

POSTFEMINISM AND THE KNIFE: COSMETIC SURGERY
ACCOUNTS OF YOUNG THAI WOMEN

by

CHALISA CHINTRAKARN

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology
College of Social Sciences
University of Birmingham

December 2023

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

Abstract

Since early 2010s, cosmetic surgery (CS) has come into vogue across Asia, including Thailand especially among women. Feminist scholars have extensively explored CS, with some of this scholarship underlain by the concept of postfeminism. Postfeminism centres around aesthetic/psychological/professional self-containment and self-empowerment, as well as self-monitoring and scrutiny from other women. Postfeminism has been increasingly examined concerning Asian locales. However, there has been scarce feminist research on not only young Thai women's CS experiences, but also the applicability of postfeminism in the Thai context. This thesis thus aims to critically examine the reflective CS accounts of young Thai women through the lens of feminist theory. The research questions of this study are: 1) what informs young Thai women's decisions to undergo CS?; 2) what are their post-operative experiences? To investigate these questions, semi-structured online interviews were undertaken with 50 young Thai women who had CS and five Thai cosmetic surgeons. The thesis has found that the reflective CS accounts of young Thai women are greatly underpinned by postfeminism, with several influences about Thai society and East Asian countries. These Thai and East Asian influences cohere with Chinese physiognomy; the collectivist and conservative basis of Thai society; Thai and Korean popular culture; and Korean and Thai-Chinese beauty styles. This thesis makes the prime theoretical contribution surrounding the entanglement between women's self-confidence/esteem and looks; various characteristics of appearance-focused surveillance from men and women alike; and the distinctiveness of this project from postfeminist manifestations in the West.

Dedication

For Professor Yufu Iguchi, my first academic role model in the field of gender whom I met in Japan.

Acknowledgements

My PGR (Postgraduate Researcher) journey has been such an arduous ride, with an abundance of physical and emotional challenges. Nonetheless, I have received unwavering support from a range of bright-minded individuals as follows:

In terms of people in my personal life, I owe special thanks to my family, especially my parents. Their long-standing encouragement for me to thrive academically and to bridge the gap between Asia and the West has shaped who I am today. The memories with my grandmother have also been instrumental in putting my mind at ease, despite her bereavement prior to the onset of this PGR tunnel. I have been indebted to my partner, Kieran Rickards, who has been my main emotional outlet. His introverted personality and our habitual exchange between British and Asian cultural elements have mitigated my stress throughout. Kieran was also my PhD thesis copyeditor for conventions of syntax, grammar, and spelling, for which I have been truly grateful. Likewise, his family has been integral to the cultivation of my emotional wellbeing whilst in Birmingham.

Within UK academia, I would like to express my immense gratitude towards my PhD supervisors, Dr Kelly Hall and Dr Julie Whiteman, whose different yet complementary communication styles suit perfectly with my way of thinking. Their academic support has been priceless and kept me sane! I have also been thankful for my former PhD supervisors, Dr Shelley Budgeon and Professor Heather Widdows, for their assistance at the early stages of this project. I have been grateful for many pieces of scholarly and professional advice from my PhD mentor, Dr Frankie Rogan. My massive thanks must go to a number of academic/professional staff members and fellow PhD candidates in the School of Social Policy and across the University, who have facilitated my development as an academic. In particular, Dr Resya Kania and Jeewan Kala Gurung raised a range of interesting points about this project, which have been advantageous for boosting my critical thinking. Ultimately, I have been appreciative of the Westmere Scholarship scheme,

College of Social Sciences (COSS) PGR Development Funds, and bursaries from Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) and British Sociological Association (BSA) during my PhD journey.

This project would not have reached its final phase without all of the research participants. Their accounts and views have been where my biggest debt of gratitude lies. Indeed, the data collection process has been the most exciting and enjoyable stage, whereby I ensured they found the participation in my study as valuable as how I found my experience of interviewing them. Relatedly, my gratitude goes to everyone who assisted me with the participant recruitment, as without them my PhD studies would have been much more challenging.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Chapter 1 – Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 The Rise of CS in Thailand..... | 2 |
| 1.2 Foundations of Theoretical Framework..... | 4 |
| 1.3 Research Aim and Questions | 6 |
| 1.4 Thesis Outline | 7 |
| Chapter 2 – Literature on Feminist Theory: The Entanglement between Beauty and (Post)feminism..... | 11 |
| 2.1 Feminism, Power, and Beauty | 11 |
| 2.1.1 Patriarchy and Feminism | 11 |
| 2.1.2 Power | 15 |
| 2.1.3 Women’s Agency..... | 19 |
| 2.2 Postfeminism..... | 23 |
| 2.2.1 Foundations of Postfeminism and Neoliberalism | 23 |
| 2.2.2 Inclusive Trajectory of Postfeminism | 28 |
| 2.3 Physical and Psychological Surveillance | 31 |
| 2.3.1 Unprecedented Level of Self-Scrutiny in the Contemporary Era | 31 |
| 2.3.2 Self-Confidence/Esteem..... | 32 |
| 2.3.3 Gazes from Others | 35 |
| 2.3.4 Mediated Presentations | 37 |
| Chapter Summary | 41 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Chapter 3 – Literature on the Thai and Global Perspectives | 43 |
| 3.1 Thai Society | 43 |
| 3.2 Cultural Understandings of Beauty across Countries | 49 |
| 3.2.1 Learned Narratives of Justifying CS | 49 |
| 3.2.2 Dominant Beauty Styles..... | 52 |
| Chapter Summary | 56 |
| Chapter 4 – Methodology | 57 |
| 4.1 Research Philosophy | 57 |
| 4.2 Participant Recruitment..... | 60 |
| 4.3 Participant Information | 64 |
| 4.4 Data Collection | 72 |
| 4.5 Data Analysis | 78 |
| 4.6 Power Dynamics in the Research Process | 83 |
| 4.7 Personal Reflections..... | 86 |
| 4.8 Ethical Considerations | 89 |
| Chapter Summary | 93 |
| Chapter 5 – Practical Considerations on Cosmetic Surgery: How, Where, and What Styles.. | 95 |
| 5.1 CS Payments | 95 |
| 5.2 Exceptionally High CS Costs..... | 98 |
| 5.3 Research on Specific Places to have CS | 100 |
| 5.4 Beauty Styles for CS | 103 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Chapter Summary | 108 |
| Chapter 6 – Motivations for Having Cosmetic Surgery | 110 |
| 6.1 Prelude to Motivations for Undergoing CS | 110 |
| 6.2 Normalisation of CS among Thais | 112 |
| 6.2.1 Beauty-Ingrained Thai Society | 112 |
| 6.2.2 Korean Celebrities and Influencers | 115 |
| 6.2.3 Thai Celebrities and Influencers | 117 |
| 6.3 Self-Surveillance | 120 |
| 6.3.1 Self-Confidence/Esteem | 120 |
| 6.3.2 Temporary Double Eyelid Items | 123 |
| 6.3.3 Make-Up and Dress-Up | 125 |
| 6.3.4 Breastfeeding | 128 |
| 6.3.5 Ageing | 130 |
| 6.4 Media Consumption/Usages | 133 |
| 6.4.1 Social Media | 134 |
| 6.4.2 Mass Media | 138 |
| 6.5 The World of Work | 140 |
| 6.6 Education | 144 |
| 6.6.1 Educational Environments | 145 |
| 6.6.2 Educational Culture | 147 |
| 6.7 Surveillance and Commenting from Others | 150 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 6.7.1 Appearance Bullying..... | 150 |
| 6.7.2 CS Advocates..... | 156 |
| 6.8 Heterosexual Romantic Desirability | 161 |
| 6.9 Chinese Physiognomy..... | 163 |
| Chapter Summary | 165 |
| Chapter 7 – Was Cosmetic Surgery Worth It? Post-Operative Experiences..... | 167 |
| 7.1 Prelude to Post-Operative Accounts: Increased Self-Satisfaction and CS Worthiness | 168 |
| 7.2 CS is a Confidence/Esteem Booster..... | 170 |
| 7.3 Appearance-Based Self-Surveillance..... | 174 |
| 7.3.1 Heightened Self-Empowerment regarding Make-Up and Dress-Up | 174 |
| 7.3.2 Additional Layers of Post-Op Self-Scrutiny | 176 |
| 7.4 Appearance-Focused Surveillance from Others | 179 |
| 7.4.1 Friends, Acquaintances, and Colleagues..... | 179 |
| 7.4.2 Family Members | 183 |
| 7.4.3 Appearance Bullying and Preferential Treatments | 187 |
| 7.4.4 Romantic Desirability and Relationships..... | 190 |
| 7.5 Elevated Self-Empowerment in the Professional Domain..... | 196 |
| 7.6 Post-Operative Positionalities on Beauty and Gender | 202 |
| Chapter Summary | 206 |
| Chapter 8 – So What? Discussing Postfeminist Complexities in the Cosmetic Surgery | |
| Accounts of Young Thai Women..... | 209 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 8.1 Socially Constituted, Intersectional, and Conditional Agentic Power | 210 |
| 8.2 Learned Narratives of Justifying CS | 213 |
| 8.3 Reciprocity between Self-Confidence/Esteem and Appearance | 216 |
| 8.4 Divergences and Convergences between Gendered Gazes | 218 |
| 8.5 Salience of the Media | 222 |
| 8.6 Postfeminism in Thai Beauty Culture | 225 |
| 8.7 Adaptation of Postfeminism to Thai and East Asian Influences | 227 |
| Chapter Summary | 231 |
| Chapter 9 – Conclusion | 234 |
| 9.1: Revisiting the Research Questions | 235 |
| 9.1.1 What informs young Thai women’s decisions to undertake CS? | 235 |
| 9.1.2 What are young Thai women’s post-op experiences? | 239 |
| 9.2: Theoretical and Methodological Contributions | 243 |
| 9.2.1 Theoretical Contributions | 243 |
| 9.2.2 Methodological Contribution | 245 |
| 9.3: Recommendations for Advancing Thai Society | 246 |
| 9.4: Prospective Avenues for Future Research | 248 |
| 9.5: Personal Reflective Note | 250 |
| List of References | 253 |
| Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheets | 301 |
| Appendix 2: Consent Forms | 320 |

Appendix 3: Participant Recruitment Posters329

Appendix 4: Interview Topic Guides and Schedules 332

List of Illustrations

| | |
|--|------------|
| Figure 1 - Final Coding Outcome | 82 |
| Figure 2 - Visual Summary of Young Thai Women's CS Drivers | 239 |
| Figure 3 - Visual Summary of Young Thai Women's Post-Op Experiences | 243 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Table 1 - Key Information on the CS Recipients | 64 |
| Table 2 - The Surgeons' Main Expertise regarding Young Thai Women Patients | 68 |

Chapter 1 – Introduction

“Research ... begins with human curiosity and a desire to solve problems. It is at its core an activity of hope” (Smith, 2012, pp. 202-203). This statement encapsulates my initial motivation for conducting this PhD project. The ‘international’ theme of my lead supervisor’s office décor has always reminded me of my childhood characteristic as a geography lover. When I was younger, my major hobby was to engage with both Thai and world maps. This characteristic brought me to successfully enter the arts programme of a reputed school in Bangkok¹ where I was stunned by the massive value of physical attractiveness within the institution. During my high school life, I recognised that excelling at academic subjects did not suffice, and at times, students’ beauty was valued higher than their academic performance. I was pressurised by a multitude of attractive Thai women² schoolmates to both thrive academically and beautify myself. Crucially, the catalyst of my interest in exploring cosmetic surgery (henceforth CS) and beauty culture at length relates to many conversations around CS among these schoolmates. Such dialogues went hand in hand with a steady rise of beauty practices including injectables and CS in Thailand.

Having noticed that the majority of Thai people who undertook CS were women, I was fuelled to delve into the gendered aspects of societal beauty demands. My passion in geography made me come across the feminist book entitled *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism* (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017). This book offers judicious insights into the connections between postfeminism and beauty regimes in several sociocultural contexts, ranging from Anglo-America to Nigeria and multiple Asian countries like China, India, and Singapore. Having considered aesthetic demands in Thailand, I sought to empirically interrogate the

¹ The capital city of Thailand.

² This thesis uses the word ‘woman’ instead of ‘female’ throughout. This is because I associate myself with poststructuralist feminism wherein Butler’s (1988; 1990) description of gender as performative (rather than essentialist) is of vital importance. The word ‘woman’ arguably sounds less essentialist than ‘female’. The same applies to the words ‘man’ and ‘male’, unless otherwise stated in direct quotations from other authors.

applicability of postfeminism in the CS context of Thai women. For this reason, my theoretical framework is feminist theory under which postfeminism falls. I concurrently hoped to make some recommendations for mitigating social injustice in Thailand.

This thesis serves as one of the outputs of the above motivation. Inscribed within feminist scholarship, I explore 1) what informs young Thai women's decisions to undertake CS?; 2) what are young Thai women's post-operative (post-op hereafter) experiences? To investigate these questions, I employed in-depth online one-to-one interviews and a codebook thematic analysis (TA). This study is substantial, as there has been scarce feminist research on CS among Thais despite the popularity of CS in Thailand. The words CS and plastic surgery differ: the former is undertaken for aesthetic purposes, whereas the latter is often medical/reconstructive (Wen, 2013, p. 4). This thesis solely focuses on CS, with the backbone to decipher the underlying notions and social issues in young Thai women's CS accounts. The following section details the growth of CS in Thailand to provide generic contextual information.

1.1 The Rise of CS in Thailand

With a swathe of political turmoil and demonstrations in the twenty-first century (Sombatpoonsiri, 2018), Thailand is an upper-middle-income country situated in the Southeast Asian region³. In a broad sense, never has Thailand been under a colonial rule by any Western nations. Yet, the development of the Thai medical realm has been influenced by the West (Charuluxananana and Chentanez, 2007). Thai sovereignty has supported this development through diplomatic relations and trading with Western countries, as a way to avert Western colonisation in Thailand (Jackson, 1999; Wilson, 2011, p. 129). Furthermore, Thailand is considered as a beauty-

³ In addition to Thailand, the Southeast Asian region comprises Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Timor-Leste, the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos.

ingrained country, on the grounds that appealing public self-images are essential for interpersonal interactions in Thai society (Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021). The root cause of this is the long-held importance of social hierarchy alongside the collectivist nature of Thai society, which shapes not only varying degrees of respect but also the high value of public image (Mulder, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021).

In turn, Thailand has been deemed as a hub for various beauty regimes; for example, injections like fillers and CS (Wilson, 2011, p. 124). In addition to gender confirmation surgery (Aizura, 2009; Wilson, 2011; Käng, 2021), other CS procedures in Thailand have also caught immense attention from not only Thais but also foreigners, such as Australians (Jones, 2011; Holliday, *et al.*, 2015). According to International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (2021), the three most sought-after CS procedures in Thailand consist of nose augmentation surgery (rhinoplasty), double eyelid surgery (blepharoplasty), and breast augmentation surgery respectively. Thailand has not been ranked incredibly high in terms of the number of CS operations performed (Henley and Porath, 2021, p. 202), most likely because of a multitude of unlicensed Thai doctors performing CS operations (Head, 2015). Nevertheless, the country has usually been included in leading statistical data about CS (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2012; 2018; 2020; 2021).

Some Thai people wish to have CS in South Korea (henceforth Korea) (Tiemlom, 2018, p. 56; Bangkok Post, 2020), a country exceptionally reputable for CS (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012). As with Thailand, CS in Korea is not properly monitored, hence statistical data as to the number of CS recipients there have been hugely understated (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012, p. 58). Nevertheless, Korea has often been ranked as one of the top countries in the world when it comes to the number of CS operations (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2016). CS tourism to Korea has come to the forefront in several parts of Asia owing to the increased

popularity of Korean celebrities (Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh, 2019, p. 79). This has been the case among Thais, as a number of Thai celebrities went to Korea for CS (Tiemlom, 2018, p. 56).

Rather than foreigners, this thesis qualitatively delves into CS undergone by Thais in Thailand and Korea from a sociological perspective. One can witness the predominance of works concerning medical tourism from abroad to Thailand (Jones, 2011; Wilson, 2011; Holliday, *et al.*, 2015; Jaisuekul and Teerasu, 2017); and quantitative studies on Thai people's pre- and post-op experiences (Akkalatham, 2013; Seewan and Benjarongkij, 2014; Virasorn, Thongrin, and Lomchavakarn, 2020). Additionally, Tiemlom (2018) has conducted a qualitative project on Thai women's CS in South Korea with 10 interviewees. None of these works examines CS received by young Thai women in relation to postfeminism, a widely discussed and contested term in feminist scholarship. This gap informs the originality of my empirical project that qualitatively investigates potential postfeminist manifestations within the Thai CS context of this thesis. This is paramount, as postfeminism has long been perceived as disproportionately white Western given its neoliberal core (Dosekun, 2015a). In what follows, I further unpack postfeminism while introducing my theoretical framework.

1.2 Foundations of Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework is feminist theory, which is expounded thoroughly in chapter two. To lay the groundwork, it is important to identify what type of feminism with which I have associated myself. Once hearing my mother's claim that women, unlike men, need to look notably attractive, I have been critical of the essentialist dichotomy around natural differences between women and men (Weedon, 1997). Indeed, such a binary has preserved the gendered status quo, and the above claim was made by my mother straight before the outset of my orthodontics experience. Greater details on this personal story are outlined in chapter four. Yet, what is worth noting here is

the role of this anecdote in constituting the entry point for my subscription to poststructuralist feminism. This branch of feminism disputes deterministic or reductive grasps concerning individuals of any gender (Weedon, 1997).

Poststructuralism has been commonly drawn upon amongst scholars analysing the postfeminist landscape (see for example: Budgeon, 2000; Scharff, 2009; Dosekun, 2015b; Rogan, 2018), which brought me to research postfeminism. In simple terms, dubbed as “gendered neoliberalism” (Gill, 2017, p. 620), postfeminism refers to women’s individualisation and self-empowerment (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017). Analogous to postfeminism, neoliberalism is a term concerned with de-politicisation in and outside the realm of political economy (Larner, 2000; Duggan, 2003; Mitchell, 2010; Brown, 2015; Littler, 2017). Pertinently, postfeminism is grounded in neoliberal ethos that generally projects consumerist and capitalist values onto people in an individualistic manner (Giddens, 1991). In the wake of women’s successes caused by second-wave feminism, postfeminism lures women into their constant aesthetic improvement for self-empowerment, as though their subordinated positions in the gender order already faded (Baker, 2010).

I have been sparked by the works written by McRobbie (2004; 2009) and Gill (2007c) that explore various postfeminist materialisations via gendered media representations. These representations, such as *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and *Sex and the City*, point to several contradictions in the age where feminism has *ostensibly* accomplished its goals (Gill, 2007c; McRobbie, 2009). Subsequently, “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) and “the new sexual contract” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54) are coined to offer nuanced and comprehensive understandings of postfeminism. Both notions are deeply predicated upon neoliberal ethos in the sense of women’s self-containment, as well as having beauty as one of the cornerstones. These concepts do not totally negate feminism, but they cast feminist collectivism against gender disparities as expendable

(McRobbie, 2004; 2009; Gill, 2007c). I elaborate further on these two notions and the terms ‘postfeminism’ and ‘neoliberalism’ in chapter two.

Postfeminist iterations have been discovered in a multiplicity of countries outside the West, such as China (Chen, 2012; Liao, 2021; Jia, 2022); Japan (Gwynne, 2013; Fassbender, 2022); Korea (Kim, 2011; Song, 2023); Singapore (Lazar, 2017); India (Anwer and Arora, 2020); and Nigeria (Dosekun, 2015a; 2017; 2020). Dosekun (2015a, p. 967) opposes Gwynne’s (2013, p. 327) assertion that postfeminism is more prone to enact itself within Western/non-Western countries in the Global North. As Dosekun (2015a, p. 967) stresses, stark class asymmetries in the Global South allow wealthy local women to embrace individualism and self-empowerment via global consumerism and mobility. Dosekun (2017) found that young educated Nigerian women demonstrated their postfeminist subjectivities, by undertaking aesthetic practices with a high pain tolerance and having their subsequent empowered feelings from such engagement. Indeed, neoliberal values, namely individualisation and de-politicisation, have become increasingly omnipresent (Ong, 2006). When it comes to Thailand, Singpliam (2022a) uncovers postfeminist manifestations in a celebrity TV show created by a Thai woman socialite, Vatanika. Such a transnational direction of postfeminism prompted me to delve into the Thai CS context through a feminist lens, with the intent to see whether postfeminism dominates this particular beauty context, and if so, how.

1.3 Research Aim and Questions

This sociological study is a critical feminist exploration of young Thai women’s reflective CS accounts. It unpacks the underpinning concepts and social issues that are impactful in this given CS context. The following are the research questions:

- 1) **What informs young Thai women's decisions to undertake CS?**
- 2) **What are young Thai women's post-op experiences?**

This project examines what/who sparked young Thai women to undergo CS and what happened in their post-op periods. Additionally, the study explores their identity formation while making sense of their CS experiences and justifying their actions during the data collection. This examination is rooted in constructionist epistemology, which is explained in chapter four. It also investigates these women's agency and power differentials embedded within their CS experiences, both of which are central concepts in sociology for rigorously uncovering how society works. The thesis proffers its own definitions of power and women's agentic power in chapter two.

The outcomes of my study are neither universal nor generalisable to the wider Thai population due to its qualitative and subjective nature, but the project illuminates a plethora of insights into CS among young Thai women from a sociological point of view. This thesis primarily concerns Thai people. Yet, a variety of scholars – irrespective of nationality – with interests in sociology, body image, gender relations, (post)feminism, and/or media and communication can learn from the thesis. To be precise, they can explore my literature review on both Western and Asian contexts; my methodology developed amidst Covid-19 and informed by social research, feminism, and beauty; and my findings chapters that present young Thai women's reflections on their CS experiences.

1.4 Thesis Outline

My thesis consists of nine chapters. **Chapter one** outlined my initial motivation for carrying out this study, the pertinent contextual and conceptual/theoretical grounds, and the principal aim and research questions of the project.

Chapters two and three are the literature review chapters, detailing how the research questions and aim of this study, as well as its theoretical contributions, arise from previous research. **Chapter two** is divided into three overarching sections: 1) feminism, power, and beauty; 2) postfeminism (encompassing neoliberalism); 3) physical and psychological surveillance, to articulate the theoretical framework of this project at length. Also fundamental to chapter two is the emergence of two theoretical contributions. **The central theoretical contribution relates to advancing postfeminism**, which is broken down into three sub-contributions. The first sub-contribution is concerned with “the confidence cult(ure)” (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19). The second sub-contribution bears on “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) and “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). The third sub-contribution further enlightens how postfeminist materialisations in Thai aesthetic culture are distinct from postfeminism in the West. **The other contribution centres around the role(s) of the media in facilitating young Thai women’s CS**, since the media have long been one of the overriding domains for analysing postfeminism (Gill, 2017; Evans, 2023).

Exclusively delving into academic works on the Thai and global perspectives, **chapter three** is bifurcated into the two following sections: 1) Thai society; 2) cultural understandings of beauty across countries. In doing so, chapter three not only explicates the overarching context of this study, but it also shows the potential international significance of this project by examining overlaps and dissimilarities between Western and Asian beauty understandings. Relating to such international significance, one more theoretical contribution arises from this chapter. This contribution is about the learned narratives of rationalising CS within the context of this thesis, feeding into the broader realm of studies on CS.

Chapter four outlines the methodology of my project by engaging with scholarly works on social research, feminism, and beauty. The methodology comprises philosophy; participant

recruitment; participant information; data collection; data analysis; power dynamics; personal reflections; and ethical considerations. The chapter presents how I ethically planned and conducted my project in tune with feminist canon and social research, as well as pinpointing my methodological contribution and limitations. The research philosophy covers relativist ontology, feminist constructionist epistemology, and a poststructuralist theoretical and analytical perspective. The participants were 50 young Thai women CS recipients and five Thai cosmetic surgeons, all of whom were based in Thailand. The methodological contribution of my study appertains to my uptake of Zoom for conducting the interviews on a sensitive topic.

Chapters five, six, and seven showcase findings derived from my methodology. In this respect, the first research question merits more lengthy discussion, as I have received more considerable data about it compared to the second question. These three chapters hammer home the aforementioned theoretical contributions predicated upon the findings. With reference to the first research question, **chapter five** pivots on young Thai women's practical drivers for CS. These drivers consist of CS payments; exceptionally high CS costs; specific places to undergo CS; and beauty styles for the procedures. **Chapter six** continues exploring this research question, focusing upon what came before such practical considerations, i.e. these women's various motives for undergoing CS. The key arguments of these two chapters centre around postfeminist materialisations, i.e. subtle reifications of patriarchy, regarding how power productively flowed within and among women concerning bodywork.

Turning to the second research question, **chapter seven** details multiple aspects of their post-op experiences, which covers self-esteem/confidence; self-disciplining; surveillance from men and other women; and the professional sphere. The final section foregrounds the post-op positionalities of the CS recipients on gender relations and beauty which underlay their post-op accounts. The major argument of chapter seven rests upon both modest and apparent reifications of

patriarchy, yet the former was more evident. Modest reifications primarily relate to the recipients' heightened aesthetic/psychological/career self-empowerment and additional self-monitoring following the procedures, as well as monitoring from other women. Meanwhile, apparent reifications cohere with men's policing of the recipients' post-op appearance.

Chapter eight is the discussion chapter. It entwines the findings delineated in chapters five, six, and seven with their wider meanings in relation to the academic literature. It addresses so-what questions about the findings, as well as crystallising the principal argument and theoretical contributions of the thesis. Considering the key arguments of chapters five to seven, **the central argument of this thesis is that the CS accounts of young Thai women are greatly underpinned by postfeminism, with influences regarding Thai society and East Asian countries.** The chapter is divided into seven different parts: 1) socially constituted, intersectional, and conditional agentic power; 2) learned narratives of justifying CS; 3) reciprocity between self-esteem/confidence and looks; 4) convergences and divergences between gendered gazes; 5) salience of the media; 6) postfeminism in the Thai beauty landscape; 7) adaptation of postfeminism to Thai and East Asian influences.

Drawing a conclusion to the thesis, **chapter nine** consolidates my responses to the research questions and my theoretical and methodological contributions. Here I also identify not only recommendations to lessen beauty-related societal problems, but also possible paths for future research. I end this thesis with my personal note reflective of my thesis production journey.

Chapter 2 – Literature on Feminist Theory: The Entanglement between Beauty and (Post)feminism

Chapter two is exclusively centred upon the theoretical framework of this study, namely feminist theory, with the focus on various relationships between beauty and (post)feminism. It commences by interrogating a body of works on patriarchy; feminism; power; and women's agency respectively. Concurrently, the thesis develops its own definitions of power and women's agentic power. This chapter then explores a wealth of literature around postfeminism and neoliberalism, as well as the inclusive shift of postfeminism. Proceeding to the next section regarding physical and psychological scrutiny, this chapter traces the unprecedented level of self-scrutiny in today's society; self-esteem/confidence; surveillance from other women and men; and the impacts of the media upon beauty culture.

2.1 Feminism, Power, and Beauty

2.1.1 Patriarchy and Feminism

There are many framings of patriarchy (Millet, 1977; Goldberg, 1979; Lerner, 1986; Pateman, 1988). Nonetheless, this project finds Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) observation of patriarchy particularly useful. This is because a number of key feminist thinkers, such as McRobbie (2009) and Budgeon (2014), conceptualise postfeminism by drawing upon her theorisation of the term. According to Walby (1996), patriarchy is understood as a deep-seated notion around women's subordination due to social institutions that have benefited men. However, as Walby (1989; 1997) posits, this notion is inherently fluid, in that it can interlock with several social characteristics: ethnicity and class for instance. This means that women experience patriarchy differently depending upon such characteristics, and that not all men are structurally powerful.

As the above has made it clear, patriarchy rests on “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). According to Davis (2020, p. 115), it is widely believed that Crenshaw (1989) introduces this term to illuminate US legal injustice. Yet, several feminists of colour (Combahee River Collective, 1977/1986; Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982) pinpoint the core of this notion prior to Crenshaw’s (1989) conceptualisation, to address the lack of considerations on the interlocking nexus between various social characteristics (Brah and Phoenix, 2004, p. 78; Davis, 2020, p. 115). Crenshaw (1989; 1991) heralds this term as worthy of profound attention, as it throws light upon multi-layered restricted access or marginalisation women of colour encounter in both private and public spheres based on race *and* gender. Since then, various scholars have built upon the notion of “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) to cover a multiplicity of social characteristics: not only race and gender but also age, ethnic origin, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and nation (Kim-Puri, 2005; Walby, Armstrong, and Strid, 2012, pp. 224-225), to name just a few. Crucially, “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) is not about quantitative additions of such characteristics; instead, these categories of difference are entangled with one another.

Patriarchy, Walby (1989, p. 220) suggests, is broken down into six principal parts: culture; sexuality; productive/reproductive labours in the domestic domain; men’s violence; the workforce (concerning glass ceiling and the gender pay gap); and the male-dominated authority/state. These six aspects formulate overarching patriarchal social structures (Walby, 1989; 1997). The cultural dimension of patriarchy refers to the institutionalisation of masculinity and femininity via education, media portrayals, and many other realms (Walby, 1989, p. 227). This patriarchal dimension encompasses the traditional linkages between physical attractiveness and women’s values, which have been reified via the media and real-life actions (Walby, 1989). This sub-facet of patriarchy is referred to as beauty patriarchy throughout the thesis. Additionally, this study decided to refrain from the interchangeable use of structures and systems. It sticks with the former

throughout, given the widespread view that the term ‘system’ could potentially deflect human behaviours into abstract ideas (Walby, 2007, p. 455).

To fight against patriarchy, different waves of feminism have been established. First-wave feminism centres around women’s rights to vote (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). Second-wave feminism puts a spotlight on women’s personal struggles and gender-based discrimination, as well as critiquing natural distinctions between women and men (Alcoff, 1995; Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). Third-wave feminism is broadly characterised by the openness to the diversification of women’s self-identities (regarding various sexual orientations and ethnic origins), resulting from the rise of the self-empowerment rhetoric (Kinser, 2004; Zack, 2005; Budgeon, 2011a). Fourth-wave feminism is encapsulated by digital feminist activism combating a multiplicity of gender issues, such as sexual objectification of women in the media and gender-based violence (Retallack, Ringrose, and Laurence, 2016; Budgeon, 2021).

As an array of scholars claim (Mackay, 2015a; Gill, 2016; Winch, Littler, and Keller, 2016; Winch, 2017; Budgeon, 2021), such metaphorical descriptions of each wave can be considered misleading. They obstruct the construction of feminist solidarity between younger and older women (Gill, 2016, p. 612). They also eclipse varying ways women from differing sociocultural backgrounds have been affected by each historical condition (Winch, 2017, p. 212). As Winch (2017, p. 218) puts it, “moving the focus away from the age differences of the feminists involved and looking at the broader political contradictions at work allows for a more nuanced understanding of patriarchy”. In view of this critique, this project on Thai women chose to avoid deeming these generational metaphors of the waves as the central frame of reference. This is because, while Thailand has not gone through a series of feminist waves like in the West, Thai women’s collective effort into dismantling gender disparities has been unrelenting amidst many political upheavals (Buranajaroenkij, 2023).

Feminism consists of various principal strands, such as radical feminism, socialist feminism, liberal feminism, and poststructuralist feminism. The definitions of each feminist strand evolve over time in accordance with emerging debates. Radical feminism has long been subject to a multitude of attacks on account of its man-bashing, essentialist images (Gelb, 1986; Byrne, 1996). This impinges upon broader assumptions of feminism, as exemplified by Scharff's (2010) empirical study. Scharff (2010) adds that women's disidentification with feminism is rooted in the heteronormative order and thus has to do with lesbianism. Subsequently, having conducted a qualitative project on radical feminism, Mackay (2015a) argues that this branch of feminism should not be reduced to such extremist images. Rather, it is associated with great dedication to combating men's violence against women and patriarchy, in pursuit of radical social transformations (Mackay, 2015a).

Compared to radical feminism, the hallmark of socialist feminism appertains more to the androcentric nature of capitalism. As Ehrenreich's (2005) germinal work on this strand of feminism holds, gender inequality is exacerbated by the devaluing of feminine skills, such as care provision. As Gordon (2013, p. 22) adds, the other cornerstone of socialist feminism relates to its close links with social class and race, in that working-class and non-white people have been socioeconomically exploited. Liberal feminism detaches from socialist and radical feminisms, in that it largely endorses individualistic moves towards gender equality (Budgeon, 2021, p. 107). Liberal feminism incites women to individually gain masculine attributes (Friedan, 1981; Budgeon, 2021, p. 107). Moreover, liberal feminists attend more to equality between men and women in comparison with equity (Budgeon, 2019, p. 10). This means both are granted equal opportunities amidst the tenacity of patriarchal social structures (Fraser, 2009; Budgeon, 2019, p. 11).

In addition to the three principal schools of feminist thought, poststructuralist feminism, to which gendered power dynamics are central (Weedon, 1997), has been widely discussed for several decades. Poststructuralist feminism problematises the essentialist dichotomous thinking, in order to

widen gender categories and oppose the association between women and subjugated positions (Butler, 1997; Davies and Gannon, 2011). Butler (1988; 1990) conceives of gender as performative rather than deterministic or essentialist, which means gender, like sex, is a social construction that can change over time. As Butler (1988, p. 531) puts it, “gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy”. Poststructuralist feminism also disputes the dichotomy surrounding views on the body and the mind (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). Pertinently, poststructuralist feminism challenges the reductive dichotomy around natural differences between men and women (Weedon, 1997): men as more rational and physically strong, and women as more emotional and aesthetic (Frost, 2003; Autio, *et al.*, 2013).

All of these four branches of feminism have the common ground concerning their end goals of dismantling patriarchy (Mackay, 2015b). Yet, this project chose to adopt poststructuralist feminism for theorising power, owing to its focus upon the mind and the body with which beauty is closely interwoven (Budgeon, 2003). An array of feminist scholars have drawn extensively on works written by Foucault, a French philosophical historian, who has been immersed in the poststructuralist tradition (Fox, 2014). In what follows, this thesis consults with some trenchant critiques on Foucault’s (1978b; 1980b; 1986) definition of power, to construct its own definition of power.

2.1.2 Power

According to Allen (2009, p. 293), feminist scholars have widely explored the notion of power since the twentieth century. Radical feminist theorists typically draw parallels between power and men’s dominance. To illustrate, MacKinnon (1987; 1989) accentuates women’s powerlessness determined by men’s domination. Similarly, Pateman (1988, p. 219), whose

definition of power leans towards radical feminism, maintains that “in modern civil society all men are deemed good enough to be women’s masters”. In relation to aesthetic culture, Blum (2003) ascribes women who have had CS to narcissism and mental problems such as self-loathing. Drawing a rigid line between natural bodies (original, unfixed) and unnatural bodies (technologised), Ensler (2004) and Jeffreys (2014) see these women as falling into the trap of false consciousness attached to social construct around women’s subordinated positions. However, Allen (2009) argues for the understanding of power as a composition of the following forms: 1) power as men’s domination over women; 2) power as women’s empowerment. This claim is the core of this sub-section.

In relation to beauty, there have been heated debates around the term ‘empowerment’ amongst feminist scholars. This term has been adopted for advertising cosmetic products (Whelehan, 2000; Lazar, 2006; Duffy, 2010), and for promoting women’s aesthetic self-development via the media, often through capitalist logics (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023). Consequently, a range of women endorse the rhetoric of empowerment for articulating their self-fulfilment adhered to enhanced beauty (Dosekun, 2017; Ma, 2022). Because this thesis investigates CS from a sociological point of view, it would be problematic to solely associate power with women’s empowerment. As Widdows (2018b, p. 227) holds, “[the empowering stance] has led to a further claim that whatever is chosen is always the best choice and by extension not to be criticised”. For this reason, given that women’s self-empowerment is a paramount trope of postfeminism (Gill, 2007c), the thesis, akin to Gill (2007c) and McRobbie (2009), avoids conceiving of postfeminism as a stance. Instead, this project treats postfeminism as a concept for in-depth inquiry, as suggested by Gill (2007c). Postfeminism is unpacked at length elsewhere in this chapter.

Unlike radical feminism, having been a subject of debates within the poststructuralist tradition, Foucault's (1978b) definition of power is concerned with de-centralising, disciplinary practices congruous with ubiquitous norms. As Foucault (1978b, p. 93) suggests at odds with the top-down pattern, "power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere". People's day-to-day lives are more imbued with such disciplinary power in comparison to oppressive power. For Foucault (1977), the concepts 'power' and 'knowledge' are deeply entangled, in that the former gives rise to the latter. As such, power does not necessarily arise from men; it can operate within women as a form of knowledge in quest of their higher self-satisfaction (Sawicki, 1991; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). This Foucauldian definition was critiqued in the sense of concentrating mainly on self-empowerment rather than social structures (Hartsock, 1990; Ramazanoğlu, 1993). Hence, later Foucault (1988) weaves external influences into individuals' agency. Foucault (1988, p. 18) then coins the notion of "technology of self" to describe self-disciplining of ways of being for the sake of perfection and satisfaction, whilst historical and sociocultural specificities lie behind such monitoring (Foucault, 1987).

A plethora of feminist works on beauty have been produced with the inspiration from Foucault's (1978b; 1987; 1988) theorisation of power. For instance, Bordo (1993) claims that women subscribe to the disciplinary regime: they always monitor and alter their looks. As Bordo (2016, p. 24, original emphasis) writes, "[CS] is a significant contributory *cause* of women's suffering by continually upping the ante on what counts as an acceptable face and body". Similarly, Bartky (1990) likens women's habitual appearance-focused self-regulation – through applying facial make-up – to a perpetuation of the gendered essence of beauty patriarchy. In turn, Bartky (1997) and Murray (2007) maintain that power is in no way held by people in authoritative positions only. Rather, everybody imposes power onto one another and within oneself based on existing norms whilst simultaneously strengthening aesthetic demands (Bartky, 1997; Murray,

2007). Butler (1997) extends Foucault's (1978b; 1987; 1988) definition of power to call a special attention to the psychological facet of women's self-surveillance, which has fuelled a number of thinkers (see for example: Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017; Yang, 2017; Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023) to explore inextricable links between women's self-beautification and their confidence.

Recently, Riley, Evans, and Robson (2023) provide a perceptive account of "technology of self" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18), concerning body image and the media. Young women today cultivate themselves through social media content on body posture and dieting as well as self-help apps (Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023, pp. 16-17). Subsequently, these women successfully foster their self-confidence by virtue of their improved appearance, yet they are subsumed within beauty patriarchy to value themselves based on bodywork performances (Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023, p. 17). This brings Riley, Evans, and Robson (2023) to describe "technology of self" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18) in their own words. According to Riley, Evans, and Robson (2023, p. 16), it refers to "the ways in which people work on themselves to take up a desired subject position yet simultaneously representing a limited agency since technologies of self operate within wider discursive regimes that structure the availability and desirability of particular subject positions". In this sense, desirable subject positions are centred upon good looks and healthy states of mind, both of which are under the patriarchal control towards women to be self-contained consistently (Gill, 2017).

Having engaged with the above literature, this thesis finds these Foucault-inspired works beneficial for establishing its own definition of power for two main reasons. **First**, these works allow the thesis to acknowledge women's voices, potentials, and subjective identities rather than completely rejecting them. Challenging Giddens's (1991) conceptualisation of the body-mind binary that treats the body as less important, Budgeon (2003) posits that the body and the mind are mutually constitutive. The body is an ongoing process through which women negotiate with their

identities (Shilling, 1993; Budgeon, 2003). Having undergone CS herself, Pitts-Taylor (2007) compellingly recapitulates this body-mind spectrum. That is, women consider their potentials and construct their voices and identities not only while planning and undergoing CS, but also while interpersonally framing their CS accounts (Pitts-Taylor, 2007). They renegotiate with their identities due to changes in their self-satisfaction following CS (Pitts-Taylor, 2007).

Correspondingly, back to Riley, Evans, and Robson's (2023) above description of "technology of self" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18), people's desired subject positions in their self-beautification journeys cohere with their identity formation.

Second, "technology of self" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18) draws attention to wider culture wherein under no circumstances do women exist in a vacuum. Such identity building is interwoven with the profound value of appearance tied to social acceptability in the current moment suffused with consumer culture (Featherstone, 2010, p. 193). This has exerted influence in individuals regardless of sex and gender, as manifest in men's muscular-building practices and the growing use of cosmetic products amongst men (Frost, 2003; Elsner, 2012; Miller, 2014), or even some evidence of CS undergone by men (Holliday, Jones, and Bell, 2019). Nonetheless, women are embedded in patriarchal social structures where they are more pressurised than men to strive for perfect appearance (Gill, 2007a; McRobbie, 2015; Winch, 2015). Thus, **this study describes power as a stimulant formulated within oneself whereby looks are interlaced with minds, whilst being tied to sociocultural influences.**

2.1.3 Women's Agency

This section draws upon feminist arguments of agency to define women's agentic power. In the contemporary era that abounds with neoliberalism, women usually conflate their individualisation with their agency (Baker, 2008). Gill (2007a) offers perceptive insights into

women's agency, demanding further scholarly attention to the interplay between women's agentic positions and larger social relations. Critiquing Duits and van Zoonen's (2006) emphasis on women's autonomous agency regarding their clothing, Gill (2007a) claims that agency is inseparable from sociocultural contexts that are mostly patriarchal, thus coexisting with coercion. Even when women link their own choices of staying preoccupied with beauty regimes to their individual interests in beauty and fashion, such interests are moulded by societal preferences and norms (Gill, 2007a, p. 73; Harris and Dobson, 2015). Likewise, Gillespie (1996) sees CS as both liberating and coercive for women:

In a society in which women are valued according to their physical characteristics, actions to improve their physical appearance may be an investment in their physical capital and a means of achieving social power. At the individual level, therefore, such action can be seen to be rational and empowering for women. At the macro-societal level, however, women may be seen to collaborate in the dominant discourses and ideologies that disadvantage them. (Gillespie, 1996, p. 83)

Davis's (1995) work provides feminist scholarship with prolific thinking on women's agency and CS. Davis (1995) builds upon the line of enquiry countering duped-victim attitudes, concerning women's preoccupation with beauty for utilising their skills (Smith, 1990) and building their identities (Young, 1990) amidst societal patriarchal oppression. Notwithstanding the non-existence of women's absolute freedom, CS ought to be more treated as an act of agency, instead of a means of outrightly surrendering to men's dominance (Davis, 1995). Bordo (1997) and Negrin (2002) posit that Davis's (1995) argument places insufficient emphasis on structural constraints that act upon women. Bordo (2016) and Davis (2016) revisit this discussion; their stances remain the

same. Davis (2016) accentuates that Bordo (1993; 1997) does not pay adequate attention to women's agency. As with Smith (1990), Davis (2016, p. 40, original emphasis) hails each woman CS recipient as ““competent actors” with an “intimate and subtle knowledge of society,” including the dominant discourses and practices of feminine beauty”. Meanwhile, CS, Bordo (2016) insists, is a highly patriarchal practice integral to women's career and romance successes. Hence, men cosmetic surgeons are regarded as a saviour eliminating unpleasant feelings resulting from intolerable appearance (Bordo, 2016).

Arguably, Bordo (1993; 1997; 2016) and Davis (1995; 2016) focus on different aspects of body politics when making their claims. Davis's (1995; 2016) positionality reflects how a multitude of women narrate their CS stories today. For instance, Stuart and Donaghue (2011, p. 113) foreground the perceived legitimacy of women's CS rationalisation with reference to their own comfortable feelings and self-confidence, both of which are deemed indispensable for their lives. However, as Stuart and Donaghue (2011) argue, such rationale constitutes women's agentic choices that are in no way autonomous. Otherwise, justifications regarding choices would be dismissed as emanating from individual desires (Budgeon, 2011b, p. 151). Gill (2007a) suggests that scholars attentively take into account women's articulation of their own choices in relation to externally imposed factors for robust sociological analyses of their agency. By doing so, they can investigate a range of discourses that enlighten women's power and ones centred upon patriarchal oppression.

The crux of the literature on women's agency appertains to the interrelationships between women's individualisation and patriarchal social structures. This crux applies to the complexification of social media for women: the unprecedented societal impact of social media induces an additional barrier to escape from beauty patriarchy, as eloquently captured by Gill (2021a). Gill's (2021a) work unmasks how her interviewees, most of whom are young women, are complicit within the cultural imperative to craft glamorous yet unfaked self-depictions on social

media. They are agentic in standing against various forms of social injustice including the ubiquity of elusive mediated self-representations, whilst being embroiled in such ubiquity rooted in beauty patriarchy (Gill, 2021a). Relatedly, Banet-Weiser (2018) underlines how the societal shift towards commodification on social media, to which beauty and fashion are usually integral, has moulded women's agency even when they seek to challenge social injustice via social media channels. Along these lines, Rogan (2022, p. 190) summarises that "digital spaces can be conceptualised as space that both reproduces and subverts the expectations of femininity in neoliberal, postfeminist contexts".

Altogether, the structure-agency debate is centred upon nuanced perceptions of women's agency: women should be conceived of as neither cultural dupes nor subjects free from patriarchal social structures. Having consulted with the above works, **this thesis describes women's agentic power as their individual capacities to reach their own desires and/or highlight self-determination, with a partial degree of freedom in accordance with patriarchal social structures.** This definition deeply resonates with Gillespie's (1996) description of women's agency as outlined earlier. In conjunction with this thesis's definition of power noted in the previous section, women's agentic power is an amalgam of women's self-empowerment and men's dominance (including patriarchal social structures).

The foregoing CS-related works within the structure-agency debate sparked this thesis to comprehensively explore young Thai women's agency anchored in patriarchal social structures. This project therefore constructed the following research questions: 1) what informs young Thai women's decisions to undertake CS?; 2) what are young Thai women's post-op experiences? In doing so, this thesis responds to Pitts-Taylor's (2007) assertion that, for interrogating the subjectivities of these CS recipients, their interactions with other people during their CS journeys (from the emergence of their initial ideas of having CS onwards) cannot be underestimated. The

next section lays out postfeminism or “a distinctive kind of gendered neoliberalism” (Gill, 2017, p. 611) to which women’s agency is central.

2.2 Postfeminism

2.2.1 Foundations of Postfeminism and Neoliberalism

An array of feminist scholars have brought postfeminism into dialogue since the end of the twentieth century (Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, 2020, p. 4). The term is characterised in various ways: as an acute deflection of feminism (Faludi, 1991); as an epistemological transition entrenched by postmodernism and postcolonialism (Brooks, 1997); and as another version of third-wave feminism (Hollows, 2000). McRobbie (2004) and Gill (2007c) construe the aforementioned definitions of postfeminism as lacking comprehensiveness for parsing the entire picture of social transformations. Postfeminism does not wholly disprove feminism, given that feminism lays the groundwork for postfeminism (McRobbie, 2004; Gill, 2007c). For more nuanced grasps of postfeminism, they develop “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) and “the new sexual contract” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54) based primarily on gendered portrayals in popular culture.

Both concepts are inherently intertwined with neoliberal capitalism that exhorts people to materialise their freedom by self-expressions through beauty and fashion (Crawford, 2006). Wolf (1991) calls this neoliberal exhortation as a ubiquitous myth that bolsters gendered aesthetic demands for women in particular to adhere to. Neoliberal ideology originated from the area of political economy in the 1970s, centring around privatisation free from the state in line with Reagan’s and Thatcher’s governments (Harvey, 2005). According to Hall (2011), Thatcher conflated the rhetoric of individual responsibilities into her socioeconomic policies encompassing housing and employment. Meanwhile, a multitude of scholars (Larner, 2000; Duggan, 2003;

Mitchell, 2010; Brown, 2015; Littler, 2017) regard neoliberalism as having been extended to all activities at both micro and macro levels, beyond the boundaries of political economy.

Neoliberalism in the micro level centres around self-disciplining and self-responsibilisation amidst social inequalities. Exemplary of this is Scharff's (2016) research that has discovered the self-directed/responsibilised or entrepreneurial characteristic of young women classical musicians who partook in the study. These women in such a precarious profession often individually tackle insecurities and injuries, whilst embracing positivity and negating social injustice that operates behind the scenes (Scharff, 2016). In feminist theorising, studies on neoliberalism in everyday lives, including Scharff's (2016) above research, are often drawn upon from Foucault's (1978a, p. 87) notion of "governmentality". Having grasped how prisoners manipulate themselves while feeling invariably observed, Foucault (1991) links such self-regulation to general people's day-to-day self-management in tandem with external influences. Put simply, "governmentality" (Foucault, 1978a, p. 87) refers to the crisscrossing workings of power between selves, various individuals, and institutions (Foster, 2018, p. 129).

Turning to "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) as introduced earlier, congruent with neoliberalism outside the political economic sphere, this sensibility involves the following interconnected components: women's individualism; self-empowerment; self-satisfaction; preoccupation with bodies to increase their power; makeover; self-policing; and sexual subjectification (Gill, 2007c). The sensibility is adaptable depending on emerging trends and ideas (Gill, 2017, p. 611). The makeover element encompasses not only appearance alterations, but also dating, parenting, gardening, and happiness levels (Gill, 2007c, p. 156; 2017, pp. 617-618). Gill (2017, p. 620) also stresses the significance of considering the psychological (self-esteem/confidence) and affective (positive attitudes or emotional expressions) sides of postfeminism when drawing upon this sensibility. Postfeminism repudiates negative emotions such

as anger but celebrates palatable expressions with positivity and resilience, on the basis of the postfeminist belief that radical social transformations are not necessary (Gill, 2017, p. 610; Gill and Kanai, 2018).

The above constitutes the ways “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) formulates the workings of power within women themselves that are by no means culturally and socially dislocated (Gill, 2007a). At a deeper level, this sensibility reproduces patriarchy and heterosexuality on the grounds of deterministic distinctions between women and men (Gill, 2007; Whiteman, 2023). Put another way, “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) encapsulates neoliberal injunctions, notably for women, to work on their physical and psychological selfhoods, rather than driving people regardless of gender to collectively fight against gender inequality. Postfeminism is therefore equated with a modest (yet persistent) reification of patriarchy. In short, the sensibility refers to women’s self-determination and their subjectification through power (Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, 2020). Such power does not come from men in a top-down fashion but is not immune to patriarchy (Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, 2020).

Shifting our attention to “the new sexual contract” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54), this contract is coined under the inspiration of Deleuze’s (1986, p. 52) notion of “luminosity”. “Luminosity” (Deleuze, 1986, p. 52) refers to visibilities that “are not forms of objects, nor even forms that would show up under light, but rather forms of luminosity which are created by the light itself and allow a thing or object to exist only as a flash, sparkle, or shimmer” (Deleuze, 1986, p. 52). Accordingly, this contract is described as women’s shimmering visibilities in consumer culture (encompassing beauty and fashion), educational and professional lives, and extreme behaviours such as smoking and heavy alcohol consumption (McRobbie, 2009). Such visibilities – synchronising with the institutionalisation of feminism in various domains like the media and law – bring postfeminism to assume that feminism has already been successful and thus outdated (McRobbie, 2004, p. 257;

2009). This is where postfeminism diverges from liberal feminism, although both endorse women's individual choices (Gill, 2007a). Yet, as McRobbie (2004; 2009) underscores, women's shimmering visibilities operationalise as power that is inseparable from patriarchy: women are embedded in patriarchy-influenced power dynamics competing with men. This point stands in alignment with "technology of self" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18): the notion characterised by the interrelatedness between self-management and sociocultural and historical discourses (Foucault, 1987).

Patriarchy permeates beauty culture in the form of "postfeminist masquerade" (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718). This masquerade, situated within "the new sexual contract" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54), is defined as "the mask of make-up and the crafting of a highly-styled mode of personal appearance" (McRobbie, 2007, p. 725). Women adopt this masquerade to further prosper in larger society, undergirding the patriarchal root of aesthetic regimes (McRobbie, 2007). As Gill (2007c, p. 164) points out, "to a much greater extent than men, women are required to work on and transform the self, regulate every aspect of their conduct, and present their actions as freely chosen". Consequently, women come under the appearance pressure and thus aim for perfection in their looks. This is conceptualised as the "perfect" (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3) that signifies postfeminist compulsions for women to attain flawless looks in pursuit of elusive beauty standards (McRobbie, 2015).

Gill (2007c) and McRobbie (2009) find postfeminism somewhat problematic while introducing "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) and "the new sexual contract" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54) respectively. This is because of the postfeminist championing of women's individual accomplishments and choices. As Gill (2007c) and McRobbie (2009) accentuate, patriarchy and gender inequality have not yet vanished in the contemporary era; they have just manifested themselves in a more subtle way in recent years. Hence, as aforementioned, they put postfeminism forward as a broad landscape that requires thorough interrogation in lieu of a

standpoint (Gill, 2007c). I decided to treat postfeminism as such alongside my uptake of feminist theory as the theoretical framework, considering the persistence of gender disparities in Thailand as outlined in chapter three.

