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Bachelor Thesis Cultural Anthropology

Is Beauty in the Eye of the Beholder?

Media, Social Networks and the Body

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Front-page photograph:

Figure 1: Girls pose for a photographer during the Grand National Opening at the Aintree Racecourses in Liverpool, April 7th 2016

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Utrecht University

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Media, social networks and the body.

Thesis

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Maps of the research location

Liverpool and surroundings

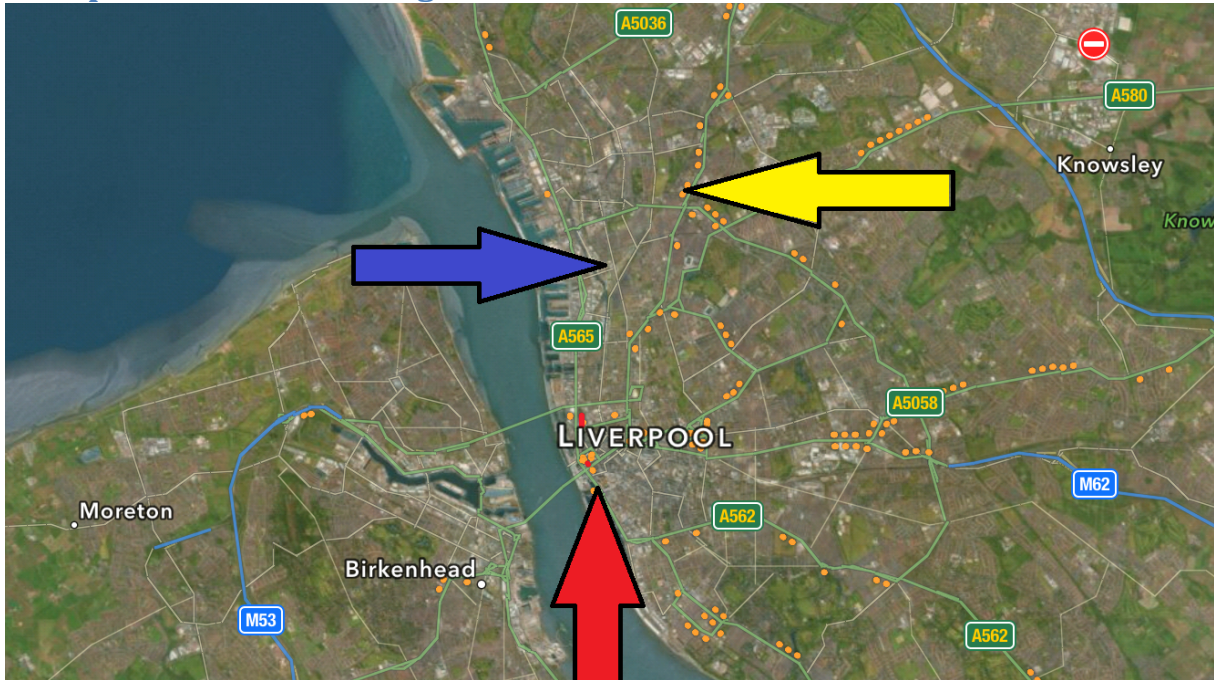


Figure 2 Map of the city of Liverpool. Yellow arrow indicates the area where we lived and where we went to several beauty salons. Blue arrow indicates the location of the Rydell gym, where we gathered most of our male participants. Red arrow indicates the city centre of Liverpool, where we made most of our observations.

Liverpool city centre

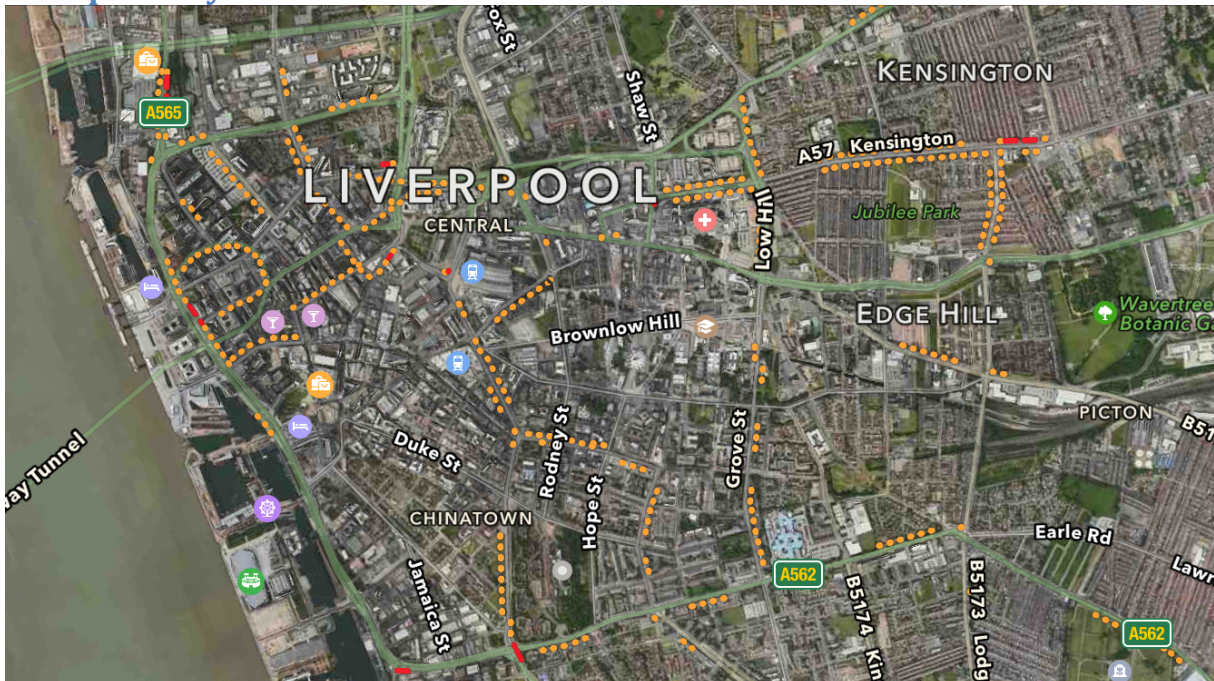


Figure 3: Map of Liverpool city centre. This map shows the areas where we spend most of our time during the fieldwork period.

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-Stephanie Blommensteijn & Iris Hameleers, June 2016

I would like to thank Stephanie for being a very capable researcher to work with, whom I came to respect very much. In the process of creating a research plan, to conducting fieldwork and writing this actual thesis, I could rely on your cooperation. You have not only become a good partner to work with, but also a very dear friend. I think we did a great job in complementing each other's work during the past nine months. Thanks Gairl!

- Iris Hameleers, June 2016

I would also like to thank Iris. Although we had a rough start, we believed in our research project and ourselves. You are a very nice person and I loved to work with you. You gave me structure when needed and together we got to deeper insights. We have worked together very closely, which has resulted in this thesis. Thank you for all the effort and fun moments!

- Stephanie Blommensteijn, June 2016

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Introduction

For centuries mankind has been changing its appearance to meet the established ideas of beauty. Beauty consists of idealised images of appearances of men and women, which are interpreted and adored locally (Kottak 2011). Along the border of Thailand and Myanmar, the people of the *Da Pong* community strive to have long necks and thereby cover them with metal rings. Tribes of the *Maori* people in New Zealand perceive blue tattooed lips as an ultimate form of beauty. In the West, beauty is often encapsulated with skinny women who have long blond hair, soft faces and perky breasts. In certain societies the 'full' body is a sign of beauty. Before women are marriageable they need to be fed until the right weight (DeMello 2013). All these manners to adapt the body, to create the desired shape and looks are means of disciplining and controlling the body. During the last decades, methods to meet these ideals and standards have intensified (DeMello 2013). Cosmetic surgery, extreme diets, and procedures such as *scarification* have gained popularity and have become more readily available. Perceptions of beauty, established ideas of gender roles, and stereotypes within a community are part of one's culture. Beauty ideals take shape within a particular social and cultural context; economical class, social class, gender and the location of the society are just a few of the factors that contribute to how beauty is constructed in that society.

The world becomes more interconnected every day, through acceleration and intensification of human contact, streams of products and goods, information, media and money. Primarily due to technological development, distances between places have become relatively smaller and transport becomes cheaper. Globalization has led to processes of homogenization and heterogenization and because these processes take place at the same time, there is an area of tension (Eriksen 2007). Within this debate, there are certain thinkers who argue that globalization only leads to homogenization or heterogenization or some form that combines both of the processes. Mainly Western culture, vision and beauty ideals are spread, because globalization manifests itself the strongest in the Western world (Eriksen 2007; Daniels et al. 2012). Places that lack the capability to join these technological advancements of volume and speed of media traffic are excluded. The places that are capable to keep up are the most influential in the spread of (beauty) ideals, due to their interconnectedness (Potter et al. 2012). However,

heterogenization can occur in which local cultures do not disappear, but a re-evaluation of the local takes place besides this world culture (Appadurai 2006). There is also the possibility that a new, local meaning will be given to the world culture; this phenomenon is called *glocalization* (Eriksen 2007; Ritzer 1993). Ideas of what is seen as beautiful are influenced and change through these processes.

Within the pursuit of beauty ideals, there is an on-going debate on the influence of social networks and media in the formation of these ideals. Several academics, such as Brown & Dittmar (2005) and Tiggemann & McGill (2004), discuss the influence of media on the self-image of especially young women. They argue that exposure to extreme skinny beauty ideals could result in more negative emotions towards one's own body. This negative experience results in a negative impact on mental health and the overall wellbeing of people (Cattarin et al. 2000). Studies of, among other, Engeln-Maddox (2005) and Tiggemann & Slater (2003) add to this that especially the theory of social comparison ((Festinger 1954)) plays an important part. Ferguson, Winegard, and Winegard (2011) counter these findings and argue that instead of the media, *peers* and social networks have a big influence on beauty ideals and self-images of people. However, how social networks *and* media influence the pursuance of these beauty ideals has received little attention within the literature. Therefore, within this research we aim to answer the following research question:

How do media and social networks influence the perceptions of beauty of young men and women in Liverpool (United Kingdom) and how are these perceptions reflected on the body?

We made a subdivision in the following three sub questions, thereby aiming to answer the research question. *How do media and social networks influence the beauty ideals of young people? In which way are beauty ideals of young men and women being influenced by friends, family members and potentially peers with whom they have weak connections? How are beauty ideals of young men and women reflected on the body?* These questions are all directed to young men and women in Liverpool, where we conducted the research. These questions will be answered in the following chapters in this order, both for women and men.

Aim of this research

The purpose of this thesis is gaining deeper and broader understanding of the influence of media and social networks in the construction and perception of beauty ideals in Liverpool (UK). The theoretical and social relevance is to give a broader perspective into the processes that lie behind the formation of beauty ideals in Western societies, such as Liverpool. Processes and outcomes can have a negative effect on society as a whole and a detrimental effect on the life of individuals. In this thesis we aim to show that media and social networks spread ideals of beauty. We state that these concepts cannot be seen separately, but must be seen as interacting agents in the formation of beauty ideals. Social media is in this process a mediator. Beauty ideals are distributed, via media, through society and reinterpreted within social networks. Social networks as well as society secure the pursuance of these ideals. These social networks reflect re-interpreted beauty ideals into the media through the consumption of certain images and the neglect of others. Differences in beauty ideals will occur through differences within social networks. The media transforms and alters these ideals and distributes these images back into society. This main argument will be supported by data from observations, informal conversations, participant observation and qualitative interviews gathered in the field.

Research methods in the field

During a three months of fieldwork in Liverpool the United Kingdom we conducted a qualitative research, with a comparative nature. Qualitative research is directed towards the description, interpretation and the explanation of behaviour, experiences and perceptions of research subjects (DeWalt and DeWalt 2010:128). To gain a wide understanding of the formation of beauty ideals we aimed to find a diverse group of participants between the age of 18 and 25 years old who were working, studying, or unemployed. During our time in Liverpool this somewhat posed a problem, due to the short period of the fieldwork and the closed nature of a lot of locals towards newcomers. We used the snowball- method to find people that were suitable participants and willing to partake in this project. Therefore, most of our participants are gathered from beauty salons, a boxing school and students from university. We use beauticians from the salons and the plastic surgeons as professionals and we consider our participants as a representative of the population.

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To answer the research question we made use of method triangulation (Boeije 2009). We used several methods to gain a deeper understanding of how the construction of beauty ideals is influenced by media and social networks among young people in Liverpool. We made use of Participant Observation (abbr. PO), Interviewing (structured and un-structured), and Informal conversations. Through 'being there' and 'hanging out' we obtained data on the importance of beauty in Liverpool. We were able to build up rapport with our participants, which created the possibility to talk more about feelings and emotions that were connected with their looks and thoughts. By gaining trust they were more open to share this information, knowing that we guaranteed their anonymity. By observing beauty treatments, and through participating in some of them, we experienced how ideas of beauty are fluid and subjected to change depending on the time and place. On numerous occasions we went together so that one could participate or observe, while the other could focus on taking notes. Through participation in Liverpool's nightlife we observed pressure excerpted by *peers*, female and male, as well as experiencing it ourselves. By interactions among people on the street and during nights out we gained insight in the symbolic use of beauty in social spaces. Different types of interviews yielded data that answered sub questions about the composition of social networks, and the frequency/ intensity of contact with different types of media. Something we could not observe, due to the fact it was not possible to follow ones every move. Often there is a discrepancy between what a participant's *claim* is the case and what the case *actually* is. This combination of methods makes it possible to diminish this discrepancy between data and reality ('t Hart, Boeije, and Hox 2005). This proved to work multiple times during our research period. Several people had claimed not to be influenced by family or the media, but after several observations and follow up questions; it appeared to be the other way around.

