

The importance of looking good english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



4. 0 Introduction

Analysis will be presented in a thematic form focussing on the main issues discussed in the interviews as outlined in the box below. It includes a breakdown of the themes that were addressed in the semi-structured interviews namely Construction of Self, Consumer Culture and the body, Body image and Gender, and Change. Through sub-themes grounded in the data, this process tries to analyse and interpret the data collected from the young females' narratives.

Themes

Sub-Themes

4. 1 Construction of Self

Looking at own reflection
Body Image in Adolescence
Importance of looking good
How our physical appearance influences our emotions
How our actions are influenced by the perceptions of others about us
The ' defect'
Benefits of Looking Good

4. 2 Consumer Culture and the body

What influences body image
Media
Peer pressure
Personality - dissatisfaction-
perfectionism

4. 3 Body Image and Identity

Gender
Objectification

4. 4 Change

Before and after CS - Looks
Emotions
Lifestyle

4. 1 Construction of Self

Having a sense of self is salient for every individual. As outlined in the literature review, Cooley claims that we develop our sense of self from the image of our self, which others reflect back to us in interaction. It is best explained by Mead's concept of 'I' and 'me', where the 'I' takes the role of the other as a means of turning back upon the self, to reflect upon the self as 'me'. The way how participants constructed their idea of self is a proof of all this. An interesting excerpt claims that she was not really aware of her 'defect' until she realised that other people were seeing it." When I look back, first and foremost I didn't know that I had this defect, I mean I knew but I used to say no it doesn't show, but when I was at the Secondary School in the first years I used to hear people calling me names, I mean at first it didn't use to bother me because I used to say they must be jealous, but then as I was growing up, I started hearing these names again because then my jaw started to develop, which made my jaw look bigger, you know?"

(Bernice)The family can also be the unit which helps us build our sense of self." It's in the family, meaning we are continuously pulling each other's leg about the issue, you know what I mean? Subconsciously it has always been there. Then there were comments of someone who used to come to school with me when I was young and even though time went by, the comments always remained at the back of my mind." (Gina)This also shows that although time goes by, the concept of the self that was reflected back to us from others stay with us for a long time, and that is why we worry about " other people's perspective, how they look at me..... because I think that if others don't like how I look maybe they would not even be interested in

getting to get to know me" (Gail). These excerpts from the transcripts highlight the way that the ' I ' is taking the place of the ' other', to reflect back to the ' me' the way that the self is seen by others, in this way influencing the way that the self is seeing ' itself'. As Crossley posits the body does not simply exist ' in itself', but ' for itself' and that is the main reason why social agents continuously inspect themselves in the mirror and worry how they are being portrayed by others" I remember that when I was in my teens, my parents had a dressing table with side mirrors. I was obsessed with looking at myself in the mirror and hating what I saw" (Joann) and, " It was already a difficult thing to look in the mirror, let alone take a photograph" (Romina)

4. 1. 1 Looking at Own Reflection

As explained in the methodology chapter, visual elucidations were used to start the interview. One of the participants did not have a photo of how she looked prior to the cosmetic surgery. She claims that " I never had the intention to take a photograph of myself, basically my operations were bust implants and mini tummy tuck meaning it was already difficult to look at the mirror let alone take a photo" (Romina). This absence of data is an important finding in itself. It shows the degree of how dissatisfied with her body this participant was. Although all others brought photos of themselves with them to the interview, I could sense they shared this same view, " I look very different, it is very difficult for me to look at that photo because try to understand I know I looked different so I just leave it there, I think that is the only printed photo that I left" (Bernice). To the same question, another

participant after a very long, quiet pause replied, " Look, when I look at this photo the first thing I see is my nose, you know? It's because I was always very conscious about it since I was a little girl, it is something that happens to me whenever I look at any photo of myself before I had the rhinoplasty" (Doriana), while another participant even goes to the extent of saying, " When I look at how I was before I do not see myself, I see a different person, yes to that extent I was so conscious about it" (Marika). This is a very strong statement related to identity. Her identity is what she is now, which means that before she did not feel like it was herself. " I never felt in place, like I have something which is not mine, it doesn't belong to me, I don't feel that that had to be my nose" (Marika). As Featherstone relates the body, especially the body's surface has become to be seen as a vehicle of self expression and so it has indeed become a must for many, if not for all, to look and feel good.

