unfortunately, what such women are investing their time and money into is an uncertain future. Despite objectifying themselves sexually on *FHM* Girlfriend, there is no guarantee that they will then progress, automatically, to modelling as a full time profession.

Furthermore, if a modelling career is obtained it will, in all likelihood be short lived as very seldom do models over the age of approximately thirty feature in mainstream media. The possible exception is if a woman becomes famous due to modelling. Heidi Klum, the international supermodel and celebrity – now nearing the age of forty – referred to by Belinda exemplifies this exception. Despite retiring from modelling, Klum's celebrity status has enabled her to continue with a lucrative media career (she initiated her own reality television programme, *Project Runway*, aimed at aspiring fashion designers). However, once obtaining a professional modelling status there is, once again, no guarantee that a woman will become a celebrity. Indeed, most professional models remain relatively anonymous

despite their chosen careers. We see them on the runways of televised fashion shows and in the glossy pages of magazines such as *FHM*, but they are by no means famous and/or recognised by the general public. The celebrity status indicative of glamour and prestige is not a definite result of professional modelling. As such, perhaps the glamorous "media world" (Couldry, 2000: 10) to which so many young women aspire to belong, by means of modelling, is another facet used by patriarchy to promote and profit from the act of self-exposure. The link between professional modelling and a celebrity status is, to a certain extent, deceptive in that the one will not always accompany the other. And yet, the majority of participants alluded to fame and money as a definite motivation for progressing in a modelling career, proof of their possibly misinformed perception regarding the professional world of modelling.

Thus, many young women in South Africa and throughout the world are drawn to the modelling industry's facade of glamour and prestige. The reality is that such an environment operates according to what is known to sell and generate profit: sexually stereotyped women. It is a cut-throat industry fraught with racism, sexism, classism and control. What models obtain from looking "sexy" and "beautiful" is of little concern to the producers of this industry. The latter is preoccupied with delivering a product that will sell to a mass market. As such, the former participant is a potential resource that, if not suited to a given project's requirement (blonde hair and/or white skin for example) will be rejected. Although gaining a degree of pride and confidence from posing in front of the camera and looking a certain way, models are still physical objects, used by the modelling industry to generate revenue.

Furthermore, that the positives of modelling make many young women want to belong to this environment perpetuates the necessary stereotype. This stereotype has also become naturalised by the media, an irony in that it is unnatural and constructed. Indeed, if women were to "forget all about" (Wolf, 1990: 285) the normalised practices associated with looking "good," the visual result would be far different than what we see in the media today. Most young women depicted in the media wear copious amounts of make-up while their coloured hair, toned bodies and tanned skin indicate hours of additional body work. Due to its repetition around most parts of the world, such an appearance, and the measures needed to obtain and maintain it, are considered normal, especially if a woman wants to

feel good about herself. Conversely, if a woman doesn't wear make-up or if she puts on (or loses) too much weight, it means she is neglecting herself, the expected result being her unhappiness. Most models exemplify the ideal appearance – they always look "perfect" – a factor that contributes to their expected confidence and pride. Because they look amazing, the assumption is that they feel amazing. But, as already indicated, this is not always the case. The sense of power gained "from turning oneself into a living art object" is probably "not much" (Wolf, 1990: 285) when compared to the freedom of extending one's contentment to beyond what you like.

As a reconstruction of the modelling environment, *FHM* Girlfriend exploits the already mentioned requirement on the part of many young women to belong to a group or category. Upon initial inspection of this platform, the compliments shared between the amateur models are indicative of a communal setting. However and as proven, the competitiveness of *FHM* Girlfriend makes any sense of belonging a fallacy. The effects of patriarchy (environment one) occur by means of modelling (environment two), whether amateur or professional. With regard to the former level of modelling, the accepted focus on a woman's appearance and body allows for an "intensification of each individual's desire, for, in and over [her] body" (Foucault, 1980: 57). Aspiring models adhere willingly to an "investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation" (Foucault, 1980: 57). Indeed, the feelings of pride and confidence experienced by these women when posing for *FHM* Girlfriend are a form of stimulation. So intense is this stimulation that it warrants the methods of control inflicted by these women, onto themselves. The result is the third and final environment pertaining to the act of sexy self-representation, namely, the women's identities.

Environment Three: The inner world of amateur models as a result of their self-inflicted control

The dynamics of environment one and two entice amateur models to maintain their stereotyped appearances in a variety of interrelated ways. As a result of this persuasion, the women interviewed believe that sexy self-representation via a platform such as *FHM* Girlfriend is genuinely therapeutic. They conform to a sexual stereotype while simultaneously showcasing their appearance and bodies to a predominantly male audience.

While the former practice entails ongoing regulation, the latter involves deliberate exposure. Both – regulation and exposure – are self-induced. And yet, they are initiated by these women due to their proposed benefits of sexual pride and confidence. As contended by Nancy Thumim (2012, 3–4), the therapeutic benefits of contemporary self-representation are "'political'" because the meanings of therapy "take shape within human relations structured by race, gender, class, sexuality, age..." The contemporary discourse that regards sexual explicitness as indicative of an empowered feminine identity is apparent in the dynamics of *FHM* Girlfriend. Such a discourse dictates that sexy self-representation is therapeutic for women because it provides them with confirmation regarding their "sexy" appearance. This discourse promotes a very specific type of appearance that answers to the requirements of patriarchy. The therapeutic benefits experienced by the amateur models are thus shaped according to the rules and regulations of this restrictive discourse. The women feel invigorated due to their participation on *FHM* Girlfriend, but only because they meet the required physical expectations of "sexiness." They are fully aware of what they should look like, dissecting their own bodies into "bits" (Gill, 2007: 80) that are then critiqued.

Furthermore, the therapeutic benefits associated with sexy self-representation are, as already indicated, a temporary experience for the interviewed participants. Because of their amateur status as models, their exposure to the "glitz and glamour" of photography shoots, for example, is limited (at least in comparison to most professional models). As such, the majority of these women don't always look as perfect as they do when posing in front of a camera. Their excitement and confidence experienced when modelling is brief but impactful, making them want more of it. Modelling also offers them an escape from their ordinary lives. It is, in this sense, comparable to an addictive narcotic: the highs of engaging in it are intense but fleeting. When disengaged, the participant could slip into a melancholic low, the only cure being another aesthetic treatment and/or experience (getting a facial to feel "better" about oneself for example). Thus, sexy self-representation connects itself to a number of ongoing practices that, in many instances, have become embedded in the minds of South African women. Like prisoners familiar with the constraints of a guarded existence, so many contemporary women adhere to the rules and regulations of patriarchy. It is a form of power that has become internalised, thereby inducing states of docility that are

"independent of the person who [initiates and] exercises it" (Foucault, 1977a: 201). Indeed, applying make-up every morning is a standard and normal practice for the majority of participants interviewed. To not do this – i.e. to be truly natural – is considered abnormal and/or lax.