Another issue we encountered was the duality of anthropologists. On the one hand wanting to fit in, putting effort into interacting, thinking and living like an insider to learn to understand the population. On the other hand, you will never fully become an insider and collect all the information you want to have. If you would fully integrate and become an insider, there is the risk of *going* native which means that the research is no longer valid. We have built rapport with people, who have become true friends, but who were always aware of our role as researchers. Sometimes when our role as a researcher seemed to be forgotten, we had to emphasize that fact, which re-enforced us as outsiders

again. This sometimes created the struggle of being friends versus the goal of this research. We did converse on these matters to such extent that these 'struggles', resolved. Other information we obtained on the social aspects of Liverpool, such as the high rates of drugs abusers in Liverpool, we only obtained from interviews. It was not possible for us observe it; someone had to point these things out. The other fact we learned is that British people will not inform each other when something does not look good, according to their standards. This resulted in an outsider effect, because we often did ask or said things in that matter. These examples illustrate us trying to fit in, but still being outsiders. As far as we know, this did not create personal issues with participants and it gave us the option to learn about social rules in Liverpool.

Chapter index

Within the on-going debate of what exerts the most pressure on the perceptions of beauty of young men and women, we start with the discussion of literature in the upcoming chapter. In this theoretical chapter, we will examine concepts as social networks, media, gender, class and the construction of the body and discuss on-going debates concerning these concepts. By doing so, we discuss the contemporary processes that play a role in the formation of beauty ideals of young men and women, in which social media and agency have a place. These processes do not only interact, but are also formed by each other. The second chapter will present the context in which we will discuss how the theoretical concepts have their impact on Liverpool and its inhabitants. By doing so, the answer for the research question is directed to the location and can be interpreted in the explanation for the congregation of processes. In the third chapter we will present and discuss our empirical data concerning women in the field. The fourth chapter will present and discuss the findings of the male population. We will show how the central concepts and processes have affected our participants in Liverpool. Due to the comparative nature of this study, chapter three and four will use the same order of concepts in analysing the data. The fifth chapter will entail the conclusion and discussion of this research project in which we will give an analyses of the previous chapters as well as an overall conclusion. This thesis will conclude with references, a summary in English and a personal reflection of this process by us both.

1. The formation of beauty ideals under the influence of media and social networks – a theoretical Framework

Within this theoretical chapter we will first outline the role of mass media in the formation of beauty ideals. Subsequently we will discuss the different forms of capital and the influence of social networks on the formation of beauty ideals in the second section. Gender as an expression of culture will be discussed in the third section. In the fourth section we will elaborate on how we aim to theorize the body in this research project based on the concepts of Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987). The social and cultural context in which the body takes its form will be debated in the fifth section. We will conclude this framework with the discussion of the formation of female and male bodies in order to outline the differences between these bodies in theory and practice.

1.1 Mass media in the formation of beauty ideals (Stephanie)

Within this research we make a distinction between forms of media and social media platforms. Media is an overall concept that contains all forms of media, but where there often exists a one-way direction in the stream of information. Social media is part of media but contain the platforms of media where there is a multi-directional stream of information.

Technological advancements have led to forms of mass media. This contributed to the spread of culture and conceptions of beauty ideals (Daniels et al. 2012; Eriksen 2007). Smartphones, television, computers and other forms of media can be seen as instruments of globalization in which conceptions of beauty ideals are upheld and distributed (Daniels et al. 2012; Eriksen 2007). Images containing men and women of a certain age and with certain characteristics in the appearance that are seen as beautiful, are spread through these media channels. Technological advancement has made the rise of social media, online networks and communities possible (Juris 2008). Beauty ideals in contemporary communities are expressed and spread within social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. These ideals are also created and spread by the same and other forms of media such as commercials on television and Internet sites. The images displayed by those instruments, are given meaning by consumers and in networks within a certain social cultural context (Rokka, Desavelle, and Mikkonen 2008).

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Ferguson et al. (2014) argue that the media contributes little to the formation of a negative self-image through the spread of these beauty ideals. This is in opposite what Festinger (1954 in Ferguson, Winegard, and Winegard 2011) states. The ideals of beauty and envisioning of the self are constructed by observing other people. According to Festinger, people feel the intrinsic need to compare themselves and their capacities with an objective standard. People are thus continuously looking for standards to compare themselves with and when these are not available, people will compare themselves with subjective standards (Ferguson, Winegard, and Winegard 2011). Due to this, a self-image is formed, that is based on ruling beauty ideals, instead of normative images coming from the community. DeMello (2013) directs to the phenomenon of *Symbolic annihilation*, which she defines as:

“Underrepresentation or elimination of a specific demographic group in the mass media, which results in a distortion of the public’s understanding of that group, in this case: aging women” (2013:45).

Due to the underrepresentation of the normative population and their appearances, a distorted image can develop within society. For instance, images of older women are underrepresented in the media and therefore women feel that they must always look young to meet the established beauty ideals. Advertisement is all around and designed to make consumers undertake action (DeMello 2013; Edmonds 2010). Within this research it is important to know how media plays a role in the distribution of beauty ideals. The media influences the nature of beauty ideals that exist within networks of people, visible in the following processes. While homogenization creates a more standardised perception of beauty, heterogenization and glocalization ensure that beauty ideals are variable contrary to existing dominant values (Eriksen, 2007) This is widely dispersed and lived up to through media (Granovetter 1973). We will argue upon later that this also happens in Liverpool.

1.2 Social networks and social capital (Stephanie)

Social networks link individuals and groups together and provide social support and protection, but also exert influence on behaviour and thinking patterns. Social media creates the opportunity for individuals to maintain large (online) networks (Eriksen

2007; Granovetter 1973). Social media provides platforms on which *peers* can influence each other (Ferguson et al. 2014). Online platforms create the possibility for people to display themselves as how they would like to be perceived and how they wish and expect to meet (de Vries 2014). Thus social media form a new stage on which peers can influence each other.

Within this research we will use the concept of social networks to refer to networks of friends, family and peers. According to Granovetter (1973) someone's social network exists of *strong* and *weak ties*. Strong ties are formed by strong connections with the direct social environment, as family and friends. Weak ties consist of looser, volatile contacts. These weak ties are easy to create and to maintain through social media (Juris 2008). Granovetter (1973) recognizes the power of strong ties, because they account for a degree of social support and participation. He argues that weak social ties are of primary interest, because they provide for social cohesion, political mobility and social mobility. Social cohesion stems from social attitudes and behaviour of individuals. This sense of belonging, confidence and participation can lead to a community feeling and a higher quality of life within the community (Tolsma, van der Meer, and Gesthuizen 2009). Granovetter (1973) argues that weak ties are of primary interest, which in this research would indicate that peers are of primary interest in influencing the behaviour and ideas of individuals. Berndt (1992) argues that friendships are of main importance in the formation of behaviour, development and ideas. However, Bengston (2001) states that family plays a major role in influencing behaviour, norms and values, such as conceptions of beauty ideals. What we thus see is an on-going debate about whether (parts of) the family, friendships, *peers* exert the greatest influence on the behaviour and actions of young people (Bengston 2001). Within this research we will aim to shed more light upon these different influences by examining the perception of beauty ideals among young men and women in Liverpool.

Beauty ideals are constructed within a social network. A person does not just belong to one social network or group, but to multiple social and cultural groups. Groups and individuals are defined by their position in relation to others within their environment. In a network with stronger cohesion, the influence of other group members will be accelerated. One's norms and values within a particular network are adapted to the norms and values of the group members to ensure the quality of contact (Sutherland 1947). Members adjust to the norms and values of a particular social

network and will behave in a different way in different social and cultural groups. The social position of an individual within a social network is also determined by *habitus*.

Bourdieu (1986 in Shilling 1993:129) states that habitus, the structure of our relations, determines how society is engraved on the bodies of its members through social and cultural practices. Habitus creates a set of values that is defined within networks and determines how social phenomena and practices are criticized. Bourdieu (1998) explains this as the way in which intrinsic structures of the social world are embedded in the body. The development of habitus is mostly created through class, which we will discuss later (DeMello 2013). The power of an individual to make his or her own choices is referred to as *agency* (Fahs 2013). The extent, to which an individual can exercise agency, depends on the socio-cultural environment. Class, gender, age and ethnicity are examples that determine the extent to which an individual is empowered or limited in his agency (within a social network) (Fahs 2013).

1.3 Social networks as social capital

One of the main ways to examine social networks is by looking into social capital. Social networks form an indispensable and important part of social capital. Social capital is a part of human capital that forms the social organization within a community and differs per person (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital therefore contains potential or existing networks and the advantages that can be obtained through these networks. Burt (2001) adds to this that more attractive, competent or intelligent people acquire this capital more easily.

Ownership of capital is variable, allowing individuals to be active actors in the social world. Bourdieu (1984, 1998) constructs the social world as a space in which actors have different types and amounts of capital. In addition to social capital, he refers to cultural, symbolic and physical capital. He defines cultural capital as the experience, knowledge, skills and even manners of speaking as ways for a person to develop as an individual. He argues that symbolic capital is achieved by honour, status, prestige and lifestyle. Physical or bodily capital is achieved through physical characteristics such as skin colour, body shape, beauty or elegance. These forms of capital are valued differently within through society. How individuals gain capital at micro and macro levels depends on their networks, social position and cultural standards. In his reasoning, Bourdieu (1985, 1986 in Thorpe 2009) disregards the aspect of gender. He argues that women are

not *capital-collecting objects*, but *capital bearing objects*. This entails that their capital cannot be acquired, but depends on the primary social networks to which they belong. In line with feminists, we agree that women as well as men are active players, who can change their social position through the acquisition of capital (Adkins 2003; Lawler 2002; Skeggs 1997). Unlike Bourdieu (1986), Thorpe (2009) recognizes that there are women who take advantage of their charm and that beauty has indeed a market value. With this reasoning Thorpe (2009) argues that the relationship between gender, power, structure and agency should be reconceptualised.

1.4 Gender; a concept of cultural expression (Stephanie)

In order to make a thorough analysis of the relationship that Thorpe (2009) discusses, we need to examine how gender is formed. Eriksen (2007) states that aspects such as gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity and physical capital construct identity. Some characteristics of the socio-cultural identity are fixed through birth, while other features of the identity can be changed. While sex is given, gender is a social construct and refers to the non-biological differences between men and women. Parts of someone's identity ensure inclusion and exclusion among certain social networks. Identity characteristics, roles, stereotypes, someone's degree of agency and forms of social organization are related to a person's gender (Mccall 1992; Kottak 2011; Nagel 2003). Stereotypes are over-simplified images of men and women, in which roles, appearance and behaviour are assigned to the sexes. Social organisation classifies what entails masculinity and femininity. This results in expectations that are assigned to gender and ensures the separation of social institutions, such as a toilet being male or female. The ideology of masculinity and femininity is embedded in society and coincidental expectations are dynamic and change within a society and over time (Gorman and Kheng 1999)

McCall (1992) argues that it is possible to obtain gender specific capital. Femininity as cultural capital is socially encouraged to obtain and used by females. Like gender, sexuality is not fixed but historically and socially constructed within power relations and is an expression of identity. Discourses of sexuality and gender shape these concepts (DeMello 2013:138). Gender as a social construct determines amongst other things the degree of agency of an individual (Kottak, 2011; Nagel, 2003). This is mainly expressed in acquired competences and expression of the body (Skeggs 1997:10; Thorpe 2009:494).

1.5 Theorising the body (Iris)

The 'body' can be seen as a stage on which social networks, media, gender and class leave their imprint. DeMello (2013) approaches the body from a constructionist perspective and states that the body is formed through experiences that are shared within the historical, social and cultural context of society. The body itself and ideas about the body are therefore subjected to change. This means that bodily features such as age, weight, sexuality, and race are not simply situated within genes, but acquire meaning within this context and occur within a set of constructed power relations. Beauty is one of these constructed phenomena, which is expressed in and through the body. Through this the occurrence of these features on the body, beauty seems to be a 'natural' thing. This process, called *naturalisation*, causes a phenomenon in which people forget to realise that the meaning that is given to these features is in fact created to classify people and rate people on these bodily features. The way in which people give meaning and use this meaning is a social construct (DeMello 2013; Klassen 2014). How people are classified and rated can be subjected to change by people themselves.

Goffman (1959) states that people can be seen as an actor on a stage. Coordinating the impressions of the body is mostly what people participate in, and during this process we control and adjust our own behaviour to how we would like to be perceived. This can be connected to Festinger's (1954) idea of social comparison, which refers to a process whereby people try to coordinate, among other things, their looks and appearance through comparison with other social actors. Reference material that is presented in various media, which is far off from reality, could result in a negative self-image among young women and men (Goffman 1959; Festinger 1954; Ferguson, Winegard, and Winegard 2011). The coordination of the impressions of the body combined with the social comparison theory provides a theoretical framework to understand how deeper lying social structures produce ideas and influence ways to think about beauty.

Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) describe how the body can be subdivided into three bodies: the 'lived' individual body, the 'social' body, and the disciplined 'political' body. They describe 'the lived body' with the work of Mauss (1979 in Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) and can be seen as 'lived experience' of the body and the individual. This reasoning assumes that all people have at least an idea of an embodied self that exists apart from other individual human beings. The most important elements of the body,

such as the mind, the soul, the self and the relation of these elements in connection to each other, as well as how the body is experienced and lived herein, will substantially differ per individual. To describe 'the social body', Scheper-Hughes & Lock (1987) use Douglas's (1970) work. It refers to the way in which the body is embedded in larger social structures. The third is the 'political body' in which Scheper-Hughes and Lock draw from Foucault's work to define this (1977, 1980a, 1980b in Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). The political body refers to the idea that modern Western bodies (individual and collective) are subjected to several social, controlling and monitoring mechanisms, such as working, leisure time, sexuality, reproduction and disease. According to Scheper-Hughes & Lock (1987), the stability of this political body depends on the possibility to control populations (the social body) and discipline individuals (the lived body). The eventual goal is to see the body as a canvas in which patterns of society are engraved and on which they can be counter-engraved (1977, 1980a, 1980b in Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). The individual, the social and the political body shape the stage on and through which the body is formed. Analyses of the body on these levels make it possible to describe the processes, which underlie the established beauty ideals and individual reactions to this.