Gill (2016, p. 613) notes that the prominence of postfeminism has been questioned by a number of feminist scholars (Lumby, 2011; Retallack, Ringrose, and Lawrence, 2016). This is because several forms of feminism, fourth-wave feminism typified by feminist activism for instance, have come into the limelight in the 2010s (Gill, 2016, p. 613). Many famous figures, including women politicians and celebrities, have also begun to identify themselves as feminist (Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, 2020). Rottenberg (2016) and Banet-Weiser (2018) introduce “neoliberal feminism” (Rottenberg, 2016, p. 333) and “popular feminism” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 1) respectively. The former is characterised as appertaining to how women, especially middle-class women, strike a work-life balance that at times encompasses childcare responsibilities in a fairly individualised and happy manner (Rottenberg, 2016). The latter refers to the popularity of feminism via followers and likes on social media; and commodifications such as feminist-inspired goods, all of which lend themselves into capitalist logics towards one’s economic accomplishments (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Unlike postfeminism, feminism pays attention to the repercussions of gender inequality in wider society (Rottenberg, 2016; Banet-Weiser, 2018).

However, an abundance of highly visible feminist iterations in the media have recently been bound up with women’s individualism (Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, 2020, p. 13). Even digital feminist activism sometimes have universalising tendencies evoked by neoliberal ethos, having failed to build full collective solidarity across various groups of women (Baer, 2016). Interestingly, “neoliberal feminism” (Rottenberg, 2016, p. 333) and “popular feminism” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 1), like postfeminism, rest upon women’s individualisation. Postfeminism thus persists amidst the recent popularity of feminism (Gill, 2016). To that end, the term “post-

postfeminism” (Gill, 2016, p. 611) has not yet come into being. Until then, postfeminism needs to be more critically challenged, in order for gender disparities to be immensely diluted (Gill, 2016). In parallel, this thesis takes a critical stance to explore postfeminism, as evidenced in the findings and discussion chapters.

2.2.2 Inclusive Trajectory of Postfeminism

Predicated on the bulk of media texts studied within popular culture, postfeminism was initially understood as solely interpellating white Western, heterosexual, young women in the middle class or above (Tasker and Negra, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). Nonetheless, the term has evolved to include or consider a greater variety of social characteristics (albeit often with some complexities), i.e. non-white-Western, non-heterosexual, and older women (Gill, 2017). Mora (2022) aids in filling the scholarly gap addressed by Gill (2017, p. 615) on the scarcity of works that interrogate the religious dimension of postfeminism. Mora (2022) claims that, while trying to challenge Islamophobia, women hijab fashion bloggers utilise beauty to demonstrate their Muslim femininity in a self-empowered manner congruent with postfeminism. As Mora (2022) notes, these bloggers do so somewhat problematically, such as perpetuating Eurocentrism and hyper-femininity, yet they enlighten the capacity for Muslim women to exhibit their self-empowerment.

The inclusivity of postfeminism has been extensively researched in relation to media culture. To illustrate, McCann (2015) explores appearance-based self-monitoring of mainly heterosexual women on the TV show called *Snog, Marry, Avoid (SMA)*, with concerns to hegemonic ‘natural’ looks vis-à-vis queer femininity. As McCann (2015, p. 238, original emphasis) puts it, “rather than focusing on the participants of SMA as symptoms of a problematic hypersexual culture, I argue for seeing these contemporary young women’s excessive femininity as queer, that is, as troubling the boundaries of gender ‘normality’”. In respect of age, postfeminism

complicatedly enacts itself to middle-aged and older women (Garde-Hansen, 2012; Whelehan and Gwynne, 2014; Jermyn, 2016). Via the analysis of several films and advertising, Jermyn (2016) has discovered older women's representations around their beauty and fashion in accordance with women's makeover in "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162). These manifestations signal makeover contradictions between youthful and ageing femininities while exhorting older women to be resilient in styling themselves (Jermyn, 2016).

Turning to such evolvment of postfeminism at odds with white Westernness, this transition has been found in the media and within the celebrity landscape. Among these, the research about Asia encompasses Chen (2012) on chick lit in Shanghai; Gwynne (2013) on sexual depictions of Japanese comics; Lazar (2017) on cosmetics ads in Singapore; Anwer and Arora (2020) on an Indian film about sexuality; Song (2021) on baking blogs of young Korean mothers; Jia (2022) on Victoria Secret femvertising in China, to name just a few. Jia (2022) is notably relevant to this thesis given its sociological exploration of aesthetic culture in Asia. Jia's (2022) analysis of femvertising in China uncovers the importance of attending to both outer and inner beauty, which resonates with the postfeminist focus on women's disciplining of both physical and psychological selves (Gill, 2017).

Highly relatable to this thesis despite its geopolitical location outside Asia is Dosekun's (2017) sociological project. Dosekun (2017) reveals the postfeminist subjectivities of young educated Nigerian women in terms of beauty. These women act as agentic risk-takers, willingly using somewhat painful beauty technologies of acrylic nails and hair weaves to satisfy themselves (Dosekun, 2017). Dosekun (2017) concurrently introduces the postfeminist concept of "aesthetic vigilance" (Dosekun, 2017, p. 169): women's attentive physical and psychological self-policing when engaging with cruel beauty regimes with optimistic attitudes. As Dosekun (2017) adds, this notion is rooted in patriarchal rationality and lures women into feeling empowered. Dosekun's

(2017) research echoes one of the cores of this thesis, in that both involve beauty-related risks tolerated by young women. Young Thai women who partook in this project were inherent risk-takers given their engagement with CS.

Concerning the Thai context, Singpliam (2022a) examines postfeminist manifestations in the reality show *This is Me Vatanika*, sitting in the intersection of celebrity culture, gender, and wealth. While addressing gender issues, this popular show depicts the extravagant femininity of a Thai woman elite celebrity named Vatanika in parallel with “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) (Singpliam, 2022a). The show foregrounds the sweeping belief that for flawless appearance, women should confidently keep on disciplining their body image and tolerate pain induced by aesthetic regimes (Singpliam, 2022a). Drawing upon Dosekun’s (2015a) germinal claim that postfeminism has transcended the boundary of Western countries, Singpliam (2022a) concludes that postfeminism permeates *This is Me Vatanika*. Dosekun (2015a) accentuates the specificity (rather than universality) of postfeminist iterations depending upon a given locale. Correspondingly, Singpliam (2022a, p. 8) uncovers Thai conservatism in the show, namely politeness at variance with overly provocative clothing.

Taken together, what is noteworthy in the academic works articulated throughout this subsection relates to the significance of self-improvement for women. Furthermore, as Singpliam (2022a, p. 18) suggests in relation to her research, “qualitative analysis through interviews with fans from various economic, cultural or social backgrounds is needed to gain deeper insight into how the discourses of empowerment and women’s agency are perceived by the fans of the show”. Given these, I formulate the main aim of my empirical study on CS among young Thai women with the use of qualitative interviews: to critically investigate their reflective CS accounts through the lens of feminist theory. The studies concerning postfeminism in Asia have been disproportionately on East Asian countries (China, Japan, and Korea) plus Singapore. Hence, this thesis regards its

advancement of postfeminism as its central theoretical contribution, by further illuminating postfeminist materialisations in Southeast Asia: the region that has been understudied vis-à-vis postfeminism apart from Singapore. More specifically, the thesis demonstrates how postfeminism in this Thai CS context diverges from postfeminism in Western countries, in view of Dosekun's (2015a) emphasis upon the fluid, non-universal essence of postfeminist iterations.

2.3 Physical and Psychological Surveillance

While analysing postfeminism, Gill (2017) foregrounds the relentless heightening of surveillance in today's society. This thesis, as noted earlier, views women's agentic power as a fusion of patriarchal social structures and women's self-empowerment. Women's monitoring of themselves or other women based on appearance is complicit in such a power coalescence, as articulated in this overarching section.

2.3.1 Unprecedented Level of Self-Scrutiny in the Contemporary Era

Neoliberalism has led to the unparalleled augmentation of beauty self-policing, which perpetuates societal aesthetic demands (Gill, 2017). A significant shift concerning new year's resolutions is manifest: unlike previous generations, most women today set the main goals of enhancing their aesthetic selves at the start of each year (Widdows, 2018a, para. 1-3). The exponential growth of technologies partly constitutes the unprecedented level of self-surveillance in today's society. Illustrative of this are photo beauty apps, allowing users to remove facial and bodily flaws or try virtually undergoing cosmetic surgery at their fingertips (Elias and Gill, 2018). Drawing on Elias and Gill's (2018) study, Peng (2020) has researched beauty filters in a Chinese mobile payment app, Alipay. Peng (2020, p. 583, original emphasis) compellingly articulates the nexus between aesthetics and technologies: "the "beauty-filters" design appears to address women's

anxiety about their bodies, but it paradoxically amplifies this anxiety by defining their unaltered appearance as imperfect and undesirable”.

It has been extremely challenging for women, even feminists, to be protected from societal aesthetic demands shaped by beauty patriarchy (Gill, 2007c). Riley and Scharff (2012) have discovered the beauty dilemma experienced by feminist scholars in their project. Specifically, even these scholars find it tricky to escape from looks-based concerns against which they academically stand (Riley and Scharff, 2012, p. 219). In essence, Riley and Scharff (2012) demonstrate women’s struggle with shunning beauty patriarchy, which consequently entails their physical self-surveillance to minimise their appearance concerns. Indeed, neoliberal injunctions configure every woman, beyond those working in beauty/fashion industries, as subject to what Elias, Gill, and Scharff (2017, p. 37) dub as “aesthetic entrepreneurship”. This postfeminist notion refers to a self-reflexive project for maximising creativity in search of the more perfect version(s) of oneself, at the expense of the discourse surrounding women’s docile bodies (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017). This alludes to societal aesthetic demands that render self-scrutiny inevitable.

2.3.2 Self-Confidence/Esteem

As outlined earlier, Gill (2017) incorporates self-esteem/confidence into “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), which falls under the postfeminist feature of psychological self-regulation. Self-confidence refers to a psychological booster in doing a certain thing, such as thriving in professional lives, whereas self-esteem is defined as the appreciation of one’s sense of self (hooks, 2010). Whilst they slightly differ from each other, both terms place greater pressure on women than on men (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Orgad and Gill, 2022). Since second-wave feminism, self-esteem has been well-documented in feminist writing. For instance, Steinem (1992) and Cruikshank (1996) underscore the intertwinement between self-esteem and politics. The democratic

regime calls upon people to foster their self-esteem for the sake of democratic stability rather than radical social transformations (Cruikshank, 1996).

Afterwards, self-esteem is considered in connection with commodification at the expense of structural changes (Banet-Weiser, 2014; 2015). Banet-Weiser (2014) explores YouTube videos posted by white and middle-class girls asking for reassurance regarding their appearance. Remarkable points here are these girls' uses of the videos as a tool for mitigating their self-esteem issues, but also several criticisms on these girls' failure to fulfil their sense of self (Banet-Weiser, 2014, p. 90). This finding is exemplary of the immense effect of individualism that characterises today's society. In her later work (Banet-Weiser, 2015), she pays heed to the salience of the self-confidence/esteem mantra in the marketisation of self-empowerment by girls' empowerment organisations (GEOs). Such marketisation risks deflecting the urgency of structural problems, but instead depicting self-esteem/confidence as women's necessary attribute for their own accomplishments (Banet-Weiser, 2015).

Gill and Orgad (2015) uncover several materialisations of self-confidence in magazines and advertisements, which led to the more recent work (Orgad and Gill, 2022) that continues to position confidence as a cult. Building upon "technology of self" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18), Orgad and Gill (2022, p. 19) regard "the confidence cult(ure) as a gendered technology of self, which not only is primarily addressed to women but also acts on gender relations, reframing critical accounts of gender power in individual and psychological terms". Such cult(ure) encourages women in particular to focus more upon fostering their self-confidence/esteem (Orgad and Gill, 2022). Paradoxically, it calls upon women to appreciate their own bodies via advertisements, in the era characterised by unrealistic beauty standards, engendering postfeminist contradictions (Orgad and Gill, 2022).

Orgad and Gill's (2022) work echoes Favaro's (2017, p. 284) analysis of magazines and websites, as well as her interviews with individuals who have directly contributed to these media resources. As Favaro (2017) maps out in the Western context, these publications promote the prerequisite of the confidence mantra for women, whilst delivering contradictory messages about aesthetics. That is, the magazines and websites challenge unattainable beauty benchmarks yet simultaneously underline the inevitability for women to work on their beauty and fashion (Favaro, 2017). Favaro (2017) and Orgad and Gill (2022) are sceptical of this confidence/esteem demand, as it incites women to solve problems to an individual end rather than root causes. Orgad and Gill (2022, pp. 4-5) underscore a noteworthy caveat: their aim is not to overturn the importance of having self-esteem/confidence to which none of us is immune. Being confident in oneself is generally helpful in some ways, such as when juggling with novel encounters (Orgad and Gill, 2022). However, Orgad and Gill (2022) call into question the de-politicisation of this confidence/esteem imperative that seems empowering but in reality magnifies women's surveillance and exacerbates the status quo. Orgad and Gill (2022) are also stunned by the unparalleled dispersal of such an imperative across various domains even in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international development.

Orgad and Gill's (2022) work is a judicious and thought-provoking addition to feminist scholarship, by providing an in-depth analysis of various materialisations of self-confidence/esteem. Yet, Pradhan (2023) asserts that one of the shortcomings of Orgad and Gill's (2022) work is concerned with its geopolitical coverage. Having explored previous studies regarding Indian, Saudi, and Afghan women, Orgad and Gill (2022) have found such a confidence/esteem rhetoric in the Global South. However, Orgad and Gill (2022, p. 24) focus primarily upon the Global North, namely New Zealand and Australia as well as European and Anglo-American countries. In view of this limitation, this thesis intends to integrate "confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19)

into its theoretical contribution concerning postfeminism as indicated above. The project critically examines the ways “confidence cult(ure)” (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19) plays out in the CS phenomenon of young Thai women. By doing so, the thesis can aid in fulfilling the psychological dimension of postfeminism: the angle that warrants more scholarly focus (Gill, 2017; Evans, 2023).

2.3.3 Gazes from Others

Turning to beauty-based self-disciplining, “horizontal surveillance” (Gill, 2017, p. 617) or scrutiny amongst women is salient today. These figurations of surveillance are developed from Foucault’s (1978b) theorisation of power away from the top-down fashion (Gill, 2017). Women’s surveillance of one another takes root in the rhetoric of women’s autonomy, as though men’s domination were no longer vital (Gill, 2017). In this respect, Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz (2016, p. 94) coin “postfeminist gaze”, to capture monitoring among women which obfuscates the subject-object binary in the gender order (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). “Postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) is framed through their interviews with British women. Falling under “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), this gaze is concerned with 1) looks-based comparison with other women in both praising and competitive ways and, concurrently, 2) women’s self-scrutiny on body image to continue to be deemed attractive or acceptable (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). Such a gaze is consumption-orientated and heteronormative in essence, and its subsequent characteristics are comparative, ubiquitous, and judgmental (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 108).

Since women are encapsulated by the gendered core of beauty, “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) illustrates how power productively operates among women to alter their appearance (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). This gaze may ostensibly seem in opposition to “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6): the notion originally concerned with audiences’

objectification of actresses while seeing movies (Mulvey, 1975). Nowadays, “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) is understood as the institutionalised gaze from heterosexual men towards women, sometimes in an objectified or sexualised way (Gill, 2007b). Yet, according to Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz (2016, p. 109), “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) is still there, albeit secondary to “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) from a perspective of women. Both gazes overlap in the sense of being rooted in the patriarchal nature of beauty (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016).

“Postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) is entangled with “girlfriend culture” (Winch, 2013, p. 14) where “the long tradition of the commodification of women for male desire is internalised, redirected and utilised by girlfriends” (Winch, 2013, p. 21). However, Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz (2016, p. 98) make clear that women’s internalisation⁴ through “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) is not the focal point of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). Instead, the central tenet is how women comment on and/or validate each other on the basis of body image while formulating women’s subjectivities of one another (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). Given that Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz’s (2016) article develops this form of gaze based on the British context, the thesis incorporates this gaze into its theoretical contribution on postfeminism. This thesis showcases 1) how “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) enacts itself in the CS phenomenon of young Thai women; 2) how it works together with “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6).

⁴ Such internalisation is tied up with objectification theory that centres around women’s self-understanding and beautification through men’s objectifying looking towards women (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997; Calogero, 2004).

2.3.4 Mediated Presentations

The media are thought of as a bedrock of postfeminism owing to their indispensability to people's lives (Gill, 2017; Evans, 2023). The media significantly strengthen the interplay between disciplinary practices and societal beauty demands (Gill, 2017). Therefore, this sub-section on the media and surveillance brings this thesis to make a theoretical contribution, by presenting the ways the media facilitate young Thai women to have CS. This contribution can also add to the media and communication scholarship.

Concerning mass media, images in magazines intensify fine-grained levels of appearance-focused policing (Gill, 2017, p. 616), and TV portrays self-fashioning as an apparatus for women's self-empowerment (Roberts, 2007). For instance, Peng (2022, p. 743) unmasks the gendered stereotyping of *You Are So Beautiful*, a Chinese makeover TV programme. Peng (2022, pp. 752-753) demonstrates that the show hails cosmetic and fashion consumption as a toolkit for women's greater pseudo-empowerment, reproducing the societal requirement for women to discipline their looks and minds⁵. The depictions of women's makeover can intersect with social class, as uncovered by Wood and Skeggs (2004) and Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008) regarding the UK context. Some British TV programmes portray bourgeois femininity as the epitome of makeover, thereby inciting working-class women to feel compelled to significantly reinvent themselves (Wood and Skeggs, 2004; Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008).

A number of makeover TV programmes and magazines encourage general people to surveil their own appearance and have CS, reducing the social stigma of undergoing this invasive practice (Brooks, 2004; Tait, 2007). To explicate this, American reality TV programmes animate the postfeminist motif of looks-based self-satisfaction, by promoting CS through people's actual stories

⁵ Peng (2022) connects this finding with the Chinese post-socialist age in which the state promotes consumption-oriented choices to maintain the gendered status quo (Wallis, 2015, pp. 226-227).

on self-reinvention (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2006, p. 256). Meanwhile, Brooks (2004, p. 215) notes that CS is portrayed by American magazines as a progressive and accessible aesthetic regime. As Brooks (2004, p. 222) adds, such print media foreground the safety of CS so long as one selects legitimate surgeons to preclude severe physical complications. Arguably, this highlights women's self-responsibilisation which is one of the key motifs of postfeminism (McRobbie, 2020).

The twenty-first century is saturated with the proliferation of social media, which has magnified societal aesthetic demands due to its high accessibility and interactivity (Gill, 2021b; Rogan, 2022). From a Foucauldian viewpoint, power relations that take place on social media are not always hierarchical (Tokunaga, 2011; Marwick, 2012). In reality, a large part of social media are characterised by self-curation and interactions between users, rather than the top-down regulation from social media sites (Marwick, 2012, p. 391). Thus, Tokunaga (2011) and Marwick (2012) argue that social media are predicated upon reciprocity, concerning one's concurrent roles of scrutinising oneself and being meticulously scrutinised. This means, while social media enable people to craft their self-representations, they are contingent on validation from others (Dobson, 2015), which is exemplified by Gill (2021b) and Rogan (2022).

As Gill's (2021b) UK-based empirical project points out, Instagram and TikTok play a salient role in confounding people's appearance concerns and therefore their self-monitoring, on account of the visual-oriented nature of these sites. Gill (2021b) adds that a multitude of women are inscribed within the attention economy, in which, as Lupton (2016) states, numerous individuals strive for likes and praising comments on their posts in pursuit of more social acceptance. As this thesis suggests, these findings from Gill (2021b) bear upon both postfeminism and "popular feminism" (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 1), in terms of surveillance culture and women's successes dependent on mediated visibility respectively. Similar to Gill (2021b), having empirically researched young British girls, Rogan (2022) mirrors Marwick's (2015, p. 137) notion of

“instafame” that people derive from sharing (often aspirational) photos for self-empowered feelings on Instagram. Rogan (2022) uncovers fierce surveillance among women on social media regarding good-looking self-portrayals, not least Instagram, whereby gaining likes is integral to their self-identities. Although her women participants acknowledge the importance of looks for men, they suggest that girls are the main objects of digital scrutiny from both men and women (Rogan, 2022). This means “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) still operates towards women on social media (Rogan, 2022).

YouTube proves paramount for the postfeminist trope of self-surveillance, as epitomised by Banet-Weiser (2017) and Riley, Evans, and Robson (2023), both of which explore the interplay between self-policing and make-up tutorials on YouTube. Beauty vloggers get across their hopeful and inspirational messages around self-empowerment through make-up to their audiences, bolstering societal aesthetic demands (Banet-Weiser, 2017; Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023). Riley, Evans, and Robson (2023) see this situation as buttressing gendered aesthetic norms in a subtle light and being harmful for social transformations. The repercussions from these videos are tied to what Riley, Evans, and Robson (2023, p. 6) dub as “postfeminism 2.0”. This notion captures postfeminist confusions regarding the body-positivity sentiment encompassing resilience and the relentless intensification of the makeover paradigm (Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023, p. 6).

Primarily presented in the media, celebrities and influencers are central to women’s self-beautification, in that these public figures heighten beauty pressure at large by constructing societal preferred looks (Gill, 2021b). Celebrities were traditionally solely on mass media but nowadays have their profiles on social media for their fanbase expansions (Click, Lee, and Holladay, 2013; Abidin, 2018; Rogan, 2022). Emblematic of this is Kim Kardashian who is today such a culturally powerful prototype for the general public with concerns to glamorous fashion and beauty (Wissinger, 2016; Rogan, 2022). Referring to “popular feminism” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 1), the

fame of celebrities is contingent upon the “economies of visibility” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 21) within which their successes are characterised by their popularity in the forms of comments, followers, and likes (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 10). Through this logic, while democratising looks-focused self-management and increasing aesthetic demands, women celebrities relentlessly use their glamour to uphold their privileged economic and cultural status on both mass and social media (Genz, 2015). From this thesis’s synthesis, women celebrities are clearly cemented in capitalism for their fame to which glamorous appearance is integral.

Transitioning our attention to the influencer landscape, as Abidin (2016, p. 86) puts it, “influencers are one form of microcelebrity⁶ who accumulate a following on blogs and social media through textual and visual narrations of their personal, everyday lives, upon which advertorials for products and services are premised”. Women influencers fit well with postfeminism in respect of authenticity and enhanced beauty (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023). On account of their ordinariness, influencers’ content is widely conceived of as more relatable compared to that of traditional celebrities, which successfully reinforces appearance-focused self-regulatory practices among their audiences (Abidin and Gwynne, 2017; Kanai, 2018; Gill, 2021b; Chen and Kanai, 2022). According to Marwick (2013, p. 143), such relatability stems from the ubiquitous understanding that “while mainstream celebrities are expected to protect their privacy, micro-celebrities cannot or they’ll lose this attention”. Influencers today participate in mass media as well, through which they are usually pressured to retain their authenticity and approachability like how they perform themselves on social media (see for example: Jerslev (2016) on a British beauty vlogger known as Zoella).

⁶ Senft (2008, p. 25) coins the term “microcelebrity” when investigating girls using webcams, to describe ordinary individuals who become more famous by sharing their lives virtually.

As with celebrities, influencers typically strive for their own economic self-empowerment in alignment with postfeminism (McRobbie, 2007). To be exact, dependent upon the above-mentioned “economies of visibility” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 21), influencers “try to increase their followers and likes; improve rankings; and rethink approaches to content based upon feedback provided by their readers” (Duffy, 2016, p. 449). To be economically empowered, they usually face several main obstacles. First, such authenticity of influencers is conditional, in that they are often pressurised by brands to inform their fans of their satisfactory feedback on the products or services (Abidin and Ots, 2015; Arriagada and Bishop, 2021; Lee and Abidin, 2022). Second, the role of influencers is financially precarious, although it is *ostensibly* a promising passion-driven job due to its entrepreneurial essence (Duffy, 2017; Glatt, 2022). Revenues from services/brands and metrics (such as likes and follows) at times prove insufficient or unfair; therefore, some influencers partially rely on digital apps/channels for more earnings from their fans (Glatt, 2023, p. 3). As this thesis synthesises, women influencers are subsumed within the capitalist control, while creating amiable/relatable yet aspirational personae to empower themselves and their audiences.

Chapter Summary

This chapter consulted with a wide array of scholarly works broadly related to feminist theory, with the focus on its various connections with beauty. It started with the investigation of the literature on patriarchy; feminism; power; and women’s agency. This was followed by the exploration of academic pieces regarding postfeminism and neoliberalism, as well as the inclusive transition of postfeminism. The chapter then examined the literature on physical and psychological policing, which covers the unprecedented level of self-scrutiny in the contemporary age; self-esteem/confidence; scrutiny from other women and men; and the effects of the media in aesthetic culture.

The chapter detailed how this thesis took inspirations from several thinkers to build its own definitions of power and women's agentic power. This study identifies power as a stimulus constructed within oneself whereby one's body is inseparable from their mind, whilst being concomitantly bound up with sociocultural influences. This thesis describes women's agentic power as their individual capacities to fulfil their own aspirations and/or highlight self-determination, with a partial degree of freedom congruent with patriarchal social structures. Relatedly, the thesis was fuelled by authors in the structure-agency debate to frame the following research questions: 1) what informs young Thai women's decisions to engage with CS?; 2) what are young Thai women's post-op experiences? Here this thesis also mapped out some of its theoretical contributions: advancing postfeminism; and showing the ways the media facilitate young Thai women to undertake CS. The next chapter, which is the second literature review chapter, identifies one more theoretical contribution of this thesis: showcasing the learned narratives of rationalising CS within the context of this project.

Chapter 3 – Literature on the Thai and Global Perspectives

Chapter three examines the Thai and global perspectives pertinent to this project. It commences by looking into a swathe of literature on social inequalities in Thailand and insights into Thai society, both of which constitute the overarching context of this study. This particular engagement with scholarly works is advantageous for grasping sociocultural and historical underpinnings to which Thai women are generally affixed. The chapter proceeds to explore cultural understandings of beauty in not only Anglo-American contexts but also an array of Asian countries with geographical proximity to Thailand. These understandings include learned narratives of rationalising CS and dominant beauty styles. In doing so, this project contributes to international significance by identifying parallels and differences between Western and Asian beauty understandings. In the chapter, one more theoretical contribution of this thesis is set out: displaying the learned narratives of justifying CS within the context of this study.

3.1 Thai Society

Thai society is much more collectivist than most of its Western counterparts (Hofstede, n.d.b). However, neoliberalism, together with individualism, has become increasingly mainstream in 1) digital entrepreneurship especially among people in the middle class or above (Leung and Cossu, 2019); 2) the Thai elite celebrity landscape (Singpliam, 2022a). In Thailand, there have been stark divisions between individuals in the lower, middle, and higher class standings⁷ (Käng, 2017). Well-to-do Thais often travel overseas and are preoccupied with luxurious products (Käng, 2017, p. 186), whilst poverty has profoundly impinged upon a significant part of the Thai population (Teeratanabodee, 2023). Indeed, class and regional disparities have long been serious problems in

⁷ This thesis uses the terms ‘class standings’ and ‘social classes’ interchangeably throughout.

Thailand, with an immense distinction between Bangkok/provinces nearby and the rest of the country in terms of prosperity (Arvidsson and Niesson, 2015).

Back to the works on neoliberalism in Thailand, one can witness the ascendancy of young Thai digital entrepreneurs, many of whom are socioeconomically privileged, running start-ups with the inspiration from neoliberal ethos to embrace individualism and can-do attitudes (Leung and Cossu, 2019). This neoliberal ethos has migrated from the West to the affluent groups of Thais (Leung and Cossu, 2019). These start-uppers seek to escape from the conventional work structure, yet they face precarious working conditions (Leung and Cossu, 2019). With reference to celebrity culture, Singpliam's (2022a) paper explores postfeminist iterations in the show *This is Me Vatanika*. This show exhibits women's individualism regarding self-beautification and self-confidence/esteem while addressing gender issues (Singpliam, 2022a). Meanwhile, neoliberalism in Thailand has gained scant attention within the literature; this is the absence this thesis sets out to fulfil by reaching its principal aim. To reiterate, the thesis aims to critically examine young Thai women's CS accounts with the theoretical framework of feminist theory, encompassing postfeminism or "gendered neoliberalism" (Gill, 2017, p. 620).

Despite such a scholarly gap about neoliberalism in Thailand, a number of publications on beauty in the country have been produced. Good appearance is conceived of as a key status symbol in Thai society (Van Esterik, 2000). As Van Esterik (2000, p. 4) claims, Thai sociocultural regimes value "an essentialism of appearances or surfaces. ... The real is hidden and unchallenged. The surface is taken for real". Van Esterik (2000) holds that women are more pressured by such surface effects compared to men, which is illustrated by gender asymmetry in the representations of Thai media (Singhakowinta, 2014; Singpliam, 2022b). Having delved into two Thai TV ads surrounding instant coffee and CS respectively, Singhakowinta (2014) has discovered that these commercials strengthen the patriarchal imperative for women to self-beautify in quest for more optimal lives.

Similarly, drawing upon viewpoints from some Thai university students, Singpliam (2022b) confirms the ongoing sexism of media representations in Thailand in favour of men. That is, such portrayals not only construct aesthetic benchmarks that are narrower for women, but also put a spotlight on women's looks to be scrutinised (Singpliam, 2022b). Also noteworthy is Singpliam's (2022b, p. 597) point that the collectivist hallmark of Thai society acts upon Thais to comply with beauty standards which are reproduced via social media; otherwise, there may be negative consequences towards ones who do not conform.

Indeed, beauty privilege has been deep-seated in Thai society; accordingly, multiple categories for influencers have been defined. The first one is dubbed as 'net idols' who are known for being either aesthetically outstanding or skilled in certain areas like comedy or music (Abidin, 2018). Nevertheless, according to Limkangvanmongkol and Abidin (2019, p. 98), within the Thai context, "appealing to one's physical appearance and beauty lends itself to an audience more easily than possessing and demonstrating a talent". In addition to net idols and some traditional celebrities who actively partake in influencer culture, other categories of influencers in the Thai context consist of 'university queen bees' (university students who are deemed exceptionally attractive) and 'beauty bloggers/vloggers/YouTubers' (social media users producing content on beauty items) (Limkangvanmongkol and Abidin, 2019, p. 98).

The point that university queen bees are grouped into the influencer landscape alludes to the usefulness of beauty to obtain high status within the educational domain. More broadly, drum majors and cheerleaders, who are typically selected based on physical attractiveness, are also greatly admired at Thai schools and/or universities (Plook Magazine, 2020). Intrinsic to this are the deeply hierarchical milieus of educational institutions in Thailand that further strengthen the significance of good looks to obtain respect from others (Käng, 2021, p. 275). Beauty privilege in the educational realm has experienced some backlashes against it (see Kirdsaeng, 2020 for

example), but it is still far from totally disappearing given its long-standing intensity. Such pushbacks started to take place alongside the movement against appearance bullying (Bunnag, 2021). Commenting on one's appearance, whether positively or negatively, has been socially normalised as a kind of greeting in Thailand (Käng, 2021, p. 277). In response, discussions around body shaming towards others and body positivity began to gain traction in the country following the campaign *#RealSizeBeauty* launched by the Thai-Australian Miss Universe Thailand 2021, Anchilee Scott-Kemmis (Bunnag, 2021, para. 1). However, this campaign has not yet completely tackled the hardly attainable characteristic of aesthetic ideals in Thailand, because of the persistent popularity of beauty pageantry amongst Thais (Chia and Maneechote, 2021b).

With reference to gender equality, Thailand is ranked 5th out of 11 in the Southeast Asian region and 74th out of 146 in the world (World Economic Forum, 2023). Statistically, Thailand has been positioned as having higher gender equality compared to a number of Asian countries like Japan, Korea, China, and India (World Economic Forum, 2023). Little has this situation changed over the past few years (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021; 2022). Gender asymmetry in Thai society has been particularly at stake in the political arena concerning its hitherto androcentric essence (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). In Thai political history, there has been only one woman prime minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, who received significant sexist criticisms from Thai conservative media outlets (Harrison, 2017). Gender disparities also persist in the educational, health, and professional realms (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023).

Gender inequality concerning the world of work and education is relatively subtle. As regards women's economic involvement, Thailand has been ranked within the world's top 25 in the table (higher than the UK) (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023). Notwithstanding this success, one can witness the existing gendered gap of income, career progressions, and career participation in Thailand (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023). Thai women with

flexible working conditions have long been incited to comply with normative gender roles like domestic responsibilities whilst having economic independence (Komolvadhin, 2008, p. 2). Thai women managers and executives have grappled with a glass ceiling to a greater extent than their men counterparts (Hansatit, 2014). In respect of education, although Thailand has been classified as one of the world's top countries for girls' enrolment in the tertiary education, the literacy rate has been unequal, again in favour of men (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021; 2022). Thus, Thai women's participation in professional and educational realms appears to be good on the surface, but it is apparently patriarchal from a deeper perspective. This, the thesis suggests, echoes McRobbie's (2009, p. 54) "new sexual contract" in that such participation constitutes shimmering visibilities amidst the patriarchal basis of larger Thai society.

Buranajaroenkij (2023) offers comprehensive historical insights into how gender inequality has been combatted in Thailand. As written in chapter two, Thailand has not gone through a series of feminist waves like in the West (Buranajaroenkij, 2023). Yet, a variety of women's organisations have been established since the nineteenth century, which have brought about some legal changes to protect women's rights (Buranajaroenkij, 2023). Remarkable is the pro-democracy youth movement that arose in 2020 (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 215). Hence, this movement has primarily aimed at challenging the military government that originally came forward due to a coup d'état (Phoborisut, 2020). Such a youth initiative instigated the inclusion of Thailand in the intra-Asian activism *#MilkTeaAlliance* together with Hong Kong and Taiwan, with the goal of eradicating Asian authoritarianism (Dedman and Lai, 2021, p. 97). Taking inspiration from *#MeToo*, this pro-democracy youth movement addressed an array of gender issues related to gender-based violence, sex work, abortion, and LGBTQ+ rights (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 216; Teeratanabodee, 2023, p. 2). This demonstration has been unprecedented in the sense of the overall very young age of Thai protestors (university-age people and schoolers) and their collective critiques regarding education in

Thailand (Loos, 2020, para. 5). The protest also enlightened disability, class, and environmental issues in Thailand (Teeratanabodee, 2023, p. 2).

Though being such a breakthrough, the Thai youth activism has faced several immense obstacles. Firstly, Teeratanabodee (2021; 2023, p. 19) details an important internal conflict: a number of pro-democracy protestors suggested that democracy took precedence over gender equality. In other words, messages around pro-democracy have been more palatable than those about feminism due to the long-standing patriarchal control in the country (Teeratanabodee, 2021, p. 7). Nonetheless, the movement brought feminist knowledge to the fore within Thai civil spaces, moving discussions on feminism beyond academia (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 216; Teeratanabodee, 2023). This activism also expanded feminism beyond the parameter of class-privileged, cisgender, heterosexual Thai women (Chia and Maneechote, 2021a, para. 4). Secondly, the collective fight of young Thai generations against gendered injustice has come into collision with the unwillingness of the Thai authoritarian regime to change the status quo (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 216). One of the main reasons centres around the hitherto patriarchal nature of the Thai authority/polity (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 220) that shapes social structures in the country. Another prime reason coheres with the paramount entrenchment of seniority in Thailand. Older Thais are more prone to possess greater power in both private and public spheres (McC Campbell, *et al.*, 1999; Sringeranyuang, *et al.*, 2020; Baker and Phongpaichit, 2022). Therefore, as Käng (2021, p. 5) maintains, it is common in Thai society to ascertain people's ages to pay respect to the older.

Thai society is filled with religious and spiritual beliefs. The major religion in Thailand is Buddhism, to which the rules of karma and the effects of sin are integral (Chaipraditkul, 2013). In terms of spiritual beliefs, akin to some other Asian countries like Korea (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012), Thailand is often thought of as superstitious and spiritual. Fortune telling via various approaches such as astrology reading is commonplace in the country (Trakulsuksawasd, Ingsiriwat,

and Wangsillapakun, 2021). Chinese physiognomy (*Ngo Heng* in Thai) has long penetrated Thai society (Aizura, 2009). It is described as a Chinese art of observing body features to evaluate people's characters and destinies (Wakefield and Yarborough, 2006). Predicated upon Chinese physiognomy, good features that often bring good luck comprise, but are not limited to, relatively sharp and straight noses; nose wings which are not too narrow; double eyelids; upward sloping eye tips; mouths suited well with other facial features; and moderately sharp chins (Angkasirikul, 2006). As written in chapter two, there has been a scarcity of scholarly research on religion-related postfeminist materialisations (Gill, 2017, p. 615). To broadly fulfil this paucity as part of the prime theoretical contribution of this thesis, the project interrogates whether there are any connections between CS accounts and religious and spiritual beliefs, and if so, how.

Taken together, the course of this PhD project coincides with the continuation of social inequalities in Thailand, some ground-breaking Thai breakthroughs against social injustice, and the surge of the dissemination of feminist insights among Thais. Given this concurrence, this thesis investigates the post-op positionalities of young Thai women who partook in this study in relation to gender relations and inequality, as evidenced in chapter seven. Such positionalities assist the thesis in grasping their viewpoints underpinning their post-op accounts, which feeds into one of the research questions: what are young Thai women's post-op experiences?

3.2 Cultural Understandings of Beauty across Countries

3.2.1 Learned Narratives of Justifying CS

This sub-section introduces the readers to learned narratives of rationalising CS in a multiplicity of countries. In this respect, the seminal work in feminist scholarship is Gimlin's (2007) qualitative comparative study between the US and Great Britain. As for the findings, to a greater extent than British women, their American counterparts highlight their financial sacrifices

for CS and endorse individualism by equating their CS rationale with their self-satisfaction (Gimlin, 2007). However, the CS justifications made by British women encompass not only self-satisfaction but also heterosexual romantic desirability/romantic relationship (Gimlin, 2007). British women overall construct their CS accounts away from financial sacrifices by reporting having used money from inheritance or insurance pay-outs (Gimlin, 2007, p. 49). This is on the grounds of conservatism around beauty practices in Great Britain which construes CS as a need, in lieu of an aesthetic regime that requires careful financial planning (Gimlin, 2007, p. 55). It is also such a conservative outlook that shapes the CS rationalisations of British women in line with their psychological torments affixed to their pre-op appearance, which is less dominant among American women (Gimlin, 2007).

With reference to the Asian continent, Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) investigate learned narratives of justifying CS in Korea, revealing the significance of Korean physiognomy in influencing the reasons of some Koreans to have CS in search of more propitious features. This is because astrology and face reading have been entrenched in Korean society (Kim, 2005), in terms of job hunting and social bonding (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012, p. 73). Afterwards, concerning aesthetic modifications of Korean women, Elfving-Hwang (2016) unmask an underlying effect of the discourse around displaying respect to others. Having examined older Korean women's accounts, Elfving-Hwang (2016) demonstrates close connections between their self-beautification, including CS, and their yearning for greater self-confidence to appear more respectful when socialising. Based on Elfving-Hwang (2016), women's individualisation is not immune to the social norm in Korea regarding the usefulness of looks for social interactions. An additional point to make is the popularity of CS among Korean men. According to Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012), a multitude of Korean men usually undertake CS for physiognomy or

professional purposes in the same way as their women counterparts, or for obtaining less masculine appearance.

For East and Southeast Asian countries, in addition to Korea, CS has particularly boomed in Taiwan and China (Henley and Porath, 2021, p. 202). There has been a dearth of in-depth studies on learned narratives of justifying CS among Taiwanese people. However, Wen (2009; 2013) explores such narratives in the Chinese context at length. Speaking of the Chinese context itself, CS has been on the rapid rise since early 2000s (Wen, 2013; Henley and Porath, 2021). This is primarily because the Chinese post-socialist era is characterised by the surge of consumer capitalism, provoking the vital importance of physical attractiveness (Wen, 2009, p. 9). Concurrently, the state has used the discourse of outer looks as a vehicle to retain women's subordination (Wen, 2013). Wen (2013) interrogates Chinese women's agency concerning CS, arguing for the attention to sociocultural and historical circumstances wherein these women show their agency for higher self-esteem when building their CS rationale. As evidenced in these accounts, such circumstances relate to the centrality of looks to one's social status, income, employability, and competitiveness for marriage in China (Wen, 2013). Later, Wen (2021, p. 267) points out that, while patriarchy continues calling more upon women to enhance their appearance compared to men, an array of Chinese men undergo CS for marriage-related reasons. Same as Holliday and Elfving-Hwang's (2012) preceding work, Wen (2021) also unmasks Chinese men's CS justifications tied to their career developments and desires for more feminised looks.

Regarding learned narratives of rationalising CS in the Thai context, Käng (2021) uncovers that such narratives are concerned with crafting appropriate self-images for fostering interpersonal interactions and class standings. This reflects the aforementioned point that, due to strong social hierarchy in the country, good self-images are paramount to interpersonal interactions within Thai circles (Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021). Yet, Käng (2021) explores CS along with many other aesthetic

practices such as tattooing, Botox, and muscle building. More broadly, Käng's (2021) data collection methods, participant groups, and scope of beauty regimes analysed differ from this thesis. As one of its theoretical contributions, this project seeks to extend Käng's (2021) research by providing a broader, albeit primarily subjective, picture of CS justifications amongst young Thai women. In turn, the thesis can showcase some similarities between this research and other contexts, adding to the broader realm of studies on CS.

3.2.2 Dominant Beauty Styles

This sub-section centres around particular aesthetic styles that people usually choose for their CS. The work that this thesis finds notably contested is Kaw's (1993) paper. As Kaw (1993) contends, despite defending their desires not to look white, East Asian American women inexorably follow dominant Caucasian beauty standards by undergoing double eyelid surgery and rhinoplasty to blend into wider American society. Kaw's (1993) essay is critiqued by Holliday, *et al.* (2017), who argue that white Western beauty is no longer *the* aesthetic epitome in the world (Holliday, *et al.*, 2017, p. 199). As Heyes (2016, p. 194) challenges Kaw (1993), some non-Asian people also engage with double eyelid surgery, and numerous individuals of East Asian parentages inherently have double eyelids. Heyes (2016) sums up that ageing is more salient in double eyelid surgery. Taking this debate on board, the thesis suggests that Kaw's (1993) argument is slightly outdated, given the recent sweeping effects of Korean popular culture in the US and across the Asian continent (Lee, 2011; Ju and Lee, 2015; Ainslie, 2016). To illustrate, as Ju and Lee (2015) point out, young Asian Americans hail Korean popular culture as a source of comfort owing to cultural affinities between Korea and their ethnicities (Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese in this case). The impacts of Korean popular culture on Southeast Asia are spelled out below in this sub-section.

With reference to CS benchmarks in East Asia, in quest of gaining an international recognition of CS specialism, Korean surgeons have transformed Western surgery guidelines into techniques for augmenting nose tips and widening eyes in Korean styles (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Holliday, *et al.*, 2017). Korean CS recipients previously favoured white Western aesthetics at variance with Japan, Korea's former coloniser (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012, p. 69). Yet, in recent years, Korean women, whether younger or older, have undertaken double eyelid surgery and rhinoplasty with the aim of enhancing their Korean looks rather than altering them in line with white Western images (Kim, 2012; Holliday, *et al.*, 2017; Elfving-Hwang, 2021). Although the appearance of some K-pop artists, such as Girls' Generation, has recently become sultry, desirable appearance amongst Koreans is overall more modest compared to white Western looks (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Shilling, 2016; Seo, Cruz, and Fifita, 2020).

Within the CS context of China, as Wen (2013, p. 212) writes, "while the features of Western images, such as bold assertiveness, feminine youthfulness, and the erotic body, become a signifier of cosmopolitan modernity, the features of Oriental beauty such as softness and tenderness become markers of traditional Chinese values". Chinese people aspire to undergo double eyelid surgery to look spirited and more conspicuous in comparison with young Koreans, but not precisely in Western styles (McCurdy, 2006; Hwang and Spiegel, 2014; Holliday, *et al.*, 2017). Having investigated beauty norms portrayed via cosmetic hospital websites in China, Luo (2012) has discovered that the trend of large breasts in the country corresponds to white Western aesthetic standards. By contrast, Chinese women gravitate towards smaller chins and eyes that are less deep-set (Luo, 2012). Arguably, CS preferences of Chinese women are intertwined with both Western and Chinese feminine ideals.

As aforementioned, the CS trend among Korean and Chinese men has been on the prominent rise. Many Korean men aspire to have softer looks to avoid being associated with solid

masculinity (Jung, 2010; Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012). As Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012, p. 61, original emphasis) state, “the ‘soft’ image, for these men, includes a less angular jaw, double eyelids and a prominent nose tip, while augmenting pectoral and bicep muscles to give their bodies ‘definition’”. These looks are often more ‘natural’ than Western appearance (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012). According to Wen (2021, p. 253), Chinese men have been affected mainly by Korean entertainment figures, followed by Japanese comics and aesthetic-oriented Western men, to attain such less masculine appearance. Overall, it is safe to suggest that Korean and Chinese men desire to have post-op features that are more aligned with Asian looks rather than Western ones.

For the Southeast Asian region in general, aesthetic standards mixed between white Western and East Asian (notably Korean) features prevail in several Southeast Asian countries, Vietnam and Singapore for instance (Hoang, 2014; Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh, 2019). Yet, such benchmarks demonstrate the clear visibility of Asian features and therefore cannot be conflated with white Western ideals (Frith, Shaw, and Cheng, 2005; Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh, 2019). Meanwhile, since the outset of the twenty-first century, the Southeast Asian region has been inundated with Korean music and dramas (Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh, 2019, p. 79). As Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh (2019, p. 79, original emphasis) maintain, “always featuring highly “attractive” actors and actresses, this wave diffused to all parts of Asia where the transnational influences can be observed in makeup trends, skincare practices, and cosmetic facial surgeries”. However, preferred aesthetics are distinct in Malaysia. As Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country primarily made up by Malay, Chinese, and Indian ethnicities, Menon (2019) claims that cosmetic surgeons who are salient in the design of post-op looks prefer Chinese and Indian aesthetic styles over their Korean and white Western counterparts. Muslim Malay post-op benchmarks have still tried to catch up by virtue of the religious opposition to appearance alterations (Menon, 2019).

Regarding the extant literature on Thailand, regionally speaking, north-eastern (*Isaan* in Thai language) Thai women have the highest tendency to be socially stigmatised about facial looks due to their relatively flat noses (Rongmuang, *et al.*, 2011, p. 115). Notwithstanding this, on average, Thai women share some ground irrespective of regional origin, in terms of their preferences for sharp noses, comparatively large eyes, and oval facial shapes (Rongmuang, *et al.*, 2011, p. 115). Interestingly, the looks favoured by Thais detach from such preferences of Malaysian surgeons. In Thailand, a country widely believed to be relatively ethnically homogeneous (Käng, 2021, p. 276), Chaipraditkul (2013) and Limkangvanmongkol (2018) assert that Western and intra-Asian influences inform beauty preferences amongst Thais. Most public figures within the Thai entertainment industry are either of interracial (often partly white Western) lineages or of full/partial Chinese genealogies (Käng, 2017, p. 190). Recent crowned beauty pageants in Thailand disproportionately fall under the former group (Chia and Maneechote, 2021b, para. 7). Meanwhile, having delved into the hybridity of Korean and Japanese mainstream culture in Thailand, Käng (2021, p. 4) coins “Korpanese”. This notion refers to general aesthetic yearning in Thailand for the mixture of Korean and Japanese beauty styles, on the grounds of relatively advanced developments of Japan and Korea (Käng, 2021, p. 275). While developing this concept, Käng (2021) underlines the current higher popularity of Korean culture compared to its Japanese counterpart. This is consistent with Siriyuvasuk and Shin’s (2007, p. 109) statement that the major trend has gradually transitioned from Japanese to Korean popular cultures.

To summarise these academic works about leading aesthetic styles, beauty ideals in East and Southeast Asia are characterised by racial/ethnic hybridisation, with intra-Asian and Western influences. This study sets out to fill an important gap in the literature on aesthetics in Thai society. The preceding points made by Chaipraditkul (2013), Limkangvanmongkol (2018), and Käng (2021) are drawn from their analyses of several aesthetic practices, not merely CS. Thus, this thesis takes

inspiration from these scholars to explore the recipients' accounts with regards to their desires for post-op appearance. This investigation feeds into the first research question: what informs young Thai women's decisions to engage with CS?

Chapter Summary

This chapter began by reviewing the literature on Thai society with respect to social inequalities and pertinent insights in Thailand. These social inequalities include class and urban-rural disparities, beauty privilege, gender inequality, and age asymmetry. Such insights into Thai society comprise neoliberal ethos in Thailand; some recent Thai movements against social injustice; the upsurge of the penetration of feminist knowledge among Thais; and religious and spiritual beliefs. The chapter then explored cultural understandings of beauty in Anglo-American contexts but also an array of Asian countries with geographical proximity to Thailand. These understandings encompass learned narratives of justifying CS and dominant beauty styles. Here this thesis constructed one more theoretical contribution: presenting the learned narratives of rationalising CS within the context of this study. This chapter also incorporated the potential connections between CS and religious and spiritual beliefs into the central theoretical contribution of the thesis on the development of postfeminism.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

The very act of treating women's experiences as worthy of academic research was in itself a revolutionary concept in the face of much theory by the 'founding fathers' of social science and generations of empirical work that assumed male perspectives and experiences were universal. (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010, p. 1, original emphasis)

The above argument sums up the basis of my methodology which centres around Thai women's reflective accounts at the expense of universalism or one true (objective) reality. Interwoven with this basis is what Gill (2007a, p. 78) coins as "critical respect": the notion that places emphasis upon being respectful to the researched whilst maintaining criticality, as part of feminist solidarity. This chapter sets out how my project resonates with these well-trodden scholarly claims. In a wider sense, consulting with the literature on social research, feminism, and beauty, the chapter justifies the philosophical and empirical choices of my project. It articulates the following in this order: philosophy; participant recruitment; participant information; data collection; data analysis; power dynamics; personal reflections; and ethical considerations. Ultimately, the chapter discusses how the potential benefits of this research outweigh its possible risks.

4.1 Research Philosophy

Ontology is defined as the researchers' views on reality (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). This feminist project follows relativism as its ontology, to which the plurality of realities is central (Gray, 2014). Feminist thinkers have been questioning the act of prioritising universal, objective facts that are often androcentric, calling for more attention to women's experiences (Smith, 1987; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). As Weedon (1997, p. 8) maintains, "[feminist studies] should not deny subjective experience, since the

ways in which people make sense of their lives is a necessary starting point for understanding how power relations structure society”. My study explores the reflective CS accounts of young Thai women. It is widely understood that beauty is intrinsically a social construct (Gill, 2007c). As such, the world each individual inhabits regarding beauty is profoundly socially constructed, being contingent on their interactions with others and thus broader power dynamics (Stanley and Wise, 1993). In short, these CS accounts are inherently subjective, exhibit power differentials, and counter androcentric universalism. This thesis will use the terms ‘account’, ‘story’, and ‘narrative’ interchangeably hereafter.

Epistemology is described as what justifies the legitimacy of knowledge (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). This thesis epistemologically adheres to constructionism concerned with individuals’ formulation of realities. This project is not ethnographic research whereby I was with young Thai women during their CS procedures. Rather, such realities in my project appertain to these women’s reflections on their CS experiences throughout their dialogues with me. In common with relativist ontology, these reflections were influenced by wider power relations in their self-beautification journeys. According to Budgeon (2000, p. 11), subjective realities comprise “sets of meanings and relations [that] provide the basis for processes through which the individual assembles a representation of the self in the form of identity”. To that end, such reflections cover identities that young Thai women framed while articulating the kernel of the first and second research questions respectively: 1) what/who ignited them to undergo CS; 2) their post-op experiences.

Because I adopt feminist theory as the theoretical framework, constructionist epistemology in this project is closely intertwined with feminism. Correspondingly, the recipients’ reflections on their CS experiences were impacted by myself as the researcher of this study. That is, in the realm of feminist epistemologies, researchers are often immensely reflexive in terms of power relations

between themselves and the researched (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010; Ashton and McKenna, 2020). According to Roulston (2010, p. 116), “reflexivity refers to the researcher’s ability to be able to self-consciously refer to her or himself in relation to the production of knowledge about research topics”. In feminist scholarship, such power dynamics appertain to researchers’ demographics and biographies (England, 1994; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002; Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). Also intrinsic to feminist epistemologies are researchers’ feminist standpoints that play a role in the study. The researcher-participant power differentials and the feminist standpoint in my project are further expounded in the dedicated sections of power dynamics and personal reflections within this chapter.

Poststructuralism is my theoretical and analytical perspective, which is characterised by 1) the conceptualisation of power away from an absolute possession of socially privileged people; 2) criticisms on essentialist binary thinking. In the poststructuralist tradition, power is not invariably exercised by men and can operate within women for their own desires, whilst it is enmeshed with wider society (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). Secondly, poststructuralism challenges essentialism surrounding natural dissimilarities between men and women and, relatedly, the body-mind binary (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). Minds and bodies are mutually constitutive irrespective of gender; women are no longer associated with docile bodies (Budgeon, 2003). Both points are affixed to this thesis’s Foucault-inspired definition of power I outlined in chapter two: as a stimulus formed within oneself whereby looks are interlaced with minds, while being concurrently tied to sociocultural influences. Congruous with women’s minds, this thesis defines women’s agentic power as their individual capacities to fulfil their own aspirations and/or highlight self-determination, with a partial extent of freedom due to patriarchal social structures, as set out in chapter two. Poststructuralism fits well with relativist ontology and feminist epistemology. Precisely, relativism comprises women’s subjective accounts, at the expense of universalism

focused on men's power (Smith, 1987; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). Feminist epistemologies cohere with power dynamics between women researchers and women participants (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010; Ashton and McKenna, 2020).