4. 1. 2 Body Image in Adolescence

As clearly stated in the literature review body image lies at the heart of adolescence. Young females become obsessed with the way they look because as the transcripts say, they might not have accepted who they really are. As Bordo says adolescents go out in the world hoping that their looks are accepted." I used to be very conscious of how I looked, especially during my teenage years..... As I have said earlier, the physical appearance however, is everything to a teenage girl. A simple pimple is cause for concern let alone having an ugly nose" (Joann)and".... when I was young I never went out without applying foundation, today I'm not as self

conscious as I was but when I was younger and I was still not happy with myself I never used to go out without wearing foundation - the base to cover the marks" (Gail) This clearly shows that, " at sixteen you're still finding yourself and for example now, even though I still do not like my nose 100%, I feel that as I grew older maybe it's not that I accepted myself more but it seems like you start looking after yourself in other ways, so now I feel better not only because I did the cosmetic surgery but maybe because I got used to knowing what I need to feel good" (Gina). Adolescent females build their body image from the acceptance they get from others until they are reassured from other individuals that they look good. Although Emma was dissatisfied with her breast size she states that " when I was engaged, I had accepted the fact that I had small boobs because he used to tell me that I do not need to do the operation" (Emma) and when I asked her how good did the reassurance made her feel she replied " A lot, reassurance is needed in everything" (Emma).

4. 1. 3 The importance of looking good

The issue of cosmetic surgery revolves around appearance. When participants were asked how important appearance is on a scale from 1 to 10, replies ranged between 8 and 10 plus. This shows that looking good is a very important issue to these young people. Some reasons were " I think that in everyday life, appearance is everything, even though many people say that appearance is not everything and it's the character that counts, I believe that first appearances count" (Bernice) and " I think that in every faction of society, in today's world the concept of everything is that you look good

since it reflects the whole person" (Marika). Gail even mentions a personal experience from her childhood to explain how important it is to look good. She tells how, " when I was young, even a teacher for example, if she's good looking, I used to really behave in her lesson because I wanted to please her because of her looks. On the other hand if while at mass, someone ugly passed by me, I didn't even want her to come close to me, this we are talking when I was young right, and if someone good looking passed by, I used to enjoy even if she accidentally touches me. Even on television for example, if there is someone good looking I seem to be more interested, however if someone does not look good, I lose interest." (Gail) These narratives relate to Rivers and Twine when they say that the body, especially the face has become to be seen as a reflection of the self and hence looking good is giving an idea of a person's inner character since beauty is associated with moral goodness. This could be the reason why the youngest of the participants, maybe as was said before because she was still building her self- concept, during the interview did not mention the thing that she didn't like in herself by name. It seemed to me that she was like trying to deny or rather hide what it was exactly, not because she did not want to tell me because I knew, but I sensed that she felt uneasy to even mention it to herself. " I used to think that people were always seeing me with ' that thing', maybe behind my back they were mentioning me with ' that thing'. When I used to meet people, I used to worry that they would refer to me with ' that thing'" (Bernice). In another part of the interview, both her and another participant referred to ' that thing' as a defect and when asked why did they see it as a defect, Marika replied " because for me it wasn't something

normal, it was different to others". This proves what Featherstone (1982) claims that individuals are continuously scrutinizing themselves for imperfections since a high degree of reflexivity is associated with this.