This way of analysing the body will be used in the analyses of our empirical data in order to establish ideas how bodies are formed through media and social networks in Liverpool's society.

1.6 The body and the social (Iris)

The body is shaped through multiple historical, social and cultural processes within a society, in other words *habitus* (DeMello 2013). Scholars like Bourdieu, Mauss and Rabelais argue that class is a very predominant factor in shaping the body (P Bourdieu 1986; Marx 1926; Bakhtin 1984). DeMello (2013) states that the development of *habitus*, as we discussed previous, is mostly created through class. An important way in which class shapes these bodies is through consumption. Firstly, what we consume is transformed through capitalism. Secondly, what we consume is transformed through class, and lastly our consumption patterns enforce the differences between bodies in terms of class (DeMello 2013). The way of consuming therefore manifests itself on the body. Bakhtin (1984) makes a dual distinction between the bodies of these different classes. In particular, the body of higher class is portrayed and interpreted as a sign of

beauty. Through ways of consumption the inner body is being maintained to improve the appearance of the outer body. People from the lower class have, due to the heavier mental and physical circumstances, less time and money to maintain the body (DeMello 2013). They can achieve these beauty standards through more extreme measures, such as cosmetic surgery. People from the higher class have, due to the lighter work circumstances and through their better financial position, a better base to maintain the 'inner body' in a daily routine (DeMello 2013). By inner body we mean: that part of the body that is responsible for the health of the whole organism and can be maintained through sports, nutrition and overall caretaking. We will use this distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' body in the analyses of our empirical data.

According to Foucault (1980b): when class is engraved on the body, just as gender, sexuality or race it can also be a place of resistance. To which extent and how class is portrayed on the body can differ per situation. To approximate the influence of social networks and media on beauty ideals and the body it is important to look at the class in which a population is situated.

1.7 Female versus Male bodies (Iris)

Traditionally women are valued on their bodily capital and men are valued on their cultural and economic capital. Furthermore, the idea that women are related to the 'biological' body and men are related to the 'rational' mind can be connected to current norms and roles of gender. These norms and roles have an association with masculinity and femininity, which are socialised and accepted within society. These socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity have a reflection on the body; depending in which category that body belongs (DeMello 2013). Bordo (1989) views the body as an important space of conflict; women have the possibility to refute existing gender roles and gender dominance through their bodies. Activities in daily life of a large number of women are connected with reaching beauty ideals. Women can never reach these established standards, which leads to feelings of defeat (DeMello, 2013). Women stay occupied with activities concerning the body, due to the fact that this is 'needed' within society. As a result, this leads to docile and controllable bodies, according to Bordo (1989) and to politically more stable bodies, according to Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987). DeMello (2013) adds that the body is not a space on which women are defined and controlled in, among other things, behaviour and appearance,

but in and through which these gender-roles are constructed and engraved. Outward display based on identity formation and gender is influenced by agency as well as cultural (and social) background (Duits 2006; Duits and van Zoonen 2007). Agency determines the access to resources and the possibility to take control over the body and make decisions on one's own (Fahs 2013). A person, as an actor, tries to watch these patterns of meaning and how they are expressed on the body through agency.

In each part of the world, the elements of youth are considered as being beautiful. Features such as plump lips, firm and tight skin, white teeth and bright eye whites, are all signs of a youthful, energetic and fertile person. *Symbolic annihilation*, as DeMello (2013) states, excludes women who do not meet these 'youthful' beauty ideals set out in the media. Established standards maintain their position through this process and are set extremely high. Gender norms with regard to femininity are being amplified and further shaped in their social and cultural context. Through social comparison with images from the media and *peers*, women can create a more negative self- image, which has an adverse effect on their daily lives (Ferguson, Winegard, and Winegard 2011; Ferguson et al. 2014). For men this seems to have less impact, but research on this subject seems to be scarce. 'Beauty requirements', that are based on these signs of youth, make especially women more susceptible for certain (health) problems, through negative effects that occur the process of obtaining these looks. Implications of cosmetic surgery, diets, sunbathing and other procedures are, especially in the West, constraining for women in daily life. Men encounter less of these issues (DeMello 2013).

How women experience their body is in part shaped through being subjected to the so-called 'male stare' (Mulvey 1975). The male stare on itself is again formed through what is desirable in that specific social- cultural context. This male stare exerts a certain influence on the pursuance of the established beauty ideals. Studies of, among others, Bordo (1989) and Foucault (1977, 1980b in DeMello 2013), show how women shape and control their body to meet standards that are set out in society and how they sometimes gain satisfaction from this disciplining and controlling their bodies. Fashion is such a cultural phenomenon that plays an important role in the construction of the body, through which women can control and discipline themselves (Gaines 1990; Silverman 1986; Wilson 1987). It shapes the naked body and the body gives existing and cultural importance to the clothing (DeMello, 2013). Duits (2006) describes how female bodies become metonymical locations for contemporary social dilemmas. The state,

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school, public opinion, parents and other social institutions reinterpret and judge the everyday practice of clothing women. She states that through this process their agency is undermined. Some of these actions not only strengthen gender norms, but also create them (DeMello 2013; Foucault 1977).

People who obtain these beauty ideals that are established in that specific society are more often ascribed with having several positive personality traits such as, being more sociable, competent and being more successful in life (Wheeler and Kim 1997). This idea contributes to the previously stated idea that some women take advantage of their charms and might use them to gain social capital (Thorpe 2009).

2. In the eyes of Liverpool (*Stephanie and Iris*)

In this chapter we aim to explain the choice of our field of research, which we based on a number of reasons. We explain why the United Kingdom is the area of choice. Hereafter we will discuss the economic situation of Liverpool in the past. Class, gender and the body in the context of Liverpool will be discussed subsequently, hereby explaining why Liverpool is the best location for our research project.

2.1 'The West' as centre of beauty ideals

Especially in Western societies, technological innovation and interconnectedness make it possible for homogenous images to be distributed across many locations of the globe. These images portray women as being slender and firm (Bordo 2003) and men as being masculine (Bordo 1999). The decision has been made to conduct this research project in a Western country, due to the fact that the images that are distributed mostly envision Western beauty ideals, with Caucasian looks. Therefore, we wanted to conduct this research project among a population, where the largest part might relate themselves more to these ideals.

The United Kingdom makes an interesting choice for this research project, because it stands out that both men and women undergo cosmetic procedures often. There is a division between two sorts of procedures one can undergo: the procedures that are performed by oneself and the procedures that are performed by someone else in return for money or another reciprocal service (Kwan and Trautner 2009). Procedures on the body of the individual itself, even as procedures on the body performed by others, have increased in the United Kingdom. Among other things this is visible in the proportion of gyms, beauty- and tanning salons. The United Kingdom has had a large growth in 'non-invasive treatments', including: body-lotions, anti-aging products and make-up. The last decades there has been a big increase in plastic surgery, Botox injections, fillers, IPL-treatments, breast implants, breast reductions and liposuction.¹ Within England a yearly precentral growth in aesthetical surgical and non-surgical procedures is visible among women, even at an early age (DeMello, 2013). Among men this growth in procedures remains smaller than among women, nevertheless this increase gets bigger every year. Doctor Guimaraes explains that since the last few years a big shift is going on for men in England. The current trend for men to

¹ According to interviews with plastic surgeons Doctor Juma and Doctor Guimaraes.

start using different types of (non-) surgical procedures gains popularity, which leads to men looking more groomed. Some may say even more feminine.

2.2 Liverpool: Jersey Shore of England

Our inspiration for the choice of Liverpool as field for conducting our research is based upon multiple documentaries, but especially *The Jersey Shore of England (Documentary 2010)*. It shows how beauty is established in Liverpool, with big differences within gender-roles and in the expression of these roles. This leads to stereotypes, which have a reflection on the body. In Liverpool there are more beauty salons per head of the population, than in any other city in England (*The Jersey Shore of England (Documentary) 2010*). After further investigation into the city of Liverpool we found out that women on Friday and Saturday walk around with rollers in their hair in order to get the perfect 'hairdo' at night. Noticeable is the amount of women who have their nails done (either shellac, acrylic or just a regular polish) and in all the different hair colours and hair styles that they maintain everywhere. This idea of the importance of beauty in Liverpool immediately got back up from one of our participants when we addressed him Peter² said: "*O, Beauty is all around, you should look!*" With this quote he illustrates that beauty and expressions of femininity and masculinity are visible on every corner of the street. In this city, women take visibly 'extreme' measures to accomplish their beauty ideals and therefore portray established gender roles and stereotypes. The plastic surgeon Doctor Juma gives a few examples, one of which is stated below, in which the 'extreme' expression of femininity is visible:

"It is normal for women here to make the eyebrow bigger and darker, to use fillers and to have breast augmentation to make the breast bigger and fuller. In Liverpool, Glasgow and London, women have an average cup size of double D, while the average of the country lays at 36C."

Research in the United Kingdom indicates that systematic differences in gender are present within the perception of beauty among adolescents. Deslandes (2010) explains that a contrast is maintained between active male bodies and stereotype images of passive female bystander bodies. He states that this contrast fortifies the

² Interview on (24-02-2016)

ruling gender differences. McRobbie (1991) did research among the young, working, female population in England, and analysed how they give meaning to their femininity. She describes how women emphasize the most prominent parts of their bodies that are associated with the female gender. These established gender roles are also present within Liverpool and have influence on the expression of the body for both men and women. Liverpool is a city where these expressions are prevalent in more 'extreme' ways than in other cities.

2.3 Liverpool's class

Liverpool is a Western industrial city, with a large lower class. This is a result of the social and economic history of Liverpool. Haggerty and White (2008) describe how Liverpool used to be the second largest city of England during the colonial period. During the industrial revolution, the city lacked the progress that the rest of England underwent and after the crises of 1930 and 2000 the social economical gap with the rest of England increased. High rates of unemployment and bad housing conditions have depicted the image of Liverpool as a poor city (Savage and Warde 2011). During the last decennia restorations and reconstruction of the city have resulted in a change concerning the city centre. The large economic gap that existed for a long time has decreased, but the majority of the current population can still be defined as lower class (Patterson 2011). This means that a big part of the population in Liverpool lives below the average income of England. Several studies during the last decennia revealed a correlation between lower social class and high rates of obesity among the inhabitants, this has its reflection on the body (Sobal and Stunkard 1989; Stamatakis et al. 2005). One of our participants, who has a job at the hospital, noted: *"Heroin injection in Liverpool is much higher in the rest of the country at the moment. It is so addictive that people take huge risks. Sometimes they have to have a leg amputated for instance, because of infection/ clots from the injections and they still continue to inject into the other leg."* The high rate of heroin abuse, as the abuse of other drugs, can be seen as an indicator of the bad socio- and economic circumstances in Liverpool.

Class is a predominant factor for the formation of the body. The lower social class, which is present in Liverpool, comes to expression on the body. Obesity, bad health care, drug abuse, but also the strong manifestations of gender-roles are results of

these conditions. This validates the choice of Liverpool as being a location where there is a lower social class.

2.4 Adolescents from lower social classes.

The choice to conduct research among adolescents is based on the fact that the perception of young people is still subjected to a lot of change. The period of adolescence can be viewed as instable (Dittmar et al. 2000). Dittmar *et al.*, (2000) argue that during adolescence, people are more aware and focused on interpersonal relations and their body. Appearance becomes an important part of their identity and has an enormous impact on a person's self-esteem. They explain that less is known on the social and cultural construction of the body of young men than of that is known of this construction among young women. Young girls as well as women show a larger psychological dependence with respect to their appearance. Feingold and Mazzella (1998) state those differences in gender and the satisfaction on appearance between men and women increased in the last thirty years. Due to this fact, we chose to select a lower age class and to compare the male and female population within this class. This age group grew up within the rapid technological advancements, increasing presence of media and the rise of social media. Our participants told us that this age group makes the most use of social media. During our stay, we also observed the youth using their mobile devices continuously to look at social media and communicate through it. Adolescents therefore are not only the most familiar with and embedded in these processes, but also use them the most frequent. We decided to choose men and women between eighteen and twenty-five, who have legal authority to make their own choices, but who still are the most impressionable by friends, peers, media and social media and often do not have a family of their own.

3. All the effort she puts into her appearance – beauty and women (Stephanie)

Introduction: “Go fab, or go home!”³

April 7th, 2016

Men with press-passes dangling to their chests, rain clothes and big, heavy camera’s around their necks, are crawling around the ladies that just arrived at the racecourse. Today is the Grand National, the opening of the horse race season at Aintree. It looks like the press from all over the country have gathered here to be part of this event. “Hi miss, look here? ‘Click, click, click’. “One more picture over here, Miss”. The sun shines very bright and accentuates the red, yellow, orange, black, blue and beige dresses of the ladies. The short dresses and bare legs give you a feeling of summer, while it is not even ten degrees yet. All the ladies wear high-heeled sandals and have a colourful matching purse. The headpieces they wear are with or without feathers and come in all different sizes and shapes while the colour matches with the dress. The hair and make-up of these women are carefully styled. Every hair is in the right place and the make-up looks like the make-up in magazines and advertisements. The men that escort the ladies are also perfectly styled with a black or blue tuxedo, a matching tie and a white shirt. All around us are betting stalls and drinking bars with waiters who seem to be chosen for their looks and all wear the same beautiful black vests and bowties with white sweaters. The ladies all unite before a camera and other photographers rush near this joyful scene. For a few seconds, the sound of ringing cocktail glasses overshadows the clicking sounds of the cameras. Servants of the event present plates with triangular cocktail glasses on it, with a red or orange content in it. The colourful parade pauses for a moment, takes a glass and continues laughing and talking loudly. You would almost



Figure 4 Photo taken at Aintree racecourse. We are the two centred women in black and blue.