In addition to the maintenance of a western (predominantly white) beauty standard, this internalised "fashion beauty complex" (Frost, 1999: 132) creates uncertainty and a degree of discontentment among its participants. Models in particular become ambassadors of this way of life. Their stereotyped appearance is promoted by the media as a woman's route to success and happiness. That the exact opposite occurs is, as contended by McRobbie (2009: 63), simultaneously naturalised by the media (self-help articles concerning contemporary disorders such as depression and anorexia proliferate in the many magazine titles targeted at women). Thus, an ongoing and potentially destructive scenario is currently at play among many young South African women. To a greater extent, the interviewed participants' responses toward sexy self-representation and modelling were reflective of the post-feminist contention that regards sexual exposure as positive and liberating for women as a class. However as proven in this report, such a contention – like the many women who participate willingly in the practice of sexy self-representation – fails to properly account for the latest and more obscure mechanics of patriarchy. In order to stop this potentially destructive cycle, a renewed awareness among women regarding patriarchy's existence in contemporary society is needed. How this can possibly be achieved is discussed in the following, penultimate sub-section.

A necessary intervention: Suggestions for genuine liberation

The dangers of contemporary patriarchy's mechanics can and have been deadly for young women in South Africa and the rest of the world. Reports (local and international) regarding women dying from anorexia and/or cosmetic procedures continue without signs of abating. In fact, the majority of these fatalities go undocumented by the media. The frightening risks of the "fashion beauty complex" are thus, to a greater extent, underplayed and/or completely ignored. This project's findings have reflected the beginnings of a possibly destructive cycle endured by the women who participate, via *FHM* Girlfriend, in the practice of sexy self-representation. It is concerning to think that several of the women interviewed

are completely fixated on modelling as their future. What will happen to their self-esteem if they are denied access into the professional modelling world? Will they resort to stricter regimes of perfection while trying repeatedly to access this environment? In this regard, Carmen and Belinda – participants who had alternative career aspirations – reflected a more balanced approach to sexy self-representation and its benefits. Despite their adherence to the repetitive stereotype, both women are invested in alternative careers. They seemed more cognisant of the modelling industry's strict material regulations, reflecting a more grounded understanding and acceptance of their probable exclusion from such an environment. As such, while still enjoying celebrating their (stereotyped) sexiness on *FHM* Girlfriend, they have invested the majority of their time in other, more long-term and stable career options. Their stereotyped appearance is not their only focus.

That most young women are exposed on a daily basis to the idealised feminine stereotype is almost unavoidable. Given the media's relentless promotion of the "perfect" feminine appearance, we won't be able to avoid this stereotype – and its associated practices – all together. If media conglomerates allowed for the promotion a diverse range of women, the current situation in which we find ourselves may be different. This is not – and may never be – the case. As indicated, most media organisations, both international and local, are driven by profit. Such a reality results in their adherence to mainstream standards of sexiness and beauty as they are proven to sell. Thus, perhaps feeling pressured to adhere to the promoted stereotype, at least to a certain extent, is an almost unavoidable scenario. Society's conditioned mindset regarding what a woman "who cares for herself" should look like will almost always influence how women are perceived by others. The proposed solution in this regard, is for women to gradually divert from concerns regarding their appearance. This diversion must be slow and considered rather than fast and radical. We will need time to digest and consider the fact that looking "sexy" or "beautiful" is a ploy on the part of patriarchy. Although many women do feel good when looking good in a stereotyped way, we must start concentrating more on the other facets of our lives: our education, health and emotional wellbeing. As such, we should exercise for the sake of our health rather than appearance. Perhaps we can maintain a kept and "attractive" look without wearing make-up or spending copious amounts of money on beauty treatments.

We must, as already contended, focus on the more important aspects pertaining to our current and future lives.

Furthermore, when looking at one another (an unavoidable scenario), women must start actively accepting and appreciating the female body's natural "flaws." For example, rather than criticise a pale, untanned woman, we must applaud her for diverting from the norms of western "beauty." If done continuously, such deliberate actions on the part of contemporary women have the capacity to wreck the mechanics of patriarchy, slowly but consistently. Our gradual acceptance of what is truly natural will generate an awareness regarding the unnecessary effort we put into looking a certain way. Difference must be initiated and accepted at a grassroots level with contemporary women in order to one day filter to the top of the media food chain. Moreover, it must be realised that the terrifying, mannish lesbian discussed by McRobbie (2009) is a mere stereotype. Like models, lesbians have been assigned various characteristics which limit them in terms of their individuality. To bring about this understanding as well as an awareness regarding patriarchy's persistence, feminist groups – no matter how small – within education facilities and/or the workplace should be initiated. Women need to talk openly to one another regarding why they feel the need to lose weight, wear make-up, dye their hair and enlarge their breasts. By engaging with one another regarding these and other topics, individual contemplation will occur. Instead of an unquestioned adherence to the practices associated with looking "good," women will start to recognise the sinister realities pertaining to their current and/or desired appearance. We will be more critical when viewing the confident expressions of models in glossy magazines, because what most of them represent is a sense of pride and contentment laced with self-criticism and control. Thus, while a revived feminist revolution may take years to emerge, the above suggestions will at least start to generate awareness among contemporary women.