4. 1. 5 How our physical appearance influences our emotions

From the interviews I could sense that sadness and lack of confidence were the two major emotions commonly felt by all before they did the surgery. The fact that they did not like the way they looked, influenced their emotions. Gail narrates how she " used to feel less than the other young females who didn't have acne, those that I used to be with I mean, yes of course I used to feel less!" Even Emma shared exactly the same feeling saying that she felt less especially in " certain situations, not always, like on the beach for example, when I used to go out to Paceville and I'm wearing a good padded bra I was never bothered, but when it came to barbecues and other summer related activities I used to feel different." Doriana also recalls how " for example when I was talking to someone and I feel certain eye contact, I used to say that he is noting my nose, now that thing is all gone". She is also making a comparison of how she felt before the operation and now that she has done it. Even Gina relates to this that after she did the cosmetic surgery, her emotions changed. " For example my self esteem, even though I need to work on it a bit more, it is still much better than it was before" She continues to say that " it helps in giving you more self confidence if you look at it more holistically, for example today I have more confidence in myself and I think a lot of it is that, not just, but it used to hinder me, I used to feel that it hinders me." These narratives highlight the

issue of reflexivity that Crossley so well explains. The body and the mind are not separate things but they are intertwined to the extent that the body is influencing our emotions. Bernice admits that after she has done cosmetic surgery and was happy with her improved look she says that " even as a character I feel more happy, believe me it's true." Romina strengthens this when she says," when you look good, you will feel better and you will have more motivation in life..... take for example when you are sick in bed, you feel really down, you look in the mirror and you do not look your best, your hair undone, no make-up and then when you eventually get up, brush your hair and maybe apply some eyeliner and lipstick you already feel the improvement so yes it reflects a lot." As was seen above, our appearance influences our emotions. This is because as Doriana narrated, when she was talking to someone she was constantly thinking of what he is thinking of her. This proves that as was said in the literature review, social actors are never in full possession of their own bodies but are also continuously being watched by other bodies during interaction.

4. 1. 6 How our actions are influenced by the perceptions of others about us

The fact that the appearance of the participants after they had cosmetic surgery met the cultural ideals of beauty or was at least deemed as close, gave the participants more motivation towards life and more confidence. In general, they did not recall that the fact that they didn't like their appearance stopped them from doing what they wanted in life like for example in work related matters. However, little things that had to do with appearance were the ones most reported. Bernice recalls how before she

had cosmetic surgery there were some cool students at the school where she attends which she really liked to make friends with but," I used to stay in my comfort zone and I used to say it can't be that I talk to this kind of people. I never used to try because I used to think that they would laugh at me or start commenting behind my back. Now it's a different story, now I am the one who go near them, it's like a challenge with myself, when I went back to school after the operation I said let's see if I manage to speak to people with whom I never tried before.... and I managed and today we hang around."

Marika also mentions how her actions before and after the cosmetic surgery changed. Before," I did not see myself attractive, not even did I feel it, I used to feel inferior, it was not that I was there to compete but if you do not feel comfortable with your body you feel inferior. Now I can say that after the operation, when I went out in public and went to work, everyone told me how much I changed and how good looking I became... and that means that there really was something wrong with how I looked, so unknowingly you feel the boost. Now even for example to express myself, the thought that there is someone saying what a big nose I have, which before was a continuous thought, is completely gone. Today it does not even come to my mind, now I am care free." This shows that Marika felt better when she was reassured by her friends that her looks were accepted. When the perception of others about us is a good one, we feel better and that is why all participants reported that after they had cosmetic surgery they felt better since as Davis claims cosmetic surgery is seen by women as remaking their lives while allowing them " to renegotiate their relationship to their bodies, and through their bodies to themselves" Emma believes that after her cosmetic surgery

she became more confident even with her friends. " Today my girl friends joke with me because when before I had the surgery I was very conscious to take off my top while at the gym or before going out while we are changing together, today I just take my top off confidently". For example Gina remembers how before she had cosmetic surgery she used to avoid doing certain things like " There was no way I would put my hair up, today I do it sometimes, but before I never did as my nose looked more prominent."