³ This vignette is based on participant observation at the Aintree racecourse at the Grand National, the opening of the horserace season at 7th of April 2016.

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forget that this day is the opening of one of the worlds' most famous racecourses and that the people are coming here to see horses race.

Women in Liverpool are known for their extravagant appearance. This vignette illustrates how women in Liverpool give expression to their femininity. The women all felt the need to wear (the same type of) dresses in different colours, high heels and to have matching accessories. It was evident that they put a lot of effort in their make-up and hair, indicating the need to accentuate their femininity and give expression to their gender roles. When we asked a group of women to be in a picture with them, photographers came rushing towards us to make a picture too. Combined, these are indicators that women know that their behaviour is being watched by other people and media, and therefore they feel the pressure to put a lot of effort, energy and money in their appearance.

In the previous chapters, we presented a literature overview about how the media and social networks influence beauty ideals and how this is expressed in the body. This chapter will address how these processes take place for the female population between the ages of 18 till 25 in Liverpool. The first section will discuss how the media portrays female beauty and how media and celebrities influence beauty ideals of the female population. The second section analyses the influence of social networks on the beauty ideals of women. A distinction will be made between the different levels of influence of family, friends and peers. The last section will discuss how beauty ideals shape the female body in Liverpool, where a distinction is made between the inner, outer body and online body. We will demonstrate that images in the media portray beauty ideals that create low self-esteem and that therefore women rate themselves very low. Among our participants, the influence of family in appealing beauty ideals, while influence from friends and peers is normally higher, yet fluctuates per women.

3.1 Media influence on beauty ideals of women

Media personalities play a big role in the formation of beauty ideals. Based upon empirical data, we will argue in this paragraph that beauty ideals are distributed through (social) media channels that members of the female population follow and are obtained by beauticians.

Our empirical data shows that women in Liverpool are exposed to different media forms that can be found all around them. Women in Liverpool are confronted with online and offline media and advertisements. According to Doctor Guimaraes,⁴ a plastic surgeon from Liverpool, most women watch television⁵ and see commercials, use the Internet, read newspapers, magazines, blogs, watch vlogs and use social media, such as Facebook and Instagram. Rebecca,⁶ a twenty-year-old student who lives in Liverpool, adds that women in and around the city are also confronted with a lot of advertisement in their daily lives. For example, advertisement can be found on the outer sides of busses, inside stores, shopping windows, and on billboards in the street.

The degree and direction of the media influence depends on the frequency and the type of contact. Because interconnectedness in Liverpool is very high through social media, women are often confronted with mediated beauty standards. In Liverpool we can speak of both heterogenization and homogenization as described by Appadurai (2006) and Eriksen (2007). We argue that the prevailing 'scouse'-brow is a form of homogenisation. In Liverpool the trend is to make a scouse brow: a tattooed or squared very big, extreme dark brown or black rectangular brow. The worldwide media trend became to have full, dark eyebrows.⁷ According to plastic surgeon Doctor Juma,⁸ most women follow trends in the media, but they try to make the trends part of their own culture by adapting it to local beauty ideals, but this can also happen the other way around. By combining global beauty trends and local cultural beauty traits, they create something new. He also proclaims that beauty ideals set out in the Media are adapted to someone's personality, preferences, body type and appearance.

⁴ Interview on (18-04-2016)

⁵ Some participants indicate that they see fewer commercials on television, because they watch Netflix or skip the breaks. They state that personalized commercials and side commercials on the Internet are possible through the use of cookies, and that they are increasing and more directed to you as an individual.

⁶ Interview on (02-03-2016)

⁷ According to the interview with Holly.

⁸ Interview on (09-04-2016)

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When I ask my participants what image the media portrays as female beauty, they all describe the same image: the ideal woman is tall, toned (the preferred tone depends per person), slender, should have a flawless, clear skin and long hair. Other participants⁹ add nice high cheekbones, plump lips, white teeth, nicely groomed eyebrows, full/lush lashes and “*big boobs and a big bum*”¹⁰. Others mention that an ideal woman has to be well taken care of with nice make-up and that she wears nice, fashionable clothes. Internal meaning and enactment can be different for every person. There are women who take more or less ‘extreme’ measures to acquire the image set out in the media. The media portrays famous, beautiful women and with this they set out a particular image of how women should look. According to our participants, these images resemble media characters as: Charlotte Crosby (UK), Vicky Pattison (UK), Angelina Jolie (US) and Kim Kardashian (US).

DeMello (2013) states that ‘average women’ are underrepresented in the media. The media only display a few types of women (DeMello 2013: 45), which often resemble the image set out earlier. During our time in Liverpool we observed that forms of media, like television and magazines, display models and celebrities who fit the picture of this ideal woman, instead of displaying the reflection of the diversity of the female population. Because the media advocates certain ideals of how a beautiful woman must look, a standard is set out in society. This type of women displayed in commercials, reality soaps, movies and adverts make other women want to look like them. The adverts seen in offline and online spaces contain images of celebrities and people that meet the beauty standards or that are being transformed to live up to the advocated beauty ideals of Liverpool/England.

Many participants mention that they compare themselves to the images displayed in the media. In general women look at the examples and see them as the role models, who should be followed. Each participant feels a different level of pressure to comply with the images shown, but a lot of female participants explained that they, like most especially young women in Liverpool, feel a lot of pressure to live up to the established beauty standards. Over-comparison with media images leads to a distorted self-image, because social comparison with the average population fades (Ferguson et al. 2014). The majority of the images contain extremely beautiful people, through which

⁹ Based on interviews with Elizabeth (14-03-2016), Holly (15-04-2016) and Ammy (02-03-2016).

¹⁰ Based on conversations with Elizabeth.

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many people tend to create a negative self-image and a low self-esteem. They do not have the features these role models have and they sometimes do not realize that this is not what an average person looks like. This is visible in Elisabeth's story.¹¹ She was exposed to beauty ideals that did not resemble her mixed-heritage looks. She had a low self-esteem until she changed numerous things, such as several facial features and wearing a corset every day. She explained that she felt as if she did not look how she was supposed to look before her changes.

“For years it wasn't even just like my hair, it was the fact that, obviously, all my facial features were very different and my skin colour as well. And it's not that I ever hated my skin colour or anything like that, but because you don't see women really in the media with my skin tone or my hair type. You just feel really out of place and like you don't fit in. It wasn't actually until I started wearing extensions and contact lenses etc. That I did actually started getting male attention so. It shows really that the media does have a big impact really.”

Rebecca told us that she feels less confident because of the images in the media:¹² *“I'm quite confident, but when I compare myself to the media, I feel less confident about myself. They have imperfections covered up, that's a big difference.”* Commercials are directed to the viewer in order to let them undertake action, buy certain products and treatments to enhance their appearance (Edmonds 2010). Adverts also show which products and treatments are necessary to accomplish these ideals. This mechanism is visible in the next quote of Rebecca. To achieve resemblance with media personalities, she is inclined to buy certain products that the media convinces her to buy.

“I don't feel as feminine as how the women look in the media. I feel ugly compared to them. They have a woman wear a type of make-up and you feel bad because you don't wear that. So you will buy that product, and you still don't look like that.”

Beauticians, such as hairdressers, nail artists and make-up artists, together with plastic surgeons are the mediators between the media and the population. The

¹¹ Based on interview (14-03-2016)

¹² Based on interview (02-03-2016)

participating beauticians in our research state that media personalities like the Kardashians determine the trends in the beauty industry. These trends are followed by our participants/ young females and are performed on the body by beauticians. Beauticians offer products and treatments to the customer, which are in accordance with the trends in the media. We will come back on this subject later.

3.2 Social networks and the influence on beauty ideals

Apart from the media, social connections with family, friends and peers influence beauty ideals. In this research, we define the family as including parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins and other family members that are close to an individual. Friends are people with whom you have a close, personal connection and *peers* are described as people you have weak or no direct contact with.

3.2.1 Family members

Family has an important influence in the way girls feel about their body from a young age onwards, but this starts to decrease from around the age of 16-18. Doctor Juma and Doctor Guimaraes¹³ explained to me that, family members tend to comment a lot on girls' appearances, especially parents and other close family members but this diminishes when women grow older, more mature and autonomous, the bonds with the family fade. Women tend to be closer with friends and peers in their direct surroundings, because they spend most time with them. Most participants mentioned that there is little or no influence felt by their parents and grandparents, regarding how informants assess their body, how they shape beauty ideals, and how this comes into practice on the body. This is especially when there is a big age gap between family members. English adults¹⁴ do not share their feelings and emotions with their family, and a lot of subjects are restricted in British culture. When strong ties with family members are still present, more influence on perceptions of beauty can be found, but this is rarely the case. The only bonds with family that continue to exist are mostly bonds with family members from the same age and sex. Ammy¹⁵ states that young women do not compare their body to the bodies of their family members. She tells us

¹³ Based on the interviews with Doctor Juma (09-04-2016) and Doctor Guimaraes (18-04-2016)

¹⁴ According to Holly (15-04-2016)

¹⁵ Based on interview (02-03-2016)

that this is due to the fact that they do not belong to their age group and when the informants grow older, contact with family often fades away. Often, bonds with family members around the same age and especially of the same sex, are much stronger.

At a certain moment, girls are seen as women and as old enough to make their own decisions. They are then able to judge their own appearance and less attention is paid to how they look. Interestingly, although participants state that there is little or no influence of family left concerning appearance, when they go to see their parents and other family members, they adapt the styling of their appearance to this visit. This is exemplary with a few informants around the age of twenty who do not live with their parents anymore. They will wear more moderate clothes and more suitable make-up (less and more natural). They tell me that they still get comments about their appearance from their parents and that they will rethink their choice of for example hairstyle or clothes.

Our participants state that comments are often made because of the generation gap and inappropriateness of appearance/clothing. Sometimes after consideration, women think that the family is right and change their appearance. Subjects, like being overweight, can be addressed directly or indirectly by friends and family, but this depends heavily on the situation, the people involved and the subjects being addressed. As girls grow older and puberty ends, the appearance in Liverpool becomes less over the top. While comments and the influence of the family fades, the influence of friends, peers and celebrities become more prevalent.

3.2.2 Friends

Participants explain that when young girls grow up, often they spend most time with friends and they become the closest persons in their life. Therefore, they are the ones that have an influence on behaviour and appearance. Informants state that during a social event, friends and society in general, expect you to look a certain way. It is not socially acceptable to put on anything; your appearance needs to look a certain way. An informant put the pressure from different friend groups in these words:

“There are certain friends with who you can go however you want. If you see me and B, we are quite casual people. We wear a dress sometimes, but more often not. We just wear

jeans. But if you meet Elizabeth, she will be like skin-tight dress, long heels and stuff, just to go out for one drink. There is pressure from both sides to dress normal or dress up."

This supports the claims made by Sutherland (1947), who argues that a person alters his behaviour, norms and values to the standards of the (friend) group to maintain and strengthen the friendship. Within groups of friends, the amount and type of pressure differs, and the exact beauty ideals can also slightly differ within these groups. In some groups, the girls dress up for a girls' night in, just to look good for their friends.¹⁶ Beauticians¹⁷ state that women talk a lot about beauty and try to help each other with the accomplishment of certain beauty traits, especially when they go out. They do each other's hair, make-up, nails and eyebrows. This saves money, as these procedures are expensive. Women also often compete with each other. Informants shared different stories about competition between female friends about who looks the best within the group itself, or between girls in general in a public space (peers). Everyone wants to look their best and when someone of the same sex overrides the other that woman is embarrassed and she will probably leave the public place with her friends. Females can also dress up for male attention in specific, but this happens less frequent. In continuation of the British custom, friends, family and peers do not often comment directly on someone's appearance. Even when someone asks for a friends' opinion. People will comment in a positive way, even when they do not think in a positive manner.¹⁸ Rebecca gave me the example that she would never degrade her friends' clothes, even if she thought they were not pleasing to the eye. She would consider it rude. Indirect comments are seen as most appropriate, but also not used frequently.

When there is a really close bond between for example sisters or friends, there is the possibility that they give an honest answer to each other, but only if the bond is strong enough. During interviews and participant observation some kind of anxiety among the participants, because they feel pressure to look a certain way. On the other hand, the participants say that they do not feel pressured by friends because they can be themselves around them. This allows us to conclude that some women feel a lot of pressure by (some) friends to appease beauty ideals, while some women consider the

¹⁶ According to the interview with Ammy

¹⁷ According to interviews with Shawn (12-03-2016), Katie (09-03-2016) and Toni (17-02-2016)

¹⁸ According to the interview with Doctor Juma

pressure from friends to be very low. It can also mean that there is a discrepancy between what informant feel and what they tell us.

3.2.3 Peers

The influence of peers tends to be stronger for some participants than the pressure that comes from friends concerning appearance. Doctor Juma¹⁹ explains that beautiful peers can function as media personalities in society. As with celebrities, the good-looking peers set a bar and other people feel even more pressured by these examples. When these peers are beautiful or successful, participants look up to them and want to resemble them. Holly²⁰ does not look up to the peers in her surrounding, but she is very aware of them and she is “*shunned*” that their success comes from their looks. According to Holly and Ammy,²¹ peers that look good at the university, at work, when going out or in other social areas create a lot of tension. Doctor Juma also explains that all peers are responsible for an extra field of pressure because they are ‘real’ and live in society. Peers, or members of the society create a pressure towards behaviour and appearance, they make up what is socially acceptable. While people in friend groups can experience pressure, pressure from peers can be higher in some parts of Liverpool’s society. Peers can have minor or major influence in the pressure that women feel to look good; it is variable in every situation and for every person. Some girls do not feel tension from peers, because they are more aware of the people they have close bonds with and do not care for others.