New questions regarding sexy self representation

This project uncovered the reasons why certain young South African women engage in the practice of sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend. Both the positives and negatives of this scenario – in respect of the amateur models – have been considered in light of the research's findings. The interviewed amateur models' sense of self due to their active

participation on *FHM* Girlfriend has been investigated and discussed in addition to the current context within which sexy self-representation proliferates. For future research, other related topics and concerns could be addressed. Most of these became apparent while engaging in this project. For example, given *FHM* Girlfriend's depiction of mostly white women, all of whom adhere to western perceptions of sexiness, it was surmised that women of other races may feel pressured to subdue their ethnic traits in order to belong to this site. However, no actual evidence could be obtained to support this speculation given the fact that all participants interviewed were white. How amateur models of other racial origins behave on and towards *FHM* Girlfriend is thus an interesting topic still to be investigated. What heterosexual men who observe the depictions of amateur models on *FHM* Girlfriend think and feel in relation to these women is another facet belonging to the trend of sexy self-representation. As with the concerns regarding racial exclusivity, the actions of a heterosexual male audience were, to a greater extent, surmised. Furthermore, what about the possibility of a homosexual audience comprising women and/or men? What would an investigation of their relationship with *FHM* Girlfriend reveal in light of issues and concerns regarding gender and our heteronormative society? And finally, what of the professional models of *FHM*? Is their portrayed glamour, pride and in some instances wealth, worth them exposing their bodies to the public? Do they feel they've "made it" in terms of their careers or, as with the amateur models of *FHM* Girlfriend, is there an underlying discontentment experienced among these women? Such questions could be the start of other research projects linked to *FHM*, *FHM* Girlfriend and the practice of sexy self-representation.

Conclusion

Sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend does offer young South African women the opportunity to celebrate and showcase their sexiness, an activity that then generates seemingly genuine feelings of pride and contentment among these women. However, the often unconsidered constituents of sexy self-representation – the self-criticism, competition, racial exclusion, classism and heteronormativity – are real and unchanging, despite years of feminist and sometimes public outcry. As such, a somewhat negotiated reading of this practice has emerged in this report. It has been fair to both the interviewed

participant's opinions and primarily feminist theories it employed. Thus, while sexy self-representation on *FHM* Girlfriend aids the sexual awareness prevalent among many young South African women, it also limits them in terms of their portrayed identities to others. Women as a class is, by means of the representations evident on both *FHM* and *FHM* Girlfriend, still the sexual commodity to be used and judged by heterosexual men. The "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (Hooks, 1981: 2) within which we reside still influences our perception regarding the necessary material constituents of sexiness.

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APPENDIX

Draft message to the amateur models via Facebook

Hi (insert model's name),

My name is Christiane and I'm currently working on my Masters dissertation at Wits University in Johannesburg. My research topic is *FHM* ModelBook as I'm looking into why certain South African women choose to upload pictures of themselves onto this site. Would you be willing to let me interview you over a breakfast or coffee? A local coffee shop/restaurant – whichever suits you best – would be great. Unfortunately I cannot reimburse you for the interview however the meal will be on me! I will take up only an hour of your time and will have pre-signed a consent form guaranteeing your anonymity when documenting our conversation in my thesis. Please won't you drop me a line together with your cell number if you're interested?

Thanks so much

Christiane (083 449 5463)

Information sheet and letter of consent

Research topic:

FHM "Girls": Sexy Self-Representation in Contemporary South African Media

Investigator:

Christiane Botha (christiane.botha@gmail.com 083 449 5463)

I am a current Masters student (2013) at the University of Witwatersrand

Background and Research Objective:

In South Africa as well as the rest of the world, hundreds of thousands of women who have access to the internet participate willingly in the practice of sexy self-representation. The *FHM* ModelBook scenario is an example of this type of self-representation: many young South African women upload photographs of themselves in revealing outfits and seductive poses on this site. The images are automatically available to other individuals accessing the *FHM* website, and in most instances, such photographs are indicative of a stereotyped femininity. This research project's objective is to uncover why certain South African women choose to participate in the practice of sexy self-representation via *FHM* ModelBook. Why do they portray themselves this way? Do such depictions contribute to and/or impact on their identities as young South African women? And how do they relate (if at all) to feminist arguments against mainstream representations of women in contemporary society?

Methods:

I will first be conducting a textual analysis on a selection of ModelBook profiles and *FHM* articles. Thereafter, a series of individual interviews will be conducted with amateur models belonging to the ModelBook website (not the same models whose profiles will be analysed). Each amateur model will be asked the same set of questions, most of which will be open-ended in order to generate a discussion on the topic.

Both research methods will assist in uncovering the reasons why certain women choose to portray themselves in stereotyped ways on ModelBook.

Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about your participation in ModelBook. I value your time a great deal and am committed to protecting your interests.

1. **Withdrawal**

You are free to withdraw from the interview at any point, as well as withdraw the transcript from the study after the interview if you wish. For whatever reason, you may also refuse to answer any of the questions posed.

2. **Confidentiality**

The information provided by you will remain confidential. Nobody except the researcher, her supervisor and examiners will have access to it. Your name and identity will not be disclosed at any time. If photographs from your ModelBook profile are used in the report, I will ensure to blur both your face and name in order to strengthen the degree of anonymity. I may choose to publish the report in academic journals at a later stage. Your name, identity and photographs will not be disclosed/revealed in this instance either.

	I understand that my identity will be protected

3. **Age Restriction**

Due to legal and ethical implications, no participants under the age of 18 will be included in this research project. Furthermore, I aim to investigate why certain young South African women chose to participate in the practice of sexy self-representation on ModelBook, hence me narrowing my focus to women of or between the ages of 18 – 25 years old

	I <u>do</u> belong to the allocated age category (18 – 25 years old)
	I do <u>not</u> belong to the allocated age category (18 – 25 years old)

4. **Recording**

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Once transcribed, the audio recording will be stored in my study at home and not made available to anyone else. Your identity will not be included in the interview transcript, and no one but me will have access to it.

	I am willing to have the interview audio recorded
	I do not want the interview to be audio recorded

5. **Reporting**

The findings of this research project might be published in certain academic journals. I would be happy to send you a copy.

	I would like to receive copies of any ensuing publication
	I don't want to receive copies of any ensuing publications

PLEASE SIGN BELOW TO INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE UNDERSTOOD ALL THE POINTS ABOVE AND ARE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW.