Another hallmark of poststructuralism is the importance of interrogating silences and marginalised voices (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019), which is salient in feminist theorising (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). Poststructuralism focuses on the roles of language in deciphering data, encompassing silences (Weedon, 1997; Braun and Clarke, 2022). Silences commonly reveal uncomfortable feelings of interviewees and researchers to say certain things that are deemed taboo or delicate (Ward and Winstanley, 2003; Phoenix, 2010). As Ryan-Flood (2010) accentuates, silences are a beneficial form of language for investigating underpinnings regarding complicated topics. Accordingly, I was attentive to potential silences in the data collection, which falls in line with "critical respect" (Gill, 2007a, p. 78) introduced in the outset of this chapter. The outcome was that the fieldwork was overall incredibly engaging with very few silences, but the findings chapters articulate the silences that took place during the data collection. Referring to the significance of marginalised voices in poststructuralism, the voices of young Thai women have long been marginal among feminist academics in the West. This project will be beneficial for ongoing feminist debates, as studying in-depth views of Global South women is to critique the "universalising and colonising tendencies of feminist theorising" (Mohanty, 2013, p. 976).

4.2 Participant Recruitment

I chose young Thai women who undertook CS (CS recipients) as the main participant group, whereas the supplementary group involves Thai cosmetic surgeons irrespective of gender and age. Since this study investigates a Thai phenomenon, viable participants needed to be Thailand-based; that is, living in Thailand at the time of my data collection; and having spent most of their lives in

the country as of the data collection. To my knowledge, the surgeons and the recipients were unrelated to each other. In total, this study obtained 55 participants: 50 CS recipients and five cosmetic surgeons. Five of the recipients had CS experience in Korea, whereas the rest undertook CS in Thailand only. The data collection with the surgeons, who were in CS practice in the Thai cosmetic surgery realm for at least two years, supplemented the accounts from the principal participant group, having allowed me to enrich my articulation of the research findings. This includes how their young Thai women patients largely justified their decisions for undergoing CS within medical settings. In a broad sense, having these two participant groups aided me in meeting the central aim of this project: to critically dig into the reflective CS accounts of young Thai women via the lens of feminist theory.

To justify this thesis's focus on young Thai women, no official information about the links between the number of Thai CS recipients and age brackets has been publicly available, but International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (2020; 2021) reveals that young people account for the largest group of CS recipients worldwide. In the Thai context, the age of 40 is regarded as the beginning of midlife, meaning individuals from 40 onwards are no longer classified as young people (Petcharavej Hospital, 2021). Meanwhile, it is medically advised that Thais should not undergo CS until 18-20 years old onwards, during which puberty-related bodily/facial growth ceases (Ampro Health, 2018). Thus, I thought the age of 18-20 may not have been the ideal bracket to start with. With these pieces of information in mind, I initially decided to examine millennial Thai women (aged 25-39 when participating in my study), whose first CS operations were performed at least one year before the participation. In doing so, I gave my participants sufficient time to form opinions on their post-op lives which are central to the second research question: what are young Thai women's post-op experiences?

Partway through my data collection (September 2021), I experienced difficulties in

obtaining the major participant group. This was due to the re-opening of Thai society during Covid-19 when people started to return to their normal lives and became busier. To increase the number of viable participants, I expanded the age bracket to 21-39 with a shorter temporal gap requirement (around three months) between their initial CS procedures and their participation in this project. I also widened the scope with respect to CS locations, to include operations outside Thailand. These changes helped me make greater progress with participant recruitment, and it still enabled me to investigate their post-op lives at length. Owing to the minor changes, there was a negligible, if any, implication to the collected data.

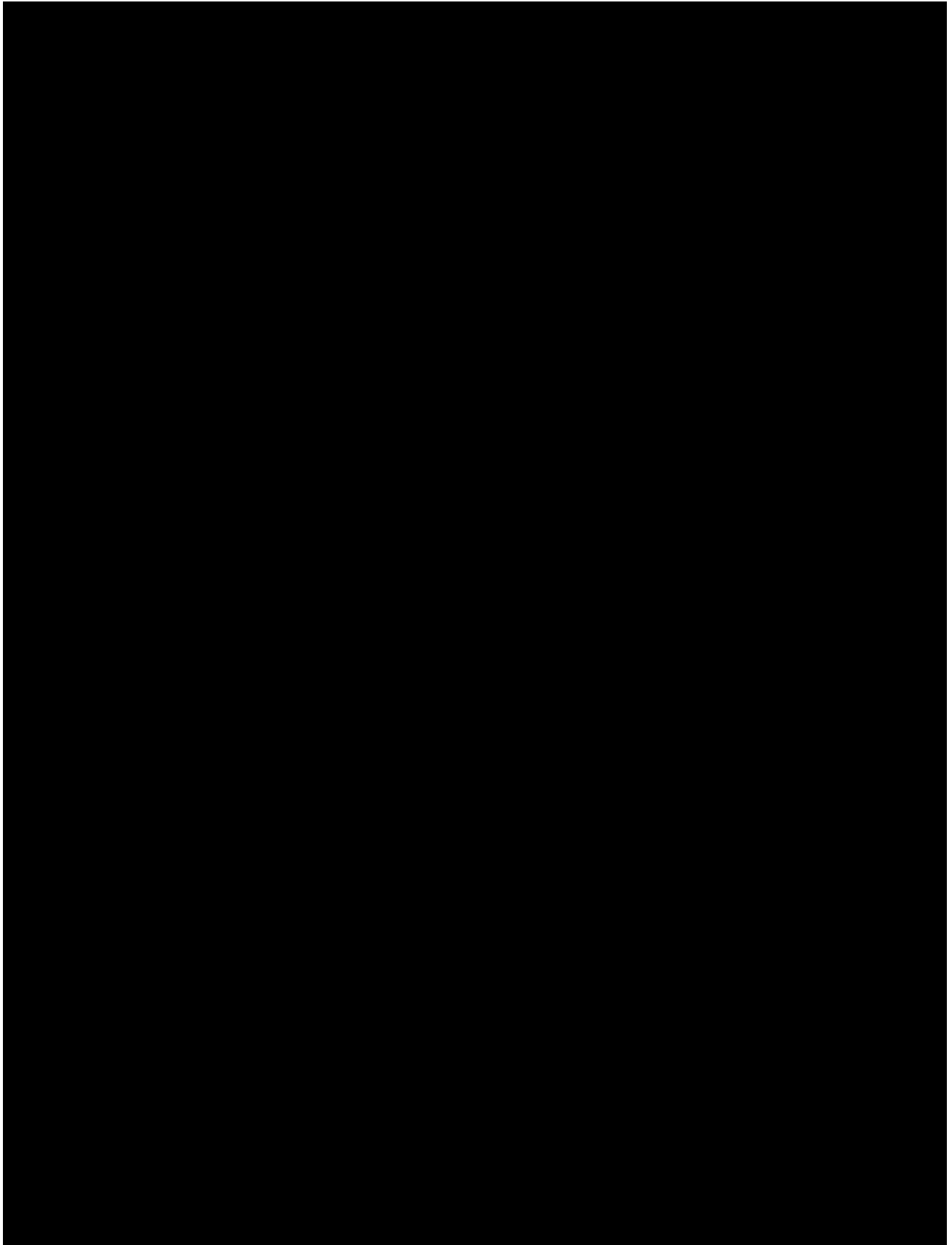
I deployed a range of recruitment strategies. I aimed for the principal participant group to contain various demographics, as I was sparked by Gill's (2021b) research that comprises participants from varying backgrounds and induces nuanced outputs on gender and body image. My social media circles yielded under 10 CS recipients, with the additional four recipients coming from my acquaintances' circles. I also recruited via a wide variety of public/private groups/pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LINE⁸ which are pertaining to my project (regarding beauty, gender, and education). Such pages/groups elicited 21 CS recipients (22 minus one who withdrew from the study a few days after partaking in this study without informing me of the reason). Some CS-related pages/groups and my social circles were beneficial in obtaining surgeon participants. I sought permission from these group/page administrators/moderators/members prior to recruiting participants in these spaces. This was followed by my recruitment poster distributions to these social media groups/pages (Appendix 3⁹). Snowball sampling yielded one recipient and one surgeon.

⁸ Established in Korea, LINE is a messenger app widely used in some East and Southeast Asian countries including Thailand (Muangtum, 2022).

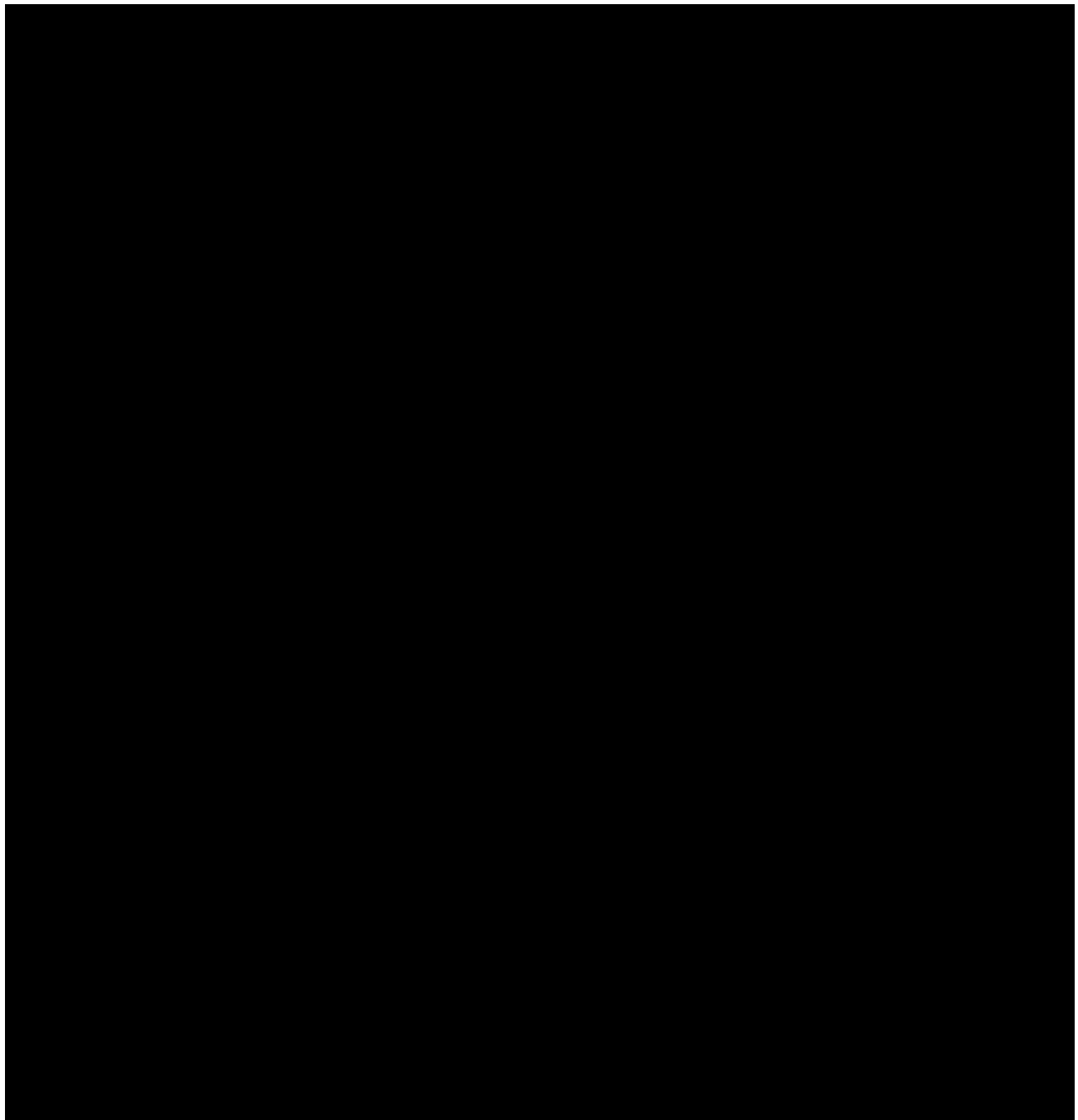
⁹ Regarding the major participant group, the version in appendix three was amended in accordance with the two aforementioned minor changes to increase the number of the interviewees. I created these recruitment posters on my own.

Saturation has been used as a decisive factor in terms of when to cease collecting data (Charmaz, 2006). An array of scholars (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2021b) critique the long-standing concept of data saturation on account of its relatively impractical guidance. I thus leaned towards the term “information power” (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2016, p. 1754). Coined based on one-to-one interview studies, “information power” (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2016, p. 1754) refers to adequate reliability around interview quality; participant coverage; theoretical framework(s); research aim(s); and analytical approaches (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2016, p. 1754). Originally, I anticipated a provisional number of 30 CS recipients and 5-10 Thai surgeons to be my participants. To justify this number, many qualitative feminist works have interviewed 15-60 participants (Budgeon, 2003; Gimlin, 2007; Dosekun, 2015b; Edgley, 2021). For instance, Budgeon’s (2000) study on women’s bodies and identities consists of one key participant group (33 young women) and one supplemental group (5 practitioners).

However, once having reached around 30 CS recipients, I started to realise I had not yet obtained “information power” (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2016, p. 1754) in the sense of conversation quality. I recognised that a handful of the interviews were not fully articulated with concerns to the recipients’ post-op lives. This slightly impinged upon my initial response to one of the research questions: what are young Thai women’s post-op experiences? Thus, I continued with the recruitment, whereby I contacted multiple individuals who publicly revealed their CS experiences via social media. This approach evoked a notable obstacle: one person who initially agreed to partake in this study blocked me on Instagram just before the scheduled time of the interview. Nevertheless, the approach overall worked well, having led to 15 participants; that concluded the recruitment for the major participant group. The final number of this participant group (50 CS recipients) is deemed relatively significant for qualitative studies and is therefore one



¹¹ An ethnic group originating in Myanmar.



¹² A Mon-Cambodian ethnic group.

¹³ A Cambodian ethnic group.

¹⁴ Ladyboy is defined as a feminine-presenting transgender individual. Given that one single word refers to both gender and sex in Thai language (Jackson, 2000, p. 416), there is always a possibility that some people mix up these two categories. In my study, this is exemplified by my dialogue with this participant only. When I asked whether she was transgender or not, she responded she was not trans but identified herself as a feminine-presenting ladyboy without gender confirmation surgery. I, however, chose to retain her self-description as a ladyboy throughout this thesis to be respectful of her self-identification.

In summary, 28 out of 50 CS recipients in my study reported having undergone one CS type, whereas the rest of them mentioned they went through multiple kinds of CS. As of my data collection, 38 out of 50 reported having had rhinoplasty (39 minus one who needed to have the implant removed consequently due to post-rhinoplasty allergy). The second and third most common procedures among the recipients are double eyelid surgery (19 participants) and breast augmentation surgery (13 participants). These details accord well with the statistical output that rhinoplasty, double eyelid surgery, and breast augmentation surgery have been the most sought-after in the country (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2020; 2021). Other procedures that the interviewees reported having undertaken varied considerably. These comprise chin augmentation surgery; liposuction; lip surgery; facial structure surgery; buccal fat removal; fat grafting; eye tip surgery; and facelift surgery. To ensure none of the recipients is identifiable, full details on 1) the type(s) of CS they undertook; 2) the year(s) CS was carried out were omitted from Table 1. However, the findings and discussion chapters outline several recipients' CS types in the manner that does not compromise their anonymity.

Based on Pew Research Center (Dimock, 2019), most of the recipients are regarded as millennials (in their mid-20s or 30s at the time of their participation), and the rest of them belong to generation Z. In other words, all of the recipients in my study came of age or grew up alongside the proliferation of the Internet (Dimock, 2019). This point is reflected in chapters five and six showcasing how the Internet facilitated these women to have CS. The professional backgrounds of the recipients are diverse as detailed in Table 1, and several of them self-described as students. Five of the CS recipients (pseudonyms: Erin, Gina, Ji, Pingpong, and Ying) informed me that they were part-time/full-time working mothers with childcare responsibilities. The recipients' provinces of origin varied greatly, covering the north and northeast to the west, east, and south of the country in addition to central Thailand including Bangkok. Nonetheless, despite my online participant

recruitment and data collection, 38 out of 50 CS recipients resided in either Bangkok or adjacent provinces around the time of the data collection. As written in chapter three, one can witness a profound dissonance between Bangkok/provinces nearby and the rest of the country with regards to affluence (Arvidsson and Niesson, 2015). Hence, this is one of the limitations of my study concerning socioeconomics which future research can hopefully fulfil.

When it comes to the supplementary participant group, all of the five surgeons in this project were all coincidentally men. I use the following pseudonyms to detail the surgeons' accounts: Dom, Jom, Min, Shin, and Van. Table 2 demonstrates the operations that these surgeons primarily performed for Thailand-based young Thai women.

Table 2 - The Surgeons' Main Expertise regarding Young Thai Women Patients

| Pseudonym | Bodily Procedures | Facial Procedures |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Doctor Dom | ✓ | ✓ |
| Doctor Jom | | ✓ |
| Doctor Min | | ✓ |
| Doctor Shin | | ✓ |
| Doctor Van | ✓ | |

All of these doctors mainly performed CS in Bangkok. This specific point, and the absence of women surgeons in the project, elicit two of the shortcomings of my study. Although most doctors practising CS in Thailand have been statistically men (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2021; 2022; 2023), this is still a limitation. Otherwise, women surgeons may have offered different perspectives on a broader picture of the Thai CS phenomenon given the gendered essence of beauty.

Going back to the major participant group, I accepted the recipients regardless of sexual orientation, as long as they identified themselves as women. This is because women's sexual orientation is not a major driving factor regarding the impacts on women from patriarchal beauty demands (Hill and Fischer, 2008). As for another crucial reason, gender is understood as performative (instead of deterministic) in poststructuralism which is my theoretical and analytical perspective. That is, gender is remade through our actions (Butler, 1988; 1990). As demonstrated in Table 1, three out of 50 recipients self-identified as transgender women, whereas one participant explicitly described herself as a ladyboy. The rest saw themselves as cisgender. Eight of the recipients described themselves as non-heterosexual (pansexual, bisexual, lesbian, and undecided). For the supplementary participant group (the CS surgeons), I did not ask their sexual orientation, because it is integral to neither the principal aim nor the research questions of my project.

I obtained a mixture concerning ethnic origin when it comes to the recipients. As presented in Table 1, 23 of them self-reported as 100% ethnically Thai; [number redacted] Thai and white Western; [redacted] Thai and Mon¹⁵; [redacted] Thai and Laotian; [redacted] fully Chinese; and [redacted] Vietnamese and Chinese. The rest self-identified as a mixture of Chinese and Thai, with a few also combining other Asian ethnicities like Vietnamese, Mon, Kui¹⁶, and Khmer¹⁷. In other words, over half of the CS recipients reported themselves as of partial/full Chinese lineage. Although Thailand is widely perceived as comparatively ethnically homogeneous (Käng, 2021, p. 276), it is still important to interrogate some potential nuances concerning ethnicity for a comprehensive analysis. Meanwhile, I did not query any of the surgeons regarding ethnic background, as it is relevant to neither the major aim nor the research questions of the study.

Initially, I intended to explore the recipients' CS accounts on the basis of class standing.

¹⁵ An ethnic group originating in Myanmar.

¹⁶ A Mon-Cambodian ethnic group.

¹⁷ A Cambodian ethnic group.

This is attributed to Dosekun's (2015a, p. 967) contention that non-Western women in each social class tend to have sharply varying degrees of postfeminist/individualistic identities as a result of their differing social privileges. My initial intent to focus on social class is also intertwined with Käng's (2021) longitudinal research that foregrounds the significance of socioeconomic backgrounds in Thai beauty regimes. On this basis, I asked the participants as to their average monthly income. Prior to the data collection, I was aware that this is a very personal question in general. To tackle this, I decided to offer pay brackets to alleviate the potential offensiveness of this specific query. Subsequently, all of the recipients kindly answered this question.

However, at the stage of data analysis, I found it tricky to define the class standings of the CS recipients. Social class in Thailand is principally concerned with income, education, and professions as well as family backgrounds and lifestyles (Hirunyato, 1988; Fayossy, 2015). As my data collection was cross-sectional and entirely online, I was hardly able to explore their lifestyles. Social class has been one of the most delicate characteristics in Thailand (Thongsawang, Rehbein, and Chantavanich, 2020). I thus decided to avoid thoroughly querying their family backgrounds or ask them to explicitly report their own social classes, otherwise it would have been deemed judgmental and inappropriate. For the same reason, I chose to avoid identifying their class standings on their behalf. To that end, I decided against the uptake of social class for analysing the participants' accounts, which is tied to the aforementioned "critical respect" (Gill, 2007a, p. 78) that accentuates the respectfulness to the researched as part of feminist solidarity. I can ensure my commitment to good research practice while treating the participants with care in line with feminist scholarship (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010).

Dosekun's (2020, p. 20) seminal study on postfeminist subjectivities in the Global South (Lagos, Nigeria) has adopted education for largely measuring her participants' class standings. Considering this, I treated the educational backgrounds of the CS recipients in my project as a

partial substitute for social class. As outlined in Table 1, 42 out of 50 recipients were conceived of as having educational capital at the time of their participation in the project, with regards to their postgraduate studies, overseas education, reputed educational institutions, and/or prestigious academic subjects. I understand educational capital as status that affects one's meaning-makings and is typically passed on to their families (Skeggs, 2002). Two of the recipients said they were studying medicine, the most prestigious subject to receive a degree in Thailand. 21 of these women reported having studied abroad. At large, being educated overseas is deemed significantly privileged in Thai society and is sometimes ascribed to their affluence (Käng, 2017, p. 186). Only one recipient, [pseudonym redacted], reported having not gone to the university level. On the whole, the CS recipients in my project have educational privileges, which is consistent with Dosekun's (2020) work on postfeminist selfhood in Nigeria.

In wider Thai society, CS has been popular among people in multiple (albeit not all) class standings. This is because a number of CS places offer affordable prices; for instance, double eyelid surgery for 5,000-7,000 Baht¹⁸ (approximately 112-157 GBP as of December 2023); and rhinoplasty and chin augmentation surgery for 8,000 Baht (approximately 180 GBP as of December 2023) (ThailandClinics, 2018). Hence, the recipients' overall educational privilege represents a limitation of my study, having hindered me from incorporating the category of education into summarising certain parts of the data. To clarify this, I have discovered a couple of the findings in which educational capital was relevant, but I cannot take them forward to the discussion and conclusion chapters. The make-up of this principal participant group had insufficient comparison between education-privileged individuals and those who were not deemed so. It would be unsuitable to draw conclusions stemming from this characteristic. Nevertheless, I have acquired profound insights into the context of my project, as evidenced in the findings chapters.

¹⁸ Thai currency.

4.4 Data Collection

No particular data collection method is intrinsically feminist (Letherby, 2003; Burns and Walker, 2005). Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be utilised in feminist research (Oakley, 2000). Nonetheless, feminist research is often value-bound/constituted with rich investigation, rather than value-free with general understandings and predictions (Griffin and Phoenix, 1994). With this in mind, I first intended to conduct face-to-face qualitative interviews. Yet, to alleviate some prospective risks of Covid-19 spread occurring from in-person fieldwork, I chose to carry out online interviews instead. The interviews took place between July 2021 and March 2022, and on average, they lasted approximately one hour. The shortest interview was around 30 mins, as requested by one of the recipients, Klee. However, Klee and I covered all of the key questions within the time limit. The longest one was nearly one hour 40 mins, with Lala who expressed her keen interest in CS and my project. She articulated most of her answers at length.

In simple terms:

Qualitative interviews give participants the opportunity to describe experiences in detail and to give their perspectives and interpretations of these experiences. The interviewer has the opportunity to discuss and explore with the participants and to probe more deeply into their accounts. (Taylor, 2005, p. 40)

To summarise Taylor's (2005) quote, qualitative interviews are understood as a form of social encounter in which the researched formulate their identities as they offer their voices and clarifications. This is evidenced in Davis's (1995) germinal feminist research on CS in the Netherlands, whereby interviewees, mostly women academics or professionals, have overall

provided their agentic identities away from the notion of cultural dupes when recounting their CS experiences. This data collection method is consistent with my ontological and epistemological positions, namely relativism (focusing on in-depth subjective accounts premised upon wider power dynamics) and constructionism (allowing the researcher to examine reflections and identities formed by the researched).

As Jia (2023, p. 119) points out, “the purpose of doing feminist research is not to interrogate participants for data, but to understand women’s experiences in a form of dialogue”. In parallel, the data collection of my project was dialogic. Specifically, the interviewees built their first-person narratives about their CS-related experiences while answering a wide range of my interview questions, through which they constructed their identities. The first part of the interviews on background information aided in building trust between the participants and me. In tune with Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill’s (2019) words, the mutual rapport was strengthened as the interviews unfolded, which resulted in most of the participants providing me with their in-depth CS accounts. Rapport formation is incredibly vital in my project, since interviews on controversial and invasive practices like CS are thought of as difficult conversations (Davis, 2023). In feminist scholarship, Ryan-Flood, Crowhurst, and James-Hawkins (2023) underscore the physically and mentally draining essence of one’s engagement with difficult conversations which involve attentive listening and thoughtful considerations of one’s positionality. As Phoenix (2023) argues, such dialogues have tackled various social issues including gendered injustice, thereby being crucial for data collection. In retrospect, Phoenix’s (2023) contention echoes my endeavour to conduct the interviews rigorously as a jumping-off point towards greater social justice, as expounded in this section.

A number of seminal feminist works on CS in the West (Braun, 2005; 2009; Gimlin, 2007; Coffey, 2013) have chosen the semi-structured interview format. Semi-structured interviews refer to

posing pre-set questions, whilst also going with the flow and incorporating impromptu queries (Robson, 2011, p. 280). To justify my choice of the semi-structured format as opposed to structured and unstructured approaches, pre-determined questions generally prevent researchers from going off-topic. The semi-structured format also allows researchers to query something based on elements that interviewees bring up (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995; Mason, 2002). This interview format proved to be the best fit for my study, because it helped me ensure none of the participants went off topic while articulating their experiences and thoughts. Likewise, the semi-structured interviews were useful for me to probe the participants with regards to their practical drivers and motives for CS and their post-op lives. To illustrate, when Pa noted her family's interest in Chinese physiognomy (*Ngo Heng* in Thai), I queried her if she had this interest as well. Pa provided me with a thought-provoking answer to this question, as explicated in chapter six.

Regarding my choice against other alternative methods of data collection, certainly, asynchronous online interviewing allows individuals to deliberate their answers before sending a message (Kanayama, 2003; Kivits, 2005). Yet, synchronous online interviews usually yield more dynamic and interactive dialogues in comparison to asynchronous ones (Stewart and William, 2005). Synchronous virtual interviewing is thus more suited for me to explore the participants' identity construction. As noted above, one cornerstone of my project covers the identity formation of young Thai women while rationalising their actions and making sense of their CS experiences in the interviews. As Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) proffer, focus groups, namely conversations that comprise multiple interviewees questioning and discussing with one another, can lead to collective agreements and disagreements on specific topics in ways that interviews typically cannot. I, nonetheless, claim that focus groups would be inappropriate for my project, the reason being the social stigma around CS in Thailand despite its prevalence in the country. Otherwise, some would have been reluctant to reveal certain details about their CS experiences in the focus groups.

Abductive reasoning allowed me to integrate feminist theory, which is the theoretical framework, into the development of the pre-set interview questions. I framed these questions on the basis of the existing literature (chapters two and three as well as the first half of chapter one). More precisely, the pre-determined interview questions for asking the CS recipients were informed by the extant feminist literature, i.e. “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), “the new sexual contract” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54), surveillance from men and women, and the roles of the media in shaping women’s self-beautification. These interview questions were also influenced by scholarly works related to preferred beauty styles and Thai society. The pre-set interview questions for querying the surgeon participants just slightly differ in that they were also linked to the inclusive trajectory of postfeminism as written in chapter two, with the intention to explore how their young Thai women patients’ CS rationalisations were distinct based upon social characteristics like class, profession, and ethnic background.

Having adopted abductive logic of inquiry, I was able to slightly amend the content and order of the pre-set interview questions as I collected the data, in ways that did not affect the ethical dimension of my study. Firstly, I formulated a few additional interview questions linking in with my existing questions to help me gain a richer understanding of CS among Thais. To illustrate, for asking the CS recipients, in conjunction with the questions of whether they think CS is popular in Thailand, and why/why not?, I added the question of why they chose to undergo CS in Thailand as opposed to other countries like Korea (or vice versa). This aided me in exploring part of their practical drivers for undertaking CS, given the generally higher costs of CS in Korea compared to Thailand (Tiemlom, 2018, p. 104). The pertinent findings are outlined in chapter five. Secondly, because there were a wide range of pre-determined questions for the recipients, I modified the order to have my priority interview questions at the beginning and the middle to ensure coverage of all of the key questions within a constrained interview time. The final version of the pre-set interview

questions is demonstrated in the interview topic guides and schedules for both participant groups (Appendix 4).

Each participant attended one Zoom interview. According to Archibald, *et al.* (2019, p. 1), interviewing via this videoconferencing platform, notwithstanding possible technical issues, can be deemed more desirable than Skype and in-person interviewing. This is on the grounds of Zoom's user-friendliness and effectiveness concerning time and cost (Archibald, *et al.*, 2019, p. 4). Congruent with such time/cost effectiveness, this Zoom method helped me acquire a relatively large number of participants. In chorus with sensitive research topics, online interviewing also enables participants to sit in settings where they feel entirely comfortable (Jenner and Myers, 2019). In my data collection, all of the participants selected private spaces for the interviews, i.e. their homes or offices. Conversely, if I had carried out in-person interviews, a number of the participants may have selected public locations where they felt more at ease to be alone with me. Public settings can be interrupting and may yield a multitude of socially acceptable interview responses rather than actual thoughts (Jenner and Myers, 2019; Jia, 2023). Hence, my use of Zoom for conducting the interviews is a methodological contribution of my project. This contribution can hopefully inspire academics who research sensitive subject matters and aim for a sizeable pool of interviewees.

I sought to ensure my commitment to good research practice throughout the data collection. My feminist research practice was informed by the notion of "critical respect" (Gill, 2007a, p. 78) that foregrounds the act of listening attentively whilst simultaneously probing critically. The main ways I followed this notion while collecting the data are two-fold. **First**, I prioritised my participants' voices and tried to avoid dominating the conversations, because this is generally deemed as a desired practice for carrying out research (Vähäsantanen and Saarinen, 2013). That is, when a few of the participants provided yes/no answers to the questions that require extended answers, I probed them by inquiring along the lines of *why do you think this is?* or *how?* to explore

in-depth explanations from the interviewees (Bryman, 2012). **Second**, given the pandemic when most people have been particularly vulnerable, in each of the interviews I was constantly attentive to my word choice when posing the interview questions to avoid triggering trauma. For example, after the first few interviews, I realised that in place of using the word ‘sexual orientation’, I should frame the question like *which sex/gender are you attracted to in terms of love?* to preclude any potentially offended feeling from the question being overly direct.

Retaining good rapport with the researched is one of the major principles for feminist thinkers to fortify feminist solidarity (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). During the data collection, I put my utmost in forming effective rapport with the participants in multiple ways. **First**, I was extra vigilant about answering their personal questions to me in ways that did not affect their interview responses, whilst striving for maintaining good rapport with them. As written in the participant information sheets (Appendix 1¹⁹), I initially intended to answer all questions from the interviewees at the end of the interviews. In practice, however, this approach proved challenging in some of the interviews, as it is human instinct that people interact in a reciprocal manner. Therefore, I chose, at my own discretion, which questions to respond to and when, depending upon whether each of the queries would potentially change their interview responses. For instance, Rung asked me if I had rhinoplasty, which makes sense considering the topic of this study. To keep my positionality on CS at bay in the interview, I told Rung that I would turn to this question after the interview.

Second, studies (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Archibald, *et al.*, 2019) posit that the gestures and facial expressions of the interviewer undergird trust and rapport with participants, increasing interviewees’ relaxed feelings to share their personal narratives and opinions. Correspondingly, I chose to turn on my camera throughout the interviews for rapport boosting,

¹⁹ For the primary participant group, the Thai version in appendix one is the final one. Before the aforementioned alterations in the participants’ age range and the spatial scope of their CS procedures, the previous Thai version was sent out to a handful of the interviewees. The difference between these two versions centres around such alterations.

having consistently nodded to show my interests or acknowledgement in their viewpoints and CS experiences. I, nevertheless, allowed the participants to decide on whether or not to turn the camera on, to ensure they felt comfortable during the interviews. It turned out that a number of the interviewees chose to have the camera off. This led to a limitation on analysing their facial expressions and thus posed a challenge for examining their identity construction. In this respect, I noticed that I was more prone to unintentionally overtalk the participants who chose to turn off the camera than those who turned it on. Yet, the camera-off option slightly increased the number of my participants, as a few of them had clearly stated before or around the time they agreed to participate in the project that they preferred not to show their faces via the camera during the interviews. Moreover, I was still able to detect their chuckles/laughs and tones while investigating their identity formation.

With reference to the linguistic facet of carrying out this project, I manually transcribed the interview data verbatim and translated the quotes used in the body of the thesis from Thai to English. To justify my choice of verbatim transcription, this approach of transcribing interviews proves useful for exploring interactions and identity building (Briggs, 1986). I acknowledged the linguistic differences that became a barrier to literally translate into English. For a greater understanding of the interview data, I linguistically fulfilled specific quotes as appropriate in square brackets. For the same reason, I also put the recipients' pseudonyms and age brackets at the time of the interviews in parenthesis straight after each quote. These additions are noticeable in chapters five, six, and seven.

4.5 Data Analysis

Through the NVivo software, I performed a thematic analysis (henceforth TA) (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to parse the interview data. NVivo is normally useful for carrying out a TA of

interview transcripts, since it efficiently facilitates coding into specific (sub)themes by virtue of its straightforward interface and capacity to store large-size data (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Different from other TA techniques (Boyatzis, 1998; Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, 2012), the guideline offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) is, akin to my study, geared towards the more interpretivist side of the positivist-interpretivist continuum. In chorus with interpretivism, my project attends to subjective findings in place of objective facts.

TA should not be considered as a single method, but instead as an umbrella term having multiple versions (Braun and Clarke, 2021a, p. 333). These versions are located in a spectrum based on flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). Precisely, coding reliability TA is the most structured, reflexive TA is the most organic, and codebook TA sits in the middle (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). At first, I oscillated between codebook TA and reflexive TA, because both are situated within the qualitative paradigm and endorse researchers' subjectivities in keeping with poststructuralism (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). I ended up selecting codebook TA, given that reflexive TA involves analysing data with no coding framework. As articulated, this thesis delves into the CS accounts of young Thai women through the lens of feminist theory. Therefore, it would be more systematic to investigate my data with a coding framework or early (sub)theme development based primarily upon the feminist theoretical framework. At the same time, I organically constructed some other (sub)themes predicated on dominant codes in the data.

In addition to its systematic nature, codebook TA has some other advantages, one of which appertains to its theoretical flexibility. Researchers can integrate multiple theories and/or insights into the analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Poststructuralism is closely connected with discourses that entail individuals' ways of acting and speaking about a topic²⁰ (Foucault, 1978b; Hall, 2001).

²⁰ Discourses are tied up with the concepts of 'power' and 'knowledge' within the poststructuralist tradition, in that "[power] induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 119).

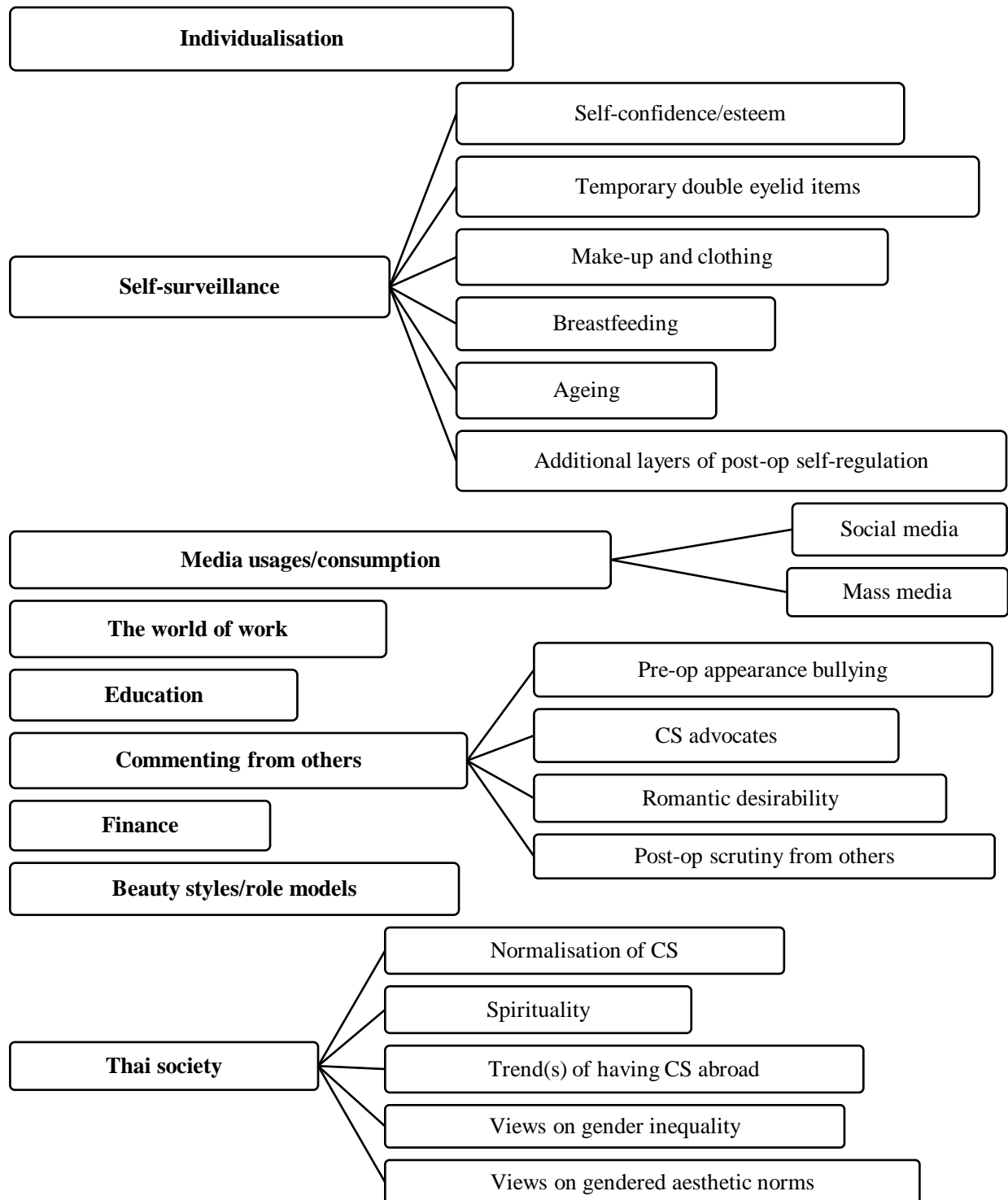
Thus, codebook TA aided me in exploring several discourses embedded within the participants' accounts, but also broader elements beyond such discourses. These discourses, e.g. postfeminist preference for optimistic expressions (Gill, 2017, p. 610), resulted in me examining the recipients' CS-related identities formulated during the interviews. Such identities are summarised in chapter eight. Another benefit of codebook TA is its appropriateness for large-size data (King, 2012), which facilitated my coding process with the overall lengthy interview transcripts. To be sure, codebook TA can cause the possible pitfall of carrying out underdeveloped analyses given the early construction of some (sub)themes (Connelly and Peltzer, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2022). Nonetheless, in line with my abductive reasoning, I addressed this potential drawback by being invariably open to emerging (sub)themes and removing certain pre-set (sub)themes during the coding phase, as detailed below.

I began my data analysis with data familiarisation via my interview transcription and my constant listening of the interview recordings, with the intention to identify the data pattern (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Concurrently, I created my coding framework premised upon the extant feminist literature and academic works on aesthetic styles and Thai society, i.e. in a similar way to how the pre-set interview questions were framed. Afterwards, in tandem with my coding stage, I added certain (sub)themes according to the data. To illustrate, the theme 'finance' was not formed in the coding framework, but it was later organically created given its moderate prominence in the data. The subthemes 'temporary double eyelid items', 'breastfeeding', 'ageing', 'additional layers of post-op self-regulation', 'CS advocates', 'romantic desirability', and 'spirituality' were also organically constructed, considering their influences in the recipients' CS accounts.

A couple of the (sub)themes I formulated in the coding framework were disregarded later on. First, the theme 'beauty and fashion' that stemmed from "the new sexual contract" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54) was deleted, as too much of the data would have potentially been coded under this

theme. In other words, it turned to be an overly broad theme and could be applied to most of my data. I thus mapped this data onto a range of other (sub)themes instead. Second, I recognised the subtheme ‘views on feminism’ can no longer be used, since I was able to query only 16 out of 50 recipients with regards to their opinions on feminism because of the interview time constraints. Ultimately, I finetuned a handful of the (sub)themes by changing their names to reflect the codes within them (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The final coding outcome is presented in Figure 1 on the next page, with the themes being highlighted in bold. The themes and subthemes shown in this figure reflect the content in chapters five, six, and seven.

Figure 1 - Final Coding Outcome



4.6 Power Dynamics in the Research Process

As mentioned, constructionist epistemology in my study is bound up with feminism, thereby involving thoughtful considerations of the researcher-participant power workings. As Oakley (1981), Westmarland (2001), and Ryan-Flood and Gill (2010) highlight, feminist scholars ought to reflexively take heed of their power relations with participants, with the goal of heightening feminist solidarity. One of the cores of poststructuralism relates to the significance of illuminating marginalised voices (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). Both most of my participants and I are Global South women, whose dialogues have been underexplored by feminist theorists in the West. With these in mind, mitigating the power gap between the researched and me was integral for this thesis, to ensure the absence of exploiting Global South women alike. Power relations are inherently uneven during writing-up, given that researchers have to choose certain details of their data to be presented in the body of their written works (Ryan-Flood, 2003, p. 102; 2010, p. 190). Therefore, it was vital for me to strive for balancing power dynamics with the researched to my capacity.

Concerning the CS recipients in my project, I have taken the middle ground with respect to the insider-outsider spectrum. That is, I have mainly resided in the UK over the course of my PhD project and have not undergone CS (outsider). However, I am a woman who has been familiar with Thai society and visibly fall under the same age range as the recipients (21-39 years old) (insider). This middle-ground position was beneficial for my data collection. To justify this, my insider dimension entailed my adequate insights into Thai society and allowed many of the participants to willingly articulate their thoughts and narratives during the interviews, which technically minimised power imbalances between me and the interviewees (Oakley, 1981). Before the interview, one of the recipients explicitly said that she would feel relaxed once I told her I would be the only interviewer. In turn, she, as well as most of the recipients, offered their detailed CS accounts during the interviews.

Meanwhile, my outsider dimension was of some help. It prompted some of the participants to provide me with extra explanations on the current situations in Thailand. To illustrate, Clara elaborated upon Thai university culture in the interview, as she was aware of my university experiences abroad. Furthermore, straight after the interviews, several recipients asked me some questions about overseas education due to their pertinent interests, which turned to be enjoyable conversations. The usefulness of my outsider dimension contradicts Rose's (1997) assertion that the outsider facet usually elicits further distances. In my research, such outsider-ness enriched data gathering and rapport formation between me and the interviewees. Although my appearance inevitably gave away my East Asian ethnic background (redacted), over half of the recipients reported themselves as partial/fully ethnically Chinese. Additionally, Thailand is often believed as having relatively little ethnic disparities as written in chapter three (Käng, 2021, p. 276). My look was thus not an issue in the research process. Yet, inspired by Ma (2022, p. 565) who explores beauty regimes in China, I set out to serve as a welcoming researcher to all of the recipients, in order to compromise my privilege of pursuing a PhD degree in the West.

For the surgeon participants, as indicated earlier, I did not query the surgeons' ages and ethnic origins due to their irrelevance to the research questions and aim, but all of them were coincidentally men. Oakley (1981) underscores the importance of considering the effects of gender in the research process. In view of larger gender inequality in Thailand, I slightly felt such an effect in the periods between their agreement to partake in the project and the interviews. I prepared myself to be as respectful as possible prior to each interview with the surgeons. However, their prestigious occupation in the country and their high educational status as former medical students are comparable to my educational privilege of being a PhD candidate in the West. This supposedly alleviated intrinsic power asymmetry between me and the practitioners. My data collection with the surgeons ended up being relaxing, because of 1) such undermined power differentials; 2) the

interview content centring around their patients' CS and general information on CS. I did not ask if the surgeons had CS themselves, meaning the sensitive essence of CS in Thailand is less tied to my dialogues with the surgeons compared to those with the recipients.

Returning to the foregoing point on intrinsically uneven power dynamics between the researcher and the researched in the writing-up stage (Ryan-Flood, 2003; 2010), the participants were offered several options to articulate additional details/thoughts. These options include 1) making some minor amendments, such as adding an example, to their interview transcripts; 2) expressing their final notes at the end of the interviews. The former option aided me in ensuring the confirmability and credibility of the data. Where none of the participants requested transcript alterations, a number of them gave their final notes when the interviews were about to finish. Some of these notes turned out to be integral to my analysis, especially ones on their attitudes towards CS.

I encountered multiple dilemmas with concerns to data presentation in the thesis. As a researcher, I have the power to determine the data inclusions and omissions in this thesis (Gill and Ryan-Flood, 2008, p. 382). The first relevant dilemma revolves around my need to put aside several parts of the data that are not pertaining to the research questions. The examples of such erasures are 1) the recipients' idealised beauty role models and styles after their CS procedures; 2) CS tourism from abroad to Thailand based on the surgeons' experiences. I hope such erasures can be integrated into potential future publication(s)/presentation(s). Secondly, I noticed that the extent to which the participants expanded on their thoughts and accounts varied considerably, and some of the accounts were deemed more elaborate than the others. I coped with this dilemma by showcasing the accounts provided by all of the participants in the thesis, and I tried to achieve a balanced presentation of such accounts as best as I could.

4.7 Personal Reflections

This section is concerned with my personal experiences, my feminist standpoint, and my vulnerability, all of which framed my potential future research trajectories. Feminist standpoints allow researchers to utilise their feminist identities and profound awareness of gendered repression to unmask women's experiences (Harding, 1987; Smith, 1997). To be further reflexive, I took a feminist standpoint to detect androcentric viewpoints based on the CS narratives of young Thai women. A feminist standpoint can be employed alongside poststructuralism while utilising feminist theory to decipher sociocultural phenomena (Hirschmann, 1997), for investigating various micro/macro repercussions of gendered power relations. Vulnerability is a subject of focus in feminist scholarship that refers to researchers' shared vulnerable feelings with the researched (Page, 2017). I mapped the communal sense of vulnerability between the participants and myself onto Ahmed's (2015) suggestion that vulnerability that researchers share with the researched can induce concrete forms of feminist resistance against social injustice. My vulnerability rested primarily on both gender and ethnicity, which is the cornerstone of this section.

In respect of gender, since my past experience of undertaking cosmetic dentistry, I have been critical of what poststructuralist scholars have long disputed: the use of natural differences between men and women to sustain the gendered status quo. In my childhood and teenage life, my mother constantly encouraged me to perfect my look through chin augmentation surgery, considering my small original chin that impeded me to smile properly. Consequently, with the beauty influence of many good-looking women students in my aforementioned high school, I chose to have orthodontics to change my facial structure instead on account of its less invasive nature. The crux of this story relates to my mother's words straight before my orthodontics that women need to look particularly attractive – men do not need as such due to their naturally stronger physiques. Clearly, this story is entangled with the status quo induced by essentialist distinctions between men

and women. Where men are traditionally likened to physical strength (Frost, 2003), women are conventionally associated with beauty consumption (Autio, *et al.*, 2013). As such, my orthodontics experience has been one of the main components that evoked my thinking of beauty as patriarchal and demanding.

The above anecdote was the point of departure for my self-description as a poststructuralist feminist, which brought me to make a foray into feminist lexicon including postfeminism or “gendered neoliberalism” (Gill, 2017, p. 620). This entailed my uptake of a feminist standpoint in this study. Having benefited from this standpoint, I realised my gender-based vulnerability came into being in the difficult conversations with some of the recipients. Riley and Scharff (2012), as written in chapter two, uncover strong aesthetic demands facing feminist scholars, with which I wholeheartedly resonated. In effect, I internally strongly related to the women participants who conceived of CS as a confidence/esteem booster, since my orthodontics resulted in a surge of my self-esteem and self-confidence regarding job applications. Indeed, most women have been complicit in gendered beauty norms, but also the inextricable links between the mind and the body (Gill, 2017). This shared sense of vulnerability sparked me to explore an array of beauty phenomena while drawing upon feminist theory in the future, with the goal of demanding higher social justice.

Whilst adopting a feminist standpoint, my positionality on beauty regimes has slightly altered since the beginning of the data collection. Having investigated several narratives on double eyelid surgery, I recognised that double eyelid surgery can be perceived as less invasive than orthodontics with which I had engaged. Subsequently, I have overcome confirmation bias by attending to some of the accounts that deflected the risky nature of CS. I have become less critical of CS compared to the pre-interview period. Nevertheless, my understanding of aesthetic culture as demanding remains unchanged, given an all-encompassing range of sociocultural influences in the

recipients' motives for having CS, as written in chapter six. I took a critical stance to articulate my findings without disparaging the participants in any way. This practice adheres to Gill's (2007a, p. 78) notion of "critical respect" that, as aforementioned, highly values the respectfulness to the researched whilst retaining criticality, encouraging academic thinkers to rigorously dig into social inequalities. As Widdows (2022b, p. 17) argues, a way forward is not to blame individuals with regards to their aesthetic modifications, but to create a culture with less blame and lower levels of beauty demands.

Turning to my vulnerability pertinent to ethnicity, I am a cisgender heterosexual woman of East Asian (redacted) descent who grew up in Southeast Asia (Bangkok, Thailand). Having visited an array of Western countries since my childhood, I have long been cognisant of wider ethnic discrimination against ethnically East and Southeast Asians in the West (Nishimuta, 2008). I have experienced such discrimination, notably during my postgraduate journey in the UK. One of the pressing issues within the UK entertainment industry relates to the scarcity and stereotypical portrayals of ethnically East and Southeast Asian celebrities (Cheung, 2018). Consequently, when a multitude of the participants underscored their efforts to fully fit into beauty standards in Thailand, I internally resonated with them. Their accounts were reminiscent of my frustrated feelings with the paucity of celebrities of East and Southeast Asian heritage, but also ethnic discrimination against this community in the UK.

Such frustration is affixed to what Collins (1986, p. S14) develops as "outsider-within" as part of feminist lexicon. It refers to "situational identities that are attached to specific histories of social injustice – they are not a decontextualised identity category divorced from historical social inequalities that can be assumed by anyone at will" (Collins, 1999, p. 86). Indeed, part of the ethnically East and Southeast Asian community has been pigeonholed as a socioeconomically privileged group in the UK (Yeh, 2020, para. 8). Hence, racism encountered by this ethnic

community has often gone under the radar or has been conflated with Chineseness in UK society (Yeh, 2020, para. 8). My pertinence to “outsider-within” (Collins, 1986, p. S14) ignited my research interest concerning East and Southeast Asian feminist solidarity in the West. It is fascinating how the difficult conversations regarding CS with my interviewees evoked a prospective set of such conversations on another social issue. I hope all of these dialogues will be valuable for bringing about social changes, as have a range of difficult conversations been up until present (Phoenix, 2023).

4.8 Ethical Considerations

My study abides by the University Code of Practice for Research (University of Birmingham, 2021). The ethics approval from the University was prerequisite, given that the project involves human subjects. After the ethics approval (ERN_21-0222), I sent the Thai versions of both the participant information sheets (Appendix 1) and the consent forms (Appendix 2) to those who seemed interested in participating in this study. These documents broadly contain the general information of my project; confidentiality; anonymity; the participants’ rights in the study; the findings dissemination; and the potential risks and benefits of partaking in this project. Having followed advice from the University ethics committee, I offered a minimum of four days between the participants receiving the consent form and the information sheet and partaking in the study, to make sure they had time to make informed decisions.

The participants’ consent was granted by the beginning of the interviews. I chose to accept their consent in signature/written name/oral forms to be inclusive. This is because signing a consent form can be seen as very formal and can put some people off from partaking in the research (Bryman, 2016, p. 131; Jia, 2023, p. 116). Around half of the participants offered their signatures in the consent forms. Similarly, in the information sheets distributed to the participants prior to the

interviews, I wrote that video recording was preferred owing to the ability to see each other's non-verbal communication, but audio recording was also acceptable. Nonetheless, the interviews were either audio- or video-recorded via Zoom with their consent, ultimately in accordance with the participants' preferences. A greater number of the interviewees selected the audio-recording option.

All of the interviewees were able to leave this study without informing me of the reason, up to six weeks after their interviews. The outcome was that only one interviewee in the primary participant group withdrew from the project following the interview without telling me the reason. I then deleted the data about this particular interviewee. One minor change concerning confidentiality was made amidst the interview phase, but it did not affect the ethical aspect of the study. That is, in the participant information sheets, I outlined that I would treat translated data in the same way as transcribed and analysed data. However, after translating one of the transcripts, I saw no particular benefit of translating every word from the interviewees. I then deleted that specific translated transcript and translated only the quotes I wished to include in the thesis drafts.