4. 1. 4 The ‘ defect’

It is highly interesting how these participants viewed their so called ‘ defect’. Two of the participants felt that any lack of opportunities they might have faced were attributed to the fact that they had this ‘ defect’. " I used to go to drama lessons and whenever I was not chosen for the play, I used to think that I was not chosen because of that thing" (Bernice). Gail also reported that " you know when there is a guy that you like, you start imagining that he does not want to go out with you because you have acne." As was said earlier, all the others said that although they did not fully like how they looked and still went for cosmetic surgery, it never stopped them from doing anything that they wanted to do. An interesting fact that two participants spoke about was that their defect was the only thing they focused on, when she admitted by saying" Before when someone used to talk to me, I was obsessed with thinking that that person was thinking what a big nose I have, how ugly, especially from the side it’s scary, even if they didn’t say anything. " If I wanted to go into modeling , I did, in fact I even won competitions with my nose as it was before, so no it really did not stop me from doing the

things I liked." As was mentioned earlier even Dorian confessed that when she looked at her face, her nose was the only thing she saw. This is highly interesting since as she narrates, " I think it's important that I tell you this. A few years before I had cosmetic surgery I had won a beauty contest ' Ms Maltese Galaxy' and went to represent Malta in ' Ms. Galaxy' in the United States. Now this was something big, and I went with a big nose" and while she laughs about it, she continues"..... yes that is how conscious I was of my nose, like only my nose existed in my whole face." The fact that only for some the ' defect' was a hindrance but for others not, reveals that in the end, as will be presented further on in this analysis, there is another element which influences how social beings differ in their perspective of how they look at things, which is their own personal character.

4. 1. 7 The benefits of looking good

The benefits of looking good seemed to be common among all the participants. " I believe that in today's world physical appearance gives you better opportunities in life. These include situations such as interviews for jobs, opportunities for modelling, more handsome men, etc." (Joann). Gail said " At work even if you go for an interview, as we are saying first appearances count, if you don't look good, for example with a lot of pimples on your face, fat, I mean the first thing that people see is your appearance". From these excerpts, the fact that the body is being seen by social beings as a means of power is evident. This can be linked with what Bourdieu (1996) calls ' symbolic capital', since the body has become an agent of symbolic value. Another common benefit mentioned by the participants was more of

intrinsic value. " Being physically attractive gives you more self confidence which in turn, makes you more accessible to available opportunities" (Joann) and " it gives you that boost to feel more secure.... more confident" (Doriana) while Romina was sure that " once you look good, then you feel good and that gives you more motivation in life". Although all these narratives focused mainly on appearance, three out of eight participants mentioned also that it is through " taking care of yourself, how you look, how you communicate, your behaviour, how you sit down" (Marika) that " makes people see you as a successful person" (Gina). Emma continued to mention that " although there are people who are not extremely good looking, but just average, their approach with people tends to give them all they want." Featherstone (2010) writes about this concept and refers to it as body schema, which instead of focussing only on looks, is more related to a ' felt body', focusing mainly on charisma, which draws attention to ' presence'. He adds that this additional aspect to body image is something which needs to be communicated between bodies leaving a ' feel good' impression sensed via affect.

4. 2 Consumer Culture and the Body

Bernice mentions how " we see a lot of new make up on the market and models on television" while Gail observes how " everyone is beautiful, with a great figure and wearing the latest trends in fashion." " Marika also notes that we are continuously seeing " a perfect person, 100% beautiful, wearing make- up where images are almost always airbrushed." These issues all point to the contemporary phenomenon of ' consumer culture'. As

Featherstone (2010) posits, consumer culture is obsessed with the body and is constantly promoting this kind of lifestyle to the whole population especially adolescents and young adults. Although critics deemed consumer culture as superficial and something which abandons human values, as can be seen from the participants' narratives, consumer culture continues to triumph and young females continue to be bombarded by it to the extent of opting to body projects to achieve the look that they so desire.