3.3 Beauty ideals reflected on the female body

There is a tendency to think that if your looks and appearance are rated as more attractive, you will automatically be more successful in life. My informants provided a lot of examples that confirm the idea that people tend to rate beautiful people as overall more successful in life, as Holly²² affirms in the following quote. “*There are two girls in my class that are so skinny and beautiful; they always get picked first with everything.*” Women can take advantage of their femininity. Mulvey (1975) argues in his idea of the *male stare* that women use feminine features like breasts to accomplish certain things

¹⁹ Based on interview (09-04-2016)

²⁰ Based on interview (15-04-2016)

²¹ Based on interview with Holly

²² Based on interview with Holly

with their body, just because they are females. In the analysis of how women alter their body there will be made a distinction between the outer body, the inner body and the online body. The outer body directs to the outer appearance, the enhancement of appearance through amongst other things: clothing, make-up, sunbeds, jewellery, hairstyle and nail treatments. The inner body directs to having a healthy body, in which nutrition and sports play a role, while the online body entails the presentation of the body on social media platforms.

3.3.1 Inner body

Sport is a method to achieve beauty ideals by slimming and shaping the body and to make it more fit and muscular. Although everyone explained this to us as a fact, the majority of our informants do not practice sports because they say they do not have the time, money and energy. The free time people have is mainly used for social events and other things people prefer to do. Two informants²³ point out that sports, supplements and steroids are things that mainly concern men, women usually do not like it and they simply do not have the time for it. Food and diet are supposed to be a subtler way to enhance the shape of the body. This is also something they want to pay attention to, but actually do not practice due to the lack of time, money, energy and especially motivation. All of the participants point out that they want to eat healthier and get better nutrition, but the majority of my research population really never do it. They state that most women from Liverpool just love fast food and a huge amount of the population (male and female) is overweight. From observations in the field we can confirm this idea.

3.3.2 Outer body

In Liverpool, images that portray certain beauty types are visibly present and important. Every street is covered with shops that concern the change of appearance and promise the ability to become more beautiful. Women use their bodies in order to show their perceptions of beauty ideals. Perceptions of beauty differ between women even as the amount of time and money spend in and different ways to maintain and obtain their beauty ideals. This results in different appearances, clothing and hairstyles. We observed that women in Liverpool use several different methods to change their appearance temporarily or permanently to obtain what in their eyes is beauty.

²³ Based on interviews with Ammy (07-02-2016) and Holly (15-04-2016).

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Rebecca²⁴ explained that almost all female adolescents in Liverpool wear make-up every day. Some of our participants wear more natural make-up, while some use a lot of make-up and beauty treatments in their daily life.

Other expressions can be found in, for instance, clothing style, hairstyle, spray tan, fake nails (acrylic or shellac) and bodily ornaments. Participants state that a few of these methods are more eminent in enhancing one's beauty ideals, like the change of hair and clothes. A nice and appropriate outfit is very important for women in Liverpool. Jewellery and bodily ornaments are present in society, but are used less by my informants. Overall, jewellery is seen as something nice, but not all people use it in order to enhance their appearance, possibly because it is too expensive for this research group. People also perceive tattoos in different ways. Rebecca²⁵ declares that tattoos are a way to enhance beauty and confidence (and all participants agree that confidence is one of the most important features of the self), and that it is a sign of or supplement to their character. Most of the participants do not want to have tattoos because it is a permanent change to the body, but show respect for the people who do want or have them.

Almost all the women in Liverpool make use of beauticians to accomplish beauty ideals. This can be seen in the different salons that can be found in Liverpool. There are salons that specialize in for instance: sunbeds, fake tan, hair, nails, make-up, the waxing, dying or tattooing of eyebrows, the extensions of eyelashes and hair or multiple procedures. In almost every street in Liverpool you can find multiple beauty salons. Most women put a lot of effort in their appearance and go to the nail artist once or twice a week, they put extensions in and dye their hair often and in striking colours. Beauticians are the link between the media that displays and disperses beauty ideals. When women want to resemble these, they go to a beauty salon and get treatments.

When women go out, they put even more effort in their appearance, as can be seen from the following quote from Holly, which explains the urge to look good, especially during on a night out. *"When I go for a night out, I go to the extreme to look at my best; I spend hours finding the right outfit, putting on my make-up and fake nails"*

Participants state that plastic surgery is an extreme tool to acquire beauty ideals. It should be noticed that, plastic surgeons encounter only a small part of the population.

²⁴ (02-03-2016)

²⁵ (02-03-2016)

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They particularly encounter customers who pay much value to their appearance and have enough money to go to a surgeon. These people may be more aware of their appearance and have more money to spend on it. All informants are convinced that, without complications, plastic surgery can lead to the increase of a person's self-esteem, whether or not the person actually looks better. Almost all of the participants I spoke to know people who have had plastic surgery or will not preclude that they will use it one day themselves. The opinions depend severely on the type of surgery and the amount (lack) of confidence of the woman it concerns. Botox injections or lip fillers are socially more accepted, possibly because you don't need to go to a clinic. These can be obtained at the beautician at the corner of the street. Many of the women think that plastic surgery is a method to enhance beauty, if not overdone. Most of the women state that it is fine for other women to use this method, but they do not want to use it themselves. They state that the reason is because it permanently changes the body. They will not feel like themselves anymore after a surgery and there is always a risk that the surgery goes wrong, which results in negative side effects on their appearance. They do note that they do not know what the future will bring, that may they age badly, that they will consider plastic surgery. Other reasons for the evasion of plastic surgery include the obtaining of scar tissue, risks and deformations. A woman²⁶ who had Botox for 5 years already (30) did it because she likes her eyebrows more when they are higher and her skin is tighter. Her boyfriend did not like it. She did it because she wants to enhance her beauty and this is how she likes it. A few participants believe that it is a legitimate reason to make small changes to your body to improve self-esteem according to the society of Liverpool.

A reason for plastic surgery according to a plastic surgeon is because women enhance the things they see as their weak point. They concentrate on these points and devalue their bodies for that. This will be illustrated in the following quote of Doctor Juma:²⁷

"The majority of females are confident in their own body, but they also tend to be more critical about their body, they are looking for minor imperfections. You can't get rid of an imperfection. It is not only about how they perceive themselves, but also about how other people perceive them. Friends will agree with you. When you talk about an imperfection,

²⁶ Based on the interview with Keeley (28-02-2016)

²⁷ (09-04-2016)

they will agree with you, they will not say that you don't need to change. Some friends will say no, let it go, don't change it. But most friends will agree with you because they want to support you as a friend."

For women, looks are often far more important than the possible damage they create for these women, as can be seen in the quote from Elizabeth.²⁸ She only stopped using fake eyelashes because they destroyed her own eyelashes. "I used to wear fake eyelashes every day, but I had to stop because my own eyelashes started falling out, literally just breaking off."

3.3.3 The Online body

There are also methods to present appearance online and enhance online beauty. Women in Liverpool alter the presentation of their body in the media and on social networks in the best way possible. They use methods, which make them look slimmer, less old (or older) and overall more beautiful according to their ideals. Females use programs to change their photos like Photoshop or they put a filter over a photo to make the colours brighter or darker. Females often ask to untag them in a photo²⁹ that they do not like and they make sure that photos they find ugly never make it on the Internet or their social network page. Holly even told me that although she posts little on Facebook, if she would post a selfie, she would make a hundred, and will choose the best one. This is a form of screening information to make someone seem prettier of having a more active life than it is in real life. This is an example of alteration of the body (but not on the body itself) for the presentation online.

3.4 Conclusion

Perfect looking women dominate the media, an image that is not the representation of the population. Women want to look like media personalities and try to acquire the same traits. This image is not reachable by most of the population. Social media and media like advertisement, television, internet and magazines spread beauty ideals of what is currently in fashion. Women in Liverpool do not only follow friends on social media but also celebrities, in order to know the trends and the latest updates about how

²⁸ (14-03-2016)

²⁹ Untagging means deleting a tag, an online nametag attached to a photograph. This is primarily done on Facebook.

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they should look and what they should wear. Women watch these role models in society and the media and this creates low self-esteem and a negative self-image when they look at their own body. Women in Liverpool state that they do not have the time and money needed to achieve media images. Overall, influence and pressure from family on women's appearances for our research group is not present anymore. The most time is spent with friends and peers; therefore, they are the ones exerting influence and pressure. In some groups of friends there is pressure to look a certain way, while with other friends, participants do not feel this pressure. For some informants, the most pressure comes from peers with whom they have a weak or no connection. There is also competition going on between women for who looks the best, within or outside friend groups and from peers. Friends, peers and the society as a whole also exert pressure in the direction of behaviour or appearance.

Reaching a certain beauty standard can restore self-confidence. The body can be changed by a healthy lifestyle (sports and nutrition) or procedures and treatments (make-up, clothing, hairstyle, beauty treatments and (non-) surgical procedures). Women only participate in the last option, the outer body and alter their online body to present themselves in 'better' manner. Salons have a very influential role because they are the mediator between the media and the population. People go to salons to look like the celebrities they see in the media and to look better than their friends and peers. Participants state that beautiful people have better opportunities in school and in the workspace they are more successful. Both plastic surgeons agreed with this statement: beauty is a form of capital that females can obtain and this has value in society.

4. Taking good care of yourself - Beauty and men (Iris)

Introduction: This is a man's world³⁰

April 1th 2016

"This is a man's world!" The first sentence of James Brown's hit from 1966 blares through the room that faintly smells of sweat and men. After a loud electronic sound, which indicates the start of the training, fifteen men and one woman start their training in different parts of the gym. One large room with two rings, an area with boxing sacs and some instruments for muscle training are situated across the mirror, which is placed on the wall at the back side of the room. D and Robb, in the official ring, push two young boxers to their limits. 'Don't let your guard down!' and 'come on, keep going' are just a few lines of encouragements thrown at the sweaty young men. A couple of guys and one woman are practicing their punches on the sacs. In the corner, a group of other men do exercises regarding their muscular training. When the signal buzzes again, everybody stops with what they're doing. Some sweat that fell on the floor is wiped away, some guys exchange a few quick words, but then they switch to a different part of the room and resume their training at the next buzzer. Before his push-ups, Jack quickly adjusts his hair in the mirror. "You look nice lass!³¹" D shouts at him. After this round, the woman called Beth takes place on the bench next to me. After she cooled down a bit, she takes off her gloves. 'Don't you need to be in the ring this round?' I ask when she caught her breath again. "I am not allowed to go in there yet. They say it is too dangerous to fight the men, until I am better, and until the trainers know that they can control themselves. They don't want me to get hurt, since this is not really a girl's thing." She says smiling. When the buzzer rings again, she puts on her gloves again and starts sac training with one of the guys. That's when James sings the last line of his famous song: "This is a man's world. But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing, without a woman or a girl."

This vignette portrays how gender roles are perceived and embedded among men in daily life in Liverpool. It shows how sports, and especially boxing, are being used to gain

³⁰ Vignette is based participant observation at the Rydell gym (01-04-2016)

³¹ Lass: a girl or young women.

skills and who is accepted to participate. The friendly banter between D. and Jack illustrates how men perceive being concerned about looks is mostly connected with being a women and femininity, especially in a sports setting.

Within this research project we have made the division between women and men between the ages of 18 and 25 in Liverpool. In the previous chapter we discussed how media and social networks influence women from this population. In this chapter, we focus on young men and how media and social networks influence them. In the first paragraph I will discuss how the media portrays the 'ideal' male body and how this body is interpreted. I show how two male beauty ideals are created: one top-down by the media and one bottom- up ideal by participants. I will describe the resemblance and differences between these two ideals and then analyse the influence of the media on the beauty ideals from the participants. In the second paragraph, I will focus on the social networks that are present in the men's life. The influence of family, friends and peers on their perception of beauty will be discussed. I will analyse the interactions between these networks and the individuals by discussing the resemblances and differences that exist between the beauty ideals of participants and the ideals that exist in their networks. In the third paragraph the reflection of beauty ideals on the body will be discussed, which I will divide into three categories: the outer body (clothing, hair, spray tan, cosmetic surgery), the inner body (sport, nutrition) and social media. In the fourth paragraph, I will give a conclusive answer to the research question.

4.1 Media influence on beauty ideals of men

Our participants state that they are exposed to different types of media on a daily basis. Through television, radio, smartphones, computers and in daily life on the streets they encounter a lot of media images. Reality soaps, commercials, billboards, magazines, window advertisements and personalized commercials on social media are all different ways that men have said to come in contact with the media. The set gender roles create differences between expressions of femininity and masculinity (Skeggs 1997), which are portrayed in media images as ideals of beauty. Male beauty in the media consists, according to Callem,³² of a tall, toned, muscular man. This top-down male ideal should have a nice flawless skin with a bronzed skin tone, white teeth and clean-cut hair. They should wear nice clothing and there should be almost none or nicely groomed facial hair.