Because of the difficult conversations in the fieldwork, it is no surprise this study involves potential risks. **First**, in view of the sensitive nature of CS, I foresaw the likelihood of the interviews to be emotionally intense for some of the CS recipients. To minimise this potential risk, not only did I indicate this possible aftermath on the consent form and the participant information sheet, but I also noted a source of specialised emotional support in the information sheet. The interviewees were also allowed to refuse to answer certain questions that they felt uncomfortable with throughout their interviews. However, as I realised at the outset of the data collection, I needed to think of a viable solution for the scenario in which an interviewee was in tears during the fieldwork. Notably, I acknowledged the possibility for the participants who self-described as non-heterosexual, transgender, or a ladyboy to have faced homophobic comments from their families (Ryan-Flood, 2014). As I was also aware, the collective fight of young Thai generations against

gendered injustice, noted in chapter three, covers their demand for same-sex marriage in the country, but they encountered a push-back from the Thai authoritarian regime (Buranajaroenkij, 2023).

Hence, I set out the following: if any of the participants had become emotional, I would have highlighted my intention to use this PhD project as a vehicle for reducing gendered disparities. In turn, during the interviews with the participants who self-reported as LGBTQ+, I felt uneasy while posing the questions regarding their families or their views on gender inequality. Nevertheless, none of the participants in my study became teary in the fieldwork; all of the interviews went well and ended with a positive atmosphere. My above uneasy feeling reflects Davis's (2023) claim that uneasiness can be treated as worthy of critical feminist exploration related to delicate topics, for the purpose of continuing challenging social injustice. Indeed, as a LGBTQ+ ally, I enjoyed listening to the CS accounts of every self-identified LGBTQ+ participant, most of whom thoroughly articulated their CS experiences.

The **second** possible risk of my study is concerned with the emotional impact of the interviews on myself. As Elmir, *et al.* (2011) point out, researching a delicate topic can engender emotional trauma during the research process. Relatedly, the data analysis did weigh on my emotional wellbeing. It traced me back to my traumatic childhood memories about body image which previously made me contemplate having chin augmentation surgery as aforementioned. To alleviate my emotional trauma, in addition to consulting with my supervisors, I took inspiration from several interviews to watch the videos of Asian-American/British YouTubers in my down time (with some cautions on their brand sponsorships in mind). This approach aided me in feeling aesthetically connected whilst negotiating with my "outsider-within" (Collins, 1986, p. S14) identity. I resonated with Kim's (2021, p. 1159) claim that Asian-American women YouTubers ignite a sense of belonging for Asian audiences to overcome appearance-based insecurities caused

by racial bias and stereotyping.

Arguably, the following possible benefits of this research significantly outweigh its above-mentioned potential risks. **First**, whilst there was no compensation, whether financial or non-financial, from partaking in the project, the interviews can be deemed therapeutic for a number of the CS recipients. In feminist research, not only can interviews be an opportunity for participants to thoroughly reflect upon various events and to unburden themselves, but they can also lead to positive life changes (Opie, 1992; Skeggs, 1994; Oakley, 2016; Connell, 2018). As Olson and Shopes (1991, p. 197) state from a feminist perspective, interviewees are to be “heard, to air grievances, to work over and perhaps seek reassurances for certain decisions, and, yes, to complain”. Relatedly, when I expressed my gratitude for attending the interview, one of the CS recipients thanked me back and added that this study prompted her to reflect on herself.

Second, this project can be inspirational for a range of academics. Transferability (Lewis, *et al.*, 2014), in place of generalisability to the larger population, is applicable to this study. Precisely, some readers can methodologically explore the context, participant recruitment, and data collection and analysis of my project and choose to follow some of these elements. These readers, though, should be sensitive to their own research settings, as well as power imbalances between them and their participants (Yardley, 2000). Theoretically and conceptually, scholars with interests in gender issues and body can investigate gender relations and postfeminist materialisations within this given Thai CS locale. I hope the recipients’ CS accounts, comprising a wide array of motives for undertaking CS and post-op lives, can stimulate fruitful discussions amongst sociologists and beyond. To that end, my study can potentially fuel a variety of academics to unravel other aesthetic practices, such as non-surgical beauty practices like Botox and body hair removal, in many Asian/non-Asian contexts.

Third, to date, scholars have mostly treated issues around aesthetics as minor (Widdows,

2018b, p. 1), yet Widdows (2018b) accentuates the urgency of beauty-related problems which deserves more attention in the policy domain. Kristensen (2023) suggests policies around body image can be part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as regards gender equality and good wellbeing and health. Indeed, beauty ideals can lead to short- and long-term physical and mental problems (Widdows, 2018b; 2020), and aesthetics is gendered in Thailand (Van Esterik, 2000; Singhakowinta, 2014). Given this, my study could be of benefit for macro-level policymakers to take more account of how Thai society can positively progress in relation to body image. Kristensen (2023) weaves appearance bullying into the SDGs, which dovetails with my data where body shaming was evident. The concluding chapter spells out this specific benefit with reference to the overall finding of this thesis.

Chapter Summary

Having consulted with the literature on social research, feminism, and beauty, this chapter articulated the methodological choices of my study. In the chapter, I laid out research philosophy; participant recruitment and information; data collection and analysis; power relations; personal reflections; and ethical considerations. I also showed how the potential benefits of this project significantly weigh over its possible risks.

In essence, this study relies on relativist ontology, feminist constructionist epistemology, and a poststructuralist theoretical and analytical perspective. After conducting semi-structured in-depth Zoom interviews with young Thai women and Thai cosmetic surgeons (55 participants in total), I performed a codebook TA to explore the data. My use of Zoom for carrying out the interviews on a delicate research topic is the methodological contribution of my project. I employed an abductive approach over the courses of the data collection and analysis. I consistently reflected on the inevitable power differentials between me and the researched and attempted to alleviate such

imbalances, as this is one of the methodological foci of feminist scholarship. This chapter also displayed how I embraced the feminist notion of “critical respect” (Gill, 2007a, p. 78) by inquiring my participants in a critical yet respectful manner and considering silences. Above all, at variance with objectivity and universalism, my project aids in decolonising feminist scholarship by interrogating Thai women’s reflective accounts, as made clear henceforth in this thesis.

Chapter 5 – Practical Considerations on Cosmetic Surgery: How, Where, and What Styles

Chapters five to seven are the findings chapters drawing on the data of this project. These chapters set out to accomplish the principal aim of this thesis: to critically examine young Thai women's reflective CS accounts using feminist theory as the theoretical framework. Chapter five sets the scene regarding the first research question: what informs young Thai women's decisions to undergo CS? The chapter showcases practical drivers for CS surrounding CS payments; markedly high CS costs; particular places to undergo CS; and beauty styles for the operations.

Subsequently, this chapter puts forward the central argument that postfeminism, or modest reifications of patriarchy, markedly underpinned the recipients' practical drivers for CS. To unpack this argument, the recipients overall exercised their agentic power, by self-financing their CS; and/or thoroughly self-researching specific places to have CS to be assured of CS quality. These actions allude to women's subjectification through beauty patriarchy; in other words, muted forms of patriarchy actively embodied by the participants with the goal of improving their own looks. Another cornerstone of this argument appertains to the great influence of their mothers in such financing. This influence presents subtle manifestations of patriarchy in the form of supportive motherhood aligned with gendered beauty demands.

5.1 CS Payments

This section explores the recipients' narratives about who and what contributed to the CS payments. Half of the recipients reported having entirely spent their own money for CS. They exercised their agentic power concerning self-financing CS in keeping with the postfeminist feature of women's individualisation (Gill, 2007c). As Baker (2010, p. 190) points out, contemporary women are lured into the mantra of independence while disavowing any firm sense of victimhood.

Meanwhile, a few received partial financial CS support from their men partners or families (mainly mothers and fathers), with a rather even proportion between men and women. A number of the CS recipients were fully financially supported to undergo CS by their loved ones, i.e. men partners and families (mothers in most cases). The relatively high involvement of their mothers in such CS payments depicts supportive motherhood and reifications of patriarchy in conformity with desirable versions of body image. This is attributed to the conventional perception that women are primary beauty consumers (Autio, *et al.*, 2013), which led to their mothers' subjectification through beauty patriarchy (Gill, 2017).

Based upon the overall interview data from the surgeon participants, students were more prone to be financially supported by their parents for the operations compared to their non-student counterparts. This proved somewhat convincing with reference to the recipients' CS accounts. The youngest participant in the project, Ree, was given full financial support for CS from her father. Ree was still studying at the time of the operation with no professional experience. Hence, she did not have economic capital for the procedure at that point. Also exemplary is Freya's below message, demonstrating that her parents had higher economic capital due to her very young age and shortage of money at that time.

Initially, the father was anti, the father said that he seemed worried in terms of safety, right? But eventually, my father and mother brought, were the ones who brought me to undergo it [CS], because they were afraid I would secretly undertake it, with unlicensed doctors. This was because at that time I was still a kid, and my sum of money was not a lot. They were afraid I secretly would undertake

rhinoplasty, 8 9,000 [Baht²¹], and they were afraid I, it would be dangerous. They therefore brought me to undergo it. (Freya, **redacted**)

However, from a holistic perspective based on the recipients' accounts, the most accurate picture is that they used their own money for the procedures after they had gained some professional opportunities, regardless of age and whether they were studying at the time. Greta and Tracy, for instance, reported having undergone CS while studying their undergraduate degrees; they spent their money accumulated via their part-time roles for their CS. As Greta put it, "at that point, [I] worked, worked part-time, so [I] had a certain amount of money, and it was not expensive". Another case in point is Tina who commenced her CS journey whilst at school, having used the sum of money from her part-time job for her initial rhinoplasty. Equally noteworthy is **[pseudonym redacted]**'s account, as she was the only participant who did not enter the realm of tertiary education in her life. She had CS soon after she graduated from her high school and started working. As **redacted** further recounted:

When studying, [I] was teased by (primarily men) friends that I was a person who had no nose (bridge), flat nose bridge, something like this. Their teasing was the motivation that once growing up, [I] would work and accumulate money for having it [rhinoplasty]. (**redacted**)

In summary, the recipients' agentic power in respect of self-financing their CS was mainly reliant on their economic capital, rather than their ages per se. Put simply, their economic capital informed their practical drivers for the CS payments to a greater extent than their ages. This

²¹ Equivalent to approximately 200 GBP as of December 2023.

epitomises neoliberal injunctions towards individuals to be their own entrepreneurs in both private and public spheres (Du Gay, 1996). Neoliberalism directs people towards self-development in various aspects, in lieu of radical eradication of social inequalities (Burchell, 1993; Scharff, 2016). In this sense, neoliberal ethos drove a number of the participants to make a living for their surgical self-beautification. This finding showcases modest reifications of patriarchy concerned with the recipients' voluntaristic involvement in beauty patriarchy using their own income for CS. This is where beauty patriarchy and the career angle of patriarchy were interwoven in Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) theorisation. Otherwise, the recipients' mothers were overall the major financial supporters of their CS, which demonstrates not only the mothers' economic capital but also subtle materialisations of patriarchy.

5.2 Exceptionally High CS Costs

This section centres around markedly high CS costs. Based on the interview data with the surgeons, Korea has a higher worldwide prestige when it comes to CS in comparison with Thailand. As Doctor Min noted, CS in Korea is generally 10 times more expensive than that in Thailand. Indeed, Korea has been greatly dedicated to their CS development (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012). CS tourism to Korea has come to the forefront in several parts of Asia owing to the increased popularity of Korean celebrities (Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh, 2019, p. 79). As Doctor Van detailed:

If facial CS, [I] view that [Thailand] is still far from Korea, still not as good as Korea for sure. But in terms of body contouring: breast augmentation, liposuction, buttock augmentation, these sorts of things, technology used is not very advanced. I mean technology all over the world has been followed up constantly. ... For this reason, concerning the results, there are no clear differences between the skills of Thai

doctors and Korean doctors in this respect. [But overall], I viewed that there are still gaps, I viewed that there are gaps [between CS in Thailand and CS in Korea].

(Doctor Van)

In this project, five of the recipients (Klee, Cee, Baimai, Kung, and Maprang) have experience of undertaking CS in Korea. They were ignited by the widespread reputation of CS in Korea as regards its first-class quality, which mirrors Holliday, *et al.*'s (2017) claim that practitioners' skilfulness can be one of the key factors for undergoing CS in Korea. Two of these interviewees also entwined their justifications for having CS in Korea with their consumption of a CS-related Korean reality programme. This Korean show is identical to reality TV programmes in the US, in the sense of celebrating postfeminism: they popularise self-transformation through CS as a vehicle to boost aesthetic self-satisfaction (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2006, p. 256; Tait, 2007). Meanwhile, Maprang and Baimai clearly distinguished between Korea and Thailand during the interviews. Maprang reported having consulted with (a) Thai doctor(s) but did not decide to have [redacted] surgery back then. Afterwards, as Maprang made clear, her discovery of details on CS in Korea was the catalyst to finalise her CS plan. When it comes to Baimai, below was an important part of her rationale for CS in Korea:

For the most part, I saw Thai people who went to have it [CS] in Korea in order to get their CS performed in Thailand corrected. And CS performed in Thailand mostly had a lot of problems. I therefore felt that eventually everyone has to end [their CS journeys] at hospitals in Korea. **(Baimai, redacted)**

Kung received full financial support for CS in Korea from the third party, whereas Cee did so from her grandmother. Baimai, Klee, and Maprang paid for these operations on their own. Baimai, Cee, Klee, and Maprang were conceived of as significantly educationally privileged in the country since their lives prior to these particular procedures. However, there are a handful of Thai doctors whose prestige can invoke high CS costs, as Doctor Min pointed out. Mindy's case is exemplary: she reported having initially planned to go to Korea for her subsequent rhinoplasty. Yet, due to potential health safety issues provoked by Covid-19, Mindy ended up undergoing it in Thailand which costed more than the one in Korea she previously looked at. She spent her own money for this procedure. As with the above four recipients, Mindy was deemed very educationally advantaged in Thailand prior to this specific operation. Educational capital can be understood as status that has a bearing on one's meaning-makings and is typically passed on to their families (Skeggs, 2002). This section thus offers further insights into the recipients' agentic power concerning self-financing CS, considering Baimai's, Klee's, Maprang's, and Mindy's great educational capital that helped shape their capacities to pay exceptionally high prices for CS.

5.3 Research on Specific Places to have CS

Carefully selecting particular places to undergo CS is likened to postfeminist subjectivities for which the trope of self-responsibilisation is paramount (McRobbie, 2020). The relatively risky essence of CS prompts individuals to be responsible for circumventing severely negative CS ramifications via such careful selection (Leve, Rubin, and Pusic, 2011). These claims are credible within the context of this thesis. A multitude of the participants self-researched where to undertake CS at length, using the Internet and/or social media to ensure the selected places were appropriate concerning quality, as well as costs in some cases.

Therefore, the thesis overall argues that the recipients' thorough research on specific places for the procedures informed their decisions to undergo CS. That is, they exercised their agentic power regarding women's individualisation (Gill, 2007c), to pre-empt unsatisfactory CS outcomes. They embraced the postfeminist notion of "aesthetic entrepreneurship" (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017, p. 37) introduced in chapter two: being self-reflexive and thoughtful for aesthetically enhanced versions of themselves (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017). Several interviewees carried out such research for months or even years, one of whom is Tracy. She was following a doctor for over five years owing to his reputation, having seen rave reviews about this practitioner from both celebrities and the general public on social media. Tracy reported having done extensive research on several doctors in addition to this specific practitioner, as she was fearful of prospective negative CS outcomes. Another prime example is Hanna who spent a year or so choosing a doctor for performing her double eyelid surgery:

Double eyelids, right? I looked at reviews: I needed to look at doctors' experiences to check each doctor, they have what kinds of experiences and created pretty double eyelid surgery or not. One thing was that I was not afraid of expensiveness: I was afraid it ended up not being pretty, not being suited with my face. This is a necessary thing [to consider], and I researched a lot of info. (Hanna, **redacted**)

Based upon the interviews, facilitating elements for selecting where to undergo CS include CS communities/groups on social media; ads and algorithms on social media; clinics/hospitals' social media pages; CS-related websites/discussion boards; CS-related salespersons/agencies; celebrities and influencers on social media; and word of mouth from cisgender heterosexual women or LGBTQ+ individuals. In this respect, the media significantly played out, feeding into the

theoretical contribution of this thesis concerning the roles of the media in facilitating young Thai women to undertake CS. In most cases, the interviewees actively searched for the above media sources once they had solid intentions to engage with CS.

CS communities/groups on social media and hospitals/clinics' social media pages were the most instrumental media sources in the participants' selection of CS venues. The former sources allowed the interviewees to investigate various shared posts on CS results and choose the most suitable/favourable ones for themselves. For example, as Ree mentioned, "[I] focused on looking at reviews in closed [social media] groups, having entered these closed groups and checked reviews in terms of which doctors had a lot of good reviews, something like these, as well as the shapes I liked". Meanwhile, the latter sources enabled them to explore further details on hospitals/clinics and/or doctors before making their decisions. To illustrate, before her double eyelid surgery, Moz scrutinised the Facebook page of the clinic that her mom had recommended, in order to explore how this clinic created eyelid creases. Drawing upon the dialogues with the surgeon participants, Thai CS-related communities/pages/groups were highly beneficial for marketising and normalising CS amongst Thais. This is arguably due in part to the comparatively significant social media use in Thailand (ASEAN UP, 2019).

Doctor Shin brought up a pressing issue in the Thai and Korean CS realms which can potentially happen when selecting doctors for carrying out CS. To explain this, there have been an immense number of CS clinics compared to cosmetic surgeons, on the grounds that some doctors who were not qualified as cosmetic surgeons entered the CS world to perform CS. This is probably why statistical figures about CS in Thailand and Korea are often hugely understated and thus not entirely accurate (Elfving-Hwang, 2013, p. 1; Henley and Porath, 2021, p. 202). According to Doctor Shin, this shift caused some problems on CS outcomes in Thailand, e.g. complications that need to be corrected later. Such words from this surgeon allude to the current need to endorse

“aesthetic entrepreneurship” (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017, p. 37). This postfeminist notion parallels the recipients’ agentic and careful selection of specific places for their CS which is the crux of this section. This demonstrates muted reifications of patriarchy revolving around the participants’ voluntaristic involvement in beauty patriarchy through such meticulous selection.

5.4 Beauty Styles for CS

This section delves into the recipients’ practical considerations in terms of aesthetic styles for the operations. As made clear in the interviews with both the recipients and the surgeons in this project, post-op appearance was ultimately dependent upon individuals’ physical structures, safety, and doctors’ expertise. Individuals were able to think about their preferred looks (specific aesthetic styles as well as augmentation/reduction levels) prior to the consultations with their practitioners. Yet, their doctors then evaluated people’s physiques on the basis of safety and physical attractiveness from medical perspectives, and they agreed together how CS outcomes should look.

For the pre-op discussions with their doctors regarding their aspirational post-op looks, several CS recipients in this study simply said to their doctors that they wished to have certain parts of their bodies augmented (or smaller in the cases of liposuction). Meanwhile, a number of the recipients identified East Asian, Thai, and/or mixed-race (i.e. Thai-white²² and other-Asian-white) styles when consulting with their practitioners. These findings are identical to the dialogues with my surgeon participants. The latter result broadly mirrors the extant literature that beauty ideals in Thailand are the paragon of ethnic/racial hybridisation, with intra-Asian and Western influences (Chaipraditkul, 2013; Limkangvanmongkol, 2018). These recipients chose the styles suited and/or favourable for them, as instantiated in the extracts below.

²² *Luk Kreung* in Thai language, which literally means a half child.

I brought the pictures of 2-3 people: a Korean influencer, and a general Thai person whom [I found] at random. I viewed that her nose was a big one but without nose wings. I imagined that ... my post-op nose would look like this. (Amy, **redacted**)

It was probably a Chinese woman model I found on IG. I [was like], this kind of nose was pretty. If undergoing [rhinoplasty], [I] wanted to obtain this look. (Pa, **redacted**)

Only one participant, Clara, used to refer to purely white Western appearance for CS when discussing with her doctor(s). As for her justification for this selection, Clara thought it would not be feasible to turn her face into either Korean or Chinese styles which constituted prevalent beauty standards in Thailand from her viewpoint. Clara regarded her original facial look as mixed between white and *Khaek*²³ because of her Thai and white ethnic background.

Consonant with Clara's above viewpoint, East Asian styles (mainly Korean and Thai-Chinese) were the most dominant in the beauty styles that the recipients in this project conveyed to their doctors. East Asian aesthetics were prominent among the recipients from a multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds: from partially ethnically Chinese to fully ethnically Thai and Thai-Laotian. To illustrate, Sasi and Nini, both of whom self-described as entirely ethnically Thai, displayed Korean beauty to their doctors. East Asian styles symbolise Asian economic leaders and cosmopolitanism (Käng, 2017; 2021). Generally, Thai-Chinese people²⁴ are socioeconomically privileged in Thailand owing to their long-standing commitments to trading (Käng, 2017; Wongsurawat, 2008). Meanwhile, by virtue of the status of Korea as a rapidly developed country, Korean celebrities have

²³ A Thai terminology that centres around Middle Easterners and South Asians (Käng, 2021, p. 274).

²⁴ Several big waves of Chinese people migrated to Southeast Asia, including Thailand, to find wealth abroad (Wongsurawat, 2008; Guotu, 2021).

conveyed new Asian cosmopolitan images through the media, thereby affecting desirable appearance for CS among people in Asia (Hoang, 2014; Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh, 2019, p. 79).

In parallel, all of the surgeon participants reported the great prominence of Korean looks among their young Thai women patients. The burgeoning of East Asian aesthetics corresponds to an important ongoing transition amongst Thai doctors. As detailed by Doctor Min, the role models for operating CS have gradually moved away from white Western beauty towards Asian (primarily Korean) references. This is on the grounds of the significant development of CS in Korea. As Doctor Min mentioned, this wider shift applies to Thais across different ethnic origins. His words detach from Menon's (2017) argument on the US context that surgeons create CS benchmarks for each minority ethnic group. This is likely because of the perception that Thailand is somewhat ethnically homogeneous (Käng, 2021, p. 276).

Aspirational aesthetic styles can be intertwined with spirituality, as exemplified by Summer, Hui, and Tina. This finding complexifies the beauty facet of postfeminism, in that it destabilises the perception of CS as emblematic of vanity (Blum, 2003; Northrop, 2012). This flows into the prime theoretical contribution of this project: advancing postfeminism, to broadly fulfil the paucity of academic research on religion-related postfeminist manifestations (Gill, 2017, p. 615). Summer, Hui, and Tina referred to a type of belief called Chinese physiognomy (*Ngo Heng* in Thai), as detailed in chapter three. To briefly reiterate, having long permeated Thai society (Aizura, 2009), Chinese physiognomy is an art of assessing people's physical features to speculate their characters and future (Wakefield and Yarborough, 2006). Summer asked her doctor to lift her eyes in accordance with Chinese physiognomy for a more fortuitous life. Hui requested the post-CS nose look that still fit with this spirituality, and the doctor somehow knew how such a look should be. Tina wished to have her nose wings removed, but the doctor suggested her not doing so on the grounds of Chinese physiognomy that equates noses with wider nose wings with great wealth.

Summer and Hui described themselves as partly Chinese in ethnicity, whilst Tina self-identified as ethnically Thai and Laotian, illustrating the impact of this spirituality on Thais of non-Chinese lineage.

Following their appearance-focused self-monitoring, a number of the participants pinpointed their desires for ‘natural’ looks to their doctors. A few were influenced by their doctors to go for ‘natural’ appearance, as indicated in Poopae’s below message. Poopae’s story diverges from most of the interviewees, in that both the doctor and a family member exerted influence when it comes to choosing post-op appearance. Through “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94), her mother made a thoughtful suggestion for Poopae towards a ‘natural’ look. As detailed in chapter two, this gaze, embodied amongst women and consumption-oriented, rests upon women’s relational understanding of gendered aesthetic norms (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016).

When undergoing [CS], at that time, I consulted with the doctor who performed it regarding, given the shape of my nose, the extent to which I can get it sharpened. But, as, [my] mother wanted [it] to look natural, did not want [it] to be too sharp, otherwise [it] would not have fit with the face. And the doctor who performed it also felt that [they] agreed that my face was like this and so should be like this. And [they] checked my nose skin concerning the degree to which it can be altered. So, I was okay, following the doctor’s opinions. At that time [I] felt that a natural look would probably have been okay. (Poopae, **redacted**)

By contrast, only a couple of the participants stressed their longing for obvious post-op appearance. In Thailand, such ‘natural’ looks are associated with Asian (mostly Korean) aesthetics rather than its white Western counterpart, as also evidenced in the interviews with both the surgeons

and the recipients. This is because Korean mainstream culture that has been salient in the Thai media often portrays ‘natural’ appearance (Seo, Cruz, and Fifita, 2020). As Doctor Van put it, “like when we watch Korean films, we can see they [the noses] are sharp, but they do not look deceptive”. Another reason may be that Thai people’s original looks bear more resemblances to Korean style compared to white Western aesthetics, mainly due to the racial overlaps affixed to the geographical proximity. This finding detaches from Menon’s (2019) result that both white Western and Korean aesthetics are construed as ‘unnatural’ in the Malaysian CS context. Arguably, the disjuncture between my study and Menon’s (2019) argument is predicated upon the widespread perception that, in comparison to Malaysians, Thais look more aligned with Koreans.

Altogether, the recipients’ beauty styles used for CS were nothing short of “glocalisation” (Robertson, 1995, p. 26), encompassing East Asian (predominantly Korean and Thai-Chinese), Asian-white, and Thai styles, as well as ‘natural’ looks and Chinese physiognomy. They were far from absolute white Western hegemonic beauty. To clarify this, the term “glocalisation” coined by Robertson (1995, p. 26) refers to “the interpenetration of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas” (Ritzer, 2003, p. 193). To that end, the thesis advocates Lazar’s (2017, p. 53) assertion that “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), concerning women’s beauty passion to foster their power, can be transnational in the sense of comprising both Western and Asian aesthetics. Since this argument put forward by Lazar (2017) is predicated on beauty ads in Singapore, I extend such transnationalism of “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) predicated on the empirical data of this study on Thai women. This finding exhibits the distinctiveness of this project from postfeminism in the West, adding to the central theoretical contribution of the thesis. Postfeminism is not universally about white Western beauty, as articulated throughout this section.

Chapter Summary

In connection with the first research question: what informs young Thai women's decisions to engage with CS?, this chapter explored their practical drivers for CS. These considerations bear upon CS payments; markedly high CS costs; research on specific places to undergo CS; and beauty styles for the operations. The principal argument of the chapter is that postfeminism, or subtle manifestations of patriarchy, markedly underlay the recipients' practical drivers for CS. To unpack this argument, the chapter uncovered the recipients' agentic power in terms of their individualisation. Most of the recipients in this study acted as their own entrepreneurs in 1) self-financing their CS and/or 2) meticulously self-researching where precisely to undertake CS to ensure quality. This entrepreneurship points to muted reifications of beauty patriarchy, showing how the participants invested their money and/or time to research CS places in pursuit of their desirable versions of attractiveness. Their mothers were the second most salient in respect of such financial investment, having displayed modest forms of patriarchy surrounding supportive motherhood corresponding to gendered beauty demands.

This chapter primarily falls into two theoretical contributions of the project. Firstly, it demonstrated the salience of the media in facilitating the recipients to have CS, mainly in terms of their selection of where to undergo CS. Secondly, the chapter feeds into this thesis's overriding theoretical contribution regarding the evolvement of postfeminism in two ways. The first way relates to the intertwinement between beauty styles for the procedures and Chinese physiognomy. The second way revolves around the transnationalism of "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) in the aspect of such beauty styles. These styles varied considerably, with Thai-Chinese and Korean being the most dominant. This study thus extends Lazar's (2017, p. 53) claim that "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) is sometimes deemed transnational when it comes to aesthetics. The next chapter fleshes out both theoretical contributions while continuing investigating

the same research question.

Chapter 6 – Motivations for Having Cosmetic Surgery

Having delved into practical drivers for CS, my thesis goes on to examine what emerged prior to that, i.e. a wide array of motives for undertaking CS. These motivations, reflected in the structure of this chapter, largely comprise: the normalisation of CS; self-surveillance; the media; the world of work; educational milieus and culture; scrutiny and commenting from others; heterosexual romantic desirability; and Chinese physiognomy. This thesis continues investigating the first research question: what informs young Thai women's decisions to engage with CS?

Subsequently, this chapter sets forth its major argument as follows: postfeminist iterations, i.e. subtle reifications of patriarchy, pervaded young Thai women's accounts on their CS motives. More precisely, a multitude of the recipients displayed their agentic power, in terms of identifying fully or predominantly themselves as the main source of their motivations for undergoing the procedures. Also anchored in such modest reifications is how power productively flowed among women concerning bodywork, in parallel with the gendered essence of aesthetic culture.

6.1 Prelude to Motivations for Undergoing CS

Women's individualisation is central to postfeminism, as part of the broader celebration of increased gender equality which has created women's *pseudo*-autonomy (McRobbie, 2004; Gill, 2007c; Baker, 2010). Accordingly, as the interviews with the surgeons overall demonstrate, the justifications of their Thai women patients aged 21-39 for undertaking CS greatly revolve around doing for themselves rather than pleasing other people. This is exemplified by Doctor Jom below.

Most of them undergo CS for themselves. Not a lot of them come to undertake it for their partners. ... It is mostly about confidence in their personal lives, followed by their professions. **(Doctor Jom)**

To the surgeons' knowledge, these patients varied considerably when it comes to their occupations. On the basis of the surgeons' words, ethnic origins bore very little impact upon such justifications, which is consistent with the widespread perception that Thailand is a rather ethnically homogeneous country (Käng, 2021, p. 276).

Turning to the recipients who took part in this study, nearly all of them reported acknowledging sociocultural influences that entailed their CS decisions. These influences, spelled out throughout this chapter, cover: the normalisation of CS; the media; the anti-ageing imperative; workforce; beauty privilege in educational culture and environments; the appearance-bullying norm; heterosexual romantic desirability; and spirituality. Their acknowledgment of such sociocultural influences is antithetical to the specific neoliberal facet that encourages people to demarcate their choices from externally imposed or societal factors (Baker, 2010). However, the majority of the recipients in this project noted that the key source of their motivations for engaging with CS was fully or primarily themselves. This finding reflects the individualising essence of postfeminism. Indeed, such a celebratory discourse induces people's mindsets congruent with their self-determination instead of victimhood (Baker, 2010, p. 190).

One participant, Mink, regarded men as the major provenance of her motivation for undergoing CS, and a couple of the interviewees described heterosexual romantic desirability as one of the key origins of such motives. Some of the other recipients identified Thai women, e.g. friends and mothers, as the main sources of their CS motivations. Based upon the interviews, these women's interests in CS and their attractive appearance had a significant bearing on the participants' CS motives, usually in a positively advocative or inspirational way. This finding demonstrates the power of women in promoting aesthetic modifications to one another owing to the gendered basis of beauty culture (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). Illustrative of this is Yu's CS motivation

mainly ignited by the attractive post-op nose of a woman who is younger than her. Yu said this woman substantially increased her desire for having rhinoplasty, from 30% to 100%.

In short, the recipients positioned themselves as relatively neoliberal, postfeminist subjects. That is, they accepted the sociocultural factors that helped shape their decisions to undertake CS. Yet, they simultaneously attempted to detach such decisions from overt gendered oppression and individualised the major sources of their motivations for having CS. This finding showcases subtle materialisations of patriarchy and constitutes the bone of this chapter as fleshed out hereafter.

6.2 Normalisation of CS among Thais

The first motive for undergoing CS is concerned with the normalisation of this beauty practice among Thais, showcasing the salience of such normalisation in fusing power within a number of the recipients. Put simply, these interviewees took on board this CS norm and later decided to undertake CS. Based on the data, it can be perceived that CS has become increasingly commonplace over the last 15 years. This is because most of the participants who identified such normalisation as an overt factor for undergoing CS engaged with the procedures within 10 years before their interviews. The normalisation of CS amongst Thai people resulted from the following sociocultural components: beauty-ingrained Thai society and Korean/Thai celebrities and influencers, which are constructed as sub-sections below.

6.2.1 Beauty-Ingrained Thai Society

The popularisation of CS in the country relates to beauty-entrenched societal value which Lala metaphorically likened to luxurious goods:

If it were not societal value, suppose ... that society did not tell that [we] must, that society did not even know Chanel [a luxurious French brand], if you used Chanel, who would care? Even if you purchased it for millions, they would not be interested? [They] would not know that it costs a million, [they] would not know who uses [it]. But if that society knows Chanel, and it became a hit. People go to have [CS], this is not different from Thai society in which beauty is high-ranking value in society, [I] mean good looks, which makes people choose to go to undergo CS. And once having undergone it, [we] get compliments, [we] get opportunities and so continuing continuing. (Lala, **redacted**)

As written earlier, Thai society is collectivist, thereby appraising positive public self-images as an important impetus for interpersonal communication (Mulder, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021; Hofstede, n.d.b). This provokes the ubiquity of bodily/facial enhancements in Thailand (Käng, 2021). These image repercussions impinge on Thai women to a greater degree than men (Van Esterik, 2000). However, the levels of beauty value in Thailand vary depending on the provinces. Thip articulated that the CS trend was deeply entrenched in Bangkok compared to her province of origin, which she considered as one of the factors for her to undertake CS:

Suppose I had lived in [a province in northeast Thailand] throughout, I had not come to live in Bangkok, I would probably not have undergone rhinoplasty. ... But once coming to live in Bangkok, [I have seen that] people, a lot of people had [CS], and there were a lot of CS undergoers whose looks, after having it, became better. And this made me think that, if I had undergone it, I would probably have looked better as well. (Thip, **redacted**)

Indeed, this capital city has been characterised by the intersection of beauty and health, as epitomised by many advertisements on a range of aesthetic practices (including CS) in Bangkok (Aizura, 2009). This is intertwined with the aforementioned massive socioeconomic gap between Bangkok/provinces nearby and the rest of the country (Arvidsson and Niesson, 2015).

Such an appearance-oriented society exerted influence in several participants to compare Thailand with their lived experiences in other countries where they used to reside/stay (Europe or some other Asian countries such as Japan and the Philippines), which prompted them to undergo CS. Their overseas experiences are in no way representative of such countries, yet these recipients drew comparisons between these specific experiences and their lives in Thailand to show their feelings outside the beauty-ingrained discourse of Thai society. Take Freya as an example: having lived in Europe before having her facial CS, Freya noted the centrality of aesthetic standards in Thai society compared to Europe from her viewpoint:

I have felt that the Thai sociocultural aspect comprises beauty standards that Thai women must have double eyelids, sharp noses, oval faces, mouths having dimples. Get it? Meanwhile, when I resided in Europe, everyone was like, beautiful by themselves: they tried to find words to appraise, such as “your hair looks so gorgeous today”. Get it? **(Freya, redacted)**

The above message forms part of Freya’s rationale for engaging with CS. Statistically, CS has permeated Europe (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2021). Nonetheless, this quote from Freya points to the body-positivity discourse in the West from which Thailand has taken inspiration afterwards (Bunnag, 2021). As appearance that fits into societal aesthetic benchmarks

has been understood as cultural capital in Thailand (Käng, 2021), there is still a long way to go towards full inclusivity regarding looks.

6.2.2 Korean Celebrities and Influencers

The second contributing element to the normalisation of CS amongst Thais centres around Korean public figures. As Moz narrated:

It was those Korean celebrities, those had [CS] a bit, right? ... So I was, the celebrity who I favoured had it, I tried, I had to go to undertake it, yes yes. (Moz, **redacted**)

Doctor Min and Doctor Van pointed out that, in addition to Thai celebrities and influencers, K-pop stars helped normalise CS in Thailand. According to Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh (2019, p. 79), Korean songs and dramas have boomed across the Southeast Asian region over the past 20 years. They have reinforced the trend of CS in Southeast Asia, following the sweeping prevalence of CS among both Korean celebrities and general individuals (Yip, Ainsworth, and Hugh, 2019, p. 79). Interestingly, Moz was the only CS recipient in this project who said that a famous man was one of the factors to have CS. This relates to the wider Korean CS context in which many men pursue CS for career purposes, for more propitious features, or for having softer looks associated with caring masculinity (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012).

A few more recipients reported having associated Korean public figures with their motivations for having CS. Pingpong's motive of embarking on her CS journey is centred upon a woman Korean singer whose nose Pingpong found attractive. Pingpong admitted she compared her appearance with this K-pop star, having led to her decision to undertake rhinoplasty. In addition, she reported having been inspired by Korean women influencers to have this procedure due to their

good looks. Another recipient, Kung, equated one of the reasons for her CS with her passion in K-pop cover dance, a genre loosely described as “the copying of choreographed movements from music videos” (Käng, 2014, p. 559). As Kung mentioned, her interest in cover dance made her notice Korean women artists’ noses, which induced her subtle desire to enhance her own nose through rhinoplasty.

This sub-section has shown that Pingpong and Kung observed Korean women celebrities and/or influencers and desired to have their noses surgically modified, via “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). Indeed, this gaze revolves around 1) observation of other women in both praising and competitive ways and, concurrently, 2) women’s self-assessment on body image to remain in the loop of acceptable looks (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). Such a gaze illustrates how power productively flows among women to alter their appearance, on account of women’s shared understanding of gendered beauty demands (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). As highlighted in chapter two, “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) constitutes the central theoretical contribution of this project: advancing postfeminism. To be precise, this thesis displays 1) how “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) manifests itself in the CS phenomenon of young Thai women; 2) how it works side by side with “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). One of the pertinent results is that the participants, including Pingpong and Kung, overall presented their pre-op evaluation on other women as inspirational. They reported having been inspired by other women’s good looks to have CS. This finding illustrates modest reifications of patriarchy. That is, “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) is rooted in the patriarchal nature of aesthetic culture, in that women embody patriarchy towards one another.

6.2.3 Thai Celebrities and Influencers

As with the latest sub-section, this sub-section on the Thai celebrity and influencer landscape feeds into the central theoretical contribution of the thesis: advancing postfeminism. It does this by showcasing the ways the recipients saw Thai women celebrities/influencers as mainly inspirational through “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). To begin with, Kanoon foregrounded Thai celebrities’ revelation of their CS experiences:

In the past, celebrities, when they had undertaken it [CS], they would have lied that [they] did not undergo it, right? But these days celebrities have undergone it, they will tell that they have had it. I felt that the post-op looks were good. (**Kanoon, redacted**)

As Kanoon and Moz articulated, such revelation prompted them to have CS. Indeed, one can witness a recent sociocultural trend in Thailand: many Thai celebrities and influencers, usually women, have publicly disclosed their CS accounts via social and mass media. Arguably, this trend stems from the growth in neoliberalism that champions individual choices around the world (Ong, 2006), including Thailand primarily among the class-privileged (Leung and Cossu, 2019; Singpliam, 2022a).

The popularisation of CS by Thai celebrities is not limited to their verbal disclosure of CS experiences. As Frung mentioned regarding her CS motive, she noticed constant facial changes of Thai celebrities as a result of their CS, i.e. before vs after looks. Such noticeable changes reassured Frung her post-op appearance was likely to be better. Pingpong also recounted that Thai celebrities’ visible physical modifications induced by CS was part of her CS motivation. Irrespective of whether these public figures verbally unmasked their CS experiences or simply showed their

detectable physical alterations, they have amplified societal beauty demands at large. This amplification is generally facilitated by their idealised and charismatic images due to their celebrity status (Ferris, 2007; Redmond, 2014). According to Stuart and Donaghue (2011, p. 111), the uncontrollable ubiquity of celebrities' portrayals constraints individual choices of women not to comply with aesthetic ideals. In this respect, beauty patriarchy is far from disappearing, but rather, it is embodied by women celebrities inspirationally.

Turning to Thai influencers, based on my research data, they increased societal aesthetic demands in similar ways to their celebrity counterparts, i.e. through their revelation of CS experiences and their visible physical changes resulting from CS. The quote below expands on the former way in which influencers helped normalise CS in Thailand:

YouTube, when net, YouTubers [and/or] net idols have posted that, they reviewed CS, reviewed thread lifting, I looked at them. I was convinced that, wanna undergo them?, they would make me become prettier, yes. (Carrie, **redacted**)

During the interview, Andrea conveyed an identical message to the above excerpt. Both Carrie and Andrea admitted that the popularisation of CS by Thai influencers had a bearing on their decisions to undertake CS. As evidenced in the extract above, Carrie mentioned the term 'net idols' as described in chapter three: a category of influencers well known for being exceptionally attractive or gifted at certain areas such as comedy and music (Abidin, 2018). In conjunction with postfeminism, the relatability of women influencers often reinforces a sense of inspiration and individual empowerment amongst women (such as Carrie and Andrea) regarding self-beautification, whereby beauty patriarchy stays in force (Winch, 2015; Mora, 2022).

Zizi's account concerning influencers' unmasking of their CS experiences is intriguing. She remarked on a problem around CS-related social media marketing of influencers, whilst she admitted that a Thai woman influencer's CS experience contributed to her CS decision. As Zizi explained, in Thailand, some influencers are hired to undertake CS by CS clinics but are then dissatisfied with the results, yet they are incited to say that they liked these CS experiences. These sorts of issues are at stake for a number of influencers (Abidin and Ots, 2015; Arriagada and Bishop, 2021; Lee and Abidin, 2022), meaning CS-related content generated by influencers is not always deemed entirely authentic and trustworthy. After a long period of contemplation of whether to engage with CS, the post-op nose of one Thai woman influencer was the stimulant for Zizi's determination to have rhinoplasty. Evidently, akin to Carrie and Andrea, Zizi was complicit within the relatability of women influencers which intensified beauty demands.

To summarise, the normalisation of CS among Thais has been attributed to not only beauty-fixated Thai society, but also Thai and Korean entertainment landscapes. These elements have formed part of strong aesthetic demands among Thais. This overarching section broadly resonates with McRobbie's (2009) contention that popular culture has been instrumental in circulating the beauty dimension of postfeminism. Crucially, a specific gendered effect has been interwoven with such popularisation of CS. In the larger Thai CS context, CS undergoers were predominantly women, including both public figures and the general public, as accentuated by some of the surgeon participants. Doctor Jom, Doctor Min, and Doctor Shin highlighted that Thai women – and LGBTQ+ Thai men – were more interested in body image compared to cisgender heterosexual men. Few exceptions encompass cisgender heterosexual men who intended to become models, as stated by Doctor Min. Indeed, even in today's society, 'interest' in this sense cannot be dissociated from greater aesthetic pressure towards women compared to men (Gill, 2007a, p. 73).

6.3 Self-Surveillance

With reference to “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), self-surveillance covers both physical and psychological dimensions. This section covers self-monitoring in relation to self-esteem/confidence; temporary double eyelid products; make-up and clothing; breastfeeding; and ageing. These sub-sections demonstrate instances of “power dynamics working on a ‘deeper’ level where competition is not only directed at others, but also at the self” (Scharff, 2016, p. 119, original emphasis).

6.3.1 Self-Confidence/Esteem

This sub-section on self-confidence/esteem epitomises current neoliberal demands for both physical *and* psychological perfection (Gill, 2021c). The postfeminist notion of “confidence cult(ure)” (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19), introduced in chapter two, exhorts women in particular to love their own bodies amidst unrealistic aesthetic standards (Orgad and Gill, 2022). Concurrently, women are often criticised if they lack self-confidence/esteem concerning body image (Orgad and Gill, 2022). Since Orgad and Gill’s (2022) work does not examine the Thai context or the Southeast Asian region, this thesis theoretically adds to the evolvement of postfeminism. The thesis demonstrates that such cult(ure) encapsulates the data mainly with respect to using CS as their self-esteem/confidence boosters, instead of simply appreciating their bodies. To justify this, Doctor Jom and Doctor Van, based on their professional experiences, regarded Thai women’s CS as synonymous with an impetus for raising self-esteem/confidence. Likewise, over half of the CS recipients in the project posited that self-confidence/esteem was interwoven with their decisions to undertake CS.

The entanglement between appearance-focused self-evaluation (a physical aspect of self-surveillance) and self-confidence/esteem (a psychological form of self-surveillance) prompted a multitude of the recipients to have CS, two of whom are Mary and Iris:

[I] felt that when having no nose bridge, as I am person with fairly big eyes, it looked childlike, did not look mature. And [I] wanted to look good in photos, yes. ... I would become more confident once having undertaken it [CS]. It was entirely a matter of beauty. (Mary, **redacted**)

It probably started from [the point] that I felt that [my nose] was my defect, I did not like [it]. And [I] felt this thing on my face was not, was not attractive. I wanted to enhance it. It was the enhancement of my character and confidence. (Iris, **redacted**)

To clarify, Mary had CS in her early 20s; therefore, this account has little to do with the anti-ageing imperative. The quote about Iris illustrates the relationships between appearance, confidence, and characters. A few more participants, namely Lingling, Maprang, and Nini, also mentioned that their CS experiences resulted from their appearance-based self-evaluation but also their aspirations to improve characters and self-esteem/confidence. The word ‘character’ in Thailand centres around the creation of positive public self-images (Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021). What underlies this notion is the collectivist essence of Thai society that renders interpersonal respect crucial (Mulder, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021; Hofstede, n.d.b). This finding contradicts the lingering association between CS and vanity, complicating the beauty dimension of postfeminism. Thus, this finding falls into the overriding theoretical contribution of the thesis: advancing postfeminism.

Several interviewees elaborated on the levels of their pre-op self-confidence/esteem. For instance, Freya reported the low level of her pre-op self-esteem. Meanwhile, Tracy identified her pre-op self-confidence as relatively high, yet she admitted that self-confidence was one of the determining factors for engaging with CS:

I felt that I looked so bad that [I] did not want to even look in the mirror. [I] felt that why [I] was born without a nose bridge at all, why the eyes were uneven [aesthetically]. [My] self-esteem was very very low, at that time, yes. (Freya, redacted)

Actually, [I] was the one with a lot of self-confidence, but I secretly liked commenting on myself in mind. When taking photos, I felt that why the face had no third dimension when I took photos. Get it? (Tracy, redacted)

The word ‘secretly’ in Tracy’s message echoes the existing social stigma around revealing the lack of self-esteem/confidence especially outside the private sphere (Orgad and Gill, 2022). This is attributed to the postfeminist championing of positive mental attitudes (Gill, 2017, p. 610). Notwithstanding varying levels of self-confidence/esteem amongst the recipients, self-confidence/esteem played out as CS motivations in the bulk of the accounts in this study. This clearly indicates neoliberal exhortations towards women concerning self-cultivation of both the body and the mind (Gill, 2021c). In this sense, power operated within the recipients but was inseparable from this neoliberal ethos. Such power parallels the core of “confidence cult(ure)” (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19) as “a gendered technology of self, which not only is primarily addressed to women but also acts on gender relations, reframing critical accounts of gender power

in individual and psychological terms” (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19). To that end, this sub-section has displayed muted materialisations of patriarchy.

6.3.2 Temporary Double Eyelid Items

The accounts about temporary double eyelid items are marginal in the West, yet they are evidenced in the context of this project. Hence, this sub-section brings an interesting element to the postfeminist trope of self-scrutiny (Gill, 2007c), as well as the operationalisation of power within oneself. These double eyelid goods are also common among Korean and Japanese people, some of whom aspire to have double eyelid surgery for a more permanent fix (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Miller, 2021). Before several participants undertook double eyelid surgery, they had noticed their eyelids, had not been fully satisfied with how their eyes looked, and had tried using items for manually creating double eyelids. These recipients varied in terms of their ages when the operations and the interviews took place. To illustrate, Tina considered her successful use of double eyelid stickers as her initial motive for undertaking double eyelid surgery to make her eyes double-lidded more permanently.

Intertwined with Dosekun’s (2017) finding that postfeminist selfhood involves women’s pain tolerance to become more attractive and feel more empowered, the use of some items for manually generating double eyelids can be painful. In my project, such pain was more mental than physical, as exemplified in the extract below.

Before undergoing double eyelid surgery, I used to apply steel stick(s) or, what, [something] for constructing creases to make them double-lidded. Or, when sleeping, [I] used tapes, putting them to make them double-lidded permanently. I had to do so constantly. And [when] wearing make-up, [I] had to use, put something put

something, so as to make the eyes sweeter-looking. So, I felt that when doing these every day, it felt exhausted, and it caused scars also. I therefore decided to undertake CS, undergoing it once and being pretty for the rest of [my] life. (Hanna, **redacted**)

Wawa and Ying had in common with Hanna concerning their endurance of mental pain while using temporary double eyelid items. More precisely, Ying found these stickers difficult to apply. As Wawa recounted, “every morning I had to use [stickers], and on the days that I consumed too much sodium and applied these double eyelid items, they [my eyes] were swollen and [the stickers] did not work properly, which made [me] very upset”. These three participants eventually decided to have double eyelid surgery for getting rid of such mental pain.

By contrast, a couple of the recipients, Gemma and Ou, reported having felt totally fine with their uptakes of double eyelid products. However, the CS promotions during Covid-19 which they discovered on Facebook were the catalysts for them to undertake double eyelid surgery. This exhibits the successes of some CS institutions in marketising CS amidst the pandemic. Still, double eyelid products directly impacted upon the decisions of several interviewees to correct their eyelids surgically, as explicated throughout this sub-section. They adopted these temporary items as tools for monitoring their own eye looks, which prompted them to have double eyelid surgery for more permanent modifications in pursuit of higher self-satisfaction. Exemplary of a subtle pattern of patriarchy, this finding insinuates neoliberal, postfeminist incitements to keep being self-contained while transitioning from the uses of an innovation (temporary double eyelid items) towards surgical intervention (CS) (Gill, 2017).

6.3.3 Make-Up and Dress-Up

Wearing make-up and clothing fall into women's makeover: a principal constituent of "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) demanding women to constantly modify their looks towards perfect versions (Gill, 2007c). Gill (2017) accentuates the linkages between women's makeover and their psychological selves. Relatedly, a number of the recipients in this project wished to boost their self-satisfaction, thereby enhancing and/or simplifying their make-up/dressing-up via CS. These participants greatly varied regarding their ages at the time of the procedures and the interviews.

One of the surgeon participants, Doctor Dom, pinpointed justifications around eye make-up from many of his Thai women patients aged 21-39 for undergoing double eyelid surgery. That is, they wanted their eyelids to look more apparent while applying eyeliners. This, along with aspirations to unravel eye make-up rituals, strongly resonates with multiple interviewees' rationalisations for double eyelid surgery, one of whom is Greta:

If [I] used an eyeliner or used eyeshadow(s), and when opening [my] eyes, the side that did not appear double-lidded – or on some days did not appear double-lidded – it [the eyeliner or eyeshadow] totally disappeared. Get it? (**Greta, redacted**)

Likewise, several participants wished to unburden their nose make-up in quest of increased self-satisfaction, as evidenced in the below extract:

Previously, [I] adopted make-up approaches that heighten the nose bridge, contouring to appear as having a nose bridge. But later, if [I] could undergo it

[rhinoplasty], [I] should do it now. I therefore decided to undertake it. (Net, **redacted**)

When it comes to clothing, some of the interviewees reported having wanted to undergo breast augmentation surgery, due to their desires to have fewer difficulties and/or to look more attractive when wearing outfits. This is exemplified by the following:

[I] put a lot of sponge [inside my bras], and when dressing up, there appeared to be no [breast] curve. It was not attractive. ... As they [breasts] did not exist such that [I] was almost like a man, just a bit [chuckling]. They did not exist, did not exist, seriously. (Mindy, **redacted**)

Mindy's above message revolves around her self-monitoring when dressing up and some difficulties with the use of bra fillers. In the interviews, Mindy and Maprang highlighted not only such difficulties, but also their mental pain around their engagement with bra fillers. Maprang reported having needed to keep pulling the fillers, as they constantly fell out of her original breasts. As she made clear, this was upsetting for her. Mindy said she was frustrated when her bra fillers did not fit well with certain types of clothes, such as elastic shirts. These narratives relate to some of the accounts on temporary double eyelid items in the previous sub-section. That is, they undertook CS as an impetus for removing mental pain associated with more routine beauty practices.

Mindy's giggling, as indicated in the quote, may emphasise her dissatisfaction with pre-op breasts which she described as tiny and thus likened to masculinity. In this study, three out of four transgender/self-reported-as-a-ladyboy recipients (Hanna, Lingling, and Mink) reported having undertaken breast augmentation surgery to look more femininely attractive when wearing clothes.

Yet, a few of the cisgender participants (not only Mindy but also Jang, Maprang, and Ying) showed their dissatisfaction with their self-identified flat breasts. In addition to Mindy, Ji was another interviewee who linked her original body shape to masculinity due to her self-described rather small breasts. As Ji recounted, this body shape obstructed her to enjoy dressing up. On this basis, the distinctions between the cisgender and transgender/ladyboy recipients regarding their narratives on breast augmentation were relatively inconsiderable in the data. Notably, these particular participants profoundly echo Butler's (1990) poststructuralist contention that, pertinent to the performative basis of gender, individuals perform femininity and masculinity through self-beautification.