4. 2. 1 What influences Body Image

It is common belief that in today's world looking good has become a must. All participants mentioned that especially during their teenage years, when they were still building their body image and the need for their looks to be accepted was a priority, various things influenced their body image. To obtain the image they wanted, these young females felt the need to even turn to one of the biggest body projects - cosmetic surgery. The media and other people's comments were highly influential in their decision to opt for surgery. Both the media and peer pressure were commonly mentioned by all participants as prime constructors of body image, which image, as Featherstone (2010) claims changes with time and space. As Blum explains, it is during adolescence that these factors influence the construction of the young females' body image. As the young females grew older, although they believed that looking good is not something only important in your adolescent years, they all agreed that " it is not a priority.... sort of now it is not the main issue in my life" (Gina). This shows that as young females grow older, they tend to be more comfortable with themselves and with their body

image, especially by being reassured that their body image has been accepted by the people around them. One of the participants who have had rhinoplasty at the age of 22, and was not fully satisfied with the results strengthens this idea by saying " I think that at 16, having done it (referring to her rhinoplasty) that early, would still have not gotten me there, meaning if I didn't like my nose at 16, I would have done it again at 20 for example" (Gina). This contrasts with her reasoning today that even though she is not hundred per cent happy she will not do it again.

4. 2. 2 Media

Media was mentioned as the main precursor to why participants of this study opted for cosmetic surgery, with some giving it more importance than others." I think that the media continuously influence us, all the time, take creams for example, if you don't want wrinkles try out this cream, even make up, for example three weeks ago there was this new mascara on the market and since I like wearing mascara, I bought it. Now since it was an offer, I didn't just buy one but three as they were on offer from e-bay.

Yesterday I was watching television only to realise that a new mascara is out already, more recent than the one I bought, so that's why I think that the media is all the time influencing us and the things are constantly changing and without knowing you want to stay up to date" (Gail). This highlights Featherstone's argument that we are constantly being bombarded by this kind of advertising, advertising aimed at making us the person that we would like to be. The incongruence between the image that we do not have and the image we want to have, leads us to desire a change, and sometimes the

desire becomes so deep that it might even mean going under the knife. Gail continues to say, " From all media, I think television is the most influential. If you notice carefully you do not see people who aren't good looking on television apart from when they speak about poverty or other similar issues. When someone is helping in a program they're either models or beautiful women, even men, very rarely you see someone ugly reading the news and when you do, you remark how did they chose her?" (Gail). This shows that even as spectators, we expect to see beautiful women. She even insists that when someone is not good looking enough or does not take care of himself/herself " she would be good to work in a factory where she does not have a lot of contact with people, or in an office answering phone calls". With this kind of reasoning in mind, one does not wonder why it is becoming a habit for young females to opt for cosmetic surgery. Doriana, a part-time actress, also narrates how television was her biggest motivation to go for cosmetic surgery." I started becoming conscious when I started having cameras going around me. Without thinking, whenever I felt that a camera was shooting my profile, a lot of times I used to look at the cameraman and ask him to take the shot from another angle. It was then that I was becoming conscious of how conscious I was... because let's be frank if you see an actress on television with a big nose, it's what you are going to look at and sort of say look at her. Today when you switch on Italian TV you see all those beautiful women because today apart from rhinoplasty, we see people who do their lips or cheekbones, remove wrinkles from their neck, arrange their ears, basically today you can arrange everything". As Bordo says this puts pressure on young females to start routines of self improvement, since as

Berger claims women are constantly ' watching themselves being watched'. Romina agrees that " the media's exposure is so huge and highly influential that everyone is becoming affected". Gina mentions another type of media, and recalls how " when I was young I used to see magazines like Cosmopolitan or something similar, which today I don't bother to look at and you end up seeing all those beauties and then I look at myself. I remember they used to have a section at the back which was full of adverts of different clinics and today I believe that they were those adverts which ignited my desire to go for cosmetic surgery".