³² Interview on 10-03-2016

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Men, overall, should have the appearance of being healthy and fit. They shouldn't laugh too much, but have a manly tough look. This corresponds with the observations that we have made in the City of Liverpool. *Figure 6* is a good example of the commercials men encounter in their daily lives, on-line as well as on the streets. The male models that are portrayed in the media and in commercials are mostly men with a famous career, such as in sport (David Beckham, football) or on the screen (Ryan Gosling, actor, see *figure 6*)³³, or men exhibit this previously described male ideal in extreme forms. This creates a unified idea of a male ideal body which can be related the concept *symbolic annihilation*. In this case this means that the men portrayed in the media, the people they try to live up to, are a small selection of the diversity that is available in society. All the men that are portrayed in this media resemble this male ideal look to a certain degree. The fact that men, such as Callem and Michael, are able to describe this strict idea of male beauty proves the fact that the images shown are a small selection of what is available in reality. Some men are aware that the images set out in the media have a high malleability. Jonathan stated that: *"What you see in de media isn't real, if you spend that amount of time and money... it might be possible, but that isn't my life."*

All men differ in the degree that they want to comply with these images. Men like Callem, Josh and Tommy³⁴ have expressed the wish to look more like the media ideal, but not all of them act upon this. Men, such as Jonathan and Nathan³⁵, who said not to be in contact with the media as much due to limited use of smartphones, computers and TV, have a less defined image of what the perfect male media body looks like and also claim to not bother as much to change their appearance. The more makeable traits, such as hair and



Figure 5 Hugo Boss commercial featuring Ryan Gosling. Caption saying: "I don't expect success, I prepare for it" - Ryan Reynolds and Boss Bottles Fragrance for men. (Copyrights Hugo Boss)

³³ Examples based on observations made in Liverpool and interviews with Josh (25-02-2016) and Callem (10-03-2016)

³⁴ Interviews on (10-03-2016), (25-02-2016) and (08-04-2016)

³⁵ Interviews on (04-04-2016) and (08-04-2016)

clothing, are achieved more easily and create a direct effect on the appearance. All participants, except Jonathan, said to pay attention to their hair and clothing and to a certain extent get their inspiration and their ideas on what to buy from media images, such as window commercials and celebrities. Even though some of them initially, such as Tommy³⁶, say they have their own style, after a while they realise they have been influenced by some form of media on what they like or what they would want to have.

The male role models that are being noticed and looked up to are mostly men with a good career and esteem in society, such as sportsmen and actors. Sports and watching sports play a big role in Liverpool's society and constitute a big part of their spare time. It seems that success in sports creates a stereotypical masculinity that people relate to male beauty, just as Mosse describes in his work "*the image of Man: the creation of modern masculinity*" (1998). The act of being successful in sports is almost just as important as looking or being masculine. Several men said that working out and looking after their nutrition can be important in achieving a fit and toned body that is portrayed in the media as the ideal male beauty.

According to Ferguson et al. (2014) who based his work on Festinger (1954) and Goffman (1959), images that people use to compare themselves with can create a negative self-image if these images are far from reality. Several men³⁷ consider their body and appearance as less attractive, less valuable and less productive in relation to the beauty ideals set out in the media. The men who do feel unsatisfied with the looks of their body mostly wish to be longer, more toned and masculine if they could change this immediately. However, this unsatisfied idea of their body is not enough to make men take a couple of hours per day in order to reach these standards. Others, such as Jonathan and D., who come in less contact with the media and who exercise more than other participants, said to put more value to the health and capacity of their bodies than towards the looks of it. Looks often come in at a far second place for these men. These findings, and especially the comparison with the media, correspond with the ideas of Ferguson *et al.* (2014) that the media indeed creates the wish to look different and have a more negative self-image as a result. Media amplifies the idea that achieving male beauty and a successful life go hand in hand, by connecting the male beauty ideals to successful famous men (Griffin, 2006).

³⁶ Interview on (08-04-2016)

³⁷ Based on interviews with Josh (25-02-2016), Callem (10-03-2016) and Shawn (12-03-2016)

4.2 Social networks and the influence on beauty ideals

The social networks of men within Liverpool consist of direct family (brothers, sisters, (grant-) parents), cousins, friends (people with whom they have a close connection, exemplary from high school or university), colleagues and *peers* (people they have superficial or no contact with, such as classmates, roommates, neighbours, people they know from sports etcetera). Berndt (1992) states that within social networks, connections with friends and family are the most influential on individuals. Beauty among social networks differs slightly to beauty ideals that are set out in the media. Beauty amongst men is overall less discussed than among women. Conversations are mostly focussed on sports, women or work among most of our participants. Sometimes men talk about a media personality, but somehow this seems to have less of an effect within the social networks of men than observed among our female participants. A plausible cause for this could be the idea that men portrayed in the media are 'not real' or 'far-flung' from daily life as discussed earlier.

4.2.1 Family members

All male participants say that during puberty, especially family had a larger influence on what they wore. Parents made more comments about looks and tried to pressure them into certain looks. They would tell them to put on clean clothes or to groom their hair differently. When they grew older, parents became more accepting of what their sons were wearing or had less influence on their son's opinion. Jonathan and D.³⁸ added to this that the importance of looks also became less, when they got over a certain age.

In relation to friends and family, men mostly assess their body as good looking. They do not feel bad about themselves or about the bodies of their friends. Most men prefer to be taller or more masculine when they compare themselves to friends and family. Older brothers and taller friends mostly set an example for this. Men generally talk about the bodies of their friends and families in a respectful way. They do not see anything wrong or 'ugly' about the bodies of their loved ones, although their loved ones might think completely otherwise. As Callem stated about his mother and sister: *"They are both doing that Weightwatchers program, because they think they are fat. Although they aren't. I have told them so, but yeah..."*. This comment shows that direct comments are being made among family, but we cannot make an assessment of the influence of

³⁸ Based on interviews and informal conversations on (01-04-2016) and (04-04-2016)

these comments, due to the fact that we were not able to gather more data on these family interactions.

4.2.2 Friends

Currently all men claim that friends have more influence on how they look. We can connect this to Berndt (1992), who states that friendships play an important role in the formation of behaviour, development and views. We can observe this in evident comments about haircuts and clothing, which provoke some friendly banter, but might actually result in change with the men who get the comments.³⁹ These direct comments are mostly directed at hair, clothing and skin tone. Indirect comments of this kind occur more often among family. These are all traits that can be changed within a limited time frame. Direct comments that focus on the body, such as weight, muscles or the condition of the skin, are far less frequent or even said to be non-existent. These comments may occur indirectly, but this is something that has not yet been observed by either our participants or us.

Men and women have said that being in a relationship has a big impact on what people wear. Partners would make comments on how they do not like the way their significant other is dressed. This would happen when they go to a social event, such as a night out or a dinner in a restaurant.⁴⁰ The actual changing of certain looks, which some men have said to do, could be argued to be an alternation of certain values in order to maintain and strengthen a relationship. As we have discussed previously, Sutherland (1947) stated that norms and values within a group are altered within that group in order to guarantee the quality of the connection. This alteration can be seen as a form of social control (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). Men workout or go sporting together as a spare time activity and/or to achieve a bigger, more buff body. Amongst friends there always seems to be a small competition factor; who gets the most attention and who looks the fittest. If men feel like they are underdressed/overdressed compared to each other, they would change their clothing. Some men said to agree on outfits with friends before they go out to make sure they all look somewhat uniform so no one sticks out, positively or negatively. Men might advise or discuss with friends what to wear on a

³⁹ Based on interviews with Josh (25-02-2016), Callem (10-03-2016), Michael (10-03-2016), Tommy (08-04-2016) and Nathan (08-04-2016)

⁴⁰ Based on interviews and informal conversations with Katie (09-03-2016) and Shawn (12-03-2016)

night out, go to a hairdresser once in while or talk about new clothing. Shawn⁴¹ stated that in the past he even ruined someone's look, through tossing his drink over the outfit of a friend, in order to look better himself. This competition between friends and other men on a night out often is about seeing and being seen. This means that friends and peers both exert a certain amount influence on how men look.

4.2.3 Peers

Amongst men who are not friends there is a bigger competition factor. This occurs especially during nights out, when people question: who looks more masculine, who wears the better outfit, and who gets the most attention. The competition is with the people from the same sex as opposed to impressing people who might be a potential mate. Demello (2013) states that women among themselves maintain and alter set gender norms through competition and altering their appearance. It could be argued that this process also occurs among men in whom they alter and maintain gender norms and male beauty ideals in Liverpool.

The men that have been interviewed all said not to feel pressured to comply with existing beauty ideals, but when asked in different questions, they did express a need to look a certain way at different events. Family events, night outs, and church mass are a few examples that evoke certain behaviour towards appearance that men would describe as 'social acceptable attire'. They said they were not obligated to wear certain outfits; however, they would feel that it would be inappropriate not to dress in a certain way. Callem,⁴² for example, would feel uncomfortable when attending these events and especially at family events feel as if he would not make his parents happy. He stated: *"They would not say it, but you just would not. You would not want to get to a hard place with them"*

Within the group of men, the degree to which they would feel uncomfortable and to which they feel there is a form of 'social acceptable attire' varies. Some men, like Josh and Jonathan,⁴³ said it would only feel 'wrong' in official settings, while others, like Shawn and Callem,⁴⁴ would feel uncomfortable in more daily events, such as work or

⁴¹ Interview on (12-03-2016)

⁴² Interview on (10-03-2016)

⁴³ Interviews with Josh on (25-02-2016) and Jonathan (04-04-2016)

⁴⁴ Interview and informal conversation with Shawn on (09-03-2016), (12-03-2016) and (15-04-2016) and with Callem on (10-03-2016)

class. One of the most obvious examples would be nightlife in Liverpool. Most participants have said they would want to look good and all information would point out that there was some sort of competition between men going on. A couple of men say that they do think about looking better than friends on a night out. During the same night out competition among men for the attention of women evokes pressure between groups of friends to all have a desirable. Several men have said not to be bothered by how they look on a night out, mainly because they do not go out to often.

This can be linked to the social comparison theory of Festinger (1954), who argues that people constantly look for objective examples as a reference to their own behaviour and appearance. When this is not available, they will create subjective images to compare themselves with. A unified male look as portrayed in the media and in a society let people compare themselves with these other men in order to reflect on their own appearance. When people do not go out at public events often they do not exhibit this behaviour of comparing their appearance to the in society set out standard as much. Most interviewed men feel some sort of pressure to look good according to existing standards. Standards they may have set or that society in which they live has set out.

4.3 Beauty ideals reflected on the body

Beauty ideals in Liverpool are present in every aspect of life, especially for women. For men these ideals are not only less extreme, but they also require less work in front of the mirror than women. Prevailing looks for men, during the spring of 2016, were nice 'clean' and 'tidy' looks. Participants said that a groomed and tight haircut; including facial hair, was necessary. A tanned skin, but not too dark, due to the time of the year, and clean and fresh outfit were also preferred. This means 'up-to-date' clothing and shoes as displayed in the media, with no stains or holes unless they are meant to be in them. This was a prevailing image during nights out in the streets (see *figure 7*). During the day, this 'look' still prevailed, although a lot more men were wearing sports clothing or sweatpants, compared to the nightlife. According to the men themselves, beauty entails 'taking care of yourself',

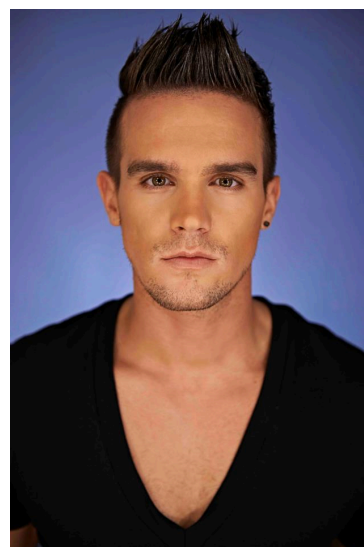


Figure 6 Gary Beadle, reality star, that resembles the desired male 'look' in Liverpool. Especially prevailing during nights' out

yet men differ in what they mean by this. The younger men (18-22) mostly seem to refer to the outer appearance, which can be reached through clothing, haircuts, sunbeds etc. The somewhat older men (24-28), seem to refer to the inner body with this, which entails sporting, good nutrition and rest.

4.3.1 The outer body: clothing, hair and cosmetic procedures

Clothing is an important part of the appearance of men in Liverpool. Especially during nights out, a good outfit is a must. According to Callem,⁴⁵ an outfit would be considered appropriate when it would not stand out from his friends too much, but at the same time still had an individual clean and tidy look. Shopping, looking clean and paying attention to their appearance have been said to be important to the self-esteem of several men.⁴⁶

All men say clothing needs to be practical, cannot take too much of their time, and should, preferably, be comfortable. Therefore, most men said to buy a lot of products online due to time and practical issues. Specific elements, like shoes, which require a good fit, are still bought in the store. This to make sure they have the right product. Men feel the need to carry out a style and a sense of 'taking good care of themselves', because, as described before, it is preferred in some social situations to look tidy, fresh or neat. As Nathan⁴⁷ states *"I am always a bit of a perfectionist. I mean really, like, all my colours should match ... I shop often as well, that is why I have no money"*. Participants said that this is how they would like to be perceived. Men like Jonathan and D.⁴⁸ said not too care as much, as long as it is comfortable and they do not look like homeless people it should be all right. Hairstyles are being used for the same goal: to look well taken care of, to feel good after a treatment, to boost self-esteem, and to create an appearance as how they would want to be perceived. This controlling the body in order to create an impression with other people, can be seen as an example of Goffman's (1959) theory. Men act as actors on a stage, in which they alter and adjust their appearance in how they would like to be perceived. Again some of the men have this view on their hairstyle, while others have a regular short trimmed cut and claim to not care as much as long as it looks proper. These are the men who do not come into contact with the media too often or go

⁴⁵ Interview on (10-03-2016)

⁴⁶ Interview with Shawn (09-03-2016), (12-03-2016), (15-04-2016), Callem (10-03-2016), and Tommy (08-04-2016)

⁴⁷ Interview on (08-04-2016)

⁴⁸ Interview with Jonathan on (04-04-2016), interview with D. on (01-04-2016)

out on a regular basis. Men will also use sunbeds to alter the colour of their skin. According to Callem,⁴⁹ this normally happens more towards summer, in order to look more desirable and healthy.