Analogous to the previous sub-section on double eyelid goods, this sub-section illustrates the fuzzy line between CS and more routine self-beautification like applying make-up and dressing. To justify this, these two sub-sections have explored the recipients' hopes to undertake CS by reason of simplifying and/or enhancing their clothing/make-up. This has consonance with Widdows's (2018b) claim that the boundaries between traditionally routine and extreme beauty practices have become increasingly blurry. This is due to 1) the constant rise of aesthetic demands provoked by the relentlessly visual-oriented global move; 2) the rhetoric of individual choice induced by neoliberalism (Widdows, 2018b). The recipients pertinent to these two sub-sections adjusted themselves in accordance with such a transition and the continuation of beauty patriarchy, having viewed CS as the end solution to untangle and/or improve their bodywork routines. They were subsumed within the postfeminist trope of makeover (Gill, 2007c) that exhorts women to strive for their perfect aesthetic versions (Gill, 2007c). However, this finding helps enlighten a non-dichotomous, nuanced positioning of aesthetic regimes.

6.3.4 Breastfeeding

Gill (2017) underlines how the postfeminist feature of self-monitoring in “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) has become increasingly extensive. In this respect, several scholars researching postfeminism and maternity (Tyler, 2011; Littler, 2013; De Benedictis and Orgad, 2017) examine the pervasive neoliberal force of appearance-based self-surveillance towards mothers. Having explored the rise of neoliberal depictions of pregnant beauty, Tyler (2011) connects this line of argument with breast augmentation surgery resulting from breastfeeding: the practice today often likened to individualised commitment and good motherhood (Schmidt, *et al.*, 2022; Augusto, Neves, and Henriques, 2023). This thesis extends Tyler’s (2011) above claim: Ji’s and Ying’s breastfeeding was integral to their body scrutiny, which induced their breast augmentation surgery.

Regarding Ji’s account, she felt satisfied with her breasts during breastfeeding to a greater extent than her pre-breastfeeding breasts. Ji engaged with breast augmentation surgery to become satisfied again for the rest of her post-breastfeeding life. As Ji described her feelings about her pre-CS breasts:

Once I breastfed the child, [my breasts] were firmer, but they then became saggy. They expanded a lot; that is, when I breastfed the child, my breasts were 40 [inches], from 31 to 40. They increased a lot. And when it was the end of the period that I breastfed the child, [I] felt they were floppy, do you get it? ... And I felt that I favoured [my breasts] when I breastfed and they got firm. (Ji, **redacted**)

When it comes to Ying, she did not explicate her feelings towards her breasts throughout breastfeeding. Nonetheless, akin to Ji, she was dissatisfied with her breasts after breastfeeding. Ying

recounted that her breasts became completely flat following her breastfeeding, insofar as bra fillers no longer helped. As Ying explained in her own words:

From the past when they [the breasts] seemed to be little [but] I was still able to use bra fillers to back them up. But once the child drank milk from my breasts, they were totally gone. They were unable to be backed up [by bra fillers], yes. At that point, [I] felt, at that point [I] felt [it] was a complex [of inferiority]. (Ying, **redacted**)

Ji's and Ying's cases demonstrate that postfeminist compulsions towards mothers to discipline their bodies can be connected with significant maternal mandates (pregnancy and breastfeeding) and an optional form of self-sacrifice as a mother (breast augmentation surgery). As Tyler (2011, p. 29, original emphasis) puts it, "pregnancy has been reconfigured as a neoliberal project of self[-]realization, a 'body project' to be directed and managed, another site of feminine performance anxiety and thus ironically a new kind of confinement for women". As above, these two participants strongly echo this quote from Tyler (2011), but in relation to post-pregnancy breasts. Interestingly, Ji deemed a conversation with a Thai woman friend (whose breasts changed after breastfeeding) as the main source of her CS motive. Meanwhile, Ying regarded herself as the primary origin of her motivation for undertaking CS as a whole. They positioned men away from the core of their reasons for having CS. In these interviewees' cases, power thus operated within/amongst women. Yet, it was intertwined with beauty patriarchy that modestly operates to put immense pressure on mothers' self-improvement, in congruence with the neoliberal grammar of self-containment (Littler, 2013).

A surgeon participant, Doctor Van, touched upon the point that some Thai women undertake breast augmentation surgery following their pregnancy and breastfeeding. This surgeon positioned

this as a ‘solid’ reason for having breasts surgically modified for aesthetic purposes. This may sound sensible, given its relevance to maternal duties like pregnancy and breastfeeding. This line of rationale can help counter the lingering understanding that CS symbolises vanity (Blum, 2003; Northrop, 2012). Simultaneously, it further reinforces self-monitoring and body modifications amongst women, against the backdrop of societal patriarchal oppression.

6.3.5 Ageing

Gendered double standards around ageing appearance have been deep-rooted in several countries (Sontag, 1997). For the most part, the recipients in this study associated anti-ageing with not only CS but also skin treatments and injections like Botox. The ages between 30 and 35 were regarded as the turning point of starting to ‘feel’ old. Accordingly, all of the participants who undertook CS for anti-ageing purposes were in their 30s at the time of the procedures. This finding is an addition to the debate on postfeminism and anti-ageing. Previous pertinent works centre on older/mid-age women who want to look more youthful (Garde-Hansen, 2012; Jermyn, 2016). Meanwhile, this sub-section illuminates how young women tackled their ageing, paralleling the extensification of self-disciplining as part of postfeminism (Gill, 2017).

Ying is one of the recipients whose justification for double eyelid surgery revolves around ageing and aesthetic self-surveillance:

Eyes, why [I] decided to undergo it was in the past, [I] was the person with single eyelids. [I] was the one, eyelids, single eyelids. But as [my] age started to increase, there were small lines emerging. They were double-lidded, some days they were triple-lidded. But I thought that if I undertook double eyelid surgery, my eyes would look sweeter, they would look prettier. So, I went to consult with a doctor, asking the

doctor for them to be double-lidded permanently, but the original eyes had no [medical] issues. (Ying, **redacted**)

This quote is centred upon the connections between Ying's self-scrutiny around her eyes during her 30s and her self-satisfaction. Ying's narrative is intriguing in that she reported having been satisfied with her pre-op *Muay* (a Thai terminology meaning East-Asian-looking) eyes despite her pure Thai ethnic background. This is at odds with Moz who associated her CS rationale with both ageing and her partial Chinese heritage²⁵. Ying's satisfaction with her original *Muay* appearance reflects the wider perception that *Muay* eyes are sometimes not stigmatised in Thailand. This perception coheres with the dominance of not only partly white Thais but also those of partial/full Chinese ancestry²⁶ in the Thai celebrity and influencer landscape (Käng, 2017, p. 190). Nevertheless, Ying's choice of double eyelid surgery was provoked by ageing as above.

By contrast, Ou and Pingpong, both of whom are of partial Chinese lineage, did not explicitly construct their accounts of double eyelid surgery in relation to their ethnicity. Pingpong referred to her ageing eyelids when rationalising her double eyelid surgery. For Ou, in addition to the CS promotion she discovered on Facebook as aforementioned, she connected her CS narrative with 1) ageing; 2) her comparison between her relatives' eyes and her own:

The period of the doctoral studies when [I] started to become 30 something [years old] already, and [I] met [mostly women] relatives whose, when they were in their

²⁵ By and large, Thais of full Thai lineage have less eyelid fat and wider eyes, compared to entirely/partly ethnically Chinese Thais as well as Korean and Japanese people (Käng, 2021, p. 282). Yet, as exemplified by Ying, *Muay* looks are not necessarily synonymous with East Asian ethnicities.

²⁶ In Thailand, partially/fully ethnically Chinese people usually fit into *Muay* style that primarily encapsulates East Asian aesthetics. This style signifies Asian economic leaders and cosmopolitanism (Käng, 2017; 2021).

20s 30s, eyes were identical [to mine]. And when they started to become 40, we met each other, and their eyes changed to another style. (Ou, **redacted**)

As evidenced in the excerpt, Ou adopted “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) on her (predominantly women) elder relatives, having viewed these women’s eyes as a warning against ageing. Ou then chose to pre-empt the potential increased sagginess of her eyelids by undertaking double eyelid surgery. To recapitulate, Ou’s CS rationale centres around this horizontal observation and the marketisation of CS on social media, rather than linear articulations of beauty patriarchy. Yet, she was not situated outside the patriarchal control, given the patriarchal root of beauty upon which “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) is premised.

This sub-section turns now to Gina who clearly embraced “aesthetic entrepreneurship” (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017, p. 37) with concerns to ageing. Under the postfeminist zeitgeist, “aesthetic entrepreneurship” (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017, p. 37) refers to high levels of self-reflexivity, creativity, and agency in self-modification for pursuing enhanced versions of physical attractiveness (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017). Gina’s principal reason for undergoing CS was her inspiration from a Thai woman singer to look friendlier for children studying at the school where she worked. This rationale opposes the belief that CS is likened to vanity (Blum, 2003; Northrop, 2012), thus complexifying the beauty angle of postfeminism. Yet, another reason for her double eyelid surgery appertains to ageing. Gina mentioned her great satisfaction with her eyes when she was younger. However, as she grew older (over 30 years old), she wished to undergo double eyelid surgery after evaluating her look in the mirror and feeling unhappy with her subsequent eye appearance. As Gina put it:

I saw [myself in the mirror], and [my] look was ... I spent on other things, spent a lot, was able to spend, right? I therefore decided to have it [CS]. ... Once being old already, ... as it was no longer necessary to worry about many things, [I] tried loving myself. (Gina, redacted)

Gina's words "tried loving myself" in the above message refer to her engagement with CS, which is contrasted with "Love your body (LYB)" neoliberal discourses (Gill and Elias, 2014, p. 180) that direct women towards individual appreciations of their original bodies. This means Gina equated neoliberal injunctions to constantly take care of oneself with undertaking aesthetic modifications instead of simply loving one's look.

Altogether, the findings in this sub-section parallel Widdows's (2018b) claim that today, women are greatly preoccupied with their own looks, with their desires to rejuvenate themselves. This is interwoven with the ubiquitous postfeminist trope of self-disciplining amidst high beauty demands (Gill, 2017). Power deeply flowed within these participants, whilst it rested upon beauty patriarchy concerning the anti-ageing imperative and elusive beauty effects towards women (Gill, 2017).

6.4 Media Consumption/Usages

Earlier, this chapter demonstrated the roles of the celebrity and influencer terrain in normalising CS among Thais. This section further adds to one of the theoretical contributions of the thesis: uncovering the ways the media facilitate young Thai women to have CS. This section is centred upon the impacts of social/mass media uses/consumptions on aesthetic modifications. Social and mass media coalesced power within the participants into their decisions to have CS. In this sense, "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) was paramount to such

power constellations, presenting how power productively worked among women regarding self-beautification. To be precise, the recipients' media uses/consumptions echo Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016) finding on the prevalent and comparative essence of this gaze. Nonetheless, what is missing in Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016) project are women's uptakes of this gaze on the media as inspirational. Such uptakes constitute the core tenet of this section. These pervasive, comparative, and inspirational qualities of this gaze are shown in the sub-sections of social media and mass media. These two sub-sections are largely characterised by Gill's (2007b, p. 255) quote: "surveillance of women's bodies ... constitutes perhaps the largest type of media content across all genres and media forms". Not only does this quote from Gill (2007b) indicate that the media have been profoundly enmeshed with beauty patriarchy, but it has also remained convincing over the past few years (Gill, 2021c).

6.4.1 Social Media

From the beginning of the last decade, digital culture has penetrated people's day-to-day lives because of its rapid circulation and interactivity, which has engendered the exponential growth of visual culture on social media (Dobson, 2015; Tiggemann, *et al.*, 2018; Gill, 2021b). In this project, quite a number of the CS recipients – with great variations concerning ages at the time of the procedures – demonstrated the relationships between self-satisfaction and social media usages/consumption. Overall, the participants' media consumption/usages on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube were the most impactful in their decisions to have CS. That is, the recipients not only saw appealing posts/pictures featuring women public figures as well as the women general public, but they also monitored their own online personae on social media. From a feminist perspective, patriarchy was covert here, given that this looks-focused monitoring amongst and within women was underpinned by the gendered basis of aesthetic demands (McRobbie, 2015). Inherent in such

policing is the mutual essence of surveillance on social media where people discipline each other and are concurrently monitored by one another in a participatory manner (Tokunaga, 2011; Marwick, 2012). Intertwined with this surveillance culture is the ubiquity of self-optimisation to boost mediated visibility on a competitive capitalist logic (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

According to Marwick (2012) from a Foucauldian perspective, power operationalises in a multidimensional manner on social media: between platforms and users, and within different interpersonal relationships. By and large, power relations on social media are more interpersonal than top-down (Marwick, 2012, p. 391). The **first** pattern that portrays such power workings is concerned with women models in fashion shops on Instagram. Through Jang's uptake of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94), she was inspired by these women to engage with CS for her enhanced body shape. Her giggling in the below quote may underscore her dissatisfaction with self-described flat pre-op breasts.

IG, clothing shops, sometimes, I wanted to wear but [chuckling] cannot wear. [I] wanted to dress up but if, as, [for] people who[se breasts] are flat, it will be hips are fine but breasts are loose, or breasts are fine but hips are tight. (Jang, **redacted**)

Toon was another participant who linked women models in clothing shops on Instagram to her justification to undertake CS. Congruent with the individualised nature of postfeminist beauty culture, both models and general women are socially exhorted to relentlessly take heed of their self-stylisation (Wissinger, 2015a; Gill, 2021c). Thus, in tandem with the exponential growth of social media, models are salient in amplifying unattainable aesthetic benchmarks on account of their paramount credentials around appearance (Wissinger, 2015a; 2015b). Such an effect of women models is evidenced in Jang's and Toon's accounts as above.

The **second** pattern also appertains to the comparative and inspirational characteristics of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). A number of the interviewees deemed women on social media, whether public figures or the general public, as influential for their CS decisions. A few of them, e.g. Zan and Jang, were driven to have CS by general women’s social media posts. For example, Jang was partially sparked by her women friends’ good body shapes to receive breast augmentation surgery. Several participants deemed beauty vloggers on YouTube as one of the contributing factors for their CS decisions. They saw vloggers’ glamorous make-up and then wished to surgically alter their own appearance. To illustrate, as Kanoon recounted, “it was relevant [to my CS motive], because sometimes, when they wore make-up, as they had a nose bridge, it enhanced their make-up”. This reflects the extant literature on postfeminism that beauty vlogging usually encourages their fans to refine their looks via make-up, as a toolkit for fostering self-empowerment (Banet-Weiser, 2017; Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023). As beauty vloggers fall under one category of influencers in Thai society (Limkangvanmongkol and Abidin, 2019), it is likely that these interviewees were enticed by the relatable images of influencers (Marwick, 2013; Kanai, 2018; Chen and Kanai, 2022).

Third, Baimai’s and Ree’s narratives are cases in point regarding Gill’s (2021a, p. 1390) claim that, in society flooded by digital media, “being watched and feeling judged are not simply done by others to the self, but equally are applied to one’s own appearance, requiring a distinctive critical gaze on the self”. These two interviewees longed for rhinoplasty due partly to their self-scrutiny while crafting their social media profiles. The following are Baimai’s words:

When I saw my own face [while producing content], when looking to the side,
[chuckling] [I] felt that [chuckling] [my nose] was flat. And I saw it often. And [I]

felt that I lacked this [chuckling], if my face had a nose bridge, it would be good [chuckling]. (Baimai, **redacted**)

Baimai's consistent chuckling may accentuate her dissatisfaction with her self-reported flat nose. While creating their social media content, Baimai and Ree constantly looked at themselves through a selfie perspective: a standardised form of appearance-based self-surveillance (Giroux, 2015). When I asked these two participants whether they would self-identify as influencers, they responded that they had not reached that point. Still, they felt the need to look more attractive on the camera. They were not immune to wider aesthetic pressure towards influencers to maintain an aspirational quality, as part of their self-empowerment in congruence with postfeminism (Banet-Weiser, 2012; 2017; Abidin and Gwynne, 2017; Hearn and Banet-Weiser, 2020). Hence, Baimai and Ree were located within power dynamics between themselves, interpersonal relationships, and social media platform(s) (Marwick, 2012). They were exhorted by their followers to appear beautiful in their social media profiles.

Compared to Baimai and Ree, Neen drew a clearer parallel between her appearance-focused self-monitoring on social media and her engagement with fans, thereby having been immersed in such interpersonal power workings. Having self-described as a fashion influencer, Neen reported having noticed some aesthetic flaws on her nose. She also acknowledged the centrality of physical attractiveness for boosting her confidence to be a more effective communicator via social media. This elicited her decision to undergo rhinoplasty. Neen's case illustrates how influencers' material and affective interactions with audiences are crucial for sustaining their fan bases (Baym, 2018). It resonates with Banet-Weiser's (2012) assertion that, in line with postfeminism, influencers are compelled to self-manage their authentic, aspirational, and positive attributes on social media, in

order to maintain their fame and feel more empowered. Aesthetics is indispensable for the creation of such attributes (Abidin and Gwynne, 2017; Hearn and Banet-Weiser, 2020).

6.4.2 Mass Media

In tune with the extensive dissemination of mainstream media, mass media consumption/uses, not least TV and magazine, had a bearing on aesthetic self-satisfaction of several participants whose ages at the time of the procedures varied. In this regard, most of these recipients referred to their consumption of mass media rather than their uses, which echoes the less interactive nature of mass media compared to social media. The notable exception is [pseudonym redacted] who monitored her face on TV by virtue of her former profession as a news anchor, in which case she used to work for mass media.

Thai women celebrities' looks on TV were influential in the decisions to have CS for some of the recipients in this study. Celebrity culture can be defined as “the site of a surplus of contemporary society’s charisma—by its very nature it involves individuals with special qualities” (Ferris, 2007, pp. 372-373). Celebrity status is usually likened to high favourability (Hunter, Burgers, and Davidsson, 2009), and one of such qualities relate to outstanding physical attractiveness (Ferris, 2007). Tracy’s below message exemplifies such a celebrity effect at a personal level:

I think it [TV] was relevant, as I felt that I grew up alongside Thai media, having been a very very Thai kid. Having studied in [a] Thai school[s], having had Thai friends. I felt that I engaged with the media that were like Thai dramas. And [I] felt that Thai celebrities had the value like this as well, that having a nose bridge was good, having a nose bridge would be attractive. (Tracy, redacted)

This quote is linked to Tracy's justification for having CS. As Tracy added, she particularly followed one Thai woman celebrity who was famous in the Thai drama realm. Similarly, Gemma mentioned the impact of the same actress, but unlike Tracy, she directed towards this celebrity's eyes rather than nose. Moreover, when I asked Net as to whether the media had to do with her reason for undergoing rhinoplasty, she admitted that she thoroughly compared her face with another Thai woman celebrity. Net hoped to look comparable to this public figure. These accounts are tied to "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) in the sense of being inspired by the glamour of women celebrities to enhance their own appearance. Indeed, women celebrities cultivate their appearance for their cultural and economic status on both mass and social media, whilst strengthening aesthetic demands at large (Genz, 2015).

Magazines have long portrayed and moulded postfeminism, with respect to 1) neoliberal incitements for women to be more confident in themselves and keep improving their looks; 2) meticulous surveillance of women's bodies (Gill, 2016; 2017, p. 616). The latter facet resonates with how multiple interviewees (Klee, Pingpong, and Sasi) looked at beautiful representations of women models featured in magazines via "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94), as illustrated by the extract below.

Magazines may have been relevant, because at that time there were still not a range of mobile phones, right?, and they were Japanese magazines, something like these. So yeah, [they] may have been relevant in that respect, may have been relevant in an unconscious manner that actually [they] have been relevant, that in the past which types of faces were hit, I would want to have a type of face like them, something like that, maybe. (Klee, **redacted**)

The quote demonstrates Klee's articulation of Japanese magazines in Thailand. Japanese popular culture gained widespread currency among Thai people until the successful emergence of Korean popular culture across Southeast Asia (Siriyuvasak and Shin, 2007, p. 109). While Klee followed Japanese magazines, Sasi and Pingpong were inspired to have CS by Western magazines that featured both Asian and white Western models. Pingpong, like Klee, depicted her uptake of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) as inspirational, in the sense of having been fascinated by attractive models. Meanwhile, Sasi narrated a role of magazines in shaping her CS rationalisation in alignment with both inspirational and comparative qualities of this gaze. Sasi found magazine models' facial make-up pretty and wanted to look like them. Then, she described her frustrations when she was unable to wear eye make-up in a similar way to the magazine models, due to her original modest eyelids. Fundamentally, Sasi, Klee, and Pingpong echo the existing literature on postfeminism that glamorous images in magazines typically intensify societal beauty demands (McRobbie, 2009; Gill, 2017, p. 616), in this case the demand to surgically alter appearance.

6.5 The World of Work

This career-related section showcases high societal aesthetic demands amongst Thais which affected power within young Thai women who undertook CS. All of the surgeon participants noted the great diversity of occupations of their young Thai women patients. Their professions range from celebrities, influencers, and models to businessowners, sales agents, civil servants, and office workers. Correspondingly, the CS experiences of several interviewees were induced by their former/current career areas based in Thailand. These cover not only areas/occupations for which looks are prerequisite (advertisement, fashion influencer, beauty pageant, news anchor, physical

exercise teaching, online fashion branding, and hospitality), but also ones for which interpersonal communication is generally crucial (account executive, nursing, medicine, and therapy). These participants differed in terms of their ages at the time of the procedures. Most of these recipients closely connected such career-related rationale with their aspirations to burgeon further in their existing jobs, whereas a few stressed the employability aspect.

Importantly, these CS accounts are interlaced with “the new sexual contract” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54), notably with regards to “postfeminist masquerade” (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718). This masquerade is conceptualised as “the mask of make-up and the crafting of a highly-styled mode of personal appearance” (McRobbie, 2007, p. 725) to further thrive in the professional domain. This line of CS rationalisation demonstrates modest materialisations of patriarchy, because “postfeminist masquerade” (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718), albeit ostensibly promising for women, is actually a trap to surrender patriarchal oppression (McRobbie, 2007). In this sense, their career-related CS motives were affixed to both beauty patriarchy and the professional angle of patriarchy in Walby’s (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) theorisation. Indeed, the career sphere in Thailand has been patriarchal, by virtue of gender asymmetries concerning income, career progressions, and career participation (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023).

The first relevant account was about Tina’s aspiration to burgeon in the hospitality career path (‘pretty’ and airhostess), as outlined in the quote below. ‘Pretty’ is a subcategory of Thai women idols, usually with ample breasts, whose works often revolve around appealing a swathe of individuals at expos (Limkangvanmongkol and Abidin, 2019, p. 97).

At that time, [I] probably had a part-time job; it was, [I] was a pretty, had a part-time job, yes. And it required looks that were used for competition, yes at that time. And once being grown up, [I] started to wish to become an airhostess. Airhostess was part

of [the reason] for, okay, changing my face again [chuckling], yes. (Tina,

redacted)

Tina's chuckling may imply her subtle shyness associated with a multitude of times she engaged with CS. Tina's account is tied up with "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) in the sense of seeing other 'pretties' and being motivated to cosmetically enhance herself, to ensure an appearance-focused competitive edge. However, from another perspective, Tina was profoundly embedded in beauty patriarchy, since 'pretties' are typically targeted by photographers who are predominantly men (Mokkhasen, 2016, para. 5). Mindy was another recipient who looked at other women via "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) in the professional domain. Both Tina and Mindy depicted their adoption of this gaze as comparative and inspirational. In Mindy's case, celebrities were pivotal, mirroring the sweeping perception that celebrities are romanticised due to their glamour and economic achievements (Ferris, 2007; Redmond, 2014). This internship opportunity led Mindy to scrutinise her face and wish to increase appearance-based self-satisfaction:

At that time, I interned ... at [a Thai company in Bangkok]. And I saw celebrities every day, and each of them was attractive. I therefore felt that [they were] attractive, I also wanted to be attractive. And [when I] took photos, how to say, they did not look pretty. [I wondered] what I should undergo first, so I tried researching, the procedure that can make [individuals] prettier. I found that it was a nose, as it is situated at the centre of faces. Undergoing [rhinoplasty] can change faces. (Mindy,

redacted)

This section turns now to career areas that do not centralise beauty per se but require interpersonal communication. [Pseudonym redacted]'s profession relates to medicine, wherein she liaised with an array of men and women co-workers. She reported having yearned for boosting her self-satisfaction when looking at herself in the mirror, but also reducing her worry when interacting with these colleagues:

I feel that I have thought of this matter [beauty] as equal to my profession. [They] go hand in hand with each other. ... Meeting a lot of people has made me worry a lot about the eyes of other people [fellow medical students and nurses].

(redacted)

This excerpt illustrates that “postfeminist masquerade” (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718) can pervade the areas wherein beauty is traditionally peripheral. Also pertinent to this was Amy's account. She demonstrated how her professional area (therapy) resulted in her decision to undergo rhinoplasty. As the below excerpt suggests, Amy undertook CS partially to create a pleasant atmosphere for her clients, challenging the understanding that having CS is emblematic of vanity (Blum, 2003; Northrop, 2012).

Perhaps, actually there were multiple reasons. But ... the period when I made the decision to undergo [CS] was around ... [the period] that [I] worked from home quite a lot. Then, I deliberated every time, normally while working [or attending a] meeting [in-person], I rarely looked at the screen and saw my own face all the time like this, right? Then, when I ... saw my own face unintentionally [on the screen], [I] got to know my own defect to a greater extent. And, yes, and ... I had to be a person

who supported clients. And I had to be an exemplar, I had to create a good atmosphere; meanwhile, sometimes I still worried about my own look. For instance, [I] went to them to support them, and then when smiling and talking, I turned to myself and did not like my own smiling face. That is, [I had] buck teeth like that and a big nose, there were moments when that [feeling] sprang up. (Amy, **redacted**)

Paralleling Amy's message, Daar, Chiodo, and Rohrich (2021) claim that looking at oneself via video conference calls can erode confidence in facial appearance. Similarly, Gill (2021b, p. 34) uncovers how the use of meeting software placed further pressure upon some of her participants to scrutinise their own looks due to the camera feature. This extract about Amy is career-related, whereas this specific finding from Gill (2021b) appertains to social lives. Nonetheless, both proffer that fine-grained appearance-based self-monitoring in keeping with "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) can take place via such meeting software during the Covid-19 pandemic. Amy was the only interviewee who weaved such software into her motivation for having CS. Yet, her story is worth noting by virtue of its convergence with Baimai's and Ree's earlier CS motives resulting from constant self-policing through a selfie perspective. Despite being situated outside social media, Amy's looks-focused self-observation via meeting software mirrors an important scholarly claim regarding the reciprocal nature of surveillance on social media (Tokunaga, 2011; Marwick, 2012). Amy scrupulously surveilled herself and was concomitantly surveilled, whereby the operation of power centred around interpersonal communication and herself.

6.6 Education

This section is concerned with intense beauty demands imposed by educational environments and culture in Thailand. A number of the participants connected their educational

culture or milieus with the desires to surgically improve their looks. In other words, these educational elements fused power within these recipients into their CS experiences. These participants varied in respect of their levels of pre-op educational privileges. On the whole, the time periods between being influenced by such educational culture or environments and subsequently undergoing CS were comparatively short. This finding is consistent with the widespread understanding that childhood and adolescence are the critical periods for self-identity formation to which both body image and the educational domain are fundamental (Sandhu, *et al.*, 2012; Branje, *et al.*, 2021).

6.6.1 Educational Environments

Premised upon Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) theorisation of patriarchy, educational milieus in Thailand illustrate the intertwinement between beauty patriarchy and femininity in education. As multiple participants captured, on the grounds of the normalisation of CS among Thais, some CS-related conversations with/among their friends in their Thai educational institutions prompted them to undertake CS. Rung's CS account is exemplary of this impact:

At that time, when undergoing [redacted] surgery, I remember [I] lay down, lay down, lay down like this, lay down [and] talked. And "you, I want to undertake rhinoplasty" said all [women] friends, but I was sitting and playing with the mobile phone, I was the only one who was playing with the mobile phone without expressing any opinions. But in the morning at 8am, [I] was not in [my] room, picking money 10,000, over 10,000 Baht²⁷ [and] taking a taxi alone. And friends rang [me], what happened. Once exiting the operation room, [I] told [them] that you,

²⁷ Equivalent to over 220 GBP as of December 2023.

I was fine, I came here to undergo [redacted] surgery. Everyone was shocked that “did you actually undergo it?”, [I] had not told anyone. (Rung, [redacted])

Rung made clear that the above dialogue synchronised with the normalisation of CS in Thailand. Rung’s narrative is intriguing in that she heard her women friends talking about CS at her Thai undergraduate university, immediately became inspired to begin her CS journey, and went to have her first CS operation on the following day.

Similarly, Net, Ying, and Zizi took inspiration from beauty-related dialogues among/with their school/faculty mates, all/most of whom were women, to engage with CS. As Net and Ying added, these conversations coincided with the wider popularisation of CS in Thailand at that time and made them think it was acceptable to have CS. Zizi’s case was special in the sense that this motivation had to do with her beauty-related academic subject that entailed this group of faculty mates. Above all, such peers alluded to women’s subjectification through beauty patriarchy which engendered a horizontal impact upon these four participants. This finding is emblematic of muted materialisations of patriarchy. More precisely, within feminist theory, such women-dominated interactions establish a communal sense of highly valuing aesthetic standards on account of their shared gender, construing aesthetic practices as enjoyable to undertake (Carey, Donaghue, and Broderick, 2010).

Furthermore, several CS recipients embraced “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) in Thai educational settings, by noticing attractive fellow women students and becoming inspired to have CS for their appearance enhancement. These participants, one of whom was Neen, exemplify the comparative and inspirational characteristics of this gaze.

When entering the university, it was like, that friend was pretty, I also wanted to be better-looking. So, I thought that what I wanted to get surgically altered was probably nose. (Neen, **redacted**)

This was another way a horizontal effect permeated these interviewees' lives whereby the patriarchal essence of beauty was in place in a muted manner. As Winch (2015) claims, women project patriarchy onto each other via appearance-focused observation. Subsequently, this dynamic limits women's choices not to conform to aesthetic benchmarks (Winch, 2015).

6.6.2 Educational Culture

This sub-section is rooted in societal beauty privilege that is hierarchical and patriarchal (Van Esterik, 2000; Käng, 2021). Some of the participants (Amy, Clara, and Kanoon) constructed their narratives in relation to Thai educational culture with a negative tone, which connotes the urgency of such culture to be tackled. This negative tone is contrasted with the postfeminist emphasis on positive emotions in place of negativity (Gill, 2017, p. 610; Gill and Kanai, 2018). Clara's account on her university life is one of the examples:

In Thailand, it is ... a problem that is deep-rooted if I analyse [it] properly, it is from SOTUS. ... I felt that how seniors treated good-looking juniors and [how they treated] unattractive [juniors], or [their] interests in [these two groups of] juniors differed. ... I certainly liked being a centre of attention, so I felt bad. It was another point that motivated [me] to change myself. (Clara, **redacted**)

As shown in the quote, Clara addressed an alarming societal issue caused by SOTUS in Thailand. SOTUS (Seniority, Order, Tradition, Unity, and Spirit) is described as hazing in Thai educational institutions which places emphasis on the concepts of respect and hierarchies (Winichakul, 2015). SOTUS, involving its patriarchal basis (Teeratanabodee, 2023), accords well with the profound impact of hierarchical relations in larger Thai society based on wealth, age, and gender (Winichakul, 2015). Seniors generally treat junior students who are considered attractive well compared to their less attractive counterparts. In Amy's personal experience, the nexus between SOTUS and appearance impinged particularly on women university students with regards to networking. Her experience with SOTUS yielded her discomfort with her pre-CS look and thus her lack of self-confidence. Amy mentioned that her decision to have rhinoplasty was indirectly influenced by this SOTUS effect.

Mink highlighted another important component of Thai educational culture:

It was probably because of friends in class that were good-looking. And, during the secondary school period, there were performances, cheerleaders, drum majors, and opportunities that required selection. In my view, I was a person, a kid who certainly paid attention to study, but I was rarely selected for something like this due to appearance. It was a complex [of inferiority], yes. (Mink, **redacted**)

As written in chapter three, beauty privilege has come into force in Thai education, in the forms of drum mayors, cheerleaders, and university queen bees (Limkangvanmongkol and Abidin, 2019; Plook Magazine, 2020). As widely known, these people have been predominantly women. Hence, based upon Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) theorisation of patriarchy, these aesthetically privileged individuals epitomise the linkage between beauty patriarchy and femininity in education.

Inherent in this is the profoundly hierarchical nature of educational institutions in Thailand which intensifies aesthetic demands (Käng, 2021, p. 275). To restate, the term ‘university queen bees’ refers to glamorous university students (Limkangvanmongkol and Abidin, 2019, p. 98).

Comparable to Mink’s above account on beauty privilege in her secondary school, Clara and Kanoon posited that some elements of university culture which involve looks-based selection, university queen bees and cheerleaders for example, affected their decisions to have CS. As Kanoon added, because she was rarely chosen to join activities in her institutions due to her pre-CS look, she needed to be good at studying in order to have a place to stand in society. This elicited an inferiority complex in her mind and therefore her decision to undertake rhinoplasty.

The above accounts about Clara, Amy, Mink, and Kanoon build upon the postfeminist concept of “the new sexual contract” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54). That is, these interviewees demonstrated how the pressures towards women to prosper regarding both education and body image can be merged into one form of compulsion. In this way, beauty privilege in such a hierarchical educational realm prompted the participants to embrace beauty patriarchy. However, even those in beauty-related privileged positions in educational institutions can also be under such pressures. Meg’s account is illustrative: she served as a cheerleader for her all-girls’ school. According to Carey, Donaghue, and Broderick (2010), all-girls’ schools are notably beauty-ingrained, since girls reduce a sense of ‘coercion’ to conform to beauty ideals on the grounds of their shared gender. The principal source of Meg’s CS motivation was a subtle form of patriarchy. Specifically, she felt the competitive aesthetics of other women cheerleaders that ‘automatically’ provoked her to compare herself with them, considering the large attention to cheerleaders within the school commanded. This indicates her application of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) towards other women cheerleaders and herself in a comparative manner.

It can be summarised that women students regardless of looks are subject to appearance-based pressure induced by educational culture and/or milieus, which results in some women having undergone CS like the participants in this section.

6.7 Surveillance and Commenting from Others

6.7.1 Appearance Bullying

This sub-section is an interesting addition to feminist theory, wherein previous works on bullying centralise 1) behaviours that are deviant from heteronormative femininity and masculinity (see for example: Ringrose and Renold, 2010; Ringrose and Rawlings, 2015); 2) body-shaming advertising that may drastically constrict societal aesthetic standards (Ringrose and Regehr, 2023). That is, pre-op appearance bullying was prominent in my data. Women are more predisposed to be body shamed in comparison with men due to beauty patriarchy (Dolezal, 2016), which has also been the case in Thai society (Van Esterik, 2000; Chaipraditkul, 2013; Käng, 2021). In Thailand, appearance bullying has long been conceived of as a norm (Käng, 2021), even before the popularisation of CS among Thais (Pengpid and Peltzer, 2013). As pointed out in chapter three, commenting on one's appearance has been socially construed as a way of greeting in Thailand (Käng, 2021, p. 277). Beauty-related norms often effectively meld power within individuals to improve their looks (Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2023). In chorus with all of these points, almost 20 of the interviewees regarded their experiences of being body shamed as shaping their CS rationale. These participants varied considerably with concerns to their ages at the time of the operations.

When it comes to their pre-op stories, these interviewees were usually bullied in their childhood or teenage years, although in several cases they encountered this in their adulthood. This is consonant with some studies (Jones and Crawford, 2006; Tzani, 2018; Sukoco, Purnomo, and Hadiwijoyo, 2022) showing that childhood or teenage histories of being body shamed can engender

low levels of self-satisfaction and/or self-esteem/confidence as well as trauma. This is attributed to the perception that childhood and adolescence are the critical periods for self-identity formation to which appearance is integral (Branje, *et al.*, 2021). As reported in the interviews, nearly all of the perpetrators were older or around the same age as them. This may have been the result of far younger individuals often not wanting to directly pick on someone older than them. Older people typically have more authority than those who are younger in Thai society (McCampbell, *et al.*, 1999; Sringernyuang, *et al.*, 2020; Baker and Pasuk, 2022). Another possible reason was the recent cultural shift against body shaming in Thailand, which casts light upon the ubiquitous perception that appearance bullying has long instilled into older Thai generations (Bunnag, 2021).

The body-shaming perpetrators, who directed power towards the CS recipients, were a rather even split between women and men. This result shows how “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) and “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) were adopted in an adverse manner, as illustrated by a multiplicity of the stories in this sub-section. Paralleling Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz’s (2016) study, this sub-section demonstrates the judgmental characteristic of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). Indeed, due to the shared gender eliciting the communal recognition of beauty demands, women sometimes negatively push one another to successfully engage with bodywork and therefore perpetuate beauty patriarchy (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 108). With reference to “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6), this sub-section extends Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz’s (2016) research regarding the judgmental essence of this gaze, given body shaming from men within this Thai CS context.

Some of the recipients in this study received greatly offensive words. These include comments from friends or co-workers concerning: eyes getting closer together while sleeping due to the absence of a nose bridge (as encountered by Ree); where to breathe given no nose bridge (Zan); being cast as the most unattractive woman in the company (Ying); and being told that her pre-CS

look hardly fit in well with her university where on average students look attractive (Amy). Ree's case is intriguing in the sense that her close women friends bullied her as such, which echoes Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016) study that unmasks the omnipresence of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) even amongst close women friends. Meanwhile, Amy, Ying, and Zan heard the foregoing brutal words predominantly from men, presenting the blatant versions of "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Ying's and Amy's cases unveil both judgmental and comparative characteristics of "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6), showing how these two participants were judged as less attractive than most women in their affiliations.

Body shaming from family members generally results in strong feelings of inadequacy, because it could be more mentally damaging in view of the implied fellowship amongst family members, as shown in Net's message:

My dad teased, mom has a nose bridge, dad does not have a nose bridge, why, when being born, did [I] not pick up the right one?, why did [I] pick up the person without a nose bridge? [I] was like, your genetics, still [he] blamed me. ... Most people were my [men and women] relatives that teased something like this. The mom was like "do not be exposed to the sun a lot, otherwise", "as you are already grown up, why not undergoing rhinoplasty?", she was the one who even suggested this. So, it had made me not very confident about the nose since back then. (Net, **redacted**)

As outlined in the quote, while Net had no control over her gene expression, her father's feelings of unattractiveness via "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) were projected onto her. In this scenario, her father clearly demonstrated the comparative and judgmental attributes of this gaze. Meanwhile, having adopted "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94), Net's mother

made suggestions for Net to avoid getting tanner and to engage with rhinoplasty, which Net deemed as a form of body shaming. Fairer complexions are associated with higher class standings and thus typically desirable in Thailand (Van Esterik, 2000; Aizura, 2009; Esara, 2009; Limkangvanmongkol and Abidin, 2019). Net viewed comments on her look from her family members as undermining her body confidence. Instead of combatting gendered beauty norms, the mother succumbed to them by not only advising Net to further beautify herself but also providing her with partial CS financial assistance. This financial support epitomises supportive motherhood in line with desirable versions of appearance.

Toon's long-standing inferiority complex prior to her rhinoplasty parallels Net's preceding story. Toon's mother constantly squeezed her nose in her childhood, as Toon differed from her parents and her elder sister who were born with a nose bridge. Her mother exhibited "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) in both judgmental and comparative manners. Relatedly, Toon said that "[I] have to say that since the beginning, since birth, since [I] can remember, [I] am a person who always had trauma regarding nose". Clearly, Net's and Toon's mothers were embedded in the postfeminist motif of women's massive attention to aesthetics (Gill, 2007c), having passed beauty patriarchy onto their daughters. That said, parents were peripheral in the pre-op accounts around body shaming. Rather, friends and elder relatives, irrespective of gender, stood at the core, as instantiated by Tracy's and Klee's below stories.

Being compared to the striking looks of other family members, regardless of gender, can be particularly mentally damaging due to the absence of control of each person's unique gene expression, as exemplified by Tracy:

Actually, I myself had wanted to undergo [rhinoplasty] since [I was] a kid, because it was so strange that [my] dad [my] mom, both of them have nose bridges. And

everyone [mostly women relatives] had expected that I would have been born and had [a nose bridge]. But [I] was born and did not have [it]. ... My mom is very attractive. So, everyone liked to say that why not having a nose bridge like your mom? Where has [it] gone? I felt that it was a bit of an inferiority complex. (Tracy, **redacted**)

As the quote indicates, Tracy's (mostly women) relatives compared her with her mother whom Tracy described as very attractive, which must have put significant pressure on Tracy as well as strong feelings of inadequacy. Tracy admitted that such comments were interlaced with her meticulous facial self-scrutiny, having induced her rhinoplasty. In addition to the above message, the relatively narrow age gap between Tracy and her mother and the singer-mom status of her mother resulted in Tracy being close with her mother's (primarily women) mid-adult friends. This led to a similar experience of being body shamed. Klee had an analogous encounter to Tracy: her **redacted** friends, most of whom were women, compared her with her brother **redacted** **redacted**. This caused an inferiority complex in her mind and invoked her decision to start her CS journey. These stories about Tracy and Klee are paradigmatic of the comparative and judgmental basis of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94).

From a perspective of gender, neoliberal injunctions are especially directed towards women to cultivate their own minds and bodies, both of which are considered mutually constitutive (Budgeon, 2003). This has been the case in this project considering the accounts about appearance bullying. The perpetrators provoked an inferiority complex and/or lower self-esteem/confidence towards several participants (the above experiences about Klee, Net, Toon, and Tracy for instance). This finding is congruent with the academic literature that body shaming is connected with the

sense of self and psychological states (MacCallum and Widdows, 2018; Widdows, 2022b).

Precisely, according to DeYoung (2015), shame often provokes feelings of inadequacy and isolation from other people.

The majority of the recipients who were body shamed prior to the operations expressed their negative feelings towards the body-shaming perpetrators in the interviews. However, a number of the participants, including Moz and Poopae in the quotes below, simultaneously/solely tried to avoid looking at their experiences of being bullied in an overly adverse manner. They attempted to soften the severity of body shaming, by reframing such experiences as positive drivers for their aesthetic modifications, or as occurrences upon which they ought not to dwell. Given the postfeminist discourse of optimistic expressions at the expense of gender disparities (Gill, 2017, p. 610), these particular interviewees may have formulated postfeminist identities.

Around that time I was like, this eye look was already good; that is, sometimes I did not care about people's words. Until the day when the eyes became really saggy, they were not attractive at all, I then accepted that okay, I was not attractive anymore, the eyes were not attractive anymore. (Moz, **redacted**)

[It was] not the motivation that made me want to undergo [CS], because bullying words [from women friends] did not, I did not really think about those words, yes. (Poopae, **redacted**)

Such optimistic expressions are captured by “cruel optimism” (Berlant, 2006, p. 1). It is the postfeminist notion about one's framing of adverse situations in ways that sidetrack the root cause of social injustice (Berlant, 2006). This means Moz, Poopae, and several other recipients exhibited

their self-management of both appearance-based and psychological aspects in tune with the neoliberal regime, having depicted patriarchy in a muted way.

6.7.2 CS Advocates

Shifting our attention towards more positive occurrences for the participants, a number of them reported having been suggested by individuals in their lives to engage with CS. These CS advocates acknowledged some room for appearance enhancement for the interviewees who differed concerning their ages around the time of the procedures. Across the data, most of the CS advocates were cisgender women, followed by transgender women and gay men. Based on the recipients' accounts, all of these women and gay men advocated the recipients to have CS in a pleasant way. This finding brings the thesis to suggest that "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) can be adopted in an advocative manner, feeding into the central theoretical contribution of this study: advancing postfeminism. However, this section also showcases multiple accounts that directly relate to "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) within heterosexual romantic relationships.

None of the recipients in this study regarded their fathers or other men family members as advocates for them to undertake CS. In contrast, across the data, the mothers overall came into play as the strongest advocates, connoting supportive motherhood in conformity to aesthetic benchmarks. Paradigmatic of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) from the mothers and other women was Frung's rhinoplasty narrative. Her mother brought her to consult with a doctor when she was in grade [redacted], but at that point Frung managed to avoid it by virtue of her fear of CS pain. As the below quote shows, years later Frung's women friends successfully persuaded her to have rhinoplasty by making an advanced payment to a practitioner before Frung's approval.

Actually, I was a person who thought that I [had] a big nose and [had] no nose bridge constantly. If I had [a nose bridge], [I] thought, it would probably be better. Also, another factor was that [women university] friends were the ones who encouraged all the time, wanted [me] to undergo [CS], wanted [me] to undergo [CS]. Also, [they] were the ones who paid the insurance cost [for me] [chuckling], so [I] went to have it like following through after a false step. (Frung, **redacted**)

Reflected in her chuckling, Frung acknowledged a strong peer pressure from women alike due to the advanced payment. Since her women friends were satisfied with their CS that had taken place at this CS institution, Frung decided to undertake it and tolerate the CS pain. Her mother was eventually the person who paid in full for this operation. Altogether, this account demonstrates that Frung's women friends exerted more power in her than her mother, because of these friends' satisfactory CS experiences at this particular CS institution.

Frung's narrative centres around her horizontally strongly advocated decision (i.e. decision heavily suggested by other women) to undergo CS, considering the solid encouragements from her mother and women friends. A few more participants similarly made their horizontally strongly advocated decisions to engage with CS on account of the huge encouragements from their mothers. These interviewees include Cee, Deer, Moz, and Summer. This finding shows that women's communal great interests in beauty turned into subtle materialisations of patriarchy. Indeed, in wider patriarchal social structures, beauty patriarchy fundamentally impinges more on women compared to men (Gill, 2007a). Due to the ascendancy of neoliberal ethos, women are seduced into the imperative to take risks and endure the pain for enhanced appearance (Dosekun, 2017).

Except for Moz, the other four recipients were under 20 years old or in their early 20s when making these strongly advocated decisions to undergo CS. Moz made such a decision in her early 30s. As Foulkes, *et al.* (2018) have discovered, children and teenagers aged 12-18 are more prone to be socially amenable than individuals aged 19-59. This thesis presents a slightly different result that women over 18 years old can also be heavily persuaded by peer pressure and/or figures of authority in their families to undergo such an invasive aesthetic practice. Nevertheless, on average, these five participants were very young at that time, which broadly accords well with the claim made by Foulkes, *et al.* (2018) that younger ages positively correlate with greater susceptibility to be socially influenced. On top of that, all of these five participants were fully/mostly financially supported by their older women family members (usually mothers) to engage with CS. In essence, these five cases sit at the intersection of gender, age, and economic capital, showing the reifications of supportive motherhood and sisterhood in passing beauty patriarchy onto these participants.

Beauty patriarchy has long been inscribed within the status quo in favour of men (Bartky, 1990; Wolf, 1991). Accordingly, there were still a handful of the accounts related to CS advocates who were cisgender heterosexual men and directly used “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) towards the participants (Klee, Jang, and Mink). These recipients varied with reference to their ages around the time of the operations. Yet, all of their men CS advocates were their current/former partners. Such narratives about Mink, Klee, and Jang showcase the advocative yet judgmental essence of this gaze. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Mink was the only interviewee who considered men as the major provenance of her motive for undergoing CS. Likewise, Mink’s rationale for her breast augmentation surgery depicts a linear influence of a man. Mink’s boyfriend encouraged Mink to get her breasts augmented. However, there was a concrete distinction between Mink’s account and Klee’s and Jang’s narratives. Unlike Mink, Klee and Jang pointed out that the mainsprings of their CS experiences were themselves. These two participants displayed their

agentic power in conjunction with the postfeminist vocabulary of individualisation within “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162).

The following appertains to Klee’s story:

My first boyfriend, I used to ask, I used to ask, whether [he] wanted me to save money to see him in [a Western country] or wanted me to use this amount of money for undergoing breast augmentation surgery. And [he] selected that, undertake breast augmentation surgery. Was [he] okay? Was it possible? [I] therefore thought that the boyfriend wanted me to have breasts to that extent? [I was like], I shall undergo it, something like that. (Klee, **redacted**)

Klee departed from Mink and Jang, in that she showed her questioning of such CS advocacy as indicated in the quote, whereas Mink and Jang did not ‘position’ their current/previous partners as negative at all. Nevertheless, all of these three interviewees shied away from beauty-related sexism expressed by these men, which can be regarded as one of the patterns of silences in the data. Specifically, after saying the above quote, instead of beauty sexism, Klee drew attention to her young age when being with her first partner. As Klee explained, such a young age brought them to get together purely due to appearance, and then this boyfriend outrightly influenced her to engage with breast augmentation surgery. While recounting the above breast augmentation motive, Mink went on to note that her boyfriend did not force her to have her breasts augmented; he just implicitly said so during sexual intercourse. Mink admitted, with a pleasant tone, that he was attracted to her purely because of her post-op facial look rather than her personality. About Jang, whilst having been directly encouraged by her former/current boyfriend to have her breasts surgically augmented, Jang did not depict his encouragement and teasing on her breasts as negative:

Jang: Initially, [I] was contemplating that [I] wanted to have it [breast augmentation surgery], but there was no time. Then, out of the blue, the partner teased me that undergoing it? So I was undergoing [laughing]. If the partner encouraged, I would undertake [it].

Researcher: *Or*²⁸, the partner was the one who encouraged a bit, right?

Jang: He just teased me that, undergoing it? [chuckling]. [He] saw that [they were] very flat. So [I] seriously intended to have it.

Researcher: *Orr*²⁹.

Jang: Yes.

(Jang, redacted)

Jang further individualised her aesthetic modification, by narrating that this partner afterwards tried to stop Jang from undertaking breast augmentation surgery, but she was determined to engage with this procedure. Altogether, Jang, Klee, and Mink may have constructed their identities relative to the postfeminist discourse regarding optimistic portrayals in articulating manifest forms of sexism (Baker, 2010). These three cases parallel the preceding notion of “cruel optimism” (Berlant, 2006, p. 1) concerning affective self-management to frame questionable situations in ways that deflect the root cause of social injustice (Berlant, 2006). Their alignment with this notion displays patriarchy in a subtle manner.

Additionally, across the data, only Mink connected sexual intercourse with CS rationale, although 13 out of 50 CS recipients reported having undertaken breast augmentation surgery. This

²⁸ An expression of acknowledgement.

²⁹ An expression of acknowledgement.

was a pattern of silences in the data, complicating “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) to which the trope of sexualisation is paramount. The normalisation of women’s sexual practices is championed in the broader postfeminist climate (Gill, 2007a). This finding in my study, though, is unsurprising considering a prevalent Thai discourse: the ongoing sensitiveness of talking about sexual intercourse (Ounjit, 2015). The association of women’s sexualisation with the nation’s enemy has been entrenched in Thai society (Harrison, 2017). In brief, this is one of the ways Thai conservatism distances itself from the hitherto Western-centric basis of postfeminism, feeding into the central contribution of this thesis: advancing postfeminism.

6.8 Heterosexual Romantic Desirability

Heterosexual romantic desirability was not deemed dominant in the data of this thesis about the pre-op accounts. Still, it is a noteworthy element to unpack, because this is where the (hetero)sexuality angle of patriarchy and beauty patriarchy were interlocked based upon Walby’s (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) theorisation. In feminist theory, heterosexual romantic desirability is largely tied to the social stigmatisation of singlehood that impinged particularly on women due to the ubiquitous stereotypical association between women and dependence (Sharp and Ganong, 2011). The media portrayals have profoundly linked the postfeminist grammar of women’s individual choices to coupledness rather than singlehood (Taylor, 2012). Such desirability has to do with beauty patriarchy, since physical attractiveness of partners has thus far mattered more for men compared to women (Jeffreys, 2014).

Clara, Freya, Lala, and Meg, all of whom self-reported as heterosexual, linked heterosexual romantic desirability to their CS rationale. Hence, these four interviewees’ self-beautification revolves around their longing for “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Their rationalisations bring the thesis to characterise this gaze as desirable for some women. According to Walby (1989, pp.

225-226), heterosexuality has long shaped a variety of societal preferences including heterosexual relationships. As Budgeon (2016, p. 413, original emphasis) puts it, “women who are not normatively partnered ... often struggle to present themselves as ‘empowered’ or ‘liberated’ at these moments”. The excerpt below epitomises the nexus between the postfeminist motif of women’s individual choices adhered to coupledness and “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6):

[I] probably wanted to be pretty, in order to gain acceptance from the opposite sex who was not friends. [I mean] perhaps general men. Probably, at that time, [I] probably wanted to have a boyfriend, when being a kid, having wanted to be pretty, having wanted to have someone who came to flirt, having wanted something like these, yes. (Freya, **redacted**)

Freya equated this quote with the mainspring of her CS. Notwithstanding this, she emphasised that the mainspring was ‘herself’ having taken heteronormative beauty standards into consideration. Clara and Lala also described themselves as the major source of their motives for CS. Meg likened this source to her internal comparison between herself and several other women in her school. This means all of the recipients who connected their CS narratives with heterosexual romantic desirability tried to display their agentic power, by individualising their principal sources of undertaking CS in congruence with postfeminism. This finding is indicative of postfeminist compulsions for individuals to underscore self-determination in place of subordination within gender relations (Baker, 2010, p. 190). To that end, these four interviewees showcased subtle reifications of patriarchy.