4. 2. 3 Peer Pressure

Several were those who mentioned that comments of others, and by others they did not just mean significant others, were the cause of what made them reflect on how they looked and which consequently triggered the dissatisfaction with their looks and decided to opt for cosmetic surgery. " Friends used to tease me, not bully me, just joke, but deep down it still hurt me" (Emma). She continues, " My mother always had big breasts even when she was young and I always used to listen to my father telling me, obviously not to hurt me, jokingly, he used to tell me I don't know who you took after as your mother always had a big pair of boobs" and, " even my male friends whenever they see a woman with big breasts, they exclaim what beautiful breasts she has.... without knowing you start thinking that a woman to be beautiful and attractive needs to have big breasts" (Emma). This very typical reasoning goes hand in hand with Bordo's claim that young females are falling victims to the hegemonic ideals of beauty which are always making

them feel like there is an obligation to reach beauty targets, even if at times they may be naturally unattainable. Marika narrates, " I remember I was at work and there we used to take the nail polish with us and apply it behind the boss's back. Once there was this guy who smelled the nail polish and told me I'm sure you can smell this better than me. Today, I take his comments as something positive because at that instant I decided that I had to do the operation... from that day I said this is enough, I don't want to hear any more comments, I don't want to hurt anymore..... it disturbs you mentally." I find these statements very powerful. The pain, the hurt, the frustration that can be easily felt in her words, surely highlights Crossley's concept of reflexivity, the way how she was not happy with her physical was able to disturb her mentally since the mind and the body are not separate as Descartes believed but rather as Crossley claims, are like changeable facets of the same coin not but separate from each other. To react to the various comments that Gina was used to hearing, she mentions how she developed her very own defence mechanism when she admits that, " I used to feel conscious and didn't like the fact that someone would eventually comment on my nose even if he never did but for example one thing I remember doing is making the joke myself so as to avoid that someone else would do it. I remember doing that... like... I said it, sort of, now you don't need to do it." By doing this, Gina was trying to alleviate the pain caused by the others' comments about herself which in reality made it difficult for her to accept herself as she was.

4. 2. 4 Personality

Although media and comments featured in almost all participants' narratives, according to the same participants there was something intrinsic which could influence the way they deal with the situation. According to them this came from inside the individual. Doriana and Marika both mentioned that they were perfectionists and that they believed that having this trait made it less easy to accept their 'defect' and more prone to make them do something about it. "I'm a vain person, even for example if I pass by a mirror, I want to see perfection and my nose was far from perfect. Then you start comparing, if for example I don't like my nose, the moment I see a nose I like, I used to go in front of the mirror and start trying to mould my nose in the shape of the nose I liked" (Doriana). and "It's a must that you compare because when you look at things... look I am a bit of a perfectionist and when you look at things which are perfect, it is only natural that you wish that yours were perfect too. I love linear things, and my nose wasn't linear, with perfect nostrils, perfect line.... it has to be straight" (Marika). Apart from perfectionists who almost demanded that their looks had to be close to perfect, Romina argued that none of these were her motivation. Romina, who had a pregnancy when she was only 17 years old, felt very sad because she felt that the pregnancy stole her body away from her at such an early age. So when I asked her what really made her go for cosmetic surgery she replied, "My own personal sadness, because I'm the type of person that if I am not happy with myself, no beautiful comment would change me. On the other hand if I am happy with myself, you can tell me whatever you want like what an ugly dress I am wearing or how ugly I am, because if I think that

that is good, then it is good... it does not affect me because if I am fine with myself, my self esteem is high" (Romina). She continues to bring an example of her husband. She says that although he has a bit of a crooked nose, it does not affect him and does not intend to do the operation. That is why she bases a lot on one's own character. Doriana also bases this on character when she says that what we can take in, is not necessarily the same for everyone." Take for example myself and another girl at school, we both have big noses and there is some peer pressure at school. If someone comes on to me and tells me how ugly my nose is, he can break me, but the other girl might not be affected. So yes although the pressure is there, it all depends on how much you are able to absorb it or not, not everyone can cope with it. For example when I was younger I used to get offended easier, as I grew older pfff..... so rather than the pressure varies, it's more how you can deal with it" (Doriana). Although this study is supposed to focus on social motivations which lead to cosmetic surgery rather than intrinsic motivations, I thought this was an interesting finding because although traits like perfectionism and one's own character are usually considered personal and intrinsic, one cannot really divide the personal from the social since really and truly the personal is highly influenced by the social through the interaction with other social actors.