SIGNATURE: **DATE:**

Interview guide

1) **What made you decide to set-up an FHM Modelbook profile?**
2) **What is your current occupation?**
3) **Who would you say is your current role model and why?**
4) **What are your future career aspirations?**
5) **Why do you find modelling as a career so attractive?**
6) **Do you feel you're using your body in a positive way?**
7) **How would you describe yourself in terms of your personality/"inner self"?**
8) **What do you hope to achieve from your Modelbook profile?**
9) **Who would you say your Modelbook profile is for? Please explain your answer**
10) **How do you feel about the fact that so many people (men in particular) look freely at your album photographs on Modelbook?**
11) **How do you feel in relation to the men who view your photos on Modelbook?**
12) **Why do you think men look at Modelbook?**
13) **Why do you think other women look at Modelbook?**
14) **Do the comments/compliments from other people on your Modelbook profile concern you (ie do you find them meaningful?) Please explain your answer**
15) **What, in your opinion, makes a woman sexy?**
16) **Have you ever posed in lingerie? Why?**
17) **Do you think you are portraying a positive femininity? Why?**
18) **What do you think (heterosexual) men regard as sexy?**
19) **How do you feel in relation to your own Modelbook profile (ie when you view your own photographs, what sorts of feelings/thoughts generally emerge)?**
20) **Do you consider yourself sexy?**
21) **Do you ever look at and comment on the photographs of other Modelbook members?**

22) **Why?**

23) **Do you feel pressured at all to maintain a certain appearance as a result of belonging to Modelbook?**

24) **How do you maintain your appearance (ie what sorts of routines do you follow in order to maintain your figure etc)?**

25) **Are you happy with your body?**

26) **What, if anything, do you want to change about your body?**

27) **In your opinion, is looking good worth all the maintenance (hair, make-up, exercise etc)? Please explain your answer.**

28) **Do you ever feel misinterpreted by others because of what you look like?**

29) **Do you think your body and appearance has worked to your advantage in certain social situations?**

30) **Do you feel comfortable posing in bikinis and/or lingerie? Please explain your answer.**

31) **Please describe what you think constitutes a perfect (female) body**

32) **Would you ever consider breast augmentation or any other forms of cosmetic procedures in order to further your modelling career?**

33) **Please explain your above answer.**

34) **Do you think your profile on Modelbook adequately represents who you are as a person? Please explain your answer.**

35) **What do you think the response would be if a really fat woman were to pose for Modelbook?**

36) **What would your reaction be in relation to the above scenario (ie a really fat woman posing for Modelbook)?**

37) **What do you think about the *For Him Magazine* (*FHM*) cover girls?**

38) **Do you ever look at the pictures of women in *FHM* and why?**

39) **Do you think their poses are appropriate?**

40) **Would you yourself like to progress to posing on the cover of *FHM* one day?**

41) Are all or any of your photographs on Modelbook retouched by means of Photoshop?

Ethical clearance form

Scanned 25/4/13

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON MEDICAL)
R14/49 Botha

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER H13/03/16**
PROJECT TITLE	FHM Girls: sexy self-representation in contemporary SA
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ms C Botha
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Literature & Language Studies/Media Studies
DATE CONSIDERED	15/03/2013
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	21/04/2015
DATE 22/04/2013	**CHAIRPERSON** (Professor M Williams, Acting Chairperson)

cc Supervisor : Ms M Iqani

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

26/04/2013
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Interview transcript

PARTICIPANT: ANDREA (PSEUDONYM)

DATE OF RECORDED INTERVIEW: 25 May 2013

DATE OF TRANSCRIPTION: 25 May 2013

CODES: Q = Question; A: = Answer

Q: What made you decide to set-up an FHM Modelbook profile?

A: Because like I said I want to be a professional model. Its my passion

Q: What is your current occupation?

A: Im still working for my dad… he owns his own electrical company that manufactures cables and insulation… that sort of stuff

Q: So what do you do for the company?

A: Ag I just do general admin stuff, basically whatever he needs me to do.

Q: And do you enjoy it?

A: Its ok I guess…. its just something I'm doing while I build up the modelling. I really want to make it with my modelling career.

Q: Ok so who would you say is your current role model and why?

A: Uuhhh… (pause) Megan Fox, Heidi Klum...

Q: And what about the models of *FHM*? Do you think of them as role models?

Yes… when I look at them its like I want what they have… its like im jealous but not in a bad way if that makes sense

Q: Yes it does make sense… What are your future career aspirations?

A: To become a famous model

Q: And why do you find modelling as a career so attractive?

A: I just love it… the feeling of standing in front of the camera is just so amazing you feel good and happy… and the compliments from other people makes you feel proud.

Q: Ok but as a professional career and full time job?

A: It's a tough job I know but you earn a lot of money while looking beautiful so… ya… what girl wouldn't want that?

Q: Ok so here's another question for you: Do you feel you're using your body in a positive way?

A: Uhh…I don't really know how to answer that question

Q: That's fine, no problem… How would you describe yourself in terms of your personality/"inner self"?

A: I'm fun, friendly…. Down to earth…. Honest….

Q: Great… What do you hope to achieve from your Modelbook profile?

A: I wanna get onto the cover of *FHM* and make it in the modelling industry… It's bitchy but I can handle that (shrugs)… it's just the way it is…

Q: Who would you say your Modelbook profile is for? Please explain your answer

A: Myself

Q: And how do you feel about the fact that so many people (men in particular) look freely at your album photographs on Modelbook?

A: Ag I honestly think it's a good thing cos it makes you feel good about yourself. It also makes me feel proud…

Q: How do you feel in relation to the men who view your photos on Modelbook?

A: Good, confident… A bit strange at first when they all say how nice my boobs are (laughs)…

Q: So when they compliment you on your boobs do you feel uncomfortable?

A: A little bit… but I'm definitely always in control of my photos… like I would never do something I wasn't comfortable with

Q: Ok I see… Why do you think other women look at Modelbook?

A: For the competition. You have to see what the other girls have going for them cos the competition out there is tough… so it helps to know who you're up against.

Q: So competition. What about when you look at the girls in *FHM*?

A: You get tips from them on how to pose, it helps you when you plan your shoots…

Q: What, in your opinion, makes a woman sexy?

A: Her personality.

Q: Have you ever posed in lingerie?

A: Yes.

Q: Why?

A: Ag a lot of girls have problems with it but I really don't mind. I always choose my outfits and im very happy with them…

Q: Ok. And what about going further than lingerie? Do you think you'd ever do that?

A: I'd maybe show my bum and boobs… I don't think there's anything wrong with that. But so long as I was in control of the shoot cos how it would be done would matter.

Q: I see, ok, so what do you think men see as sexy?

A: A toned body… big boobs… blonde hair…

Q: How do you feel in relation to your own Modelbook profile (ie when you view your own photographs, what sorts of feelings/thoughts generally emerge)?

A: I feel proud seeing that I've come this far already…

Q: Do you consider yourself sexy?

A: (Slight pause) Yes.

Q: And do you ever comment on the photographs of other Modelbook members?

A: Yes. I enjoy it cos it helps them with their confidence and it also helps me cos I like to meet new people…

Q: Ok that's nice… Do you ever feel pressured at all to maintain your appearance because you belong to Modelbook?