6.9 Chinese Physiognomy

This thesis complicates postfeminism in that Asian spirituality impacted upon the decisions of multiple interviewees to have CS, forming part of the overriding theoretical contribution of this project: advancing postfeminism. Chapter five demonstrated beauty styles for CS in alignment with Chinese physiognomy. This section articulates the role of this spiritual belief in shaping the motives for engaging with CS. As mentioned, Summer's aesthetic role model for her double eyelid surgery bears on Chinese physiognomy. Relatedly, she identified this spiritual belief as the origin of her motivation for having CS. The below message connotes Summer's decision strongly suggested by her mother as written earlier, but also her own interest in this spirituality. On this spiritual logic, Summer believed having saggy eyes could bring unfortunate luck to her life; therefore, she wanted to get them corrected for a better fortune.

Actually, I did not, starting from the eyes, right?, I wanted to believe in fortune-telling, and my mother wanted me to have my eyes corrected, because my eyes became saggy, right? ... And then it was my mother who wanted the child to undergo breast augmentation surgery. I followed her aspiration, so I was okay, it came as a pack, package that breast augmentation surgery and double eyelid surgery were performed together, yes. ... But primarily, initially, it began from my desire to have my eyes corrected only. (Summer, **redacted**)

These sorts of rationale pertinent to both beauty and spirituality make CS appear more acceptable to undergo compared to rationalisations purely about appearance, as the former seems to be less anchored in vanity. Thais regardless of gender are interested in Chinese physiognomy (Angkasirikul, 2006). Still, such spirituality-related justifications are inseparable from patriarchy,

given that CS has been more normalised among Thai women in comparison to their men counterparts, as outlined earlier. Chinese physiognomy drove Summer but also Tina to undertake CS, and these two interviewees varied with respect to their ethnic origins. Tina described as “wanting to have *Lao Teng* [meaning double eyelids in one of the Chinese dialects]” in search of better luck. On the contrary, although Pa pinpointed her belief in Chinese physiognomy, she decided to go against it in her rhinoplasty experience. There is a widespread belief on the connection between snub noses and good physiognomy regarding high earnings (Angkasirikul, 2006). Pa maintained that such a linkage was overshadowed by her desire to look aesthetically pleasing.

What the above three accounts tell us is the complexification of motivational identification, illustrating that Chinese physiognomy can influence the workings of power within individuals either in support of or in opposition to CS. That is, Summer and Tina conflated such physiognomy with their aspirations to undergo CS, whilst Pa weighed her appearance enhancement over this spirituality. Arguably, this contrast alludes to the tremendous effect of beauty demands. By having CS, Summer and Tina could become both luckier and prettier, given that their post-op appearance would be more closely aligned with both Chinese physiognomy and societal aesthetic standards. On the other hand, Pa recognised that her post-op nose would fit less with this spirituality, but she decided to prioritise attractive appearance over Chinese physiognomy.

From a feminist perspective, all of these participants embraced the self-help discourse in postfeminism. This self-help paradigm covers passion in spirituality and self-beautification in quest of greater self-empowerment (Baker, 2010). Having considered certain looks that are hailed as good in Chinese physiognomy, the recipients decided on whether to espouse this spiritual belief when comparing with aesthetics. What underpinned such consideration was the postfeminist feature of

women's self-responsibilisation to keep improving their own lives, whereby the patriarchal control flowed behind the scenes to perpetuate women's self-reliance (Baker, 2010).

Chapter Summary

Using feminist theory, this chapter sought to explore various motives of young Thai women for appearance alterations through CS, reflected in the sections and sub-sections. The chapter examined the first research question: what informs young Thai women's decisions to undertake CS? It argues that their accounts on the motivations for undergoing CS show a variety of subtle reifications of patriarchy or were greatly underlain by postfeminism. The next few paragraphs articulate the key take-aways from this argument.

The first take-away rests on the postfeminist grammar of women's individualisation (Gill, 2007c). The majority of the recipients in the project displayed their agentic power concerning their individualisation, by positioning fully or mainly themselves as the central source of their motives for engaging with CS. **The second take-away** is about the postfeminist feature of "horizontal surveillance" (Gill, 2017, p. 617) or scrutiny among women. There was a multiplicity of ways power productively operated amongst women concerning bodywork before the procedures. These points bring the thesis to regard "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) as prevalent within the pre-op accounts in this Thai CS context. Crucially, across the pre-op accounts, "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) from other women operationalised in a more positively advocative way towards the participants compared to "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6).

In closing, I would like to remark on **additional take-aways** from this chapter, the first one being some of the recipients' formulation of postfeminist identities when narrating their pre-op lives. This formulation relates to their attempts to present themselves as optimistic/positive by

toning down social injustice (body shaming and beauty-related sexism), which constitutes subtle reifications of patriarchy. As for another take-away, the chapter feeds into several theoretical contributions of this thesis: advancing postfeminism; and uncovering the ways the media facilitate young Thai women to undertake CS. Integral to the first theoretical contribution were Thai and East Asian influences that complicate the heretofore Western-centric essence of postfeminism. Other than Thai sociocultural elements, instrumental factors include East Asian (predominantly Korean) popular culture; temporary double eyelid products; and Chinese physiognomy. Additionally, another theoretical contribution of the project, demonstrating the learned narratives of rationalising CS within this Thai CS phenomenon, is primarily predicated upon what was written in this chapter. Chapter eight synthesises the results in chapters five to seven to lay out this particular contribution from a holistic viewpoint. Before that, this thesis will proceed to the second research question.

Chapter 7 – Was Cosmetic Surgery Worth It? Post-Operative Experiences

Chapter seven spells out diverse aspects of young Thai women's post-op accounts. These aspects include self-confidence/esteem; make-up and clothing; additional levels of appearance-based self-scrutiny; appearance-focused scrutiny from others; and the world of work. This is followed by the recipients' post-op positionalities regarding beauty and gender relations which underpinned their post-op narratives. The chapter responds to the following research question: what are young Thai women's post-op experiences?

As for the key argument of this chapter, while the recipients' post-op accounts parallel both subtle and apparent reifications of patriarchy, the former, namely postfeminism, was more salient. Such modest reifications cohere with several overarching findings. The first one is about the participants' elevated aesthetic/psychological/professional self-empowerment after the CS procedures, wherein their agentic power in meeting their personal and career desires increased. In this sense, self-empowerment is surrounding how the recipients' CS outcomes boosted their aesthetic self-satisfaction and their self-confidence/esteem, as well as facilitating their day-to-day makeover and professional lives. Secondly, the recipients were socially compelled to keep on monitoring their body images as a consequence of CS, whereby their agentic power was undermined. Both findings point to neoliberal, postfeminist incitements notably towards women to constantly improve themselves whilst beauty patriarchy is still sustained. The recipients' agentic power coincided with both men's policing and other women's policing of the participants' looks, which are deemed as linear and modest materialisations of patriarchy respectively. Altogether, the latter form of policing was more positive than the former, alluding to the sweeping postfeminist association of women's self-beautification with a means to raise their power (Gill, 2007c).

7.1 Prelude to Post-Operative Accounts: Increased Self-Satisfaction and CS Worthiness

Almost all of the CS recipients reported feeling more satisfied with their most recent post-op appearance compared to their original looks. They stood in alignment with the postfeminist motif of elevated self-empowerment owing to enhanced bodies, whereby beauty patriarchy was shrugged off (Gill, 2007c). However, some of the interviewees – who varied greatly in respect of their ages at the time of the interviews – underlined their concrete/prospective plans to get the same body parts corrected again. This bears on their self-surveillance in pursuit of more flawless looks, sharply resonating with the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3): the postfeminist concept that is conducive to successful femininity in neoliberal times (McRobbie, 2015). Enfolded by beauty patriarchy, this concept perpetuates women’s constant appearance-focused self-help at the expense of collective solidarity against gender disparities (McRobbie, 2015). In this vein, their potential/firm intentions to further change their bodies are tied to the patriarchal control, which covertly diminished their agentic power in reaching the pinnacle of their aesthetic self-satisfaction.

Nearly all of the recipients in this project reported CS was overall worth it. Their reasons for depicting CS as worthwhile overwhelmingly revolve around their higher appearance-based self-satisfaction as noted above, as well as their improved self-confidence/esteem and professional lives that are thoroughly demonstrated below in this chapter. Net and Nonny were the only participants who highlighted the unworthiness of CS. Nonny was motivated by 1) the environment where a number of Thai women had rhinoplasty; 2) her experience of being body shamed by (primarily men elder) relatives. She mentioned that CS was not that worth the investment for her personally, purely because she did not attain the level of nose sharpness she had desired. Nonny instantiates the adverse effect of the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3): imposing notably on women to strive for impeccable looks that are generally extremely difficult to obtain (McRobbie, 2015). Meanwhile, Net’s experience of being body shamed by her family sparked her to undergo CS, as outlined in

chapter six. Net said CS was personally not worth the investment, and her life would have been pretty much the same had she not undergone CS. Net figuratively posited that, for her, having rhinoplasty was tantamount to purchasing new trousers in that it was hardly life-changing. Net's case is illustrative of the unconvincingness of the postfeminist promise that women can "have it all" (Dosekun, 2020, p. 117). As she put it:

Actually, I expected more from it. I felt that once [I] had undergone it [CS], my life probably, should have become better. Say, prior it was around 80 out of 100, I wanted it [the score] to, after undergoing it, increase to be 85, overall qual, quality of life. [But], no, [it was] 80 like before [chuckling]. ... After being excited [for the rhinoplasty result], there was nothing left. It became a part of myself; I have still been the same sort of person, having the same problems, with the same personality. People have treated me the same way. So, not, not, [it was] like buying new trousers actually. (Net, **redacted**)

Two of the participants provided borderline responses to the question of whether CS was worth it. As Poopae responded, she initially believed it was worthwhile, but later she thought it was slightly disappointing. Her disappointed feeling adheres to 1) the subsequent reduced nose sharpness; 2) a greater variety of rhinoplasty shapes induced by more advanced innovations after her rhinoplasty. Poopae's account is exemplary of the illusory promise of the "perfect" (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3), considering the changeable nature of what is deemed flawless. Nevertheless, Poopae concluded that it was overall worth the investment, as she at least received something in return. Second, one of the participants with CS experience during Covid-19, Ou, pointed out that she did not receive a lot in return. Ou linked this thought to the pandemic that limited in-person interactions

to clearly show her post-op facial look. However, Ou said it was worth having the experience and being able to find out her post-op appearance. Ou's explanation parallels Budgeon's (2003, p. 47) argument that from a feminist perspective, women's sense of agency can be heightened to a certain extent through undertaking body modifications no matter how their looks turn out.

With reference to the most intriguing account about the worthiness of CS, early on in the interview, Freya mentioned that if she had been able to go back in time, she may not have undergone CS. This is due to the physical pain resulting from CS, and her feeling in the excessive societal value of beauty in Thailand which arose after she had resided in Europe. She realised in her university life that self-esteem needed to come from oneself in lieu of others. Freya found the question of whether CS was worth the investment tricky to respond to. Yet, she answered yes, owing to her increased self-esteem that led to life improvement (encompassing romantic desirability and self-development). This narrative from Freya strongly echoes "the confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19) that centres around women's self-love amidst the dispersal of unrealistic beauty ideals (Orgad and Gill, 2022). Freya's account is emblematic of dilemmas to resist unattainable aesthetic standards to fit into this cult(ure). Therefore, having looks surgically altered can be a way forward towards the ascendancy of self-esteem/confidence; it is this point that constitutes the heart of the next section.

7.2 CS is a Confidence/Esteem Booster

In addition to Freya, most of the CS recipients – with varied age ranges at the time of the interviews – reported experiencing overall heightened self-confidence/esteem following their CS operations. Only one participant, Pingpong, accentuated a decline in self-esteem/confidence after CS. However, instead of CS, her lowered self-esteem resulted from a coincidental rise of her body

weight. The following are several extracts relevant to the increase in self-confidence, both of which display the individualisation of such a confidence/esteem imperative:

Now [I] can do things confidently, when going to study, going to apply for jobs, or going wherever, [I] feel that body image is really important. It [CS] is a contributing element that has made me have more confidence to do anything. (Kung, **redacted**)

[I] feel that it is the decision that is rather correct, and feel I have got a lot more confidence in, how to call it, being on camera or something like these, in working. (Tracy, **redacted**)

Across the data, the recipients considered fostering self-confidence/esteem through CS as positive and integral to their lives. This finding illuminates the confidence/esteem imperative that is a by-product of neoliberalism (Orgad and Gill, 2022). Tracy even added that she might have her nose implant removed in her late 20s, owing to the potential great fulfilment of her self-confidence. This connotes not only the fluid nature of the body, but also her apparent championing of self-confidence. Deer reported believing that once one has become more confident in oneself, anything would be good. Another participant, Thip, maintained that CS was generally beneficial for boosting self-confidence/esteem. Deer's and Thip's statements championing self-confidence/esteem deeply corresponded to the opinions of some more recipients in this study.

Thip highlighted her increased self-esteem/confidence with respect to looking more attractive in photos. Several other recipients, including Tracy as indicated in the preceding quote, underscored the nexus between self-confidence and photo/video-taking, which echoes the proliferation of visual culture in line with neoliberal exhortations (Gill, 2021b). Adding to this, most

of the recipients in this project associated their heightened post-op self-confidence/esteem with the following: facial make-up; fashion; professions and job applications; interpersonal activities; compliments from peers about their post-op appearance; heterosexual romantic desirability; self-satisfaction with content posting via social media; self-scrutiny in the mirror; physical health self-care; and/or spending their lives in general. This finding presents the profound helpfulness of self-esteem/confidence, which is consonant with the inescapability of “the confidence cult(ure)” (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19) in private, romantic, and professional domains. Put another way, the recipients’ self-confidence/esteem is overall tied to postfeminism in respect of “the new sexual contract” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54) (regarding women’s beauty, fashion, and professional successes) and “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) (concerning appearance-based self-management as well as surveillance from other women).

A couple of the recipients mentioned their self-confidence/esteem plummeted following one/some of their operations. Firstly, Meg felt dissatisfied with the outcome of her first rhinoplasty. She pointed out that, if she had been able to turn back time, she would not have undertaken that particular procedure. Her self-esteem and confidence consequently dropped much lower than ever before. As Meg admitted, at that time she usually avoided having pictures taken of her, as she feared looking unattractive in these photos. Secondly, as Klee recounted, when one of her rhinoplasty experiences yielded a crooked nose, she lacked the courage to look people in the eye. Klee also encountered harsh appearance bullying during the recovery period when her face was swollen, which decreased her self-esteem. As Klee put it in her own words, “[I] was gossiped that [I] should not have undertaken it [CS], why having undergone it. [I] felt [I] lost [my] sense of self”. This account parallels Widdows’s (2022b, p. 14) argument that people often body shame others when negative repercussions arise after their self-beautification.

Nonetheless, following subsequent CS, Meg's and Klee's final post-op appearance turned out to be good, which brought back their self-confidence/esteem. Meg's heightened self-confidence/esteem revolves around taking photos and progressing her Thailand-based modelling role. Likewise, between her initial and final rhinoplasty, Klee became increasingly confident in applying for jobs in the Thai entertainment industry. As Klee admitted, "I am probably a person like that, whether [I] have a sense of self or not relies on appearance". These two stories exemplify how neoliberal ethos can incite women to repeatedly have their looks surgically modified, in order to have higher agentic power in chorus with the neoliberal epitome of enhanced states of mind (Scharff, 2016). The patriarchal control remained intact here due to the gendered essence of the neoliberal paradigm for self-esteem/confidence (Orgad and Gill, 2022).

In summary, CS boosted the recipients' agentic power in keeping with wider neoliberal preferences for the rise of self-esteem/confidence. The agentic power of these women corresponds to subtle reifications of patriarchy in their post-op experiences, as women are called upon to have high self-confidence/esteem to a greater extent than men (Orgad and Gill, 2022). Equally importantly, altogether the participants departed from the attempt of "the confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19) to exhort individuals, not least women, to be confident with their original bodies (Orgad and Gill, 2022). As evidenced throughout, simply maintaining original bodies has not yet proved convincing to resist ever-narrower societal beauty benchmarks. This finding aids in advancing postfeminism as the central theoretical contribution of this thesis, in that it illuminates an illusionary core of "the confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19) with concerns to CS.

7.3 Appearance-Based Self-Surveillance

The previous section touched on the relationship between self-esteem/confidence and appearance-focused self-policing. This section thoroughly investigates the ways CS affected such self-policing of the recipients.

7.3.1 Heightened Self-Empowerment regarding Make-Up and Dress-Up

Overall, the recipients' make-up and clothing experiences became more satisfactory after the procedures, which increased their agentic power. Referring to women's makeover in "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), a multitude of the recipients – with varied ages when the interviews were conducted – underlined positive changes in facial make-up, whilst none of the participants mentioned the opposite. Some of them reported enjoying wearing more make-up (at times with more diverse styles). This mirrors Lazar's (2017) claim that, corresponding to "the new sexual contract" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54), using make-up is hailed as pleasant and self-fulfilling, rather than oppressive, in the postfeminist terrain. This form of self-empowerment is instantiated by the below quote about Jang:

Researcher: How about after having it [double eyelid surgery]? Still watching these stuff?

Jang: Watching less [laughing]

Researcher: Or³⁰.

Jang: [I can] play, wear myself make-up to a greater degree. And [I] do not really feel anything about people, other peoples' eyes now, because I have [double eyelids].

(Jang, redacted)

³⁰ An expression of acknowledgement.

In this respect, Jang lessened her uptake of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) towards other women beauty vloggers; she instead cherished her own post-op appearance. Jang was laughing while narrating the above, meaning she may have embodied her identity tied to her subtle shyness in conveying her increased self-satisfaction.

Meanwhile, other recipients reported either looking more attractive while maintaining their make-up levels, or reducing the degrees to which they put on make-up due to their enhanced facial looks. They found these changes useful for their day-to-day lives. Despite this variation among these narratives across the data, what all of the recipients had in common was their appreciation of the positive effects of their post-op appearance in make-up rituals. By doing so, the recipients upheld the societal pressure towards women to modify their looks and thus demonstrated muted reifications of patriarchy. Simultaneously, their post-op decrease of make-up levels shows how CS can cultivate women’s agentic power by reducing the cost and energy of engaging with a less extreme practice like using facial cosmetics. The two practices can complement each other. This point tells us that it is no longer helpful to stick with the dichotomous parameters of the habitual vs. the extreme. Rather, more attention to nuances about beauty regimes is needed.

A fundamental component of women’s makeover in “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) centres around clothing. With some variations on their ages when the interviews took place, most of the recipients enjoyed wearing a greater range of outfits after their procedures. To illustrate, Amy reported that her face looked more mature after her rhinoplasty, thus she felt more comfortable with dressing up to a greater degree. A number of the recipients made clear that they exposed their body shapes more after their breast augmentation surgery; for instance, when going to the seaside (Andrea); and when posting the photos capturing her body in swimming suits on Instagram (Ji). Their higher body exposure in the post-breast-augmentation periods is consonant with the close ties

between sexy bodies and successful femininity in “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162). Yet, a few of the interviewees emphasised that this increased extent in clothing may have had to do more with their life stages rather than CS itself, or it may have been a combination of both. A handful of the participants noted no clear change in their behaviours with fashion. Nevertheless, the overall picture from the recipients’ narratives rests upon the postfeminist paragon around women’s assiduous engagement with fashion (Evans and Riley, 2013). This is indicative of how beauty patriarchy materialised in a covert way.

7.3.2 Additional Layers of Post-Op Self-Scrutiny

Some of the interviewees outlined the amplification of their appearance-focused self-scrutiny as a result of their CS procedures. Interlaced with the postfeminist concept of the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3), such amplification is two-fold. **The first part** appertains to dressing up after breast augmentation surgery, wherein the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3) and a Thai sociocultural element collided. That is, three of the participants – with different ages at the time of the operations and the interviews – expressed some concerns that arose following their breast augmentation operations. These recipients endorsed the postfeminist notion of “aesthetic vigilance” (Dosekun, 2017, p. 169), which revolves around “a reflexive and watchful eye on one’s attachment to and consumption of cruel hyper-feminine technologies” (Dosekun, 2017, p. 175).

Hanna undertook this specific procedure when ample breasts were favourable in Thailand. She reported struggling with clothing given the recent trend of more ‘natural’ breast looks in the country, thus contemplating having subsequent breast augmentation surgery. Akin to Poopae as indicated above, Hanna’s story instantiates the illusory promise of the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3), considering the alterable essence of what is deemed impeccable. As with Hanna, Mindy wondered if her post-op breasts were overly ample. Yet, unlike Hanna, Mindy equated this feeling

with her concern to be seen as too revealing in Thai society. Hence, she chose to cover herself up more compared to her pre-breast-augmentation self. As Mindy said:

It has made clothing very difficult; [dressing up] a little is considered provocative already. And [I] feel that they are too big. When I wear sexy items like how others wear and it looks just right [and] pretty, [in my case] it turns to be beyond the word ‘provocative’ [and instead] be obscene [chuckling]. Get it? (Mindy, **redacted**)

Mindy’s giggling may signify her slight shame about dressing revealingly, and she constructed this narrative in consonance with a ubiquitous Thai traditional force against overly sexy clothing. Thai society has been imbued with several discourses of propriety in keeping with particular places and times, including one on dressing (Van Esterik, 2000; Singpliam, 2022a, p. 8). Such propriety markedly contradicts a pervasive international image of Thailand as a land of prostitution and sexual activities (Harrison, 2017, p. 64).

Similarly, Meg reported being more vigilant in selecting outfits to put on due to her enhanced breasts. As Meg stated, “once having [larger] breasts, [I] needed to consider further – some dresses that are too sexy would look too unattractive to be deemed pretty”. The main distinction between these two stories was that Mindy decided to be more cautious with her clothing on her own, whereas Meg was initially advised by her family to do so. Notwithstanding this divergence, Meg’s and Mindy’s words shared some ground regarding their embracement of Thai conservatism surrounding decency. This conservative force is patriarchal in that it has a bearing particularly upon women’s lives (Van Esterik, 2000; Harrison, 2017). To advance postfeminism that has been heretofore Western-centric, Meg’s and Mindy’s cases complicate “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) in terms of women’s “possession of a ‘sexy body’ ... as women’s

key (if not sole) source of identity” (Gill, 2007c, p. 149, original emphasis). To clarify this, Western culture has positioned sexiness as an illusory marker of women’s liberation, having influenced many women to sexily represent themselves (Levy, 2005).

The second part of the amplification of appearance-focused self-scrutiny rests on the entanglement between the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3) and nose implants. As several recipients noted, their rhinoplasty necessitated their extra caution on the nose implants, to ensure their post-op noses remained intact. Again, this strongly resonates with the postfeminist concept of “aesthetic vigilance” (Dosekun, 2017, p. 169). These participants varied with reference to their ages at the time of the CS procedures and the interviews. To illustrate, Hui reported needing to be more careful when playing sports. Thip stopped playing volleyball and basketball due to her nose implant, always needing to make sure she did not injure her face. As Thip also stated:

It has been really difficult to live [my] life, [researcher’s name]. When doing anything, [I] have to be cautious to ensure nothing hits the face hard, because I do not know what would happen. (Thip, **redacted**)

Relatedly, Baimai underlined her routine of informing the clinic(s) (where she had facial treatments) of her nose implant, to avert any undesirable occurrences on her nose. Net used to fall off a motorcycle and only worried about protecting her nose, and Deer once bumped her nose on her friend’s back, which was a shocking experience for her. Clearly, rhinoplasty can provoke additional intense self-monitoring.

That said, nearly all of the recipients noted in this sub-section pinpointed 1) their greater satisfaction with their post-op appearance in comparison to the original versions; 2) their personal viewpoints that CS was worthwhile. This finding adheres to “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c,

p. 162) in terms of women's self-monitoring, their absorption in aesthetics, and their individualisation. Put simply, these recipients highlighted their perceptions of beauty as worth consistently keeping an eye on, de-politicising beauty patriarchy. Meanwhile, the patriarchal control covertly eroded these participants' agentic power in arriving at the peak of their aesthetic self-satisfaction, given their embeddedness within the postfeminist notion of "aesthetic vigilance" (Dosekun, 2017, p. 169).

7.4 Appearance-Focused Surveillance from Others

Thus far, this chapter has covered different areas of the recipients' agentic power. According to Pitts-Taylor (2007), interactions with other people during their CS journeys are worth considering when examining the agency of individuals who have had CS. This section is therefore centred upon surveillance from others after the CS procedures. It uncovers how the power of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) and "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) took effect. Overall, reactions from others towards the recipients' post-op looks were rather good, but ones from women were more positive.

7.4.1 Friends, Acquaintances, and Colleagues

By and large, compared to their men counterparts, women friends, acquaintances, and colleagues – usually cisgender but sometimes transgender – offered more detailed feedback and asked more in-depth CS-related questions (at times for advice) to the recipients. They often did so in an inspirational or comforting way. On this basis, this chapter regards "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) as inspirational and comforting in line with women's immense attention to beauty. To provide several examples, Deer and Wawa engaged with CS when they were under 20 years old, which is considered very early in Thailand (Ampro Health, 2018). Their women

high school friends queried them about their CS experiences and then undertook CS. Across the data, no story reported a friend/acquaintance/co-worker who was a cisgender man inspired by the recipients to have CS. These findings are bound up with Winch's (2015) contention that women's interests in aesthetics are modestly encapsulated by beauty patriarchy, construing women's observation as at times supportive of bodywork performances undergone by other women.

In this respect, some of the accounts on influencer culture are remarkable. To illustrate, Neen, who identified herself as an influencer, noted that her colleagues, most of whom were women, asked her about her rhinoplasty. One of her women co-workers decided to have rhinoplasty at the same place as her. As Neen pointed out, this was on the grounds of Neen's trustworthy image tied to her influencer role on fashion and beauty. Similarly, Carrie and Mindy were queried by a range of their women fans with regards to details on their CS. Carrie reported replying to all of these women, whereas Mindy added that she received very positive feedback on her most recent rhinoplasty from these audiences. These three instances mirror Duffy's (2020, p. 2) claim that under the postfeminist zeitgeist, "influencers are ... considered more sincere or trustworthy sources of information and advice; thus, their communicative practices tap into the wider cultural appeal of authenticity". This stems from the widespread grasp of influencers as aspirational and concurrently approachable in tune with the postfeminist feature of self-optimisation (Banet-Weiser, 2012). Therefore, a number of influencers (like Neen, Carrie, and Mindy) have reproduced aesthetic standards (Orgad and Gill, 2022), having further normalised CS and amplified appearance-based self-policing.

Scrutiny amongst the recipients' friends, colleagues, and acquaintances can be deemed comforting in a comical/humorous manner. To explicate this further, Maprang recounted that her (mostly women) co-workers provided her with positive feedback and asked her to let them touch her breast implants. Some of these colleagues touched the implants to see the distinctions between

natural breasts and breast implants. In a handful of the stories, transgender women and gay men exuberantly commented on the recipients, which typically echoes their embracement of femininity to a greater degree than cisgender heterosexual men, as epitomised by the quotes below. Consistent with Kanai's (2018) study on humorous femininity in digital culture, such cheerful actions from these peers were perhaps moulded by postfeminist outlooks championing positive and funny approaches to react to such a sensitive subject like CS.

Women are, style like “pretty already, pretty already”, “totally okay”. They explicitly compliment. But if LGBT [gay men], they compliment, but [they] tease a little, ... “[you are] pretty [and] confident in [your] face” [chuckling]. (Carrie, **redacted**)

If transgender women, they will be like “bomb”, “you are bomb” [chuckling], “lit”, “these days, since having a nose bridge, [you] have shown your side face consistently”. (Baimai, **redacted**)

As many of the recipients mentioned, they did not really come across anti-CS sentiments, due to the normalisation of CS in Thailand. Still, CS has been a delicate topic among Thais, which is exemplified by two of the narratives. These two participants starkly differed with regards to their ages at the time of the CS procedures and the interviews, yet both stories evidence the power of older individuals. First, Meg reported having been talked behind her back by her senior women colleagues as to whether she engaged with rhinoplasty. These co-workers were not yet close to Meg at that time and thus did not dare to ask her directly about her rhinoplasty. As Meg posited, it tends to be women (not men) co-workers who were able to detect that she had CS. This is paradigmatic of

“postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) with reference to 1) judgmental looking by other women; 2) an indirect form of appearance bullying related to CS.

Second, as Gina admitted, she legitimised her double eyelid surgery with her (mostly younger women) colleagues, in the manner that shied away from the core of her motive for undergoing it: to aesthetically enhance herself. That is, she drew attention to an ageing-related issue around excessive eyelid fat:

There are words to deceive society that I underwent it [CS] because I am old; it is the problem that I needed to tackle. But actually, in mind I wanted to be pretty, I wanted my eyes to be good-looking, sweet-looking, in order to be friendly for people who see. But I made excuses [chuckling] ... No one wants to tell the truth that we want to undertake it, undertake it, because we want to be prettier. (Gina, **redacted**)

As shown in the message, Gina pointed to the extant social stigma of CS in Thailand that informed her way of rationalising her CS decision to her colleagues. She added that, unlike her women colleagues, men co-workers rarely asked her about her altered appearance. Pertinent to the judgmental attribute of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94), this finding, as with Meg’s preceding narrative, demonstrates how women’s preoccupation with beauty can become disconcerting for other women (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). Gina’s story, along with her chuckling, may reflect her concern of being viewed as vain, which is sensible considering the wider existing association of CS with vanity (Blum, 2003; Northrop, 2012). Despite her concern, Gina’s primary reason for having CS was her desire to be more attractive, in order to look more affable for children at the school where she worked. This particular rationale parallels part of the above quote from Gina: “I wanted my eyes to be good-looking, sweet-looking, *in order*

to be friendly for people who see” (my emphasis). In short, Gina’s CS is not tied up with vanity; it instead echoes the salience of appearance in interpersonal interactions in Thai society (Mulder, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021).

7.4.2 Family Members

The chapter turns now to surveillance within familial relationships. Overall, women family members expressed noticeably more interests in and praised the recipients’ CS results to a greater extent than their men counterparts. Hence, “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) was dominant in the findings about this familial scrutiny, with regards to its comforting quality. Women’s interests in beauty are likened to their subjectification via beauty patriarchy, leading to women’s observation being sometimes conceived of as supporting other women’s bodywork performances (Winch, 2015). To instantiate this modest form of patriarchy, within her family, it was mainly Nini’s mother, aunt, and other elder women relatives who complimented her post-rhinoplasty look. Interestingly, Zizi’s grandmother positively commented on her post-rhinoplasty appearance to a greater extent than her parents, owing to the grandmother’s huge passion in beauty. Sasi accentuated the changes regarding familial reactions more than any other participant. As Sasi added, her elder sister praised her post-op appearance the most:

Complimented, complimented a lot, the elder sister. ... The sister lives in Bangkok, so we have rarely been together. And, but yes, when she came, she offered compliments. When talking online or calling each other, [she] offered compliments, both the nose and the eyes. (Sasi, **redacted**)

Several recipients experienced “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) from their men family members in a comforting manner. For example, Amy, Frung, and Pa were commended by their younger/elder brothers with reference to their post-op looks. As Frung put it, “he [her elder brother] liked the augmented nose bridge, he felt that the face looked more robust”. In contrast, Frung, as well as Pa and Deer, faced relatively challenging situations in negotiating with their fathers. “The male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) caused conflicts between these recipients and their fathers, which showcases the judgmental and comparative characteristics of this gaze and overt reifications of patriarchy. Deer and Pa equated such conflicts with the nexus between their fathers’ partial/full Chinese ethnic origin and Chinese physiognomy. To reiterate, Chinese physiognomy is a spiritual art of envisaging individuals’ potential successes by observing their body features (Wakefield and Yarborough, 2006). Deer explicated that her pre-rhinoplasty facial appearance was more congruent with this spirituality wherein larger-looking faces connote good luck. As mentioned, Pa described her original nose as snub, which is a sign of high income in Chinese physiognomy. Consequently, their fathers were dissatisfied with their CS outcomes. The main difference between these two stories was that Deer’s father eventually accepted her post-op face as time went by, whilst Pa’s father remained critical of her post-op nose.

Rather than fatherhood, supportive motherhood was pivotal to the post-op context of this study. This form of supportive motherhood spans an array of patterns: from providing solid compliments, to protecting the recipient from the father’s outright criticisms. To illustrate, having been anti-CS prior, Hui’s mother praised her post-op appearance and said Hui should have undertaken CS a long time ago. She was supportive of Hui’s plan to have subsequent CS. Back to Deer’s post-op story about her father’s initial disagreement with her rhinoplasty, her mother tried to protect Deer from her father’s fury by confronting him back. Concerning Pa’s above account, her mother, unlike her father, commended her enhanced appearance that it looked more mellow than

before. These accounts point to how supportive motherhood was reified on the grounds of these mothers' embeddedness in beauty patriarchy, meaning patriarchy was manifest in a modest manner.

Supportive motherhood can take another form that also displays women's subjectification through beauty patriarchy. Specifically, a number of the recipients, such as Amy, Nonny, and Sasi, inspired their women family members (mothers or sisters) to engage with CS. This finding is paradigmatic of the comparative and inspirational attributes of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). Below is a pertinent extract:

[My mother] had not, yes, supported [me] in terms of giving money [to me] to undergo it since my childhood. But once I went to have it on my own, made the decision, had on my own, she saw [me], and she wanted to undergo [chuckling] as well [chuckling]. (Amy, **redacted**)

After Amy said the above quote, she highlighted the resemblance between Amy's nose and her mother's nose. Therefore, Amy's above story, together with her giggling, implies that her mother adopted "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) by assessing Amy's post-op look and comparing herself with Amy. Only Freya sparked a younger woman family member to receive CS. Evidently, the tremendous impact of beauty can complicate the workings of power between the participants and their elder women family members, in that the latter took inspiration from the former to undergo CS.

By contrast, none of the CS recipients reported having inspired their men family members to engage with CS. Relatedly, Hanna tried encouraging her mother to have double eyelid surgery like herself, but she did not do so to her father due to his gender. As Hanna put it:

As he [my father] is a man, I know that, even if I could encourage [him], he would not undergo it [CS]. I therefore would rather not encourage, because if [I] encouraged, probably he would, he would tell [me] off. I therefore [chuckling] do not encourage [him]. (Hanna, redacted)

Hanna probably giggled because of her thought of men's CS as being situated outside the beauty norms in which women are conventionally associated with beauty consumption (Autio, *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly, predicated on my data, only women family members were influenced to physically work on themselves. This mirrors the larger beauty dimension of postfeminism in which aesthetic pressure acts more strongly upon women to feel empowered (Gill, 2007c; 2017).

However, two of the recipients reported having been subtly criticised by their elder women family members based on their post-op looks. Frung's mother, whom Frung described as keen on CS and beauty, wanted Frung's post-rhinoplasty nose to be sharper. Similarly, Toon's elder sister commented that Toon's nose would be more attractive if its tip were sharper. Toon took her sister's words on board and queried the doctor in this respect, but the doctor advised against sharpening the nose tip for physical reasons. The two scenarios evidence how these family members, while holding more power in terms of age, applied "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) towards the participants through the lens of the "perfect" (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3). Both Frung and Toon were still in their 20s when partaking in the interviews, thus it could be claimed that their comparatively young ages may have been a factor for these older women family members to critique them.

Frung's and Toon's stories allude to Winch's (2015) foregoing argument that women's interests in aesthetics are equated with their subjectification through beauty patriarchy, eliciting the sweeping perception of women's assessment on other women's bodywork outcomes as at times

supportive. Yet, in the two accounts, women's support was further translated into modest criticisms, restraining radical approaches to overturn patriarchy under the guise that self-perfection is the panacea. This suggests the judgmental essence of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). The "perfect" (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3) was also vital in post-op appearance bullying, as articulated in the following sub-section.

7.4.3 Appearance Bullying and Preferential Treatments

This sub-section rests upon two main patterns of undesirable behaviours facing some of the interviewees: appearance bullying and preferential treatments. These participants varied with respect to their ages at the time of the CS procedures and the interviews. Multiple recipients underlined their experiences of being (or continuing to be) explicitly body shamed after their operations, albeit often not on the body parts that were altered through CS. With a fairly balanced distribution between men and women, the perpetrators were usually around the same age as them or older. This shows that much younger people typically have less authority which impedes them to directly pick on someone older. This is also interlaced with the widespread understanding that the anti-body-shaming discourse was long overlooked in the country until recent years, meaning it has ingrained in older Thai generations to a larger extent than their younger counterparts (Bunnag, 2021, para. 7). Similar to the pre-op narratives, the recipients' friends/colleagues/acquaintances and elder relatives were more significant than their parents in the post-op stories around body shaming.

To give multiple relevant examples, Net was criticised by her father concerning her body shape. Net stated, "I can in no way please people 100%. Even if I were the fairest[-skin] in the world, there would still be people who thought that I was too fair [chuckling]". Net's words, supplemented by her giggling, are convincing in that people generally pay attention to the faults and flaws (Widdows, 2022a). Indeed, the body-shaming norm has pervaded various societies

(Widdows, 2020), including modern-day Thailand. This norm sits in tandem with the dispersal of the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3) that masks the dark side of underlying beauty patriarchy by inciting women to pursue elusive aesthetic benchmarks. Net’s story relates to “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) used by a heterosexual man in a judgmental manner, exhibiting an apparent form of patriarchy.

Klee was compared – mostly by older women – side by side with her sister, on both the body part that was surgically altered (eye size) and the ones that were not (skin complexions, body shape, and height). Akin to Net, Klee encountered body shaming in connection with the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3). Her experience of being compared with her sister invoked the following:

It has made us compete with each other invariably, [because] we do not want to be the person who is compared and turns to be more inferior. (Klee, **redacted**)

Klee’s narrative overall echoes the gist of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94): 1) judgment towards other women which elicits women’s appearance-based self-monitoring; 2) routine looks-focused comparison among women. Put simply, this account is illustrative of the judgmental and comparative characteristics of this gaze. In this vein, Klee’s experience was grounded in beauty patriarchy that was reproduced by older women in her life, demonstrating a modest yet potentially damaging reification of patriarchy.

Several recipients received preferential treatments after their CS procedures. For example, some of the bosses in Ying’s former workplace, who were men and had body shamed her before, became interested in her once she started to have CS. As Ying recounted with subtle anger:

Once I looked a bit better, they talked to me well. I have experienced a lot, a lot really a lot really, such that, what on earth, there have still been people like this existing. (Ying, **redacted**)

Kung, Clara, and Gemma encountered identical situations, but with her (mostly women) friends for Kung, and with her men peers for Clara. Gemma did not specify who treated her preferentially but mentioned it covered men and women. Kung and Clara identified these sorts of scenarios as leading them to see these people's true colours, with Clara describing them as insincere and best to avoid. In contrast, while Gemma wondered whether they did so to her unintentionally or intentionally during the interview, she recounted this story with a neutral tone and attempted to see this scenario as boosting her self-esteem/confidence, as demonstrated below. On this basis, Gemma may have embodied a postfeminist identity through her optimism (Gill, 2017, p. 610), depicting patriarchy in a muted light.

[I] know feedback of people who treat me in the form of, from before having it [orthodontics], after undergoing orthodontics or after undertaking double eyelid surgery. And [I] feel after having double eyelid surgery ..., it has been the most obvious: people have treated me better. They may not have been intentional, or I do not know, but I can feel I have become more confident, because everyone seems friendlier, seems to try to do good things to me more than before. (Gemma, **redacted**)

Altogether, Ying, Kung, and Clara showed their subtle anger about better treatments from certain individuals in accordance with their enhanced appearance. The perpetrators might not have

done so purportedly considering the huge societal value of beauty in Thailand (Van Esterik, 2000). Yet, these three participants were able to recognise an adverse dimension of body image. Such anger is contrasted with the postfeminist preference for optimistic manifestations (Gill, 2017, p. 610). Fundamentally, Ying's and Clara's cases appertain to "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Kung's story was enmeshed with "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). Gemma's narrative is affixed to both gazes. "The male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) and "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) are grounded in beauty patriarchy, eliciting overt and subtle materialisations of patriarchy respectively. Holistically, the accounts of these four interviewees on preferential treatment insinuate the insincere characteristic of these two gazes.

7.4.4 Romantic Desirability and Relationships

This sub-section articulates the entanglement between the (hetero)sexuality facet of patriarchy and beauty patriarchy predicated on Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) theorisation. With respect to romantic desirability, a number of the participants noted that, after their CS procedures, more men were interested in getting to know them. This result is unsurprising given the great marketability of physically attractive individuals in general (Bale and Archer, 2013). This includes the participants who commenced their CS journeys in their teenage years, 20s, or early 30s. Almost all of these interviewees reported being heterosexual. These findings demonstrate their successes in catching "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) and therefore apparent reifications of patriarchy, bringing this thesis to describe this gaze as omnipresent. Broadly speaking, men have been particularly interested in attractive women more than the other way around (Jeffreys, 2014). The discourse of romantic desirability has long penetrated society, insofar as single women often face constraints to feel genuinely empowered (Budgeon, 2016, p. 413). Hence, the interviewees

who reported becoming more romantically desirable following the operations were deemed as achieving romantic self-empowerment. This is where “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) was at play in such empowerment.

Net was the only participant who encountered a clear mixture of effects when it comes to romantic desirability. Net was catcalled by men less than before, which yielded some doubts in herself as to whether her rhinoplasty made her become more attractive. On the contrary, Net found her post-rhinoplasty look helpful for her romantic desirability on her dating profile. It can be summarised that she was still subsumed under “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Meanwhile, one of the recipients merely experienced the opposite effect. That is, compared to Jang’s life prior to double eyelid surgery, far fewer men flirted or approached Jang after the procedure. By contrast, she received greater compliments from women once she underwent double eyelid surgery. As she explained further:

Prior to undertaking double eyelid surgery, [I] had a partner already, yes, but there were constantly people who came to flirt, there were constantly people who came to approach. But once [I] undertook double eyelid surgery, they disappeared, completely [chuckling]. There was no one, in 2-3 years there was once. (**Jang, redacted**)

In line with her giggling, Jang said that she found the shift regarding the reactions from men funny, since such a change was stark. Yet, she, being fully ethnically Chinese herself, thought this was because quite a number of Thai men favoured women with relatively small eyes. In Thai society, these women, not necessarily but often those of partial/full Chinese lineage, fit well with *Muay* style that primarily encapsulates East Asian aesthetics. This style is privileged in Thailand, connoting

Asian economic frontrunners and cosmopolitanism (Käng, 2017; 2021). What this post-up story tells us is the link between East Asian aesthetic style, Chinese ethnicity, and heterosexual desirability in Thailand, whereby “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) was effaced.

Four of the self-specified heterosexual recipients, with varying ages at the time of the procedures and the interviews, accentuated the great advantages of CS in their romantic desirability. This is indicative of the profound impact of “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) upon these participants and thus overt forms of patriarchy. This finding brings the thesis to position this gaze as desirable for certain women. To elaborate upon these four interviewees’ accounts, Freya highlighted her heightened self-esteem that was beneficial for romantic desirability. Ying posited that the combination of her CS outcome and her physical work-out resulted in her attracting multiple men. As Poopae and Mink recounted, the aspect that CS changed their lives the most was romantic desirability, rather than career or self-confidence/esteem. As with Mink’s pre-op account as outlined in chapter six, “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) was notably conspicuous in her post-op story. Mink said that, notwithstanding her self-identified ladyboy characteristic, CS was beneficial for entering her first romantic relationship. Singlehood has long been socially constructed as problematic notwithstanding the pervasive postfeminist rhetoric of individual choice (Budgeon, 2016), as evidenced in these particular narratives. In this sense, these four interviewees experienced higher self-empowerment regarding romantic desirability, vis-à-vis such an effect of “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6).

Turning to romantic relationships, before the CS procedures, many of the recipients’ previous/current romantic partners were critical/sceptical of CS or simply respected their CS decisions. When it comes to their responses to the recipients’ post-op looks, most of the partners either commended enhanced appearance to comfort the participants, or modestly expressed their satisfied feelings with the CS results. For instance, as Pingpong narrated, “[my husband said that]

the former one was pretty already, the current one is prettier – comforting [me], but I do not know if [chuckling] he actually thought so [chuckling], but [he] comforted [me]”. As for another example, Tracy noted that her partner favoured both original and surgically modified versions of her look. Therefore, “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) embodied by their partners can be conceived of as comparative yet comforting.

However, the judgmental attribute of “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) was manifest in several instances in tandem with its comparative characteristic. First, Erin recounted that her husband showed himself to be pleased with her post-rhinoplasty face. As Erin added, he would have been forthright if the CS outcome had turned out otherwise. Second, Lala was the only interviewee who mentioned a strain on a romantic relationship due to a CS result. Lala reported having had a big conflict with her boyfriend at that time, insofar as they nearly ended their relationship. Part of this conflict was this former partner’s preference for her original facial version over the modified version. This story signifies how this ex-boyfriend, via “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6), projected his patriarchal power onto her in disavowing the outcome of Lala’s self-beautification.

Third, Baimai received potentially offensive words from her former/current partner. Baimai pointed out, with laughs and giggles, that her boyfriend suggested she should have breast augmentation surgery. As Baimai put it:

[My] partner was like, same as other men, was like “please have breast augmentation surgery” [laughing]. Men are like this [chuckling]. Most men are like this. I do not know, he said he saw no difference, but if [I] undertook breast augmentation surgery, he would feel [chuckling and laughing]. (Baimai, **redacted**)

How Baimai recounted this story is of particular interest, as she did not appear to find these words offensive but instead seemed to think of this glaring pattern of “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) as hilarious given her chuckles and laughs. She may have portrayed an optimistic attitude celebrated by postfeminism, whilst being subsumed within patriarchy (Gill, 2017, p. 610). Another possible explanation on her way of expression relates to the postfeminist discourse of irony (Gill, 2007c). This discourse centres around one’s sarcastic reactions to unashamedly sexist comments to make it more palatable (Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks, 2001; Gill, 2007c, p. 159). This postfeminist trope is ultimately tied to postfeminist injunctions for individuals to manage their emotions away from anger (Gill, 2017, p. 610). Baimai may have shown her sarcasm towards such sexist and ridiculous words.

With reference to the CS motives, this thesis was unable to explore any sharp dissonances between the self-reported non-heterosexual participants and their heterosexual counterparts. Considering the sensitive nature of speaking about LGBTQ+ identities³¹, these interviewees may have felt uncomfortable to emphasise their sexual identities when narrating their CS motivations. The project, however, detected some nuances between the recipients who had women partners and those with men partners. The former received more detailed comforting feedback on their CS. To be precise, Mindy’s woman partner commended her enhanced look, but also drew some comparisons between Mindy’s new appearance and other attractive individuals. Neen’s partner provided her with thorough positive comments on her post-rhinoplasty face:

They said it was better, looked more dimensional, but it did not look delusive, fake,
[or] that sharp. (Neen, **redacted**)

³¹ This sensitive essence in 2020s in Thailand may have been maintained by the wider tension between the ongoing collective fight of young Thai generations against social injustice and Thai political authority who aims to perpetuate the status quo (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 216).

Typically speaking, this finding parallels Hill and Fischer's (2008) argument that women irrespective of sexual orientation have been embedded within patriarchal beauty pressure. Crucially, it complicates one of the overriding features of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94): the heteronormative essence of women's viewing (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016). Mindy's and Neen's accounts demonstrate how this gaze can be adopted in a comparative yet comforting manner within homosexual couples. This flows into the central theoretical contribution of this thesis: advancing postfeminism.

To summarise, "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94), predominantly from cisgender women, was powerful in shaping the recipients' experiences of being scrutinised after the procedures. On this basis, this gaze can be regarded as ubiquitous. These people reacted to the participants' CS results in the following ways: complimenting the results; posing in-depth CS-related questions (at times for advice); displaying great interests in such outcomes; providing modest criticisms or preferential treatments; and body shaming the recipients. Meanwhile, the power of "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) was far from disappearing from such post-op experiences, including those both related and unrelated to romantic desirability and relationships. This gaze was overall adopted in a less positive way for the participants. On top of compliments, preferential treatments, and body shaming, the negative elements that were absent among women's reactions (overt sexism and outright rejections of the CS outcomes) came into play. More broadly, the findings resonate with Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016) statement that "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) and "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) are both in place in society.

7.5 Elevated Self-Empowerment in the Professional Domain

Earlier, this chapter alluded to the findings concerning the linkage between self-confidence/esteem and professional lives. This section further articulates career changes faced by some of the recipients following their operations. Overall, the recipients' professional lives became more advantageous, which elevated their agentic power. Nearly half of the participants identified CS as a vehicle for some of their job applications, professional opportunities, and/or professional negotiations. They varied with concerns to their levels of educational privileges, and ages at which they undertook CS and partook in the interviews. Only Ying reported the opposite, and only Greta highlighted both pros and cons, both of whose accounts are elaborated upon at the end of this section. Other recipients either noted no particular changes regarding career, or were still studying at the time of the interviews.

Such positive CS effects in the recipients' career lives relate to occupations/areas that centralise body image (beauty pageant, make-up artist, entertainment, influencer, online fashion branding, modelling, reviewer on social media, and hospitality), and ones that generally involve interpersonal communication (marketing, retailing, consultancy, IT, language, and therapy). These jobs were all based in Thailand. CS helped them effectively endorse what McRobbie (2007, p. 718) theorises as "postfeminist masquerade", to further thrive in the workforce. This masquerade, located within "the new sexual contract" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 54), is defined as "the mask of make-up and the crafting of a highly-styled mode of personal appearance" (McRobbie, 2007, p. 725) to continue succeeding in public spaces. Whilst this seems promising for women's self-empowerment, behind the scenes the masquerade reinforces the patriarchal root of beauty practices (McRobbie, 2007). To that end, the finding on the recipients' more auspicious professional lives illustrates modest materialisations of patriarchy.

Some of the interviewees emphasised their career accomplishments resulting from CS. In direct opposition to Net's aforementioned statement that having rhinoplasty was as barely life-changing as purchasing new trousers, the below excerpt about Mink showcases the great usefulness of her post-op appearance within the fashion industry. Congruent with "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) regarding women's preoccupation with beauty to elevate their power, Mink metaphorically likened such usefulness to a visa for exploring things further:

It seemed that, when others saw [me], they gave compliments as to why [I was] good at dressing up. I work in the fashion industry. [It] made others who saw me for the first time, they were able to remember me instantly, so I did not need to [ask] who are you? They were able to remember me instantly owing to my character. ... [It] is like a visa that I can [use] for encountering things to a greater degree, including my sense of self. (Mink, **redacted**)

With reference to another exemplar, prior to her double eyelid operation, Gemma did not feel satisfied with using herself as a model for her fashion brand on social media. Hence, she had the intention to surgically invest in herself for her own brand rather than hiring model(s). Based upon the extract below, Gemma became more pleased with such a use following her double eyelid surgery. She therefore boosted the authenticity of this online shop.

Career-wise, I am running a clothing brand, and I photoshoot using myself as a model. I feel that, after undertaking it [CS], the photos, they became prettier, they were more okay. (Gemma, **redacted**)

Gemma resonates with “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), in terms of women’s individualism but also their passion in beauty to boost their power. Her achievement mirrors the focal point of Banet-Weiser’s (2012; 2021) works on postfeminism: women’s self-empowerment for economic purposes by virtue of the optimisation of their own enhanced bodies. Gemma, as a model, contributed to larger self-branding culture where appearance that fits well with societal beauty standards is privileged (Duffy and Hund, 2015; Wissinger, 2015a; 2015b).

Along these lines, multiple accounts in this study cohere with the general advantages of good body image in self-branding and generating more income under the postfeminist zeitgeist (Rogan, 2022). A few of the recipients, such as Carrie and Greta, highlighted the increase in receiving offers for reviewing brands or services on social media, even though some of them did not explicitly describe themselves as influencers. These participants sat within the “economies of visibility” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 21) that are inscribed within both popular feminism and postfeminism. This notion centres around women’s self-disciplining to elevate their economic capacity in digital spaces (Banet-Weiser, 2018). While this finding seems promising with regards to women’s self-empowerment, their post-op career successes on social media perpetuated the patriarchal root of aesthetic regimes. This was one of the ways patriarchy materialised covertly.

This section now turns to the participants who belonged to career realms that generally involve interpersonal communication. Some of their accounts were tied up with CS-induced self-confidence that led to their career successes, as exemplified by the below messages from Neen and Amy. This finding extends the profound helpfulness of self-confidence/esteem, in alignment with the spill-over effect of “the confidence cult(ure)” (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19) in various realms including the professional domain. In this sense, rather than original looks, surgically altered bodies were key for fitting in with such a cult(ure). It is likely that these participants’ professional

advancements were also caused by the intensity of societal beauty demands in Thailand, considering that their professional areas are not inherently beauty-focused.