Davis (2004) argues that aesthetic surgery is an example of the obsession with malleability in late modern Western societies. If people are not satisfied with certain aspects in their lives, they change it. Aesthetic surgery is already accepted among women in Liverpool and people are becoming more accepting of aesthetic surgery among men. Doctor Juma and Doctor Guimaraes,⁵⁰ both cosmetic surgeons, claim that there is an annual rise of +-3 per cent of cosmetic procedures among men, although they refrain from facial procedures, which supports the idea of growing malleability. Yet despite this growth, mainly women undergo treatments that have a permanent effect on their appearance. Cosmetic surgeon doctor Guimaraes explained that for men there is a big shift going on in England, since the last few years. The use of products at home like day creams, masks etc. is still feminized and therefore not used a lot by men. Men do groom themselves more, but this is through shaving, haircuts and other things that are less connected to being feminine. He explains that this shift is mainly because men are higher educated and professionally need to look good and refreshed, not rough or tired. Men come for such a 'refreshing' procedure like Botox. They tend to like favour single time procedures more, because they do not want to come often. In the past these 'bodily problems' were covered up and men were not concerned about it. Nowadays, men are much more aware of their body and their deviations with the standard set out in the media. For instance, with fat breasts, different sized nipples or a fat belly. These are procedures that are done more often.

Juma explained this increase in acceptance of these men as: men accepting themselves taking treatments. These men who accept themselves having treatments, also accept other men undergoing treatments. We must however consider that the cosmetic surgery business attracts people who are more concerned with their appearance. All our participants, not only never had aesthetic surgery, but also said not to favour it as much on other people. To cut into something that is healthy is stupid and especially when you get older men do not find it attractive. This shows that the acceptance of cosmetic procedure is still very variable. As Callem stated very clearly: "I

⁴⁹ Interview on (10-03-2016)

⁵⁰ Interviews with Doctor Juma on (09-04-2016) and Doctor Guimaraes on (18-04-2016)

think that when people get cosmetic surgery done and when they become old, they start to look like dolls". Some men also reflected in this reasoning on the long-term effects of cosmetic surgery. They give a person a boost in self-esteem on the short term, but it might be needed to keep getting procedures done in order to maintain that wanted look.

According to documentaries and stories told, steroids are popular among men in Liverpool, but we did not encounter anyone who said to use it or who knows someone who has used it. Among all male and female participants interviewed, they claim that steroids are being used a lot in Liverpool, but none of the participants said to have used them or knows someone who did, which could indicate a taboo.

4.3.2 The inner body: sports and nutrition

Sports and nutrition go hand in hand for almost all our male participants in Liverpool to achieve the beauty/body ideal that they have in mind. This is not only about achieving a beauty ideal, but also about achieving a certain set of skills, such as being able to fight, lift a certain amount of weight or gain athletic skills. The men who say not to bother with the shape of their body, such as Josh and Michael,⁵¹ also say not to pay a lot of attention on their nutrition either. As long as they are healthy and not over or underweight, they are pleased and they would not work out in order to maintain their body. However, Tommy would change his diet for a couple of weeks when training for a specific goal, such as running a marathon. Most of them say to be satisfied with their body as long as it is not limiting the lifestyle they live, for instance during activities such as working, studying or working out. The men, who sport, focus on a fit healthy, toned and muscular body. To achieve this beauty ideal, nutrition in the form of high amounts of proteins, low amount of carbohydrates and Callem⁵² has said to use additional shakes to form the body. The difference between Callem, who works out in order to get certain a look, and therefor will stick to a less strict diet based purely on gaining muscles, whereas men, like Jonathan and Nathan,⁵³ who want to achieve certain physical goals, such as running a marathon or winning a fights, may go to extreme conditions to adapt their body to the task they want to fulfil with it. As Tommy⁵⁴ illustrated: *"Sport has played a quit important part in my life. I always had some sort of hobby that was a form of sport ...*

⁵¹ Interview on (25-02-2016) and (10-03-2016)

⁵² Interview on (10-03-2016)

⁵³ Interviews with Jonathan on (04-04-2016) and Nathan (08-04-2016)

⁵⁴ Interview on (08-04-2016)

*Before I went to university, I used to run half marathons, like a little long distance running and then I thought I want to try a **proper** sport”.*

No man has claimed to solely work out just for his looks or gaining a muscular body, it is always in combination with losing energy, clearing their minds or gaining a certain skill. All of the men, who sport, claim to have started out through connection with the sport via family or friends. The only one who said the idea came from TV was female boxer Beth.⁵⁵ Which form of the body the men prefer and how much effort they want to put into it, depends on the person.

4.3.3 The online body: use of social media

In general, men say that they are not very active on social media. They mostly use it to stay in touch with their friends and family that live further away or whom they do not see too often due to busy schedules. This is consistent with the reasoning of Eriksen (2007:71), namely that social media create the possibility to maintain big (online) networks. Male informants all say not to meet new people online, but they do sometimes follow celebrities. The people they follow are more likely to be a person with a career in sports, then someone who is famous for their looks, such as singers, actors and models. They say they only follow people online if they want to keep up with their accomplishments in fights, matches or games. Men on social media would not use Photoshop to alter their appearance online. They would not use filters in order to make their skin tone look darker or smoother in order to enhance their appearance online. All the men that participated in this research say they never adjusted or made up false information on social media in order to gain a certain status. Some said they did know people who have done so, these turned out to be mostly women. People have said to filter the photos and information that has been put online in order to keep their reputation with friends and family at a certain level. Some photos, which were not meant for family members, might be posted in online communities as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. They would ask people not to tag them in photos that were put online, or sometimes ask them to remove the photos.

When asked about what they think of the role of beauty in social media, all men would answer with: ‘a big role’. They claimed that people are on social media to be seen and say that beauty is an important factor to look at on social media, which they link

⁵⁵ Interview on (01-04-2016)

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especially to women. When people post photos online they do look at *what* people are doing first, but to pay attention on *how* people look in the photo that has been posted. This could be linked to the idea that social media could form a new space in which *peers* influence each other (Ferguson et al., 2014).

4.4 Conclusion

Media and social networks both influence the beauty ideals of men in Liverpool. Media creates the general idea of beauty standards, which are further spread within social networks and through peer-to-peer contact. People within these networks then interpret these ideals. These 'transformed' ideals are then reinterpreted by the media and brought back into society. Male and female bodies reflect interpretations of these beauty ideals, the effort they want to put in, and the pressure they feel from peers and friends to comply with these ideals.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

In the two previous chapters we described the findings of our three months of fieldwork in Liverpool. In this chapter we will conclude our thesis by discussing the outcome, based on the findings related to theoretical concepts we previously discussed as well as answering our main question: *“How do media and social networks influence the perceptions of beauty of young men and women in Liverpool (United Kingdom) and how are these perceptions reflected on the body?”*

To answer the research question we first provide an answer to our three main topics: the influence of media on beauty ideals, the influence of social networks on beauty ideals and the reflection of beauty ideals on the body. We use the three levels of analysing the body as Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) describe: the ‘lived’ individual body, the ‘social’ body and the disciplined ‘political’ body. We will then analyse the differences that we encountered between women and men, based on the inner body, the outer body and the online body. We will end the section with a discussion based on these findings and we will propose ideas for future research.

5.1 Media

Media, in the broad sense of the word, is present in all aspects of life in Liverpool. Advertisements and commercials starring media personalities envision idealized appearances of women and men. Our female participants come often in contact with social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat), advertisements on the Internet and commercials on the streets, magazines or on television. Our male participants come more in contact with advertisements and commercials on the Internet and on the street. Although they use social media, they are less in contact with it than women. Both groups have daily encounters with the media.

The idea of *‘what makes a woman a beautiful woman’* has a wider definition than *‘what makes a man a beautiful man’*. The female ideal has a wider range of *‘different types’* of women that fit the description of being beautiful than it has for men. For instance, differences in height, eye colour, hairstyle, skin tone (from porcelain to an olive coloured skin) can all be part of this ideal. Nevertheless, the ideas about what makes a beautiful woman are still strict, especially when it comes to proportions of the body. A woman needs to look very feminine as portrayed in the media. The expectations for the appearance of women are mostly based on British and American media personalities.

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The ideal that is set out in the media consist of having a youthful appearance, fine facial features, styled hair and make-up and have a slim, toned, yet curvy body as can be seen in this media personalities such as the Kardashians (US). Among men these expectations are also based on media personalities for the biggest part. Often the people that have a successful career form the basis for the spread of these ideals. This career can for example be in, sports, acting or the music industry, such as David Beckham (UK) and Ryan Gosling (US). Men in Liverpool should have a clean look, with no or well-maintained facial hair, strong facial features, and a fit and buff body. Clothing should be well fitted and matched, which contributes to a neat and tidy look. This creates stereotypical gender-roles in Liverpool: hyper-feminine clothing and make-up versus groomed and buff/ muscular men. These expectations create a wish to obtain these features, and therefore people undertake action to form their body.

A large number of women in Liverpool use a lot of make-up, beauty procedures and clothing. Female participants who think they do not resemble this feminine image tend to rate themselves low, when they compare to the images in the media. By comparing their selves with media personalities, women tend to have a negative self-image. Overall, media seems to have a larger impact on the self- image of women than that it has on the self- image of men. For men their overall attention towards their appearance is less, especially for those who say that they do not encounter the media often. Our male participants in general put more time and energy in sports and nutrition to form the body. It appeared that they also put the media ideals more into perspective and there is a possibility that the work they put into their body might have already been sufficient to reach a certain beauty ideal, closer to the media ideal of male beauty. The process of creating a negative self- image for both men and women can be connected to the idea of Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:6) on the political body. If we look at the media as being socially and politically controlling the body, we could say that through the creation of beauty ideals, bodies that are subjected to these ideals are under some sort of control. Expectations of how one should take care of his/her body (by means of nutrition, sports, looks) are socially and culturally constructed within Liverpool's society, in which the bodies of our participants are present. The pursuit of achieving certain beauty ideals is a way of controlling these bodies through means of time, money and effort for both men and women.

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In western societies people tend to relate high levels of physical attractiveness to traits such as being more sociable, competent and successful in life (Wheeler and Kim 1997). This can be connected to the second level of analyses: *“the social body, a natural symbol for thinking about relationships among nature, society and culture”* (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987:6). Media emphasizes this ‘collective attractiveness stereotype’ through which the connection between the stereotypical beauty ideals presented and positive personality traits can become stronger. It depends on the person how he or she rates these beauty ideals and therefore how high he or she rates a person who obtained these ideals. Some of our male and female participants in Liverpool claim that people who have resemblances with these media ideals attract more opportunities and gain greater prestige in society.

These findings correspond with the ideas of Ferguson *et al.* (2014) that the media creates a more negative self-image and complies with the idea that achieving beauty and a successful life go hand in hand (Griffin, 2006). Female and male participants want to achieve these beauty ideals in order to feel more successful. According to our participants, female beauty is more closely connected to the level of success that society would say that person has. The idea exists that women need a certain degree of beauty in order to get success. As for men a beautiful body is not necessarily linked to ‘having success in life’, although some people associated it with it.

5.2 Social networks

Within the social networks of our participants we have made the distinction between people with whom they have strong ties, family and friends, and people with whom they have weak ties, peers.

For both men and women, the influence from family members on the formation of beauty ideals decreases when participants grow older. Based on empirical data, it seems that during puberty, both men and women are more concerned with their appearance. Especially parents at that age exert influence on how they look. Both female and male participants claim that they currently do not compare themselves with the bodies of their family and that comments of family members are seen as not representable. This is mostly due to the age gap between family members, which results in an out-dated idea on beauty and looks. An often-heard claim was: “my parents do not have anything to say on what I do anymore”. Cultural habits as individualization and

separation from parents when children become legal adults may be the cause for this. Katie⁵⁶ claims that young men and women are seen as mature and ready to make their own decisions. Often they also see themselves as old enough to make their own decisions and ignore comments of family.

Friends seem to have a bigger role in this process from puberty into a later age, because they spend much time together. Strong ties exist with friends. Several participants state that they see friends multiple times a week, while they only see members of their family several times a year. Beauty ideals within friend groups seem to overlap often for both female and male groups. However, if these beauty ideals differ greatly within a friend group no direct comments would be made about appearance. Among females it might result in indirect comments or friendly banter. Among male participants we have not encountered this situation, due to the fact that their ideals seem to be more in line within their friend groups. Friendly banter did occur among male friends when they did not like a t-shirt or a haircut for example. Male and female participants claim to confer with friends on what to wear before they go out. Especially women often compete with their friends in order to look the most beautiful. This competition within same gender friend groups occurs especially during the nightlife of Liverpool.

Weak ties, such as peers, also seem to have a significant influence in shaping beauty ideals of men and women, because they set the bar in how they look. The most revealing statement concerning this matter was the fact that female friend groups actually leave certain venues when there is female competition that they cannot compete with. Although we have not specifically observed this phenomenon, we did see a lot of competing behaviour among females (staring, laughing at people, *bitchy* talk) and among men (picking fights with other men, strong uses of language). The social controlling effect that people have on each other can be placed under the *political body* (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). The stereotypical gender-roles that are maintained within social networks in Liverpool contribute to this social control. This can be seen in an incident that we encountered. One of our male participants verbally attacked one of our female participants due to her looks, which he did not find appropriate for a female. To put it in his words: "*you look more like a meth addict*".