A: Yes I think you have to always look good if you're a model I've actually had a guy once come up to me cos he recognised me from Modelbook. So ya… I always tell my dad that you never know who you're going to see at the shops…So I always wear make-up whenever I go out even if it's just to the shops.

Q: Ok and what other things do you do to maintain your appearance?

A: I go to Gym and eat healthy… its all part of looking like this… but I definitely don't deprive myself I do eat stuff I know is bad for me… You have to have some of the good stuff man!

Q: So are you happy with your body?

A: Yes I accept what God gave me.

Q: Do you want to change anything about your body?

A: No nothing.

Q: Nothing at all?

A: Nothing.

Q: Is looking good worth all the maintenance (hair, make-up, exercise etc)? Please explain your answer.

A: It's tough but it's worth it

Q: Can you explain why it's worth it?

A: The compliments feel good… knowing that people are looking at you because you're sexy…and it also feels good being healthy cos I know I'm looking after myself…

Q: And this ties in with a previous question but do you feel comfortable posing lingerie? Please explain your answer.

A: Yes I love it.

Q: And what in your mind is a sexy female body?

A: A toned body, thin but not too thin… a pretty face and smile, nice make-up

Q: Would you ever consider breast augmentation or any other forms of cosmetic procedures in order to further your modelling career?

A: No

Q: Can you explain your answer?

A: I'm just happy with what God gave me.

Q: Do you think your profile on Modelbook represents who you are as a person and can you explain your answer?

A: No not really cos a lot of people think that because you model you are bitchy and not a nice person but I'm not like that…

Q: And what do you think the response would be if a really fat woman were to pose on Modelbook?

A: Well she wouldn't be voted for... some of the other models would probably also tease her…

Q: So what would your reaction be in relation to the above scenario (ie a really fat woman posing for Modelbook)?

A: If she was my friend I'd say something but in a nice way…

Q: To stop posing on Modelbook?

A: Ya

Q: And the *FHM* models and cover girls… we spoke about them earlier… What do you think of them?

A: They've all really done well for themselves with their modelling… And they're beautiful

Q: And sexy?

A: Ya very sexy!

Q: Do you think their poses are appropriate?

A: Yes I think so

Q: Are all or any of your photographs on Modelbook retouched by means of Photoshop?

A: Yes. It makes a big difference with your photos. It helps a lot with making your skin look good. It's actually amazing what it can do.

Modelbook profiles and album photographs

MODELBOOK PROFILE 1: AMELIA

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Amelia

Name: Amelia

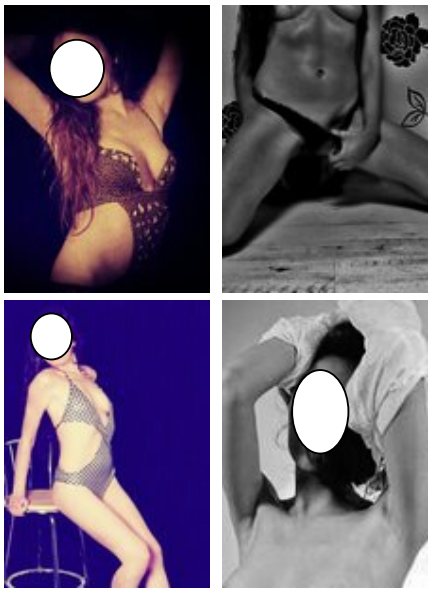
Age: 23

Bio: Hello guys! and welcome to my profile...well...i love wearing little!;)and creating different looks in front of the camera!!:) underneath i'm very sporty, love adventures, writing and always looking to have lots of fun and live life to it's fullest:). I've been doing modelling for just under a year now and so far its been a wonderful experience, i hope it continues for a long time yet to come, i would like to thank you all for the amazing comments and helping my modelling dreams grow further

Also on: Twitter

A member for 1 month, 1 week.

- **Profile**
- **Photos**



4 of 47 photos.View all

sign in or sign up to leave a comment.

- 

  Amelia has uploaded new photos.

  about an hour ago

  - 

Amelia Have a very Happy Valentines day everyone xx

a day ago

- 

Amelia has uploaded new photos.



3 days ago

- 

  Commentator 1 nice

  3 days ago

- 

  Commentator 2 I really like the last picture.....

  7 days ago

- 

  Amelia has uploaded new photos.

  7 days ago

  - 

    Commentator 3 Sexy bum

    7 days ago

  - 

    Commentator 4 cute bum



AMELIA'S ALBUM PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 1 (profile pic)