4. 3 Body Image and Identity

As was mentioned earlier one of the participants narrated how when she saw a photograph of herself before the cosmetic surgery, she did not see herself. For her the way she looks, was giving a picture of who she really was, and

according to her how she looked before cosmetic surgery, was not who she really felt she was. Giddens strengthens this by saying that in this postmodern society the body has become associated with identity. That is why it is salient that " a person should do whatever is in his or her means to improve himself or herself" (Joann). Interesting to notice that before doing the operation, Bernice used to tell new individuals that she met in her life that " listen, I am going to change how I look, my appearance will soon change". When asked why she felt like telling them this she replied that " I wanted them to know that I was not going to stay with the same appearance. It gave me a good feeling letting them know about the change I was going to have, even though I did not know yet how I would look". For me, this shows that Bernice wished to disassociate herself from the look which she didn't like even before she actually did the operation, while hoping that after the operation she would have the body image that she so much craved for, maybe an image that as Davies claims would represent her true self. Consumerism's view of seeing the body as a vehicle of self expression (Featherstone, 1991) strengthens what participants so well explained in their narratives. Bernice narrated how for her all she wanted was " just the smile, the best thing is that I have a beautiful smile, do you understand?" A smile shows happiness and positivity, both promoting a beautiful personality and something which aids good relationships, since as Blum claims, the surface of the body has become the main setting where social relations are handled. This, again, puts certain pressures on the social actors, especially the young people, because as Shilling argues, with the individualisation of the body, the body has become an agent if symbolic capital. Feminists like Blum and Bordo

argue that female bodies along the years have been more vulnerable to cultural manipulation of the body.

4. 3. 1 Gender

Gina observes how " although on television we see gorgeous men as well, if you take a deeper look, you will find men who are not that perfect but still get that position or job, for example even movie stars, not all are as good looking as Brad Pitt, but you do not normally see ugly women who are stars, you know what I mean?" As Bordo claims female bodies are required to achieve a homogenous indefinable ideal of femininity, which according to Gina this is not the same for men. When participants were asked if they think that men and women have the same kind of pressure to look good, all participants agreed that although at this day and age men are taking better care of themselves and their looks, it is still a fact that women have more pressure to look good. Emma believes that, " the pressure to look good is more on women because although on TV you do see handsome men, however you still see more beautiful women, at least that's how I see it. I'm not saying it is good that women today have a lot of pressure, men when compared with before also have more pressure, for example my personal opinion if I see a man who neglects his looks, I am put off, but I still believe that women have more pressure." Even Marika believes that women " are more pressured not to grow fat and to look good." As Gail observes, if you really look into the situation you realise how" men do not have the same amount of pressure we face. For example if my husband, and all other men, start losing their hair, I don't mind. However if the same thing happens to a

woman I pity her. Even if for example my husband becomes fatter, I would still like him." Being a woman myself, who have at heart the well being of women and the issue of equality between the sexes, I totally agree with the participants that women face more pressure to look good. However what I find disturbing is the fact that as Emma believed " it will always be like that." Marika agrees with Emma and believes that" from older times women were always like this. I see women not as a sex idol but it still has to do with sexuality, like she has to be on top, she has to look good for the masculine sex and it was always like this. She has to attract him, even other animal species for example, a woman knows that she has to look better so that she can attract the masculine sex so that she would win him for herself." I see that this very important excerpt relates to two issues; first that a woman's body is seen as a ' docile body' which can be malleable to please the man, and secondly, in contrast to this passivity, the woman is using her body as a powerful tool to get what she wants.