⁵⁶ Based on interview (09-03-2016)

5.3 Beauty ideals reflected on the body

Beauty in Liverpool is an important aspect in daily life. This is especially observed among women. There is a big difference to which extent women and men alter their body in order to achieve their beauty ideals. This difference in effort that people put in their appearance seems to be gender based. The stereotypical gender-roles that are created by the media are maintained in Liverpool's society. It can therefore be described as social control over the *political body* (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). The actual expression that participants give to their beauty ideals falls under the *individual body* in this analysis scheme can be seen among women as hyper feminine clothing and make-up and as a very buff/ muscular and groomed look for men (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987).

Male participants describe beauty mostly from a health perspective, concerned to the inner body, then that woman tend to do. Sports and nutrition go hand in hand for most men and is an important part of 'taking care of oneself'. Whereas looks are sometimes far more important than the possible damage it may create for women. Several female participants have said that there is nothing wrong with taking care of oneself, in which they mean: getting your nails, hair, and make-up done or getting new clothes. These looks are more connected with the outer body, without concern about the inner body.

The online body of female and male participants differs. Social media, in which these online bodies are embedded, can be described as a platform to maintain social networks in which *peers* can influence each other (Ferguson et al. 2014). Both men and women seemed to be influenced by these social media. Men in this situation focused more on the social part of this type of media, while women focus more on the beauty and representing aspects of these media types. These relatively new types of media create a social control, in which people feel pressure to maintain their representation towards the social world. This creates a constant need to look good, and to constantly show that you to have an exciting life, in which you are expected to constantly look happy, busy and achieve things in life.

5.4 Influence of media and social networks on the perception of beauty

In order to give a conclusive answer to the research question we combine the above findings into one intertwined process. The actual expression of beauty ideals on the body is the outcome of the following reasoning:

Media, at either offline and online sights, including outdoor advertisements, magazines, commercials, media personalities and online advertisements, distribute ideals of beauty for both men and women and are based on stereotypical gender-roles. These ideals are dispersed within social networks, which include families, friends and *peers*. Participants might have strong or weak ties with these social connections, which all mutually exert influence on each other concerning the ideals of beauty. These ideals become established within these social networks and within the society of Liverpool in general. This ideal simultaneously creates expectations to achieve these certain looks for both men and women and become visible upon the bodies. Reinterpretations and the distribution of these ideals within social networks and the exerted pressure to achieve them constantly reinforce the social and political control. Society then reflects these ideals back into the media, which reinterpret, alters and recreates these into new trends that uphold the current ideals. The distribution of these specific ideals throughout several forms of media makes them unified. This unified image of ideal male and female beauty then gets transported back into society, which completes the cycle. This is a constant interplay from beauty ideals in the media and beauty ideals within social networks. It seems that women more often than men internalize media images that are spread throughout society, which eventually gives expression to the ideals they find most desirable. It also creates a negative self- image and low self-esteem when looking to the media due to the fact that they will never reach this high set standard.

Within the debate about the influence of media versus the influence of social networks on the construction of beauty ideals and the self- image of young people, we have found that the two concepts are intertwined. Social networks and media can, in modern societies, not be seen as separately influencing people's perspectives on beauty. Other factors that also shape people's beauty ideals have not been taken into account in this research. These will be discussed in the next section.

5.5 Discussion

In this discussion we elaborate on the theoretical and social relevance of this research project. We will propose possible ideas for further research and factors that we have not taken into account in this project, but might be valuable to study concerning the formation of beauty ideals.

The theoretical relevance of this research project is to gain deeper and broader understanding of the influence of media and social networks in the construction and perception of beauty ideals in Liverpool (UK). We hope we made an addition to the existing literature on the influence of media and social networks in the formation of beauty ideals. The influence of both phenomena cannot be seen separately, but must be seen as interacting actors in the formation of beauty ideals, in which the individual has agency. The social relevance is to give a broader perspective into the processes that lie behind the formation of beauty ideals in Western societies, such as Liverpool. These processes and their outcomes can have a negative effect on society as a whole and have an adverse effect on the personal life of individuals.

In the theoretical framework we stated that the eventual goal is to see the body as a canvas in which patterns of society are engraved and on which they can be counter engraved (Foucault 1980 in: DeMello 2013). Traditionally women are more closely connected to the body, which is purely biological, and men are more connected to the mind. The body is submissive to the mind and is influenced by aspects of society. The body and beauty appear to have an important role in Liverpool's society. We could argue that the body overrules the mind in this specific context. An explanation for this reversed idea on the body and the mind has not yet been found. If we look at the context in which we conducted our research, we see that economic factors might have contributed to this phenomenon. In the past century Liverpool has had an economic downfall. Currently, the beauty industry seems to be an important economical source, which may have been the cause of the importance of achieving beauty ideals. It would be interesting to conduct a comparative research between cities in the United Kingdom to see *if* this reversed idea indeed persists and *why* this is the case.

Norms based on gender, which have an association with masculinity and femininity, are socialized and accepted within society (DeMello 2013). This is in part confirmed among our participants, although we also observed that the strict line, which some scholars pose, is not as strict in real life. We found that the hard lines between the

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categories of the gender types, male and female are blurred. There is an upcoming gender that is neither male nor female. Some men are getting more female features, while some women strive for features that are seen as male. According to Shawn,⁵⁷ some men wax and dye their eyebrows, shave their legs and have a fake tan. There are also women that for instance train hard in the gym and start bodybuilding ('fit girls'). This needs to be included in our reasoning and in further research on this topic. More research is needed to analyse this phenomenon.

We found that women, who want to be successful, often feel the need to be beautiful in order to reach this. Therefore, women that are perceived as beautiful are also perceived to be successful in life. This corresponds with Wheeler & Kim (1997), who state that having beauty is often related to having positive personality traits. For men this did not seem to be entirely the case. Men claim that they do not try to achieve beauty in order to have the feeling to be successful. It was not clear if successful men are seen as more beautiful, due to their success or if this phenomenon works the same as for women. By which we mean; if a man is perceived as beautiful, would people perceive or think that he is also more successful in life? This process of achieving beauty and success should be further studied in order to understand the difference in the importance of beauty for men and women and to understand this phenomenon.

⁵⁷ Based on interview (12-03-2016)

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6.2 Image references

Figure 1 - Grand National Opening, Front-page photograph

<http://www.express.co.uk/pictures/galleries/5641/Ladies-day-Aintree-2016-Liverpool-fashion-in-pictures/Female-racegoers-during-Ladies-Day-124661>

Accessed: 26th June 2016

Figure 2 – Liverpool, United Kingdom – Google maps.

<https://www.google.nl/maps/place/Liverpool,+Merseyside,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/@53.4200283,3.0512733,11z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x487adf8a647060b7:0x42dc046f3f176e01!8m2!3d53.4083714!4d-2.9915726>

Accessed: 26th June 2016

Figure 3 – County road, Stanley Road and Liverpool One Liverpool United Kingdom – Google maps

<https://www.google.nl/maps/dir/County+Rd,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/Stanley+Road,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/Liverpool+ONE,+Wall+Street,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/@53.4237402,->

[3.0153318,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m20!4m19!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b23df28f16aa5:0x8e03b63a98116086!2m2!1d-](https://www.google.nl/maps/dir/County+Rd,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/Stanley+Road,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/Liverpool+ONE,+Wall+Street,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/@53.4237402,-3.0153318,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m20!4m19!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b23df28f16aa5:0x8e03b63a98116086!2m2!1d-)

[2.9706845!2d53.4429194!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b215b31975731:0x532e25a7c77d3ce3!2m2!1d-](https://www.google.nl/maps/dir/County+Rd,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/Stanley+Road,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/Liverpool+ONE,+Wall+Street,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/@53.4237402,-3.0153318,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m20!4m19!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b23df28f16aa5:0x8e03b63a98116086!2m2!1d-2.9706845!2d53.4429194!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b215b31975731:0x532e25a7c77d3ce3!2m2!1d-)

[2.982658!2d53.4294718!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b212faa0d4323:0x3791b226f20a6f52!2m2!1d-2.987078!2d53.404469!3e0](https://www.google.nl/maps/dir/County+Rd,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/Stanley+Road,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/Liverpool+ONE,+Wall+Street,+Liverpool,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/@53.4237402,-3.0153318,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m20!4m19!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b23df28f16aa5:0x8e03b63a98116086!2m2!1d-2.9706845!2d53.4429194!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b215b31975731:0x532e25a7c77d3ce3!2m2!1d-2.982658!2d53.4294718!1m5!1m1!1s0x487b212faa0d4323:0x3791b226f20a6f52!2m2!1d-2.987078!2d53.404469!3e0)

Accessed: 26th June 2016

Figure 4 – Grand National – Aintree racecourse

<http://www.express.co.uk/pictures/galleries/5641/Ladies-day-Aintree-2016-Liverpool-fashion-in-pictures/Girls-arrive-at-the-Aintree-Festival-in-Liverpool-124260>

Accessed: 14th April 2016

Figure 5 – Ryan Reynolds for Hugo Boss

<https://onyxparadise.wordpress.com/2012/05/20/make-a-statement/>

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Accessed: 25th May 2016

Figure 6 – Gary Beadle – Geordie Shore

<https://geordieshoreonline.com/2012/10/series-4-cast-pictures/geordieshore-gaz/>

Accessed: 16th June 2016

Figure 7/8/9 – Photos taken during our time in Liverpool (February – April 2016) by participants or random bystanders.

7. Appendix

Appendix A: Summary (Stephanie and Iris)

This thesis contains four chapters: a theoretical framework, two chapters with empirical data of women and men that are gathered during three months of fieldwork in Liverpool, United Kingdom and a concluding chapter where theory and empirical data come together in the findings of this research.

We chose a Western country as a location to conduct our research, because mostly Western beauty ideals are spread throughout the world. The United Kingdom is a fitting location because gender roles and stereotypes take a prominent place in society and (non-) surgical procedures are used a lot to fortify these. Liverpool as city of choice is based upon multiple documentaries, the fact that Liverpool has a large lower social class and more beauty salons per head of the population than any other city in England.

Within this research we aimed to show how perceptions of beauty are constructed in the society of Liverpool. Hereby we focussed on how media and networks of family, friends and peers exert influence and how these perceptions are reflected on the body. Therefore, we formulated the following research question:

How do media and social networks influence the perceptions of beauty of young men and women in Liverpool and how are these perceptions reflected on the body?

There is an on-going debate whether media or social networks have a big influence and self-images of people. Several academics as Brown and Dittmar (2005) and Tiggemann & McGill (2004) argue that exposure to certain beauty ideals in the media can lead for women to create a negative self-image and a low self-esteem. Other academics as Ferguson, Winegard & Winegard (2011) argue that social networks, family, friends and *peers* have the biggest influence toward beauty ideals and self-images of people. We use the concept of social networks as social capital from Bourdieu (1986). Although he leaves gender out his reasoning, we will show how it has a place in the analysis of the body. In this research we use the theory of Ferguson et al. (2014) on social comparison. In this theory, Ferguson et al (2014) argues that people feel the intrinsic need to compare themselves with other people. People are looking for normative images to compare themselves with, but when these are absent, they compare themselves with the

available subjective images. In the analysis of the body, we will make use of the division of the three bodies, which are described by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987): the 'lived', the 'social' and 'political' body. We will make a subdivision of the inner, outer and online body to discuss our empirical data. Globalisation, social networks, media, gender and class are processes that shape the human body in the context in which it is situated. *Interconnectedness* and technological innovations have as a result that media transports visual images of certain beauty ideals in society and create beauty ideals that are not reachable for both men and women. Mass media and social media are platforms on which these images and ideals are exchanged. Ideals that are adored locally are reflected back into the media, thereby feeding beauty ideals.

Within this debate we aim to prove that there is not one concept that can be held accountable in the formation of beauty ideals. These processes cannot be seen separately, but should be seen as interacting agents in forming a person's beauty ideals. Beauty ideals are constructed within social networks and by images in the media. In the media women that are seen by society as beautiful are overrepresented, instead of normative images that represent the diversity of the population. Hereby creating low self-esteem and a negative self-image toward women's own appearance.

Our empirical data shows that for our research population, strong ties with family are less important in the formation of beauty ideals. Bonds with friends (strong ties) and bonds with *peers* (with whom people have a weak connection or no connection at all) are very important, but it depends per person how important. These findings correspond for men and women. For both men and women there is a tendency to rate people, they find beautiful, as more successful in life.

Difference can be found to which extent men and women alter their bodies to achieve their beauty ideals. The amount of time, money and effort people put into their appearance is gender based. Overall, men find it more important to take care of their inner body and to gain skill, which includes healthy nutrition and practicing sports. The women in our research did not take care of their inner body, but were more concerned with their outer body. Men and women enhance their appearance through different methods. Expressions such as clothing, grooming and styling of hair, are used by both sexes. Females most often make use of make-up, fake nails, plastic surgery and non-surgical procedures. Major differences between the sexes are also visible when looking at the online body. Women tend to present their *online body* the best way possible, even

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if that means to alter images and make a hundred selfies to find the perfect one. Men admit being more interested in what people do instead of how they look when they are on social media.

In the analysis of the body through the bodies of Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) the media, socially and politically controls the body through the creation of beauty ideals in Liverpool's society. According to the stereotypical gender-roles that are created by the media and maintained in Liverpool's society one must put time, effort and money in their appearance in order to reach certain standards. Media emphasizes the 'collective attractiveness stereotype' through which the connection between beauty stereotypes and positive personality traits can become stronger (Wheeler and Kim 1997). This strengthens the pursuit of these stereotypical beauty ideas. It can therefore be described as social control over the political body (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). The actual expression that participants give to their beauty ideals falls under the individual body in this analysis scheme and can be seen among women as hyper feminine clothing and make-up and as a very buff/ muscular and groomed look for men.

More research concerning *why* beauty is such an important part in the daily life of people in Liverpool and the grey areas in the division between men and women should be conducted.