Figure 2

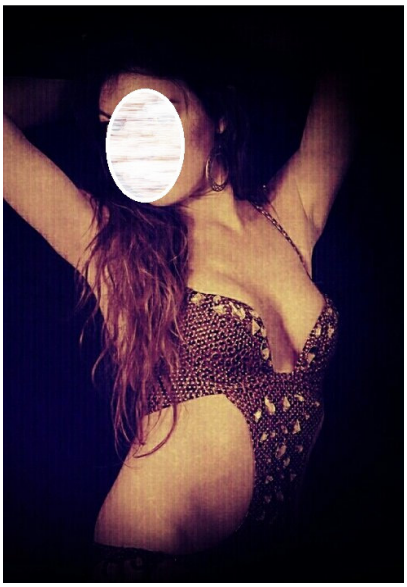


Figure 3

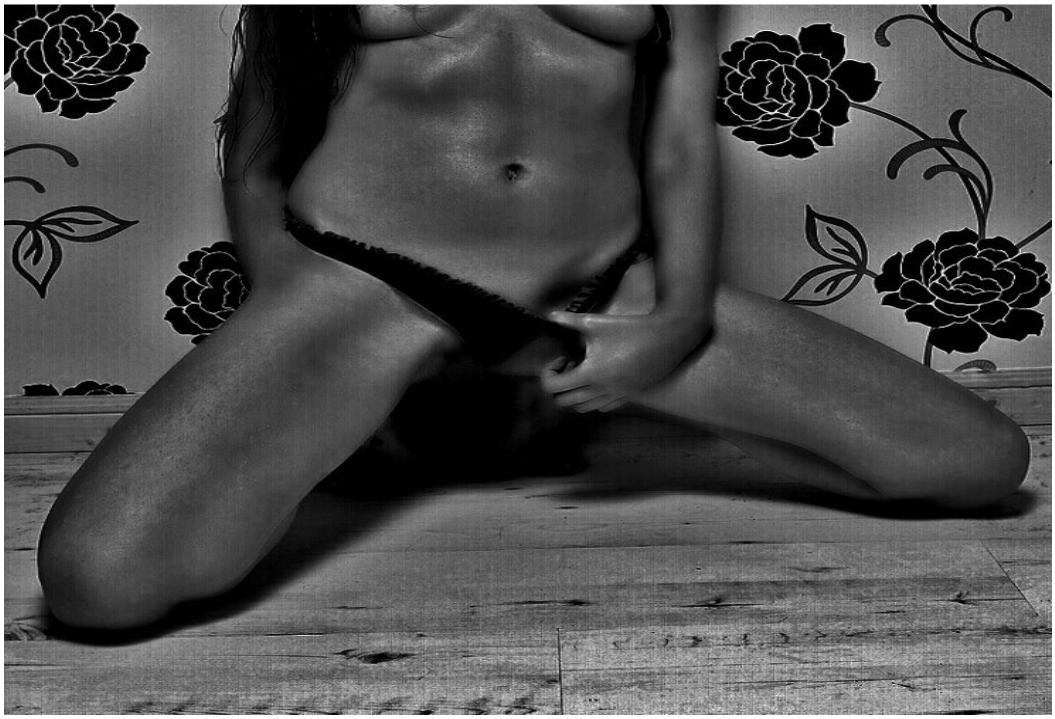


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

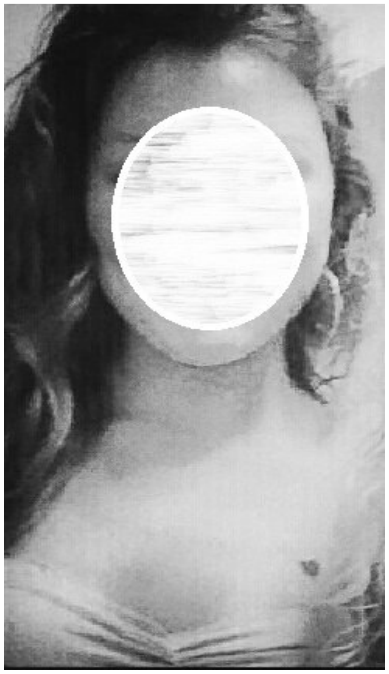


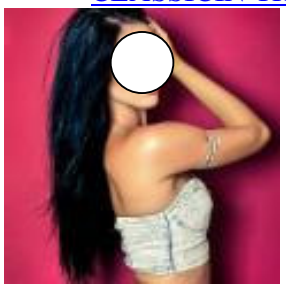
Figure 7



MODELBOOK PROFILE 2: AMY

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Amy

Name: Amy
Location: Pretoria
Age: 19
Bio: Email: steez.dj@gmail.com

A member for 6 hours, 39 minutes.

- Profile
- **Photos**



- 4 of 16 photos.View all

sign in or sign up to leave a comment.

- 

  Amy has uploaded new photos.

  about an hour ago

  - 

    Amy Happy thursday everyone :)

    12 minutes ago

- 

  Commentator 5 Hi Megan, baie welkom by modelville, best of luck met jou modeling en ek hoop sommer ons sien nog baie van jou ;)

  about 6 hours ago

- 

  Amy has uploaded new photos.

  about 7 hours ago

  - 

    Commentator 6 Very very nice.. Welcome too the ville.

    about 6 hours ago

- 

  Commentator 7 stunning

  about 6 hours ago

- **Commentator 8** Very beautiful!



AMY'S ALBUM PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 8 (Profile pic)