4. 3. 2 Objectification

Being this malleable yet having this sexual power over men, Gail believes that " from ancient times the woman was always looked at almost as an object, not that I agree with it as I get really angry when I hear someone saying it." Marika claims that " a woman's body is more attractive than a male's.... at least that is how I see it. It's not that the male's body is not beautiful but a woman's body has more parts which can attract a man." She says that it is because of this that many times in advertisements they place a woman and though " it doesn't make sense that they put a woman on a

car, because why should there be a person on a car to sell a car?" it is done. Even Bernice mentions this when she says " even when you see perfumes' or cars' advertisements, you see women. Sometimes they picture women as an object, literally, and I think that affects a woman because she starts saying I want to look good." This is a classical example of when the perfect body of a woman is being objectified and used as an object to sell more. Emma, an online croupier, relates to this by saying that " that is the mentality that they would sell more.... even where I work for example, we are all women because the mentality is that if they see a woman they play more.... it's business after all." She continues to say how they have make-up artists employed with them to make up their faces so that they would look more beautiful. This view in a way agrees with the feminist critics of cosmetic surgery who tend to present the body as an object. However as Budgeon claims bodies are never just objects and to really understand this, bodies need to be seen as they connect in social interactions with other bodies.

4. 4 Change

LooksEmotionsLifestyle

4. 4 Change

For most of the participants deciding to go for cosmetic surgery came after years of torment. They all agree that to go for cosmetic surgery you have to be very determined since as Bernice admits " you will face a lot of obstacles, meaning it might be difficult and I won't say it is not a difficult situation because it is." However when asked about how they feel that they did the surgery all of the participants perceive the decision they took as a positive

one. Joann says " she feels relieved" that she did it, Bernice and Gina both see it as " an achievement", and while everyone mention that they are happy to have done it, Marika and Joann regret not having done it earlier in their life. Interesting to note was the fact that although some took an informed decision when they chose to opt for surgery, by doing a lot of research on the internet, others say that they did not want to know what was going to happen, because they thought that they would become too scared and get disheartened to do it.

4. 4. 1 Appearance and Emotions

Seven out of eight participants were very satisfied with their new looks while Gina was the only one who was not totally happy with the outcome. " I am still not 100% happy.... I saw other patients of the same surgeon and I prefer theirs for the simple reason that I see theirs as more balanced... but I still prefer it from how it was before." Participants all narrated that the change made them happier with their appearance which also made them enjoy a higher self esteem and self confidence. Marika narrates how " I think that I have a more outgoing personality now and I became more sociable. Even to start a conversation, I don't mind speaking now, not like before, I was more of an introvert." As Hush-Ashmore found cosmetic surgery is described as having a restorative effect between self and psyche and helps to alleviate the pain associated with a body that fails to represent their true self (Davis).

4. 4. 2 Lifestyle

Bernice, 18, mentions how" I think I changed as in how I look at life. After the operation I could not eat and had to eat soup for two months, so now when

there is food which I don't like, my mind goes back and I sort of say just eat it. Even if I don't feel like going out, my mind tells me come on you spent three months at home go out and enjoy it. It seems I am appreciating life more." Although aesthetically cosmetic surgery simply changed Bernice's face, the way how she looks at life was also changed dramatically. This is another example of how the body cannot be studied on its own and that is why sociology has shifted from the sociology of the body to an embodied sociology, which approach focuses on the interconnectedness of bodily, mental and social interaction. When participants were asked if they would recommend cosmetic surgery to someone else, all of them answered without hesitation in a positive way. Gina's reply was " Let me tell you, I always believe that it depends on what makes you comfortable, for example if your nose really bugs you, but bugs you to the point that it is interfering with your life, not just bugs you a little bit, because after all it is an operation and there are cases when someone died... but if it bugs you to the point that it is interfering with your life then I would say do it. Romina also mentioned that " that you have to be extra careful not to let it become addictive" while Joann said that " feeling good about yourself is very important and a person should do whatever is in her means to improve herself." In the light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, this chapter included a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the in depth interviews. The next and final chapter will present the conclusion and the recommendations for future studies.