It has helped, but [I] do not mean undertaking rhinoplasty and therefore working more effectively [or] suddenly becoming smarter. But [I] mean [chuckling] I have become more confident, because I work in marketing; sometimes [I] have to meet clients or meet executive board(s) [or] present work(s). And it has made me more confident to work. (Neen, **redacted**)

[I] can see changes, meaning I am really no longer concerned about it [my look], yes. ... They [my colleagues] seem to, older colleagues at my workplace are people who like observing. They told that it really made me more confident, [it was] noticeable, yes. (Amy, **redacted**)

In Asia, attaching photographs to job applications has been a norm (see for example: Wen, 2013, p. 95). This, according to Carrie, Andrea, and Moz, has been the case in Thailand even within the professional realms for which body image is not indispensable. This point echoes societal beauty demands in Thailand which stem from the general huge focus on public image and surfaces in the country (Van Esterik, 2000). Correspondingly, some of the recipients found their job hunting for Thailand-based works more straightforward after their CS procedures, such as Moz in her IT pathway. Even for less formal job recruitments, looks have proved pivotal, as Ying and Lala experienced following the start of their post-CS lives with reference to their MC jobs. Hence, these participants' heightened agentic power was enmeshed with the paramount importance of

appearance for selecting job candidates in the country. Kung thoroughly narrated her experience of being successful in her job application(s):

[I] went to apply for job(s) alongside individuals who may not have, may not have enhanced [their] faces like me. So, I was more prone to be selected, which made me look back, I, if I had not undergone it [CS], I would probably not have got this opportunity. (Kung, **redacted**)

Moz, Summer, and Zizi linked their career-related accomplishments resulting from their post-op looks to their better suitability with Chinese physiognomy. They epitomise subtle materialisations of patriarchy, since their post-op professional gains are consistent with their successful uptakes of “postfeminist masquerade” (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718) for shining more in the public sphere. Simultaneously, these three interviewees complicate the postfeminist trope of women’s immersion in beauty to foster their power (Gill, 2007c), showcasing the intertwining of aesthetics and spiritual beliefs in entailing women’s agentic power. Despite their differences in their ages at the time of the operations and the interviews, all of these three participants reported being partially ethnically Chinese, which may have influenced their ways of thinking due to the origin of this spiritual belief in China.

As noted at the outset of this section, Greta and Ying were the only two participants who proffered the dark angles of beauty within the professional realm. Whilst highlighting her overall positive viewpoint on beauty, Ying underscored her personal critique on appearance-based competition. In Ying’s former MC job, she was compared with other women based upon looks, having led her to decide to leave this job. As Ying stated, “I felt that yes, I wanted to undergo CS,

but I did not feel that undertaking it was equated with me having to compete with others like this”.

Greta outlined another vital negative aspect of beauty:

I think there are probably both pros and cons. ... If the jobs require looks or dealing or interactions, I think it has beauty privilege. Get it? ... [I] think that there are some pros. But there may also be some cons in terms of, suppose I work on a thing which probably requires intelligence or something like this, if, sometimes, they may doubt my ability as to, or there may be others who are not people in [my] workplace, probably, whether [I] entered [this workplace] because of good appearance or not.

(Greta, **redacted**)

Antagonistic expressions against good-looking individuals, with the assumption concerning their lower levels of intelligence, do exist. The academic literature shows a mixture of results regarding the correlation between beauty and intelligence: Kanazawa's (2011) research has discovered the positive correlation, whereas Mitchem, *et al.* (2015) demonstrate no correlation. Whatever the correct results are, such antagonistic criticisms may be caused by ever-increasing competition with others and themselves in the wake of the individualised essence of neoliberal ethos (Scharff, 2016). Greta's account epitomises the unconvincingness of the postfeminist promise around a myriad of possibilities for women to “have it all” (Dosekun, 2020, p. 117).

In summary, this project informs us of professional gains that resulted from enhanced looks, but also negative ramifications of beauty in the labour market. However, overall, the recipients' career lives became more positive for them, meaning their post-op appearance increased their agentic power pertinent to their career. Such post-op professional experiences were rooted in both beauty patriarchy and the career dimension of patriarchy in Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997)

theorisation. Although the labour market in Thailand seems progressive, it has remained patriarchal due to the gendered gaps of income, career participation, and career progressions (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023). Arguably, what underpinned the recipients' agentic power were high gendered aesthetic demands in Thailand that even cover the impact of appearance on typical job candidate shortlisting/selection.

7.6 Post-Operative Positionalities on Beauty and Gender

The final note of this chapter highlights the recipients' post-op positionalities on gender and beauty, as these underlay their post-op accounts. Some of the recipients passionately reported their alertness to some existing problems concerning beauty demands in Thailand. Precisely, although various types of looks have been increasingly accepted in Thai society, current aesthetic standards in the country have not yet become fully inclusive. These interviewees varied considerably with respect to their ages at which they partook in this project. Nonetheless, all of these participants were regarded as having remarkable educational privileges among Thais at the time of the interviews. These educational privileges may have resulted in their critical thinking about social problems, owing to their purported exposure to various insights and ideas. Interestingly, most of these interviewees admitted they personally tried to grapple with societal current beauty ideals and the discourse surrounding loving one's own body, usually with regards to body shapes and complexions. This finding reflects "confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19), concerning the postfeminist paradox between psychological self-improvement and the paucity of great inclusivity of beauty standards. Kanoon, for instance, narrated the following:

These days, the power of women in the world of social [media], they try to offer a way of thinking that however you are, you can be beautiful. [That] made me,

mindset, my thinking began to change. But if being asked whether there were [feelings of doubt] in some aspects, there were sometimes. In my view, at times I thought I did not look pretty; if I were lighter [chuckling], I may become pretty. ... [I ultimately] want everybody to think like this, that everyone is pretty, no matter what body shapes and appearance they have; everyone is pretty in their own way really.

(Kanoon, redacted)

Nevertheless, nearly all of the recipients in this study reported seeing gender inequality in terms of aesthetics as obscure. They instead deemed women's broader domination in the realm of CS/beauty as normal or positive. As such, these interviewees may have formulated their identities pertinent to the postfeminist discourse of the entanglement between women's power and beauty (Gill, 2007c). Such identities were interwoven with the postfeminist motif of women's depoliticisation (Gill, 2007c), as the recipients equated CS/beauty with women's individual benefits (professional and psychological advantages including self-confidence/esteem). In this respect, Meg drew parallels between undergoing CS and completing an academic course, as both are concerned with self-development:

If we have potential or have money to make ourselves better, it [engaging with CS] is not different from taking an academic course. Everything is self-improvement.

(Meg, redacted)

Arguably, this line of perception illustrates an amalgam of beauty patriarchy and the ascendancy of neoliberalism in Thailand (Leung and Cossu, 2019; Singpliam, 2022a).

Neoliberalism and postfeminism strongly promote individualistic self-representations using

aesthetics (Crawford, 2006). Consequently, postfeminism provokes women's subjectification that sidelines the core of patriarchy (McRobbie, 2009). A few of the recipients even stated that Thai men had experienced gender inequality concerning aesthetics, due to the higher societal acceptance for women to engage with beauty. As two of them (Maprang and Ree) said, cisgender men who were preoccupied with aesthetics may have been perceived as LGBTQ+, as exemplified by Maprang's quote:

[Cisgender men] who are straight probably want to undergo it [CS] as well. But they do not really dare to undertake it, because people may perceive that they are non-heterosexual, something like this, maybe, from my point of view. (Maprang, redacted)

Such thinking is analogous to Doctor Min's statement that in larger Thai society, LGBTQ+ men were less likely to be judged negatively when engaging with CS. As Doctor Min said, "If cisgender straight men, they are definitely not [chuckling], not that interested in this. The maximum is laser treatment that is certainly deemed to be a big deal for straight men". Evidently, CS has been understood as a feminine beauty regime. In this vein, these recipients may have displayed postfeminist identities, by neglecting social injustice related to beauty patriarchy but instead attending to the feminine essence of the practice.

The data comprises some other grasps of beauty in tune with women's subjectification that eclipses the crux of patriarchy (McRobbie, 2009). First, several women in the project regarded men as fearful of undertaking CS. These participants may have presented postfeminist identities, by echoing the postfeminist discourse around championing women's aesthetic self-reinvention (Gill, 2007c). To illustrate, as Pingpong pointed out, "men are scared, cisgender heterosexual men – they

are like, are you going to undertake it [CS]?, are you not scared?’. This attitude surrounding women’s mental strength was also mentioned by Doctor Van:

In Thailand, actually women need to be admired, they are more courageous than men. With regards to the majority of [CS] patients, not a lot of men come to have it, since men may think a lot. [Men] are seemingly not scared, but when it comes to entering operation rooms and undertaking CS, men would rather exercise [than having CS]. (**Doctor Van**)

Second, a number of the recipients noted the widespread understanding that CS is nowadays considered as a personal right/matter in Thailand on which no one should make judgment. Indeed, this neoliberal belief is a double-edge sword: it stands against judgmental comments; on the other hand, it eclipses the urgency of elusive aesthetic demands at large (Widdows, 2018b). These participants may have embodied postfeminist identities, by weaving the postfeminist vocabulary of individual choice (Gill, 2007c) into women’s aesthetic alterations. Deer, for example, made clear that people should avoid forbidding someone to have CS if they treat CS as a self-confidence/esteem booster. The below excerpt about Baimai is also paradigmatic:

[I] feel that it [CS] is a personal matter, how, but actually it has gained more acceptance. ... Previously, perhaps media outlets made people see it was not okay to undertake CS [and] be ready to find fault with that person as to what practices they had undergone. But now it is not so: people started to accept that they have undertaken it [CS] and then turned to be attractive, that is all. There is nobody who

minds: we go to apply for jobs: “where did you have rhinoplasty?” – probably, no one asks this. (Baimai, **redacted**)

More broadly, many of the recipients in this study acknowledged the continuation of gender inequality in Thailand. Altogether they believed gender inequality would dwindle down the line owing to the country’s tentative shift towards progressiveness (Buranajaroenkij, 2023). However, these participants particularly linked gendered disparities to LGBTQ+ rights, generational gaps, and women’s domestic and professional prisms, rather than aesthetic culture. Put another way, what underpinned the recipients’ post-op accounts was not full gender equality in Thailand. Instead, it was the postfeminist discourse around conflating aesthetic modifications with women’s power (Gill, 2007c), whereby patriarchy was reified in a muted manner.

Chapter Summary

This chapter set out to answer the question: what are young Thai women’s post-op experiences? It examined various aspects of the CS recipients’ post-op narratives, comprising self-confidence/esteem; appearance-based self-scrutiny; surveillance from others based on looks; and the professional realm. The final part of the chapter foregrounded the recipients’ post-op positionalities on gender relations and beauty which underlay their post-op accounts. The overriding argument of this chapter revolves around both subtle and apparent materialisations of patriarchy in the recipients’ post-op accounts, yet the former, i.e. postfeminism, was more evident.

The first take-away from this argument is bound up with the recipients’ aesthetic/psychological/career self-empowerment and refers to subtle forms of patriarchy, wherein CS fostered their agentic power in fulfilling their personal and professional desires. Also relative to muted manifestations of patriarchy, **the second take-away** from the above argument is connected

with women's self-responsibilisation to keep up with their good looks: a by-product of neoliberal, postfeminist incitements (McRobbie, 2020). Predicated upon a number of the recipients, CS engendered 1) additional levels of self-surveillance concerning clothing and nose implants; 2) prospective/concrete planning to re-undertake CS for more flawless appearance. These instances showcase how women's agentic power in reaching the pinnacle of their aesthetic self-satisfaction was modestly diminished by beauty patriarchy.

The third take-away has to do with appearance-focused surveillance from others, displaying both modest and apparent materialisations of patriarchy: "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) and "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) respectively. This chapter underscored the significant power of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94), primarily from cisgender women, in the recipients' post-op experiences. Yet, the power of "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) was still intact in these post-op experiences, i.e. those related/unrelated to romantic relationships and desirability. This gaze is affixed to self-empowerment concerning romantic desirability that was experienced by some of the participants.

Across the data, "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) played a greater part in the post-op adverse consequences about others' behaviours towards the interviewees. Precisely, the negative elements that were absent among women's reactions (overt sexism and outright rejections of the CS results) came into force. Such interrelationships between these two gazes fall under the central theoretical contribution of this thesis: advancing postfeminism. This particular contribution appertains to some other findings in this chapter concerned with 1) "the confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19); 2) cultural divergences between the West and Thailand. These divergences rests upon Chinese physiognomy and controversy around overly sexy clothing in Thai society (Van Esterik, 2000; Singpliam, 2022a).

The ultimate take-away from the aforementioned argument alludes to modest materialisations of patriarchy. The chapter demonstrated that most of the recipients in this project may have embodied postfeminist identities. This bears on their articulation of positive/impartial post-op positionalities on CS/beauty, considering professional and psychological advantages that beauty can engender. Intriguingly, multiple recipients may have constructed postfeminist identities by seeing men as fearful of undergoing CS; casting men as marginalised regarding beauty due to the greater societal acceptance for women to engage with aesthetics; and/or construing CS as a personal right/matter in Thailand. All of these points insinuate the profound effect of postfeminism which is the core of the following chapter.

Chapter 8 – So What? Discussing Postfeminist Complexities in the Cosmetic Surgery Accounts of Young Thai Women

Chapter eight weaves the findings delineated in chapters five to seven into their wider meanings, in relation to the academic literature. This chapter concurrently summarises power dynamics in the reflective pre-op and post-op accounts of young Thai women, since a multitude of my findings are around power. As with other parts of the thesis, this chapter adopts a feminist theoretical lens. The chapter is broken down into seven different sections: 1) socially constituted, intersectional, and conditional agentic power; 2) learned narratives of rationalising CS; 3) reciprocity between self-esteem/confidence and looks; 4) divergences and convergences between gendered gazes; 5) salience of the media; 6) postfeminism in Thai aesthetic culture; 7) adaptation of postfeminism to Thai and East Asian influences.

The chapter sets out the central argument of this thesis: the reflective CS accounts of young Thai women are underpinned by an array of postfeminist facets, with several effects about Thai society and East Asian countries. These facets include 1) pre-operative agentic power concerning women's individualisation; 2) post-operative agentic power around women's aesthetic/psychological/professional self-empowerment; 3) the imperative to be entrepreneurial and self-responsibilised; 4) the paramount importance of appearance for self-confidence/esteem; 5) looks-based evaluation from other women; 6) self-optimisation and appearance-focused surveillance culture in the media; 7) positive/impartial positionalities on aesthetics; 8) optimistic expressions to subdue social injustice. To unpack such Thai and East Asian influences, postfeminism can adjust itself with the spiritual, collectivist, and conservative essence of Thai society, but also Thai and Korean popular culture, an immense worldwide prestige of CS in Korea, and East Asian and Thai beauty styles.

8.1 Socially Constituted, Intersectional, and Conditional Agentic Power

Women's individualisation is one of the paramount tenets of "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162). In the contemporary age rife with neoliberal values, women are allured to fuse their individualisation with their agency (Baker, 2008). Accordingly, the dialogues with the surgeon participants overall show that the rationalisations of their young Thai women patients for undergoing CS greatly centralise self-satisfaction rather than pleasing other people. This thesis also found several manifestations of the CS recipients' pre-op agentic power regarding their individualisation. Such manifestations comprise: describing entirely or predominantly themselves as the principal source of their motivations for CS; self-financing the procedures; and thoroughly self-researching where precisely to have CS to ensure CS quality. Many of the recipients in this project served as their own entrepreneurs in investing their own money and/or time to research CS places for their desirable versions of beauty. Moreover, a handful of the recipients saw men or heterosexual romantic desirability as (one of) their main motivators for undergoing CS, in contrast to the greater number who identified women as such and even more who reported fully or primarily themselves. Altogether, these findings parallel Baker's (2010, p. 190) argument that nowadays women are socially incited to accentuate their self-determination and independence while shying away from any strong sense of victimhood. This is attributed to the postfeminist assumption that radical social transformations to combat gender inequality are unnecessary today (Gill, 2007c; McRobbie, 2009).

The recipients' pre-op agentic power proved intersectional. It was primarily contingent upon their economic capital when it comes to self-financing CS. That is, neoliberal ethos spurred quite a number of the interviewees to earn a living for their surgical self-beautification. This finding displays subtle materialisations of patriarchy concerning the recipients' willing involvement in beauty patriarchy by spending their income on CS. In some of the CS accounts, their mothers'

economic capital was helpful in financially supporting the participants' procedures. This showcases supportive motherhood that may have also been enabled by the mothers' communal perception of aesthetic demands induced by their shared gender (Winch, 2015). The nexus between such shared perception and supportive motherhood takes another form related to age: most of the interviewees who were heavily advocated by their mothers to have CS were under 20 years old or in their early 20s (i.e. very young at the time). This result is consonant with the argument made by Foulkes, *et al.* (2018) that younger people are more liable to be socially amenable compared to their older counterparts. This is arguably intertwined with age-based power differentials that have long been entrenched in Thai society, with the older generally having more power than the younger (McCampbell, *et al.*, 1999; Sringernyuang, *et al.*, 2020; Baker and Pasuk, 2022). In brief, the recipients' pre-op agentic power lay at the intersection of economic capital, gender, and age.

Another vital hallmark of women's agentic power rested on its conditional essence in their post-op empowerment. By and large, most of the participants reported feeling more empowered personally and/or professionally, specifically in terms of aesthetic self-satisfaction, self-confidence/esteem, routine makeover, and career. Pertinent to "postfeminist masquerade" (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718), some of the interviewees successfully masqueraded themselves using their post-op looks to foster their employability, professional opportunities, and/or professional negotiations in Thailand. From a sociological perspective, such post-op career flourishing obscured existing gender disparities in the professional sphere of Thai society. The world of work in Thailand seems progressive, but it is deep down patriarchal on account of the extant gendered gaps of career progressions and income in Thailand (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023).

Yet, the recipients' post-op agentic power was conditional upon the postfeminist grammar of women's self-responsibilisation (McRobbie, 2020). CS invoked the additional levels of self-surveillance with concerns to clothing and nose implants. Moreover, a number of the recipients

reported potentially/concretely setting out to re-undergo CS on the same body parts, primarily because of their self-scrutiny for more flawless looks. These participants were compelled to reach the postfeminist concept of the “perfect” (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3), so as to fit more into increasingly narrower aesthetic standards under the guise that self-improvement is a valid solution (McRobbie, 2015). They also resonate with previous studies (Woo, 2004; Coffey, 2016) that uncover the addictiveness of CS invoked by women’s post-op self-monitoring in pursuit of more impeccable appearance.

This study supports Gill’s (2007a) claim that agency and structure are mutually constitutive rather than exclusive. To justify this, the recipients’ agentic power was not immune to patriarchal sociocultural structures that, according to Walby (1989), comprise six main dimensions. As demonstrated at length throughout chapters five to seven, the recipients’ decisions for having CS and their post-op experiences were enmeshed with patriarchal sociocultural structures. In this respect, beauty patriarchy (gendered media representations and real-life behaviours surrounding physical attractiveness), as part of the cultural dimension of patriarchy, took centre stage. It was at times intertwined with two different dimensions of patriarchy (career and (hetero)sexuality), as well as the educational realm within the cultural facet of patriarchy. In effect, beauty patriarchy deeply encapsulated various sociocultural influences that led to the recipients’ CS motivations. These influences include the anti-ageing imperative; the media; the labour market and education in Thailand; the body-shaming norm amongst Thais; and heterosexual romantic desirability, as evidenced in chapter six. Furthermore, beauty patriarchy even permeated a pregnancy-related CS motive like breastfeeding, which is congruent with strong postfeminist compulsions for mothers to regulate their own bodies (Littler, 2013; De Benedictis and Orgad, 2017). In short, their agentic power was socially constituted.

Taken together, the recipients' pre-op and post-op agentic power was influenced by not only patriarchal social structures and multiple axes of social characteristics like economic capital and age, but also postfeminist injunctions notably towards women to work on themselves ceaselessly. To that end, this thesis argues that women's empowerment can be fulfilled personally and professionally if they agree to be self-responsibilised in the long run. Such responsabilisation encompasses being continually vigilant of their post-op appearance; and planning and having subsequent CS. As noted earlier, Doctor Shin stated that some doctors who were not qualified as cosmetic surgeons came to operate CS and therefore caused several CS complications. On this basis, individuals would really need to be meticulous in researching which doctors to have CS with. If Thai society were to move at this direction towards the rhetoric of constant and careful self-management/development, Thais would be gradually socially exhorted to distance themselves from collective actions against gender disparities, as noted by McRobbie (2004) in the Western context. This thesis thus furthers the credibility of Dosekun's (2020) contention that postfeminism should be viewed as promising for women in an illusory way, in light of the postfeminist depiction of women's self-containment as the way forward.

8.2 Learned Narratives of Justifying CS

As outlined, one of the theoretical contributions of this thesis is to showcase the learned narratives of rationalising CS within this Thai CS phenomenon. First, considering Gimlin's (2007) seminal feminist comparative research between the US and Great Britain, from the totality of my thesis the learned CS narratives are a mixture of both American and British values. In terms of women's agency, the recipients' accounts resonate with American women in Gimlin's (2007) project. That is, these women 1) individualised the main sources of the motivations for undertaking CS; 2) pinpointed their own financial sacrifices for CS (in the forms of a loan or money they had

saved). Indeed, American society is inundated with moral principles of self-reliance and self-determination (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Annas and Miller, 1994). Likewise, according to Leung and Cossu (2019), the neoliberal vocabulary like can-do attitudes and individualism has been imported from the West, predominantly the US, to Thailand.

Meanwhile, the learned narrative paralleling their British counterparts revolves around the finding that a number of the recipients in my study foregrounded their psychological torments adhered to their pre-op looks. These torments cohere with their experiences of being body shamed and their mental pain from using temporary double eyelid items and bra fillers. In Gimlin's (2007) study, British participants' emphasis on such torments stemmed from conservatism around beauty practices in Great Britain. In this specific Thai context, the recipients' stressing of their psychological torments was most likely because of the remainder of social stigma around CS in Thailand. This kind of stigma was clearly exemplified by Gina. As outlined in chapter seven, Gina reported being acutely aware of such stigma and deciding to pinpoint an ageing-related issue when rationalising her double eyelid surgery with her colleagues.

Second, one of the shared learned narratives between the Thai and Korean phenomena has to do with the collectivist nature of these two countries (Hofstede, n.d.a; n.d.b), which departs from the overall individualistic characteristic of Western societies (Zhang and Liu, 2020). Such collectivist essence leads to the high value of good appearance for interpersonal communication/respect (Mulder, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Elfving-Hwang, 2016; Käng, 2021). Amy's and Gina's accounts in chapter six are paradigmatic of this, with concerns to their professional paths to which attractive looks are typically not central. Also relevant to the collectivist essence of Thai society are multiple stories in this project about the CS decisions to cultivate characters. In Thailand, the terminology 'character' is centred upon the creation of positive public self-images, to pay respect to and gain respect from others (Jackson, 2004; Käng,

2021). This is consonant with Elfving-Hwang's (2016) project that foregrounds the entanglement between older Korean women's self-beautification including CS and the Korean discourse around displaying respect towards others.

Another learned narrative in my study which parallels Korean society is concerned with spirituality. Both Thai and Korean societies are typically conceived of as spiritual (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Trakulsuksawasd, Ingsiriwat, and Wangsillapakun, 2021). Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) make a claim about the role of Korean physiognomy in moulding the CS justifications of some Koreans. Similarly, Chinese physiognomy (*Ngo Heng* in Thai) projected power onto several participants in my study as a supplement to CS, by influencing them to undergo CS and/or to choose beauty styles for the procedures. Indeed, Chinese physiognomy has long permeated Thai society as a tool for making lives more auspicious (Aizura, 2009). However, this spiritual belief can also exercise power onto individuals at odds with CS, as noted by Pa who took precedence aesthetically pleasing appearance over this spirituality. Nevertheless, what Pa and other participants whose CS motives appertain to Chinese physiognomy had in common were their hopes for more attractive looks. All of them were also located within the postfeminist discourse of self-help, having strived for their higher self-empowerment (Gill, 2007c; McRobbie, 2009; Baker, 2010). Such greater self-empowerment proved crucial for multiple recipients' post-op periods, whereby Chinese physiognomy and "postfeminist masquerade" (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718) complemented each other to augment their agentic power in their professional lives.

The last learned narrative in this thesis is pertaining to an evolving perception of CS across the globe. The study uncovered several interviewees' CS motives regarding their desires to unburden and/or enhance relatively routine beauty regimes (applying make-up and temporary double eyelid items and wearing clothes). As Widdows (2018b) argues, the lines between traditionally habitual and extreme beauty practices have become hazy on account of 1) neoliberal

exhortations to reframe most actions/decisions as individual choices; 2) the unceasingly visual-oriented societal shift. Hence, we need to deviate our attention away from the binary between routine and extreme aesthetic regimes. Today these two regimes stand in a continuum. Such a nuance of beauty practices is worth remembering for lessening the influence of neoliberal ethos that places huge appearance pressure on women in the first place (Gill, 2007c; 2017).

In summary, the learned narratives of rationalising CS resonate with previous works about other countries: women's individualisation (the US) (Gimlin, 2007); appearance-induced psychological torments (Great Britain) (Gimlin, 2007); spirituality and interpersonal interaction/respect (Korea) (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Elfving-Hwang, 2016); and a relentlessly blurry boundary between conventionally habitual and extreme aesthetic practices (global) (Widdows, 2018b). As such, this theoretical contribution on the learned narratives of justifying CS demonstrates the international significance of this thesis. It illustrates how the postfeminist tropes of women's individualisation and makeover (Gill, 2007c) can coincide with a multiplicity of Asian characteristics within the same context. This coexistence provides a broad picture of the prime argument of this project: postfeminism greatly manifests itself in the CS stories of young Thai women, with several Thai and East Asian influences. The section that follows highlights another crucial facet of postfeminism.

8.3 Reciprocity between Self-Confidence/Esteem and Appearance

This section explores the entanglement between women's self-confidence/esteem and their looks. It contributes to the psychological and beauty angles of postfeminism, both of which fall under "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162). In this respect, power operated within these recipients through which their own bodies and minds called for self-improvement. The majority of the CS recipients sought to develop their looks with the intention to boost their self-

esteem/confidence. This accords well with the finding that Doctor Jom and Doctor Van, predicated upon their professional experiences, likened Thai women's CS to a toolkit for elevating self-confidence/esteem. In the post-op periods, CS led to increased self-esteem/confidence for most of the recipients in this study, augmenting their agentic power in accordance with the neoliberal archetype of enhanced psychological states (Scharff, 2016).

The above results on self-esteem/confidence add to the overriding theoretical contribution of this thesis: advancing postfeminism. The thesis can fill a gap within Orgad and Gill's (2022) exploration, as their work does not specifically focus on the Thai context or the Southeast Asian region. The key here is that, overall, the recipients in my research partly conformed to "the confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19), in the sense of their heightened self-confidence/esteem. Concurrently, these participants helped question the paradoxical characteristic of "confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19): encouraging women to appreciate their *original* bodies whilst grappling with elusive aesthetic benchmarks circulating in larger society (Orgad and Gill, 2022). The thesis demonstrates that at the moment self-esteem/confidence requires surgically altered appearance, meaning the body-positivity movement has a long way to go towards the entire disappearance of societal demands for undertaking CS. In Thailand, the campaign *#RealSizeBeauty* has brought body positivity to the public dialogue. Still, societal beauty benchmarks stay exclusionary (Chia and Maneechote, 2021b), as acknowledged by some of the recipients in my study.

The emergence of *#RealSizeBeauty* in the second half of 2021 synchronised with the first half of the data collection of this project. Therefore, the finding that many of the participants pointed to their increased self-esteem/confidence induced by CS during the interviews indicates some room for development regarding the body-positivity move in Thailand. As with Favaro's (2017) and Orgad and Gill's (2022) works mainly on Western contexts, my project critiques the

postfeminist incitement towards women to tackle problems to an individual end. My study continues extending Dosekun's (2020) aforementioned argument countering the illusionary postfeminist mantra of women's self-containment. Self-containment cannot be the only way forward, but the game changer would be a more transformative approach towards the full inclusivity of aesthetic standards.

8.4 Divergences and Convergences between Gendered Gazes

According to Bartky (1997) and Murray (2007) from a Foucauldian viewpoint, people exercise their power onto one another based on existing norms attached to beauty culture. In parallel, the power of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) and "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) consistently came through in the findings. This section sums up several dissonances and overlaps between these two gazes; novel ways "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) played out within this particular CS phenomenon; and the overall differences between my research and Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016) study. By doing so, this section flows into the principal theoretical contribution of this thesis: advancing postfeminism.

Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz (2016, p. 108) depict "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) as comparative, ubiquitous, and judgmental. My project found all of these three characteristics in a range of pre-op and post-op accounts on both "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) and "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). In reality, these two gazes share an array of qualities within the context of this study: not only prevalent, judgmental, and comparative as just mentioned, but also advocative, comforting, and insincere. Broadly speaking, both men and women acted as body-shaming perpetrators (judgmental), CS advocates (advocative), compliment givers (comforting), and preferential treaters (insincere). The

comparativeness of these gazes often coincided with other characteristics, namely judgmental, inspirational, and comforting. This project also explored how women and men were judgmental in differing ways, i.e. modest looks-based criticisms following the operations (women); blatant aesthetics-related sexism within romantic relationships and outright rejections of the CS outcomes (men).

“Postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) was deemed prevalent with concerns to attractive women in the media and its ubiquity in the recipients’ narratives as a whole. Meanwhile, “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) was considered ubiquitous when it comes to romantic desirability; that is, a number of the interviewees reported having attracted more men after the procedures. The broad communality between the two gazes is that both can be beneficial and pernicious for the recipients’ emotional wellbeing within this beauty context. Concerning “technology of self” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18), the power of these gazes thus adheres to the inextricable intertwinement between the body and the mind. Crucially, given such communalities, this thesis recommends that scholars in the field of gender avoid seeing these gazes on a dichotomous logic.

However, it is important to acknowledge the dissimilarities between these two gazes to critically dig into gender relations. These gazes were distinct in multiple senses, with the key difference being rooted in the postfeminist modest relegation of women to the traditional patriarchal association between women and bodywork (Gill, 2007c). That is, from the totality of my project, “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) used by other women was more positively advocative and comforting than “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) from men. Indeed, on the basis of the above postfeminist relegation, most women are inscribed within the postfeminist depiction of self-beautification as a way to give themselves a boost (Gill, 2007c). Postfeminism allures women to associate beauty practices with their individual choices that make their lives

felicitous, under the guise that gender disparities are no longer at stake (Gill, 2007c). This leads to their beauty-focused advocacy and comforting comments towards women alike (Winch, 2015). In this respect, power circulates within women's circles premised upon appearance-based consumption.

Some of the dissonances between the two gazes were more or less attributed to the demographics of the main participant group. Firstly, the inspirational characteristic was disproportionately visible in the accounts regarding "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) compared to "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). That is, the recipients took inspiration from women whom they found attractive to have CS, and following their procedures they inspired other women to undertake CS. This was partially because none of the CS recipients in my study self-identified as men; otherwise, there may have been a multiplicity of the stories on the inspirational quality of "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Secondly, this thesis discovered the desirable attribute of "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) only, on the grounds that a few of the participants regarded heterosexual romantic desirability as one of their motivations and/or emphasised the immense advantages of CS in their romantic desirability. Yet, this is hardly surprising, as most of the recipients in this study reported being heterosexual women.

The inspirational attribute of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) can elicit the unconventional workings of power between the older and the younger, as evidenced in my project. As noted earlier, age-based power differentials have been pervasive in Thailand, with the older usually having more power (McC Campbell, *et al.*, 1999; Sringernyung, *et al.*, 2020; Baker and Pasuk, 2022). The greater power of older Thai people impacted on the accounts about surveillance from others in the form of body shaming: the perpetrators were often either older than the recipients or around the same age. However, this study found that some of the recipients inspired their mothers to have CS, alluding to the tremendous effect of beauty in

subverting the conventional pattern of age-based power dynamics. This finding constitutes how my thesis advances postfeminism as its central theoretical contribution. To be precise, because Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016, p. 94) conceptualisation of "postfeminist gaze" is centred upon women friendship, my thesis seeks to move forward this conceptualisation to include the pivotal roles of mothers. From the entirety of this project, such motherhood was characterised by both positive and negative qualities of this gaze. Nevertheless, the negative side was outweighed by the positive one, namely the inspirational, advocative, and comforting attributes of this gaze. Also paramount to this contribution is the finding that, of all women in the recipients' lives, the mothers overall came into play as the strongest CS advocates, connoting supportive motherhood in conformity to beauty patriarchy.

Another remarkable characteristic of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) in my data appertains to homosexual couples. Contrasted with the heteronormative core of women's viewing in Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016) research, my thesis unveiled how the recipients who had women partners received more in-depth comforting feedback on post-op appearance compared to those who had men partners. As written earlier, Hill and Fischer (2008) claim that women regardless of sexual orientation have been pressurised by beauty patriarchy to look at themselves in an appearance-focused manner. Due to the situatedness of these recipients' women partners within the beauty patriarchal control, it can be argued that they were able to relate to the participants concerning aesthetic demands. This finding makes a unique contribution to postfeminism, by showing materialisations of "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) within homosexual relationships in a comforting way.

On the whole, this thesis differs from Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016) project in several ways. First, unlike their research that portrays surveillance among women as bizarre or ridiculous, my project did not discover as such. Second, British women participants in Riley, Evans,

and Mackiewicz's (2016) study overall view other women's adoption of this gaze as judgmental. In contrast, altogether the recipients in my research saw "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) from other women as more positive than negative; that is, comforting and pleasantly advocative. Both findings point to "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) in the sense of women's preoccupation with beauty to cultivate their power. That is, women sometimes project power onto one another based on bodywork in a celebratory manner (Winch, 2015). Conceivably, such distinctions between my research and Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz's (2016) research have to do with the different foci of these two studies. The former work focuses on CS, whereas the latter centres around a wider picture of appearance-based observation amongst women. CS has been normalised among Thais as evidenced in chapter six, which may have prompted a number of Thai women to be supportive of CS, in the forms of positively advocative and comforting comments on other women's CS.

8.5 Salience of the Media

This section consolidates one of the theoretical contributions of this thesis: displaying the ways the media facilitate young Thai women to undertake CS. This contribution deserves attention, because the media have been integral to feminist scholarship on account of their paramount importance for people's lives (Gill, 2017; Evans, 2023). By and large, the media were instrumental in igniting the recipients in this study to undergo CS. Primarily, the media 1) directed the participants to be spurred by attractive individuals; 2) prompted the interviewees to monitor their own looks while using media platforms; 3) facilitated the selection of places to undergo the operations. What underlay these were the interactivity and rapid circulation of digital media (social media and websites) (Kümpel, Karnowski, and Keyling, 2015; Qiao, 2019) as well as the wide dissemination of mass media (Schrape, 2016). Such media features allowed social and mass media

to meld power within the participants into their decisions to have CS. On social media, power operationalises between platforms and users, as well as within different interpersonal relationships (Marwick, 2012). In this sense, platforms offer a place where power is mainly exchanged via interpersonal communication (Marwick, 2012), as shown in this section.

This section claims that (neoliberal) capitalism encapsulated the ways the media facilitated young Thai women to engage with CS. Content on social media is situated within the attention economy, in which numerous individuals strive for likes and praising comments on their posts in pursuit of more social acceptance (Lupton, 2016). On this capitalist logic, individuals who brand themselves via social media – or simply watch these people – perpetuate capitalist domination, by ‘working’ for such capitalist platforms through content production/consumption (Roy, 2022). Within this social media ecology, glamour is one of the top priorities for social media platforms to grow their profits, because attractive posts often increase social media use (Hearn and Banet-Weiser, 2020). Subsequently, glamorous posts permeate social media, wherein postfeminism is at play as outlined below.

Appearance-based surveillance culture, a fundamental feature of postfeminism (Gill, 2017), was integral to how the media spurred the recipients to have CS. These participants endorsed the inspirational and comparative attributes of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) while using social and mass media. In this regard, (predominantly women) celebrities and influencers played an important part, which configured the relational power that flew primarily among women, perhaps with the help of the media’s algorithm. The extant literature in the field of media and communication (see for example: Bishop, 2021; Glatt and Banet-Weiser, 2021; Glatt, 2023) unveils algorithmic bias in favour of privileged groups and/or content that serves capital accumulation. Congruent with the above algorithmic preference, influencers and celebrities often

gain profound exposure in the attention economy due to symbolic perceptions of them (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 4).

Typically, celebrities possess high economic status and glamorous symbols (Ferris, 2007; Redmond, 2014), whereas influencers are popular via their aspirational yet relatable identities (Marwick, 2013). Hence, celebrities and influencers usually thrive via self-branding on social media, narrowing aesthetic standards at large and democratising appearance-focused regulatory practices (Abidin and Gwynne, 2017; Kanai, 2018; Gill, 2021b; Chen and Kanai, 2022; Rogan, 2022). This point echoes my research result that a number of the participants who fall under the umbrella term of influencers reported receiving positive reactions from their fans owing to their post-op appearance. To that end, the thesis illustrates that the economically successful and aesthetically symbolic images of celebrities and the approachable and aspirational images of influencers are consequential (Ferris, 2007; Banet-Weiser, 2012; Redmond, 2014).

However, the celebrity and influencer landscape did not wholly capture surveillance culture in the interviewees' CS motivations. Other components that came into play include: women models in magazines and clothing shops on Instagram; pretty self-presentations of general women on social media; and the participants' appearance-focused self-monitoring via social and mass media. Crucially, postfeminism is inherent in these components, in the aspects of women's self-optimisation to increase their mediated visibility and/or marketability (Banet-Weiser, 2018); and women's self-policing and disciplining among one another (Gill, 2007c; 2017). Women are then seduced into the postfeminist notion of the "perfect" (McRobbie, 2015, p. 3), by cultivating their aesthetic selves for achieving idealised contemporary femininity in the age of social media (McRobbie, 2015).

Based upon the data, the media sources that facilitated the choosing of CS places are wide-ranging. They include: CS communities/groups on social media; clinics/hospitals' social media

pages; ads and algorithms on social media; CS-related websites/discussion boards; and influencers and celebrities on social media. Arguably, most of these media components maintain capitalist domination, due to their reliance upon social media platforms to which the attention economy is central. Crucially, all of the above media elements aided the participants in carefully choosing particular places to undertake CS in chorus with the postfeminist trope of self-responsibilisation (McRobbie, 2020). To avert severely negative repercussions concerning the CS outcomes, these women embraced the postfeminist concept of “aesthetic entrepreneurship” (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017, p. 37) by self-reflexively selecting CS locations.

From the totality of this research, digital media played out more than mass media. Under the great influence of capitalism, the media facilitated young Thai women to engage with CS in three major ways. These ways comprise 1) orientating the interviewees to be prompted by attractive individuals; 2) motivating the participants to scrutinise their own appearance while utilising media platforms; 3) helping with the selection of places to undertake the procedures. Postfeminism – concerning self-optimisation, appearance-based surveillance culture, and self-responsibilisation – was paramount to these roles of the media.

8.6 Postfeminism in Thai Beauty Culture

This section sums up postfeminist reifications from the entirety of this study, starting by articulating the recipients’ identity formation while justifying their actions and making sense of their CS experiences. A number of the recipients expressed their negative feelings towards hierarchical Thai educational culture, the body-shaming perpetrators, and/or those who treated them preferentially after the CS procedures. These expressions are contrasted with the postfeminist preference for optimistic manifestations (Gill, 2017, p. 610). Nevertheless, around the same number of the recipients may have framed postfeminist identities. That is, they showed themselves as

optimistic/positive to subdue social injustice (body shaming, beauty-related sexism, and preferential treatment). In a broad sense, this form of postfeminist identities parallels the postfeminist discourse of optimistic expressions that overshadow radical social transformations (Gill, 2017, p. 610).

Many of the recipients recognised the persistence of gender inequality in Thailand in LGBTQ+ rights, women's domestic and career domains, and generational gaps. This reflects the wider perception that feminism has not yet reached its pinnacle of dismantling patriarchy in Thailand (Teeratanabodee, 2021; 2023; Buranajaroenkij, 2023). This is interwoven with the intention of the Thai authoritarian regime to prolong the gendered status quo (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 216). Therefore, the postfeminist claim to the entire fading of gender disparities is far from convincing within the context of my thesis. However, when explaining their post-op positionalities on gender and beauty, most of the recipients deemed women's preoccupation with CS/aesthetics as positive or normal, casting gender inequality in terms of beauty as unclear. In this respect, they may have embodied postfeminist identities, considering the postfeminist depiction of beauty as an impetus for women's self-empowerment (Gill, 2007c). This depiction is under the illusion that patriarchy has now gone (McRobbie, 2009). Put simply, such identities appertain to the postfeminist discourse of the inextricable nexus between beauty and women's power (Gill, 2007c).

Altogether, this thesis discovered an array of postfeminist materialisations when it comes to the beauty dimension of Thai society, as consolidated thus far in this chapter. In brief, the thesis uncovered 1) the recipients' pre-op agentic power regarding women's individualisation; 2) their post-op agentic power concerning women's aesthetic/psychological/career self-empowerment; 3) the need to be entrepreneurial and self-responsibilised; 4) the centrality of appearance to their self-confidence/esteem; 5) overall pleasantly advocative and comforting looks-focused observation from other women; 6) the prominence of self-optimisation and appearance-based surveillance culture in their media-related CS motives; 7) the recipients' postfeminist identities in several above manners.

These elements bring this project to claim that postfeminist manifestations are abundant in the CS accounts of young Thai women. My study therefore builds on Singpliam's (2022a) assertion that postfeminism exists in the Thai aesthetic landscape.

The thesis suggests that such postfeminist manifestations within the CS context of my project ought not to be equated with a *redundancy* of feminism like in the West (McRobbie, 2009), considering the relatively novel prevalence of feminism outside academia in Thai society (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 216). Furthermore, this emergence of feminism has come into collision with the conflicted understanding between democracy and feminism (Teeratanabodee, 2021). The term 'feminism' has a long way to gain adequate public traction in Thailand to be deemed superfluous. Nonetheless, my study extends Gill's (2016) argument that postfeminism can synchronise with feminism. To be precise concerning the context of this study, postfeminist materialisations in Thai aesthetic culture can coexist with the rise of feminism outside academia. Yet, given the optimistic and de-politicising basis of postfeminism (Gill, 2007c; 2017), feminism, this study claims, should take the lead for more radical social changes towards more hopeful Thai society. The concluding chapter recommends an avenue for future research, in order for feminism to reach that stage in Thailand.

8.7 Adaptation of Postfeminism to Thai and East Asian Influences

Varying depending upon a given locale, postfeminist iterations are in no way universal (Dosekun, 2015a). This contention lies at the heart of the main argument of this project: postfeminism significantly underpins the CS accounts of young Thai women, *with multiple influences about Thai society and East Asian countries*. This section feeds into the overriding theoretical contribution of the thesis: advancing postfeminism, by highlighting how postfeminism adjusts itself within an Asian phenomenon. From a holistic viewpoint, many Asian influences were

at play in these CS accounts: for instance, Thai and Korean celebrities and influencers as well as a profound global reputation of CS in Korea. This section, however, pays heed to the influences that clearly diverge from postfeminism in the West.

The first major influence is concerned with Chinese physiognomy. Overall, this spiritual belief complexifies “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), with regards to women’s preoccupation with beauty to cultivate their power. That is, having spirituality as motivations for undergoing CS or as aesthetic styles for CS contributes to subverting the remaining understanding of CS as symbolic of vanity (Blum, 2003; Northrop, 2012). Women’s involvement in aesthetics can be fused with their desires to fit better into spirituality. This study expands on Käng’s (2021, p. 287) claim that bodily/facial modifications undertaken by Thais are both aesthetic and intersubjective – as shown in my project, it is also spiritual. Across the entire data, the recipients with partial/full Chinese ethnicity appeared to be more engrossed in (and/or surrounded by people with interests in) Chinese physiognomy than those who are not of Chinese parentage. This point sits at the intersection of Chinese lineage, spirituality, and aesthetics. These findings on Chinese physiognomy help broadly address the paucity of academic investigation of religion-related postfeminist materialisations, as Gill (2017, p. 615) stresses.

In addition to Chinese physiognomy, this thesis unmasked multiple Thai sociocultural elements at variance with the perception of CS as emblematic of vanity (Blum, 2003; Northrop, 2012). The relevant research findings complicate “postfeminist sensibility” (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), particularly women’s preoccupation with beauty to elevate their power. First, a few of the accounts in this project are tied to the CS decisions to refine characters. In Thailand, the term ‘character’ is often likened to positive outer self-presentations to have a place to stand in society (Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021). Second, Amy’s and Gina’s CS stories, as detailed in chapter six, bear on generating pleasant personae for other people due to their professions. Arguably, these two results are inherent

in the collectivist nature of Thai society which renders mutual respect indispensable (Mulder, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Käng, 2021; Hofstede, n.d.b).

Based on my data, Thai conservatism informs the sociocultural components that sharply deviate from postfeminism in the West. To begin with, sexual intercourse was almost silenced in the recipients' CS rationale, perhaps because of a ubiquitous Thai discourse: the sensitiveness of broaching sexual intercourse (Ounjit, 2015). It is distinct from the West where various mediated portrayals equate women's sexualisation, covering sexual intercourse, with their increased self-empowerment (Dobson, 2014). In this vein, this research result departs from the postfeminist trope of women's sexualisation in "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162). Secondly, Mindy and Meg experienced additional surveillance of self-clothing following breast augmentation surgery, due to the controversial image of overly sexy clothing in Thai society (Van Esterik, 2000; Singpliam, 2022a). This entrenched Thai conservative force against provocative dressing has impinged particularly upon women's lives (Van Esterik, 2000; Harrison, 2017). This finding generally differs from the West where the majority of women are socially exhorted to portray themselves sexily as an illusionary token of women's liberation (Levy, 2005). It also demonstrates how the postfeminist feature of women's self-empowerment (Gill, 2007c) in "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162) can be hollowed out by Thai conservatism.

Chapter five showed the persistence of white Western aesthetic influence, as can be seen from the effects of Thai-white and other-Asian-white styles in the recipients' desires concerning post-op appearance. Nonetheless, building on Lazar's (2017, p. 53) argument regarding the involvement of both Western and Asian aesthetics in "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162), the thesis further disputes the hitherto Western-centric core of postfeminism. Grounded in the postfeminist trope of women's aesthetic passion to boost their power (Gill, 2007c), the recipients' desired appearance for CS were little short of "glocalisation" (Robertson, 1995, p. 26). They mainly

comprise Korean, Thai-Chinese, Thai/Asian-white, Thai, and Chinese styles, as well as ‘natural’ looks and appearance that fits well with Chinese physiognomy. In Thailand, such ‘natural’ looks are equated with Asian aesthetics, mostly Korean. This is probably due to not only the relative geographical proximity between Thailand and Korea, but also ‘natural’ looks depicted via Korean popular culture (Seo, Cruz, and Fifita, 2020). Altogether, Korean and Thai-Chinese styles were the most prominent in such desired looks reported by the recipients. This is consonant with 1) Käng’s (2021) article on the immense dominance of Korean beauty in Thai society; 2) Käng’s (2017) mentioning of the prominence of partially/fully ethnically Chinese Thais within the Thai celebrity/influencer industry.

Apart from Thai-style beauty, all of the aesthetics noted in the previous paragraph emanate from either East Asian or Western countries, both of which have long been pivotal in shaping positive sociocultural imaginings among Thais (Sinnott, 2012; Chaipraditkul, 2013; Käng, 2017; 2021). None of these aesthetics comes from countries which have been deemed less developed than Thailand, nor did any sociocultural components that influenced the recipients’ entire CS experiences. In other words, the thesis constantly shined light upon the ways sociocultural elements from a multiplicity of more developed countries in East Asia and the West were crisscrossed with Thai culture and society. These findings rest upon power differentials based on broader ethnic and national hierarchies. Indeed, the core of postfeminism is not centred upon the local/global dichotomy (Dosekun, 2015a). Rather, postfeminism flows beyond national borders through consumer culture, the media, and global mobility (often in an uneven manner), whilst staying in flux depending on the locale in which postfeminism stands (Dosekun, 2015a, p. 965). Predicated upon my data, besides Thailand, Korea had the most considerable power in influencing the accounts from both the recipients and the surgeons. This affirms the tremendous effect of Korean popular culture and aesthetics in Thailand (Käng, 2021). Such Korean mainstream culture consists of

Korean celebrities and influencers; the worldwide eminence of CS in Korea; and a CS-related Korean reality show.

Conclusively, postfeminism adapted itself depending upon 1) spiritual, collectivist, and conservative Thai society (Buranajaroenkij, 2017; Trakulsuksawasd, Ingsiriwat, and Wangsillapakun, 2021; Hofstede, n.d.b); 2) sociocultural imaginings among Thais surrounding East Asia and the West (Sinnott, 2012; Chaipraditkul, 2013; Käng, 2017; 2021). Alongside the Thai political history characterised by inconsistent democracy and various attempts to make the country more progressive, a variety of Thai traditional values have been entrenched in society (Buranajaroenkij, 2017; 2023), as illustrated in this section. In closing, the crux of this chapter appertains to how postfeminism was reified in a context about Southeast Asia: the region that has been underexplored with respect to postfeminism other than Singapore. This project extends Dosekun's (2015a, p. 967) opposition to Gwynne's (2013, p. 327) claim concerning the higher tendency for postfeminism to manifest itself in Global North countries. As my study demonstrated, postfeminism has penetrated Global South countries like Thailand as well.

Chapter Summary

This chapter built upon chapters five to seven to critically discuss the research findings in relation to the scholarly literature. It intended to expand on the major argument of this thesis: a range of postfeminist facets underlie the CS accounts of young Thai women, with several influences about Thai society and East Asian countries. To briefly unpack this argument, these postfeminist facets relate to 1) the recipients' pre-op agentic power concerning women's individualisation; 2) their post-op agentic power about women's aesthetic/psychological/professional self-empowerment; 3) the imperative to be self-responsibilised and entrepreneurial; 4) the centrality of looks to their self-esteem/confidence; 5) overall pleasantly advocative and comforting appearance-based

monitoring from other women; 6) the prominence of self-optimisation and looks-focused surveillance culture in the media; 7) the recipients' postfeminist identities while making sense of their CS experiences. Conclusively, such agentic power was influenced by a range of sociocultural influences, and it can be intersectional depending upon categories of difference, particularly economic capital, age, and gender. The recipients' agentic power sat alongside the power of scrutiny from other women and men's surveillance on women's looks.

The chapter elucidated all of the theoretical contributions of this thesis. The overriding contribution centres around "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2007c, p. 162). It consists of a variety of findings pertinent to this sensibility: iterations of "the confidence cult(ure)" (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19); "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94); "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6); and postfeminism within an Asian phenomenon. Specifically, the thesis underscored the current unconvincingness of having immense self-esteem/confidence without aesthetic modifications, in view of unrealistic beauty standards. This chapter also pointed out that "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) used by other women was more comforting and pleasantly advocative than "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) from men. As the chapter recommended, the pivotal roles of mothers and homosexual relationships can be included in the conceptualisation of the former gaze. Moreover, postfeminism performed itself premised on some long-standing characteristics of Thai society (collectivist, spiritual, and conservative) and both East Asian and Western aesthetics/cultures, which is clearly distinct from typical postfeminist materialisations in the West.

The second theoretical contribution is concerned with several learned narratives of justifying CS. These learned narratives parallel previous works on other contexts; that is, women's individualisation (the US) (Gimlin, 2007); psychological torments resulting from pre-op appearance (Great Britain) (Gimlin, 2007); spirituality and interpersonal respect/communication (Korea)

(Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Elfving-Hwang, 2016); and ceaselessly opaque lines between traditionally routine and extreme aesthetic practices (global) (Widdows, 2018b). The final theoretical contribution revolves around the substantial impact of capitalism and neoliberal ethos on how the media facilitated young Thai women to undergo CS. This is where the postfeminist motifs of self-optimisation, self-responsibilisation, and appearance-focused surveillance culture were crucial. The concluding chapter synthesises what was written in this chapter to re-address the research questions.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

Having reviewed an abundance of literature on feminist theory, Thai society, and cultural understandings of beauty in several countries, this qualitative project empirically investigated the CS accounts of young Thai women. More specifically, this study was informed by relativist ontology, feminist constructionist epistemology, and a poststructuralist theoretical and analytical perspective. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews and a codebook thematic analysis (TA) to sociologically explore this particular CS phenomenon, with feminist theory as the theoretical framework. The participants involve 50 young Thai women CS recipients and five Thai cosmetic surgeons, all of whom were based in Thailand.

This study found a wide array of postfeminist materialisations in the narratives of young Thai women. The overriding argument of this thesis is that postfeminism is central to the pre-op and post-op accounts of young Thai women, with some influences regarding Thai society and East Asian countries. These influences are primarily concerned with the spiritual, collectivist, and conservative essence of Thai society (Buranajaroenkij, 2017; Trakulsuksawasd, Ingsiriwat, and Wangsillapakun, 2021; Hofstede, n.d.b), but also Thai and Korean popular culture and East Asian and Thai beauty styles. The postfeminist dimensions that were prominent in this CS phenomenon encompass: 1) pre-operative agentic power around women's individualisation; 2) post-operative agentic power regarding women's aesthetic/psychological/career self-empowerment; 3) the imperative to be entrepreneurial and self-responsibilised; 4) the vital importance of appearance for self-confidence/esteem; 5) looks-based observation from other women; 6) self-optimisation and appearance-focused surveillance culture in the media; 7) positive/impartial positionalities on beauty; 8) optimistic expressions to tone down social injustice.

In this respect, this study has fulfilled its major aim as set out earlier: to deeply examine young Thai women's reflective CS accounts via the lens of feminist theory. Concurrently, I have

built upon Singpliam's (2022a) assertion that postfeminism comes into being in the Thai aesthetic terrain. This adds to the emerging body of literature on postfeminist manifestations in the Asian continent, with some local influences (Chen, 2012; Lazar, 2017; Anwer and Arora, 2020; Liao, 2021; Jia, 2022). This thesis will be pivotal to the field of gender, since the Southeast Asian region has been largely overlooked in academic discussions on postfeminism, with the exception of Singapore.