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

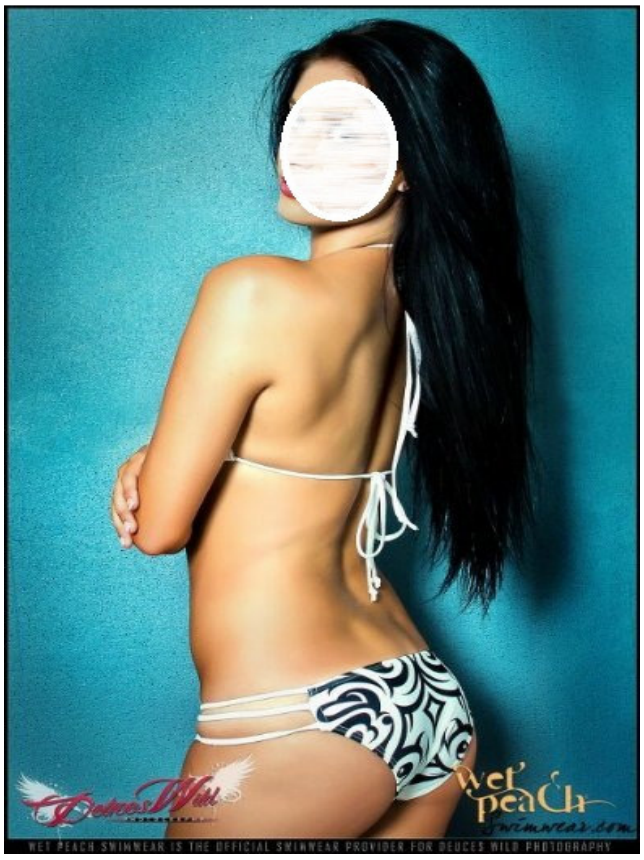


Figure 12

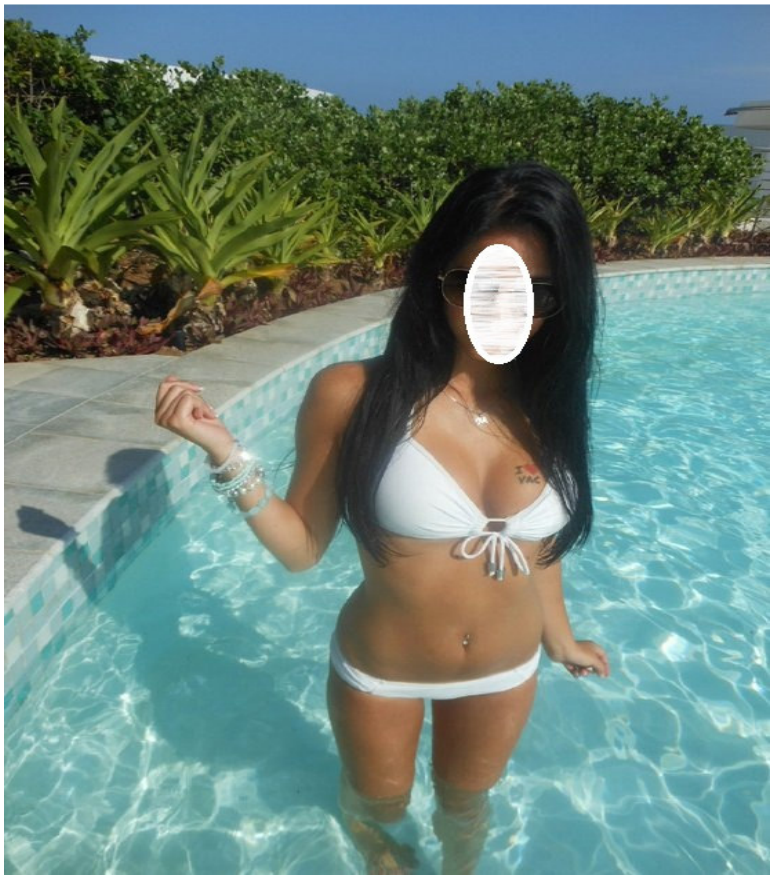


Figure 13

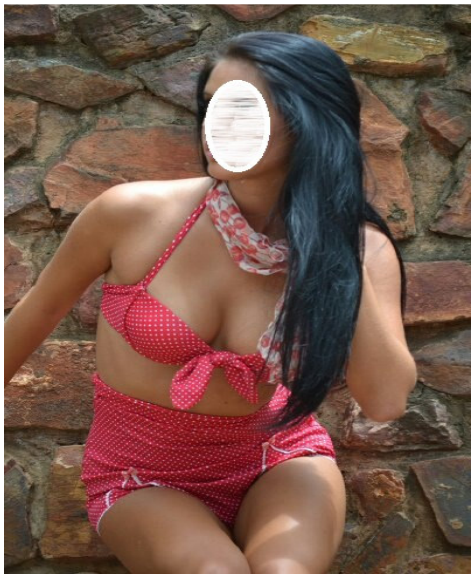


Figure 14



MODELBOOK PROFILE 3: ANASTASJA

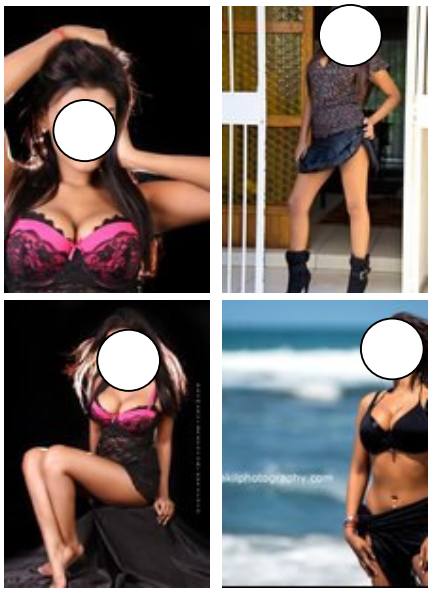


ANASTASJA

Name:	Anastasja
Location:	GAUTENG
Age:	20
Bio:	I will not bore you with my stories lol Please feel free to check out the link below to know more about me: https://profiles.google.com/112093456759761178193#112093456759761178193/about I am the second indian woman in South Africa to have been featured. I have also Declined PLAYBOY Magazine three times,i am the only indian woman in South Africa to have done so.
Also on:	Facebook

A member for 1 year, 5 months.

- **Profile**
- **Photos**



- 4 of 55 photos.View all

sign in or sign up to leave a comment.

Anastasja_ has uploaded new photos.



10 minutes ago



Anastasja I'LL BE SHOOTING TODAY! CANT WAIT!!

about 22 hours ago

- 

Anastasja has uploaded new photos.

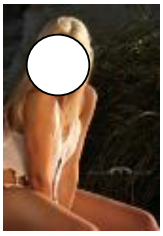


1 day ago

- 

  Commentator 9 gorgeous!

  2 days ago

- 

  Commentator 10 nice

  2 days ago

- 

  Commentator 11 Stunning pics!

  6 days ago

- 

  Commentator 12 Eish.. hot..

  6 days ago

- 

  Commentator 13 That is a osem pic



ANASTASJA'S ALBUM PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 15 (Profile pic)

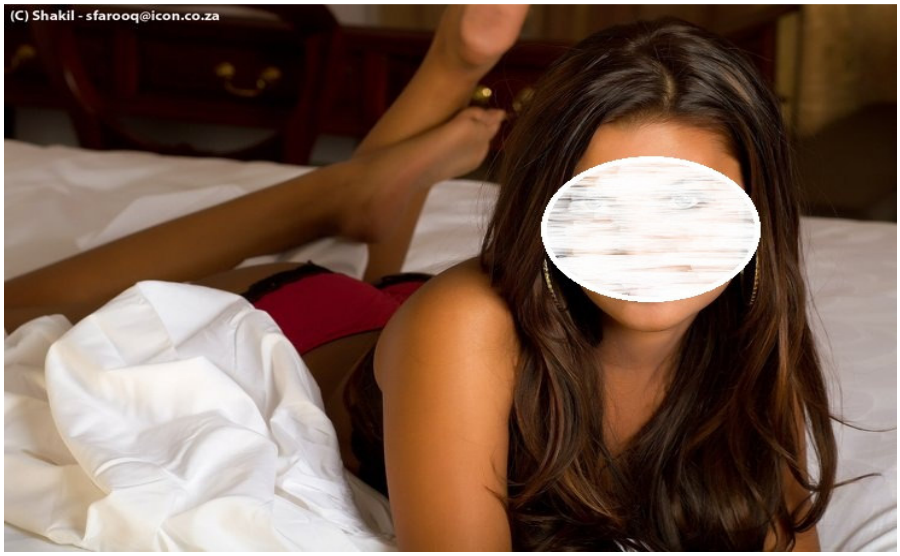


Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20





Figure 21

MODELBOOK PROFILE 4: ANELE

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Anele

Name: Anele
Location: Randburg
Age: 21
Bio: MUSIC VIDEO MODEL...PHOTOGRAPHY MODEL...BEAUTY MODEL...
Also on: TwitterFacebook
A member for 5 months, 2 weeks.

- Profile
- Photos





- 4 of 35 photos.View all

sign in or sign up to leave a comment.

- 

  Anele has uploaded new photos.

  6 days ago

- 

  Commentator 14 hey beautiful model... just wanna drop some kisses on your wall

  6 days ago

- 

  Anele FHM MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE

  9 days ago

- 

  Anele has uploaded new photos.

  11 days ago

- **Commentator 15** Wouldn't mind seeing u on the FHM cover mag.



ANELE'S ALBUM PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 22 (Profile pic)



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25

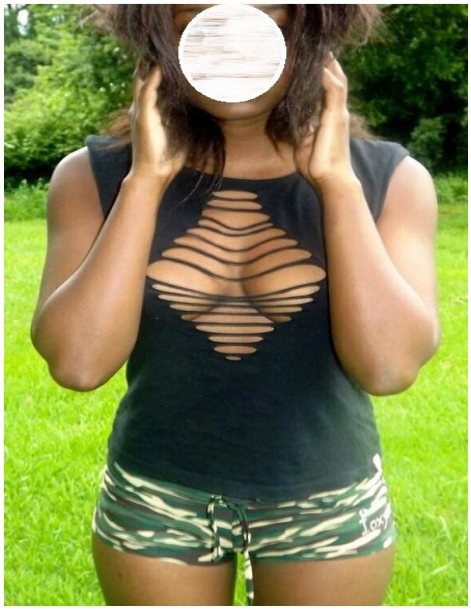


Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



MODELBOOK PROFILE 5: BIANCA

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Bianca

Name: Bianca

Location: Pretoria

Age: 22

Bio: I am a 22 year old born in Cape Town and raised in Pretoria South Africa. I'm fun loving and up for any new challenges. I developed a passion for modeling a while ago and want to take my passion up to the highest of my abilities. I'm always friendly and love to meet new people and undergo new projects. I'm hard working and I always finish what I have started to the best of my abilities, I am real go getter in life if you ask anyone that knows me! You can only expect my full effort to make a success of any project that I take on. If I am fortunate enough to be considered for a project / task I will guarantee you my 100% commitment to carry it through successfully to the best of my abilities.

Also on: Twitter Facebook






4 of 107 photos.View all

sign in or sign up to leave a comment.

about 6 hours ago

- 

Bianca has uploaded new photos.



3 days ago

- 

  Bianca It's FRIDAY!! Have a great day and an even better weekend everyone* :D
  xXx

  6 days ago

- 

  Commentator 16 i love your work !

  6 days ago

- 

  Commentator 17 Wow look at those legs!

6 days ago

- 

  Bianca has uploaded new photos.



7 days ago

- 

  Bianca Have a great week everyone* x0x

  7 days ago

- 

  Commentator 18 Waayy sexy!

- 

  Commentator 19 Stunning - Again!



BIANCA'S ALBUM PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 29 (Profile pic)



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32



Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35



MODELBOOK PROFILE 6: BRITTANY

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Brittany

Name: Brittany

Location: Ermelo

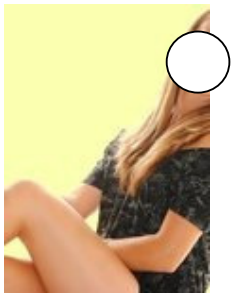
Age: 19

Also on: Facebook

A member for 3 days, 20 hours.

- **Profile**
- **Photos**





4 of 39 photos.View all

sign in or sign up to leave a comment.

- 

  Brittany has uploaded new photos.

  5 minutes ago

- 

  Brittany has uploaded new photos.



about an hour ago

- 

Brittany has uploaded new photos.



a day ago

- 

Commentator 20 You have the makings of a supermodel and a sports illustrated one too. Keep up the good work. Beautiful.



BRITTANY'S ALBUM PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 36 (Profile pic)



Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39

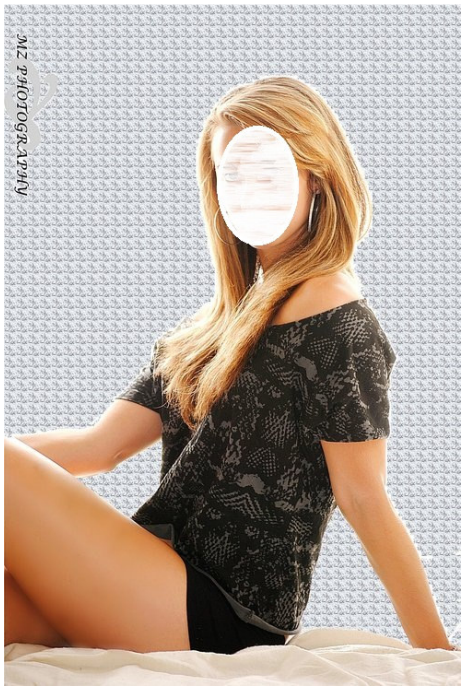


Figure 40

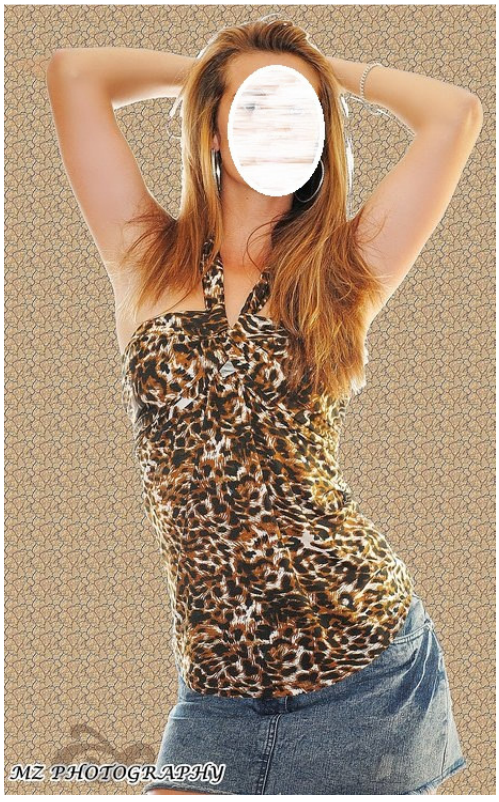


Figure 41



Figure 42



***FHM* Cover girls and their feature articles**

MODEL 1: GABRIELLA DEMETRIADES

Figure 43



Figure 44



MODEL 2: IRINA SHAYK

Figure 45



Figure 46



MODEL 3: JESSICA RAFALOWSKI

Figure 47



Figure 48



MODEL 4: LISA MARIE SCHNEIDER

Figure 49



Figure 50



MODEL 5: NICOLE MEYER

Figure 51



Figure 52



MODEL 6: OLIVIA MUNN

Figure 53



Figure 54