This chapter offers a summary to the research questions, to continue showcasing how my project has met its main aim. It then consolidates the theoretical and methodological contributions, makes recommendations to alleviate beauty-related societal problems, suggests possible trajectories for future studies, and proffers a personal reflective note.

9.1: Revisiting the Research Questions

9.1.1 What informs young Thai women's decisions to undertake CS?

Gill's (2007a) argument that women's agency is indivisible from patriarchy lies at the core of the response to this research question. A variety of postfeminist materialisations informed young Thai women's decisions to have CS, as explicated below. Yet, postfeminism does endorse patriarchy: it assumes full gender equality and lures women into their *pseudo*-autonomy, constant self-development, and evaluation among one another, whereby patriarchy operates modestly (McRobbie, 2004; Gill, 2007c; Baker, 2010; Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016; Orgad and Gill, 2022).

Such *pseudo*-autonomy was translated into multiple postfeminist reifications, one of which is about the recipients' agentic power concerning their individualisation. Their individualisation comprises: describing entirely or mainly themselves as the principal origin of their CS motivations (whilst acknowledging different sociocultural influences that prompted them to have the

procedures); self-financing CS; and thoroughly self-researching where precisely to receive CS. This finding has a sharp resonance with the postfeminist trope of women's de-politicisation and independence (Gill, 2007c; Baker, 2010). In some cases, such agentic power intersected with several social characteristics – notably economic capital, gender, and age – of the recipients themselves and at times of their mothers. This intersection was evidenced in the narratives about who paid for CS and the huge CS advocacy from their mothers.

Postfeminism encompasses 1) women's intentions to develop/optimize themselves aesthetically, psychologically, and professionally (McRobbie, 2007; 2009; Baker, 2010; Gill, 2017; Orgad and Gill, 2022); 2) surveillance among women (Winch, 2015). Both components relate to subtle reifications of patriarchy and were integral to the recipients' CS motives. This study unmasked their CS motivations attached to their desires to tackle their psychological selves (self-confidence/esteem; self-satisfaction; and an inferiority complex). Furthermore, "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) greatly prompted the recipients in my project to have CS. This gaze and "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) share certain characteristics when it comes to the recipients' pre-op accounts: advocative, comparative, and judgmental. Nonetheless, compared to "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6), "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) from other women operated in a more positively advocative manner towards the participants. Indeed, "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) is rooted in beauty patriarchy, in that women observe each other's appearance on account of women's communal sense of gendered aesthetic demands (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 108).

Congruent with Dosekun's (2015a) argument that postfeminist iterations are never universal, this thesis claims to the importance of Thai and East Asian influences in shaping the recipients' CS motivations and practical drivers. Some of these influences clearly detach from postfeminism in the West. One of them appertains to Chinese physiognomy (a type of spirituality)

that has long permeated Thai society (Aizura, 2009). This spiritual belief, and the collectivist essence of Thai society (Hofstede, n.d.b), aid in complexifying the postfeminist feature of women's passion in beauty to foster their power (Gill, 2007c). In other words, the pre-op accounts on these two sociocultural elements counter the lingering perception of CS as symptomatic of vanity (Blum, 2003; Northrop, 2012).

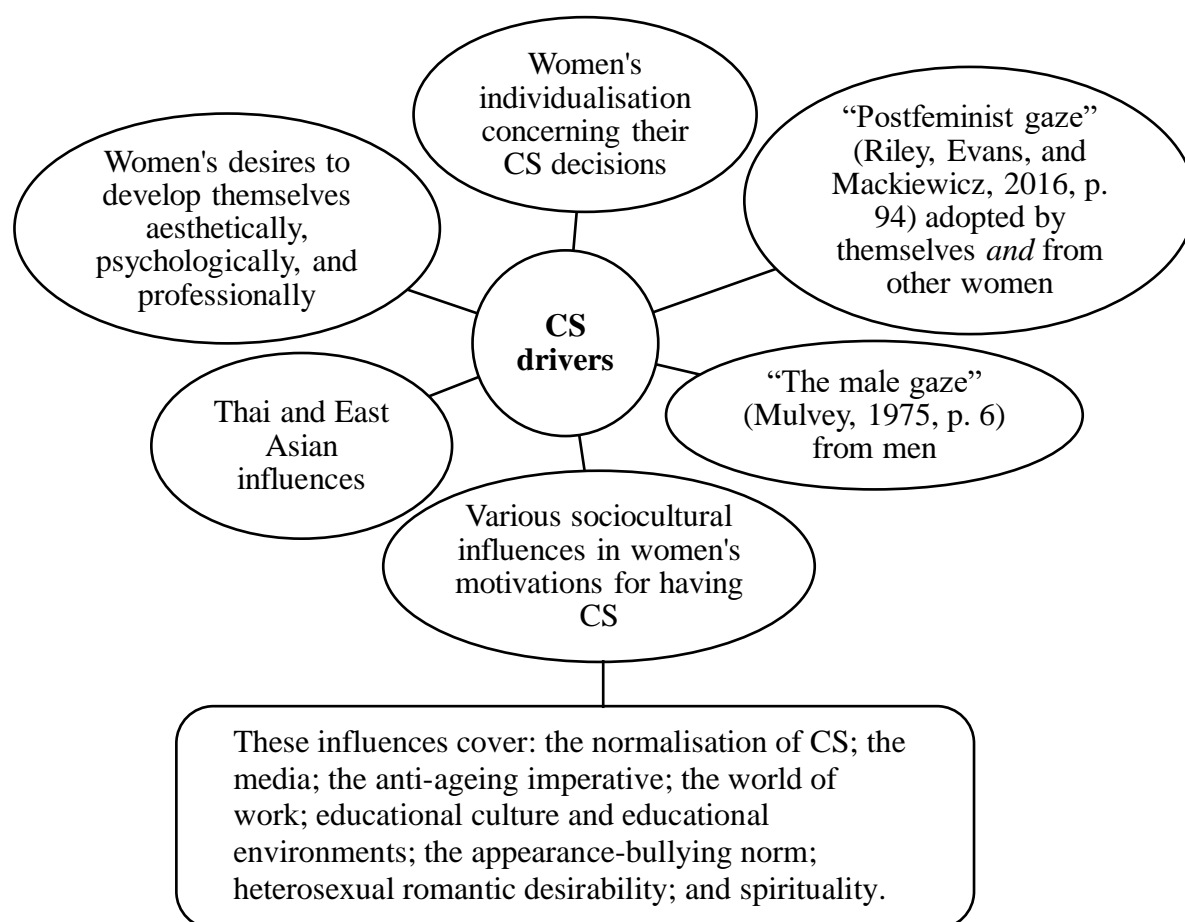
There are two more East Asian/Thai influences that are apparently distinct from postfeminism in Western countries. First, the sensitiveness of broaching sexual intimacy in Thailand (Ounjit, 2015) entailed the marginality of sexual intercourse in the recipients' CS rationalisations. This starkly diverges from the postfeminist grammar of women's sexualisation as a vehicle towards higher self-empowerment (Dobson, 2014). Second, with concerns to the recipients' desired appearance for CS, it was a reification of "glocalisation" (Robertson, 1995, p. 26). East Asian aesthetic styles, disproportionately Korean and Thai-Chinese, were the most prominent, connoting Asian economic front runners and cosmopolitanism (Käng, 2017; 2021). This means that within this Thai CS context, the postfeminist motif of women's beauty passion to foster their power (Gill, 2007c) significantly departs from outright Western aesthetics. In short, my project shows how postfeminism can adapt itself in line with Thai and East Asian sociocultural components, extending Dosekun's (2020) contention against the universalisation of this term towards white Westernness.

To summarise, my response to the first research question is that, alongside "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) and the recipients' acknowledgment of sociocultural influences, what mainly informed their decisions to undergo CS include multiple patterns of their individualisation, intentions to improve their aesthetic/psychological/professional selves, and "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). Put simply, the recipients' pre-op accounts present the monumental effect of postfeminism. Indeed, the CS decisions were translated into various muted manifestations of patriarchy, intersected with different social characteristics, and are tied to a

multiplicity of Thai and East Asian influences. To that end, this thesis builds upon Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) theorisation of patriarchy. Considering Walby's (1989) focus on traditional connections between physical attractiveness and women's values when theorising the cultural angle of patriarchy, my project points out that such linkages can be reified in unconventional ways. These ways include 1) beauty patriarchy endorsed by women for their aesthetic/psychological/career self-cultivation; 2) women's looks-based monitoring of one another.

The following diagram pulls together different strands regarding the recipients' drivers for undertaking CS:

Figure 2 - Visual Summary of Young Thai Women's CS Drivers



9.1.2 What are young Thai women's post-op experiences?

Both subtle and overt reifications of patriarchy clearly impacted on their post-op narratives, yet the former was more prominent. In other words, postfeminism greatly influenced these stories, as demonstrated in this section. The recipients' post-op accounts are centred upon five aspects: women's aesthetic self-satisfaction; self-confidence/esteem; appearance-focused self-scrutiny; professional achievements; and post-op looking from men and other women. The first four dimensions characterise the rise of their agentic power after the procedures, concerning the postfeminist feature of women's aesthetic/psychological/career self-empowerment. The final dimension is surrounding surveillance from other people, namely "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975,

p. 6) and “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94), which coexisted with such agentic power. In the recipients’ post-op narratives, both gazes have some communal characteristics: judgmental, insincere, comforting, and prevalent. Nevertheless, “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) from other women was exercised in a more comforting light than “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Referring to postfeminism, Winch (2015) deems such comforting feedback on bodywork as symbolic of a muted form of beauty patriarchy, on the grounds of women’s active involvement in makeover in general.

To explicate the recipients’ increased aesthetic/professional/psychological self-empowerment, their routines of applying make-up and dressing up became more felicitous following their operations. This alludes to the postfeminist feature of women’s passion in their bodies for heightening their power (Gill, 2007c). In this sense, these participants stayed grounded in beauty patriarchy while experiencing the post-op positive changes about everyday makeover. Likewise, altogether the recipients embraced “postfeminist masquerade” (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718) by adopting their enhanced looks for their own professional accomplishments, whilst gender disparities in the career domain persisted in favour of men (McRobbie, 2015). Also remarkable is the growth of self-esteem/confidence facing nearly all of the recipients, uncovering an important linkage between women’s bodies and minds in consonance with “technology of self” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). In this way, their elevated self-empowerment illustrates subtle manifestations of patriarchy, given postfeminist injunctions notably towards women concerning self-confidence/esteem boosting (Orgad and Gill, 2022).

However, the interviewees’ post-op agentic power was conditional on the postfeminist grammar of women’s self-responsibilisation (McRobbie, 2020). A number of the recipients reported encountering additional layers of appearance-based self-policing following their CS procedures in two main ways. Firstly, the CS operations provoked the amplification of self-surveillance in terms

of clothing and nose implants. Secondly, some of the recipients reported decidedly/potentially seeking to re-undertake CS on the same body parts for more attractive appearance. These two findings demonstrate that their agentic power in reaching the peak of their aesthetic self-satisfaction was covertly weakened by beauty patriarchy. The post-op outcomes were thus able to both empower and disempower young Thai women. On this basis, this project builds upon Widdows's (2018b) work, by claiming the significance of pre-empting lop-sided thinking exclusively on women's empowerment. Notwithstanding their eroded agentic power, most of these particular participants highlighted the worthiness of CS, displaying their attempts to de-politicise away from beauty patriarchy in tune with postfeminism (Gill, 2007c).

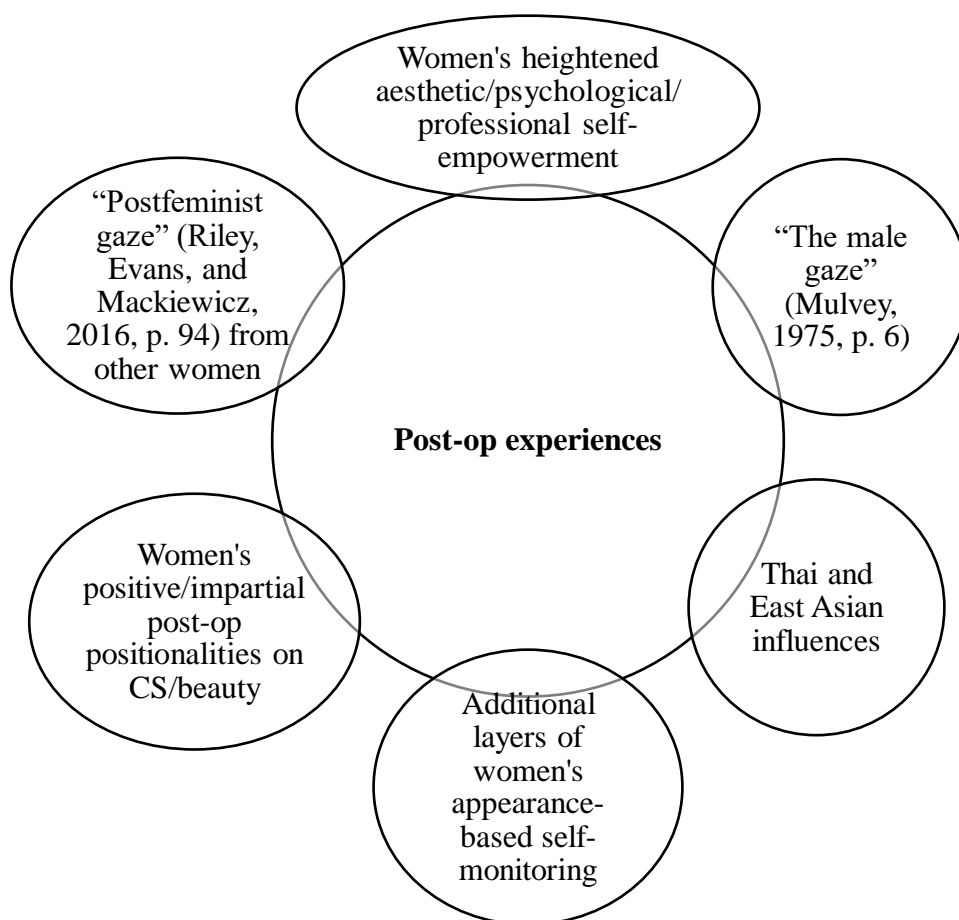
Akin to the recipients' pre-op accounts, multiple Thai and East Asian sociocultural influences in their post-op lives clearly depart from postfeminism in the West. Chinese physiognomy appeared in their post-op stories, in the form of its complementary relationship with "postfeminist masquerade" (McRobbie, 2007, p. 718) to boost their agentic power in the professional domain. Pertinent to the beauty-fixated nature of Thailand (Van Esterik, 2000), in some cases the recipients' increased agentic power was embroiled in the vital importance of looks for choosing job candidates in the country. Another crucial Thai influence that affected the recipients' post-op fashioning revolves around the societal controversy of women's revealing dressing (Van Esterik, 2000; Singpliam, 2022a). This controversy underpinned by Thai conservatism induced extra caution for a couple of the participants concerning dressing with their post-op breasts. Evidently, postfeminism acclimated to the Thai CS context, in lieu of performing universally in any sociocultural phenomenon.

Intriguing are postfeminist identities many of the recipients may have constructed, with concerns to their positive/impartial post-op positionalities on CS/beauty, in light of professional and psychological advantages that aesthetics can bring about (Gill, 2007c; McRobbie, 2009). This result

illustrates how the postfeminist discourse regarding the close tie between women's power and self-beautification structurally overshadows beauty patriarchy (Gill, 2007c). To conclude my response to this research question, the recipients' post-op accounts demonstrate the considerable effect of postfeminism or various muted (but not fading) reifications of patriarchy, with Thai and East Asian influences and the remaining impact of "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Such modest reifications encompass the above post-op postfeminist identities; their increased aesthetic/professional/psychological self-empowerment following their operations; self-responsibilisation invoked by CS; and "postfeminist gaze" (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94). Comparable to the previous section, this section extends Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996; 1997) theorisation of patriarchy by enlightening some unconventional links between women's values and physical attractiveness: 1) beauty patriarchy embraced by women regarding their aesthetic/psychological/career self-development; 2) women's appearance-based disciplining of one another.

The following visualises a range of threads about the recipients' post-op accounts:

Figure 3 - Visual Summary of Young Thai Women's Post-Op Experiences



9.2: Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

9.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

My thesis makes several theoretical contributions. As for **the prime contribution**, the project has advanced postfeminism in three key ways. The first and second ways extend the existing theoretical concepts based upon my data, whilst the third way enlightens the distinctiveness of postfeminism in this Thai context from that in the West. **First** is surrounding “the confidence cult(ure)” (Orgad and Gill, 2022, p. 19), disputing postfeminist injunctions for women to foster self-confidence/esteem while maintaining their *original* bodies (Orgad and Gill, 2022). As this thesis discovered, for self-esteem/confidence to be fulfilled, surgically modified looks were crucial given

elusive beauty benchmarks in larger society. **Second** is concerned with how “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) showed itself within this specific CS phenomenon; and its dynamics with “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Based on the recipients’ stories, the holistic picture of “postfeminist gaze” (Riley, Evans, and Mackiewicz, 2016, p. 94) from other women was comforting and pleasantly advocative, more so than “the male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6) from men. Meanwhile, my study exhibited a range of shared qualities between these two gazes: prevalent, comparative, advocative, comforting, judgmental, and insincere. This thesis therefore warns against being affixed to dichotomous grasps of these gendered gazes.

Third, as mentioned, demonstrates how postfeminist reifications in this Thai context depart from those in Western countries. Such distinctiveness revolves around Chinese physiognomy; the collectivist nature of Thai society (Hofstede, n.d.b); the delicateness of broaching sexual intercourse in Thailand (Ounjit, 2015); the controversial perception of overly provocative dressing in Thai society (Van Esterik, 2000; Singpliam, 2022a); and the prominence of East Asian aesthetic styles. From the entirety of this research, postfeminism was adjustable according to Thai and East Asian influences, all of which are either intrinsic to Thailand or from other countries classified as more developed (namely Korea, China, and Japan). My study thus adds to the subfield of transnational feminist cultural studies. Precisely, the project alluded to the tenacity of ethnic and national hierarchies determined by the levels of development, but also how hegemonic sociocultural components do not necessarily migrate from the West (Dosekun, 2020).

Now we shift our attention to **the second contribution** that showcases the learned narratives of rationalising CS within this study. Such narratives echo previous works on other countries; that is, women’s individualisation (the US) (Gimlin, 2007); women’s appearance-invoked psychological torments (Great Britain) (Gimlin, 2007); spirituality and interpersonal respect/interaction (Korea) (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Elfving-Hwang, 2016); and an increasingly blurred boundary

between conventionally habitual and extreme aesthetic practices (global) (Widdows, 2018b). This contribution underscores the international significance of this thesis among scholars who have researched body image and gender relations. **The third contribution** displays several principal manners the media facilitated young Thai women to undertake CS. These include 1) orienting the participants to be drawn to attractive individuals; 2) prompting the interviewees to monitor their own looks while engaging with media channels; 3) assisting with the selection of specific places to undergo the procedures. This contribution is tied to the postfeminist features of appearance-based surveillance culture, self-optimisation, and self-responsibilisation. Relevant to this are algorithmic bias in favour of celebrities' and influencers' content; the ascendancy of self-branding on social media; and the prevalence of CS-related online networks/pages.

9.2.2 Methodological Contribution

Turning to the methodological contribution, this thesis employed Zoom for conducting the interviews on a delicate topic. Zoom has become one of the principal communicational tools since the outset of Covid-19. Due to potential risks of Covid-19 concerning physical health, I needed to abandon my initial intent to undertake in-person fieldwork. Nevertheless, I benefited from Zoom on the grounds of its effectiveness regarding time and cost (Archibald, *et al.*, 2019). This platform enabled me to obtain a sizeable number of the interviewees. Moreover, online interviewing resulted in all of my participants having chosen to sit at private locations which usually elicit more accurate responses compared to public ones (Jia, 2023). This suits well with my sensitive research topic (Jenner and Myers, 2019). Thus, this methodological contribution of my project may inspire some academics who research sensitive subject matters and anticipate a relatively large pool of interviewees.

9.3: Recommendations for Advancing Thai Society

Based on the findings of my project, I make four recommendations to mitigate societal problems around beauty. **First, this thesis illuminates several consequences instigated by appearance bullying.** This thesis demonstrates the prominence of body shaming in the recipients' narratives around the motivations for undergoing CS, but also the persistence of appearance bullying in their post-op periods. These findings intersected with age, because most of the body-shaming perpetrators were older or around the same age as the participants. Therefore, **the thesis suggests that established Thai campaigns such as #RealSizeBeauty raise greater public awareness of the ramifications invoked by the body-shaming norm.** In doing so, these campaigns can strongly encourage Thais at varying age ranges to be more considerate towards one another with concerns to appearance. As Widdows (2022b, p. 17) claims, it is now crucial to create a culture with more diverse beauty benchmarks, but also less blame.

In alleviating societal problems regarding beauty, the ban on CS may not be a viable solution in Thai society. To justify this, the thesis uncovered some of the stories grounded in Chinese physiognomy and the collectivist basis of Thai society (Hofstede, n.d.b). These accounts illustrate that CS can be spiritual and interpersonal and does not necessarily connote vanity. In this respect, my project suggests another possible way forward. **As for the second recommendation, the Thai medical realm should allow only qualified doctors to perform CS.** This study found that the doctors who were unqualified to operate CS in Thailand invoked some CS complications that needed to be corrected later. This recommendation may serve as a springboard for reducing the number of botched procedures in the country.

Third, my study recommends that a range of educational media channels, encompassing social media pages and communities, provide insights into postfeminism and its beauty dimension. This project unveiled various postfeminist manifestations in the pre-op and

post-op stories of young Thai women. The thesis also pinpointed the salience of the media in facilitating young Thai women to undergo CS. It is ultimately not a matter of whether social media are wholly beneficial or harmful (Rogan, 2022, p. 85), but we may have to consider the ways we can use social media as a movement to lessen beauty-related impacts on society. We have witnessed some previous successful integrations of social media into activism, the Arab Spring for example (Gerbaudo, 2012).

In the wake of the aforementioned pro-democracy youth movement that addressed a range of gender issues (Buranajaroenkij, 2023; Teeratanabodee, 2023), educational media groups/pages/outlets have created content on many aspects of gender inequality in Thai society (Chia and Maneechote, 2021a, p. 6). However, they have rarely produced content on gender inequality in the realm of aesthetic culture. Considering many political uncertainties resulting from the most recent general election (Ives and Jirenuwat, 2023; Ives and Suhartono, 2023), the governmental route (the adjustments of the Thai educational curriculum) may not be a timely way forward. Hence, my study makes this third recommendation, in order for Thais to have more comprehensive knowledge on gender disparities.

The final recommendation relates to incorporating issues surrounding beauty into the social policy domain. As outlined in chapter four, Kristensen (2023) connects policies around aesthetics with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in respect of gender equality and felicitous wellbeing and health. Accordingly, as this thesis discovered, CS undertakers were mainly women in the wider Thai CS context. Furthermore, this project underlined the nexus between women's bodies and minds, covering self-confidence/esteem; self-satisfaction; and an inferiority complex. **The Thai/international social policy domain should therefore weave beauty into the realms of wellbeing and gender inequality, as well as taking beauty-related problems more seriously for advancing Thai society.** Professor Heather Widdows has worked

alongside the UK government to illuminate the ramifications of aesthetics in mental health (UK Parliament, 2022). It is hoped that this kind of progress will be made in Thailand down the line.

9.4: Prospective Avenues for Future Research

This thesis offered an in-depth sociological investigation of the CS accounts of young Thai women, with the use of feminist theory as the theoretical framework. Having interviewed young Thai women and Thai cosmetic surgeons via Zoom between July 2021 and March 2022, I conducted a codebook TA to delve into the data. The interviewees who belong to the principal group (i.e. the CS recipients) varied with regards to the CS types they undertook; provinces of origin; and career and ethnic backgrounds. The number of the participants in this major group is deemed comparatively large for qualitative studies, serving as one of the strengths of my project. That said, over the course of this PhD study, I have seen a raft of potential research paths that can hopefully be fulfilled, with the prime ones being laid out below.

First, the overall spatial/educational privileges inform two shortcomings of this thesis concerning socioeconomic coverage. To unpack this, all of the surgeon interviewees primarily operated CS in Bangkok, which is linked to a clear disjuncture between Bangkok/adjacent provinces and the rest of the country in terms of affluence (Arvidsson and Niesson, 2015). Pertinently, almost 40 out of 50 CS recipients lived in either Bangkok or provinces nearby around the time of the data collection. Over 40 out of 50 recipients in this study were conceived of as having educational capital at the time of their participation in this project. In light of these limitations of my study, **I suggest fieldwork focusing on Thais who reside far from Bangkok or are educationally disadvantaged will be advantageous for feminist scholarship.** This approach shall help scholars examine whether and/or how postfeminism adjusts itself in the accounts of less socially privileged Thais. This is worth giving weight to, since postfeminist identities of non-

Western women often greatly differ depending upon class standings due to stark class inequalities (Dosekun, 2020, p. 16).

The second prospective direction for future research is centred upon CS undertaken by Thai gay men. Based upon the interviews with the surgeon participants, Thai men who belong to the LGBTQ+ community were usually more interested in body image compared to cisgender heterosexual men. Thus, it would be interesting to dig into the CS accounts of Thai gay men through the lens of feminist theory. While using this theory, Chen and Kanai (2022) uncover the negotiation of gay men influencers with their queer identities and feminised self-beautification, in ways that are interwoven with postfeminism yet are more complex than women influencers. Similarly, future research on (post)feminism may find some dissimilarities between the CS stories of Thai gay men and those of young Thai women in my thesis.

The third potential trajectory for follow-up studies is concerned with non-surgical injectables. In view of the high popularity of injectables (such as Botox), Dowrick and Holliday (2022) explore such a minimally invasive aesthetic practice from a sociological vantage point. Dowrick and Holliday (2022, p. 1) underscore the possible future research avenue of analysing injectables consumed by people with different social characteristics; for example, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. As one of the limitations of this thesis, my project only briefly mentioned the close linkage between anti-ageing beauty and injections, as its overriding focus was on surgical procedures. Käng's (2021) project, albeit not explicitly drawing upon feminist theory, provides intersectional analyses of a range of aesthetic regimes undergone by Thais which encompass injections. Feminist scholarship would benefit from some future intersectional studies primarily/exclusively on injectables in many contexts including Thailand, wherein (post)feminist manifestations concerning beauty may be grasped more fully.

The final potential avenue for some future works revolves around Thai people's views on feminism. As detailed in chapter four, the interview time limits hampered my probing of the majority of the recipients regarding their opinions on feminism. Responses to this question from a diverse group of Thai people would be of benefit for gender-related groups and organisations committed to combating gender inequality. As highlighted earlier, feminism has not been in the public spotlight until the pro-democracy youth movement that came forth in 2020 (Buranajaroenkij, 2023, p. 215). For Thai society to move forward progressively, feminism needs to be collectively adopted by individuals across age ranges to fight against patriarchy, as posited by Winch's (2017) article I outlined in chapter two. However, any misperception of feminism must be mitigated in order reach this goal, and this is where potential studies on Thai people's outlooks towards feminism will be substantial.

9.5: Personal Reflective Note

The journey of producing this thesis has been utterly strenuous, whereby I needed to put aside a sizeable amount of the data due to its less relevance to the thesis and the word limit, hoping to incorporate it into prospective future publication(s)/presentation(s). Several personal hardships have also occurred along the road. Nevertheless, there were blessings in disguise, one of which relates to my internally formed solidarity with the recipients when hearing their endeavours to fully fit into the aesthetic benchmarks of Thailand, as detailed in chapter four. The interviews echoed my "outsider-within" (Collins, 1986, p. S14) identity in the UK affixed to social bias against ethnically East and Southeast Asians. Some white/black British people with interests in East and Southeast Asia (my partner, PhD supervisors, and PhD mentor included) aided me in managing my emotional wellbeing whilst coping with my "outsider-within" (Collins, 1986, p. S14) identity. This has given

me some hope that my prospective academic investigation to expand East and Southeast Asian feminist solidarity in the West will be meaningful beyond the East and Southeast Asian community.

Another blessing in disguise during my PhD journey rested upon my high school. Ironically, my pressurised feelings regarding attractive Thai women high-schoolmates, as indicated in the introductory chapter, have been eclipsed by their professional dedications. Many of my fellow high-schoolmates, among a multitude of Thais from this school and other institutions, have been committed to developing Thai society and the world as a whole. I have always been motivated by these Thai talents' achievements to put my utmost into the thesis, hoping that this project has done justice to the participants. The interviewees' CS accounts were explored with criticality in line with "critical respect" (Gill, 2007a, p. 78) rather than judged, as they were shaped by society. Therefore, this project focuses on the underlying concepts and social issues that were impactful in this particular CS context. The motivation from these bright-minded Thais has given myself a nudge to ensure I am a proficient sociologist. Surely, it will go on to do so when I produce potential future publication(s) on this study.

In closing, Ahmed's (2010) book entitled *The Promise of Happiness*, which has been translated into Thai language, may be instrumental in continuing interrogating social issues in Thailand, especially the notion of "feminist killjoy" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 50). This notion refers to feminists who problematise the widely perceived meanings of 'happiness' in an attempt to address social injustice with anger (Ahmed, 2010, p. 65). This thesis outlined an array of postfeminist reifications around women's individualisation and de-politicisation based upon the recipients' pre-op and post-op accounts. Should Thai society moved towards individualism, Thais would be socially incited to dissociate themselves from collective solidarity against gender inequality. The way forward is to create a culture where individualism is hollowed out; where a range of Thais embody "feminist killjoy" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 50). Subsequently, Thai people will more radically

critique the root cause of social injustice in which postfeminism is embedded, as shown throughout this thesis.

List of References

- Abidin, C. (2016) 'Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram', *Media International Australia*, 161 (1), pp. 86-100.
- Abidin, C. (2018) *Internet celebrity: Understanding fame online*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing.
- Abidin, C. and Gwynne, J. (2017) 'Entrepreneurial Selves, Feminine Corporeality and Lifestyle Blogging in Singapore', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 45 (4/5), pp. 385-408.
- Abidin, C. and Ots, M. (2015) 'The Influencer's dilemma: the shaping of new brand professions between credibility and commerce', *The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) 2015 Annual Conference*. San Francisco Marriott Marquis, 5-9 August.
- Ahmed, S. (2010) *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2015) 'Being in Trouble: In the Company of Judith Butler', *Lambda Nordica*, 2-3, pp. 179-192.
- Ainslie, M.J. (2016) 'K-dramas across Thailand: Constructions of Koreanness and Thainess by contemporary Thai consumers', *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 14 (7: 6), pp. 1-15.
- Aizura, A.Z. (2009) 'Where Health and Beauty Meet: Femininity and Racialisation in Thai Cosmetic Surgery Clinics', *Asian Studies Review*, 33 (3), pp. 303-317.
- Akkalatham, W. (2013) 'The acceptance of cosmetic surgery A study on Thai women in Bangkok', *Assumption University Journal of Management*, 11 (1), pp. 46-63.
- Alcoff, L.M. (1995) 'Cultural feminism versus post-structuralism: The identity crisis in feminist theory', in Tuana, N. and Tong, R. (eds.) *Feminism and Philosophy*. Oxford: Westview Press, pp. 434-456.
- Allen, A. (2009) 'Gender and Power', in Clegg, S.R. and Haugaard, M. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Power*. Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 293-309.

- Ampro Health. (2018) การทำศัลยกรรมของคนแต่ละช่วงอายุ ไม่ควรพลาดที่จะอ่าน [*The undergoing of cosmetic surgery for people at each age range: a must-read*]. Available at: <https://amprohealth.com/beauty-surgery/age/> (Accessed: 14 August 2023).
- Angkasirikul, R. (2006) โหงวเฮ้ง ศาสตร์อ่านคนจากใบหน้า [*Physiognomy the science of reading people from faces*]. Bangkok: Se-Ed.
- Annas, G.J. and Miller, F.H. (1994) 'The Empire of Death: How Culture and Economics Affect Informed Consent in the US, UK, and Japan', *American Journal of Law and Medicine*, 20 (4), pp. 357-394.
- Anwer, M. and Arora, A. (2020) '#ImNotAChickFlick: Neoliberalism and Post-feminism in Veere Di Wedding (My Friend's Wedding, 2018)', *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*, 11 (2), pp. 146-168.
- Archibald, M.M., Ambagtsheer, R.C., Casey, M.G., and Lawless, M. (2019) 'Using Zoom Videoconferencing for Qualitative Data Collection: Perceptions and Experiences of Researchers and Participants', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, pp. 1-8.
- Arriagada, A. and Bishop, S. (2021) 'Between Commerciality and Authenticity: The Imaginary of Social Media Influencers in the Platform Economy', *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 14, pp. 568-586.
- Arvidsson, A. and Niesson, B. (2015) 'Creative mass. Consumption, creativity and innovation on Bangkok's fashion markets', *Consumption Markets and Culture*, 18 (2), pp. 111-132.
- ASEAN UP. (2019) *Southeast Asia Digital Social Mobile*. Available at: <https://aseanup.com/southeast-asia-digital-social-mobile/> (Accessed: 26 July 2022).
- Ashton, N.A. and McKenna, R. (2020) 'Situating Feminist Epistemology', *Episteme*, 17 (1), pp. 28-47.

- Augusto, A., Neves, D.M., and Henriques, V. (2023) 'Breastfeeding experiences and women's self-concept: Negotiations and dilemmas in the transition to motherhood', *Frontiers in Sociology*, pp. 1-14.
- Autio, M., Katila, S., Strand, T., and Kylkilahti, E. (2013) 'Wealthy Men and Beautiful Women? Constructing Gender Identity through Consumption', *To be Young! Youth and the Future*. University of Turku, 6-8 June 2012.
- Baer, H. (2016) 'Redoing feminism: Digital activism, body politics and neoliberalism', *Feminist Media Studies*, 16 (1), pp. 17-34.
- Baker, C. and Phongpaichit, P. (2022) *A History of Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baker, J. (2008) 'The ideology of choice. Overstating progress and hiding injustice in the lives of young women: Findings from a study in North Queensland, Australia', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31, pp. 53-64.
- Baker, J. (2010) 'Claiming volition and evading victimhood: Post-feminist obligations for young women', *Feminism and Psychology*, 20, pp. 186-204.
- Bale, C. and Archer, J. (2013) 'Self-Perceived Attractiveness, Romantic Desirability and Self-Esteem: A Mating Sociometer Perspective', *Evolutionary Psychology*, 11 (1), pp. 68-84.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2012) *AuthenticTM: The Politics and Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2014) 'Am I Pretty or Ugly? Girls and the Market for Self-Esteem', *Girlhood Studies*, 7 (1), pp. 83-101.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2015) '"Confidence you can carry!": girls in crisis and the market for girls' empowerment organizations', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 29 (2), pp. 182-193.

- Banet-Weiser, S. (2017) ‘‘I’m Beautiful the Way I Am’: Empowerment, Beauty, and Aesthetic Labour’, in Elias, A., Gill, R., and Scharff, C. (eds.) *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 265-282.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2018) *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*. Durham, UK: Duke University Press.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2021) ‘Gender, Social Media, and the Labor of Authenticity’, *American Quarterly*, 73 (1), pp. 141-144.
- Banet-Weiser, S., Gill, R., and Rottenberg, C. (2020) ‘Postfeminism, popular feminism and neoliberal feminism? Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill and Catherine Rottenberg in conversation’, *Feminist Theory*, 21 (1), pp. 3-24.
- Banet-Weiser, S. and Portwood-Stacer, L. (2006) ‘‘I just want to be me again!’: Beauty pageants, reality television and post-feminism’, *Feminist Theory*, 7 (2), pp. 255-272.
- Bangkok Post. (2020) *The Thai Future of Korean Plastic Surgery*. Available at: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/pr/1829714/the-thai-future-of-korean-plastic-surgery> (Accessed: 20 March 2023).
- Barbour, R.S. and Kitzinger, J. (1999) *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.
- Bartky, S.L. (1990) *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. London: Routledge.
- Bartky, S.L. (1997) ‘Foucault, femininity, and the modernization of patriarchal power’, in Conboy, K., Medina, N., and Stanbury, S. (eds.) *Writing on the body: Female embodiment and feminist theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 129-154.
- Baym, N.K. (2018) *Playing to the Crowd: Musicians, Audiences, and the Intimate Work of Connection*. New York: New York University Press.

- Berlant, L. (2006) 'Cruel Optimism', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 17 (3), pp. 20-36.
- Bishop, S. (2021) 'Influencer management tools: Algorithmic cultures, brand safety, and bias', *Social Media + Society*, 7 (1), pp. 1-13.
- Blum, V.L. (2003) *Flesh wounds: The culture of cosmetic surgery*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Bordo, S. (1993) *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bordo, S. (1997) *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bordo, S. (2016) 'Twenty Years in the Twilight Zone', in Heyes, C.J. and Jones, M. (eds.) *Cosmetic Surgery: A Feminist Primer*. New York: Routledge, pp. 21-34.
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1998) *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Brah, A. and Phoenix, A. (2004) 'Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality', *Journal of International Women Studies*, 5 (3), pp. 75-86.
- Branje, S., de Moor, E.L., Spitzer, J., and Becht, A.I. (2021) 'Dynamics of Identity Development in Adolescence: A Decade in Review', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 31 (4), pp. 908-927.
- Braun, V. (2005) 'In Search of (Better) Sexual Pleasure: Female Genital 'Cosmetic' Surgery', *Sexualities*, 8 (4), pp. 407-424.
- Braun, V. (2009) "'THE WOMEN ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES'": The Rhetoric of Choice and Agency around Female Genital 'Cosmetic Surgery'', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 24 (60), pp. 233-249.

- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, pp. 77-101.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021a) 'One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18 (3), pp. 328-352.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021b) 'To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13 (2), pp. 201-216.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2022) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Briggs, C. (1986) *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- Brooks, A. (1997) *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms*. London: Routledge.
- Brooks, A. (2004) '“Under the knife and proud of it”: An analysis of the normalization of cosmetic surgery', *Critical Sociology*, 30 (2), pp. 207-239.
- Brown, W. (2015) *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone Books.
- Bryman, A. (2012) *Social Research Methods*. 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*. 5th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Budgeon, S. (2000) *Locating the Subject: Towards a Reading of Young Women, Identity and Postmodernity*. PhD Thesis. University of Leeds. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/43663.pdf> (Accessed: 20 May 2021).
- Budgeon, S. (2003) 'Identity as an Embodied Event', *Body and Society*, 9 (1), pp. 35-55.
- Budgeon, S. (2011a) 'The Contradictions of Successful Femininity: Third-Wave Feminism,

- Postfeminism and 'New' Femininities', in Gill, R. and Scharff, C. (eds.) *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 279-292.
- Budgeon, S. (2011b) *Third Wave Feminism and the Politics of Gender in Late Modernity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Budgeon, S. (2014) 'The Dynamics of Gender Hegemony: Femininities, Masculinities and Social Change', *Sociology*, 48 (2), pp. 317-334.
- Budgeon, S. (2016) 'The 'problem' with single women: Choice accountability and social change', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 33 (3), pp. 401-418.
- Budgeon, S. (2019) 'The resonance of moderate feminism and the gendered relations of austerity', *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 26, pp. 1138-1155.
- Budgeon, S. (2021) 'Sex/Gender and the Social: Feminist Theory', in Kivisto, P. (ed.) *Cambridge Handbook of Social Theory Volume 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 98-119.
- Bunnag, N. (2021) *Positive representations like Anchilee are desperately needed in the Thai media*. Available at: <https://www.thaipbsworld.com/positive-representations-like-anchilee-are-desperately-needed-in-the-thai-media/> (Accessed: 19 October 2022).
- Buranajaroenkij, D. (2017) *Political Feminism and the Women's Movement in Thailand: Actors, Debates and Strategies*. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/thailand/13363.pdf> (Accessed: 7 September 2023).
- Buranajaroenkij, D. (2023) 'Civil Society and Gender Advancement in Thailand', in Hansson, E. and Weiss, M.L. (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Civil and Uncivil Society in Southeast Asia*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, pp. 205-222.
- Burchell, G. (1993) 'Liberal government and techniques of the self', *Economy and*

Society, 22 (3), pp. 267-282.

Burns, D. and Walker, M. (2005) 'Feminist Methodologies', in Somekh, B. and Lewin, C. (eds.) *Research Methods in Social Sciences*. London: Sage, pp. 66-73.

Butler, J. (1988) 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal*, 40 (4), pp. 519-531.

Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1997) *The Psychic Life of Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Byrne, P. (1996) 'The politics of the women's movement', in Lovenduski, J. & Norris, P. (eds.) *Women in politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 57-72.

Calogero, R.M. (2004) 'A test of objectification theory: The effect of the male gaze on appearance concerns in college women', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28 (1), pp. 16-21.

Carey, R.N., Donaghue, N., and Broderick, P. (2010) '“What you look like is such a big factor”: Girls' own reflections about the appearance culture in an all-girls' school', *Feminism and Psychology*, 21 (3), pp. 299-316.

Chaipraditkul, N. (2013) 'Thailand: beauty and globalized self-identity through cosmetic therapy and skin lightening', *Ethics In Science and Environmental Politics*, 13, pp. 27-37.

Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Charuluxananana, S. and Chentanez, V. (2007) 'History and evolution of western medicine in Thailand', *Asian Biomedicine*, 1 (1), pp. 97-101.

Chen, E. (2012) 'Shanghai(ed) Babies: Geopolitics, biopolitics and the global chick lit', *Feminist Media Studies*, 12 (2), pp. 214-228.

- Chen, S.X. and Kanai, A. (2022) 'Authenticity, uniqueness and talent: Gay male beauty influencers in post-queer, postfeminist Instagram beauty culture', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 25 (1), pp. 97-116.
- Cheung, H. (2018) *British East Asian actors 'face prejudice in theatre and TV'*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-42859476> (Accessed: 8 March 2023).
- Chia, J. and Maneechote, P. (2021a) *Gender-rights activists remake Thai feminism: Fight for democracy must include equality and social justice, campaigners insist*. Available at: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Life/Gender-rights-activists-remake-Thai-feminism> (Accessed: 14 November 2023).
- Chia, J. and Maneechote, P. (2021b) *Thailand's 'revolution' in beauty standards only skin-deep: Latest choices might break the mold but Miss Universe contest holds Thailand back from broader social change*. Available at: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Tea-Leaves/Thailand-s-revolution-in-beauty-standards-only-skin-deep> (Accessed: 24 March 2023).
- Cho, J. (2018) 'Contemporary Body Practices in South Korea: Subjection and Agency in Late Modernity', *German Journal on Contemporary Asia*, 147, pp. 11-37.
- Click, M.A., Lee, H., and Holladay, H.W. (2013) 'Making monsters: Lady Gaga, fan identification, and social media', *Popular Music and Society*, 36 (3), pp. 360-379.
- Coffey, J. (2013) 'Bodies, body work and gender: Exploring a Deleuzian approach', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 22 (1), pp. 3-16.
- Coffey, J. (2016) "'What can I do next?': Cosmetic Surgery, Femininities and Affect', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27 (1), pp. 79-95.
- Collins, P.H. (1986) 'Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought', *Social Problems*, 33 (6), pp. S14-S32.

- Collins, P.H. (1999) 'Reflections on the Outsider Within', *Journal of Career Development*, 26 (1), pp. 85-88.
- Combahee River Collective. (1977/1986) *The Combahee River Collective Statement*. Albany, NY: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press.
- Connell, C. (2018) 'Thank You for Coming Out Today: the Queer Discomforts of In-depth Interviewing', in Compton, D., Meadow, T., and Schilt, K. (eds.) *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*. Oakland: University of California Press, pp. 126-139.
- Connelly, L.M. and Peltzer, J.N. (2016) 'Underdeveloped themes in qualitative research: Relationship with interviews and analysis', *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 30 (1), pp. 52-57.
- Crawford, R. (2006) 'Health as a Meaningful Social Practice', *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 10 (4), pp. 401-420.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989) 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: a Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 140, pp. 139-167.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991) 'Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color', *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (6), pp. 1241-1299.
- Cruikshank, B. (1996) 'Revolutions within: self-government and self-esteem', in Barry, A., Osborne, T., and Rose, N. (eds.) *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*. London: University College London, pp. 231-251.
- Daar, D.A., Chiodo, M.V., and Rohrich, R.J. (2021) 'The Zoom View: How Does Video Conferencing Affect What Our Patients See in Themselves, and How Can We Do Right by Them?', *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, 148 (1), pp. 172-174.

- Davies, B. and Gannon, S. (2011) 'Feminism/Post-structuralism', in Somekh, B. and Lewin, C. (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage, pp. 312-319.
- Davis, K. (1995) *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*. New York: Routledge.
- Davis, K. (2016) 'Revisiting Feminist Debates on Cosmetic Surgery: Some Reflections on Suffering, Agency, and Embodied Difference', in Heyes, C.J. and Jones, M. (eds.) *Cosmetic Surgery: A Feminist Primer*. New York: Routledge, pp. 36-48.
- Davis, K. (2020) 'Who owns intersectionality? Some reflections on feminist debates on how theories travel', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 27 (2), pp. 113-127.
- Davis, K. (2023) 'Facing uneasiness in feminist research', in Ryan-Flood, R., Crowhurst, I., and James-Hawkins, L. (eds.) *Difficult Conversations: A Feminist Dialogue*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, pp. 27-38.
- Deakin, H. and Wakefield, K. (2014) 'SKYPE interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers', *Qualitative Research*, 14, pp. 1-14.
- De Benedictis, S. and Orgad, S. (2017) 'The Escalating Price of Motherhood: Aesthetic Labour in Popular Representations of 'Stay-at-Home' Mothers', in Elias, A., Gill, R., and Scharff, C. (eds.) *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 101-116.
- Dedman, A.K. and Lai, A. (2021) 'Digitally Dismantling Asian Authoritarianism: Activist Reflections from the #MilkTeaAlliance', *Contention*, 9 (1), pp. 97-132.
- Deleuze, G. (1986) *Foucault*. Translated and Edited by Hand, S. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- DeYoung, P.A. (2015) *Understanding and Treating Chronic Shame: A Relational/Neurobiological Approach*. New York: Routledge.

Dimock, M. (2019) *Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins*.

Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/> (Accessed: 14 March 2023).

Dobson, A.S. (2014) 'Performative shamelessness on young women's social network sites:

Shielding the self and resisting gender melancholia', *Feminism and Psychology*, 24 (1), pp. 97-114.

Dobson, A.S. (2015) *Postfeminism, Girls and Young Women, and Digital Media: Postfeminist Digital Cultures*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dolezal, L. (2016) 'Body Shame and Female Experience', in Landweer, H. and Marcinski, I. (eds.)

Dem Erleben Auf Der Spur: Feminismus und Phänomenologie [Discovering Lived Experience: Feminism and Phenomenology]. Bielefeld: Transcript Press, pp. 45-67.

Dosekun, S. (2015a) 'For Western Girls Only?', *Feminist Media Studies*, 15 (6), pp. 960-975.

Dosekun, S. (2015b) "'Hey, You Stylized Woman There": An Uncomfortable Reflexive Account of Performative Practices in the Field', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21 (5), pp. 436-444.

Dosekun, S. (2017) 'The Risky Business of Postfeminist Beauty', in Elias, A., Gill, R., and Scharff, C. (eds.) *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 167-181.

Dosekun, S. (2020) *Fashioning Postfeminism: Spectacular Femininity and Transnational Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Dowrick, A. and Holliday, R. (2022) 'Tweakments: Non-surgical beauty technologies and future directions for the sociology of the body', *Sociology Compass*, 16, pp. 1-14.

Duffy, B.E. (2010) 'Empowerment Through Endorsement? Polysemic Meaning in Dove's User-Generated Advertising', *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 3, pp. 26-43.

- Duffy, B.E. (2016) 'The romance of work: Gender and aspirational labour in the digital culture industries', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 19 (4), pp. 441-457.
- Duffy, B.E. (2017) *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work*. London: Yale University Press.
- Duffy, B.E. (2020) 'Social Media Influencers', *The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication*, pp. 1-5.
- Duffy, B.E. and Hund, E. (2015) "'Having it All" on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding Among Fashion Bloggers', *Social Media + Society*, July-December 2015, pp. 1-11.
- Du Gay, P. (1996) *Consumption and Identity at Work*. London: Sage.
- Duggan, L. (2003) *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Duits, L. and van Zoonen, L. (2006) 'Headscarves and Porno-Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in the European Multicultural Society', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13 (2), pp. 103-117.
- Edgley, A. (2021) 'Maternal presenteeism: Theorizing the importance for working mothers of "being there" for their children beyond infancy', *Gender, Work and Organization*, pp. 1-17.
- Ehrenreich, B. (2005) 'What is Socialist Feminism?', *Monthly Review*, 57 (3). Available at: <https://monthlyreview.org/2005/07/01/what-is-socialist-feminism/> (Accessed: 10 June 2023).
- Elfving-Hwang, J. (2013) 'Cosmetic surgery and embodying the moral self in South Korean popular makeover culture', *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 11 (24-2), pp. 1-18.

- Elfving-Hwang, J. (2016) 'Old, down and out? Appearance, body work and positive ageing among elderly South Korean women', *Journal of Aging Studies*, 38, pp. 6-15.
- Elfving-Hwang, J. (2021) 'Media, Cosmetic Surgery and Aspirational Beauty Aesthetics of the Ageing Body in South Korea', *Asian Studies Review*, 45 (2), pp. 238-252.
- Elias, A. and Gill, R. (2018) 'Beauty surveillance: The digital self-monitoring cultures of neoliberalism', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21 (1), pp. 59-77.
- Elias, A., Gill, R., and Scharff, C. (2017) 'Aesthetic Labour: Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism', in Elias, A., Gill, R., and Scharff, C. (eds.) *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3-49.
- Elmir, R., Schmied, V., Jackson, D., and Wilkes, L. (2011) 'Interviewing people about potentially sensitive topics', *Nurse Researcher*, 19 (1), pp. 12-16.
- Elsner, P. (2012) 'Overview and trends in male grooming', *British Journal of Dermatology*, 166 (1), pp. 2-5.
- England, K.V.L. (1994) 'Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research', *The Professional Geographer*, 46 (1), pp. 80-89.
- Ensler, E. (2004) *The Good Body*. New York: Villard Books.
- Esara, P. (2009) 'Imagining the Western Husband: Thai Women's Desires for Matrimony, Status and Beauty', *Ethnos*, 74 (3), pp. 403-426.
- Evans, A. (2023) 'Femininity in the 21st century', *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 49, pp. 1-5.
- Evans, A. and Riley, S. (2013) 'Immaculate consumption: Negotiating the sex symbol in postfeminist celebrity culture', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 22 (3), pp. 268-281.
- Faludi, S. (1991) *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Fassbender, I. (2022) *Active Pursuit of Pregnancy: Neoliberalism, Postfeminism and the Politics*

of Reproduction in Contemporary Japan. Leiden: Brill.

Favaro, L. (2017) ‘“Just Be Confident Girls!”: Confidence Chic as Neoliberal Governmentality’, in Elias, A., Gill, R., and Scharff, C. (eds.) *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 283-299.

Fayossy. (2015) “ชนชั้นกลางชั้นเทพ” ผู้บริโภคกลุ่มใหม่ที่คือรู้จัก [“top-notch middle class” the new consumer group that should be known]. Available at:
<https://www.marketingoops.com/reports/research/hakuhodo-research-middle-class-asean/>
 (Accessed: 11 March 2023).

Featherstone, M. (2010) ‘Body, Image and Affect in Consumer Culture’, *Body and Society*, 16 (1), pp. 193-221.

Ferris, K.O. (2007) ‘The sociology of celebrity’, *Sociology Compass*, 1 (1), pp. 371-384.

Foster, E.A. (2018) ‘Foucault and Ecology’, in Downing, L. (ed.) *After Foucault*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 122-138.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. London: Allen Lane.

Foucault, M. (1978a) ‘Governmentality. Lecture at the Collège de France. 1 February 1978’, in: Burchell, G., Gordon, C., and Miller, P. (eds.) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp. 87-104.

Foucault, M. (1978b) *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1980a) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. (1980b) ‘Two Lectures’, in Gordon, C. (ed.) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. New York: Pantheon, pp. 1972-1977.

- Foucault, M. (1986) *The History of Sexuality, Vol. III: the Care of the Self*. Translated by R. Hurley. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1987) *The Use of Pleasure, vol. 2 of The History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1988) 'Technologies of the Self', in Martin, L.H., Gutman, H., and Hutton, P.H. (eds.) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. London: Tavistock, pp. 16-49.
- Foucault, M. (1991) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.
- Foulkes, L., Leung, J.T., Fuhrmann, D., Knoll, L.J., and Blakemore, S-J. (2018) 'Age differences in the prosocial influence effect', *Developmental Science*, 21, pp. 1-9.
- Fox, N.J. (2014) 'Post-structuralism and postmodernism', in Cockerham, W.C., Dingwall, R., and Quah, S.R. (eds.) *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Health, Illness, Behavior and Society*. Chichester: Wiley, pp. 1855-1860.
- Fraser, N. (2009) 'Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History', *New Left Review*, 56, pp. 97-117.
- Fredrickson, F. and Roberts, T. (1997) 'Objectification theory: Towards understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, pp. 173-206.
- Friedan, B. (1981) *The Second Stage*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Frith, K., Shaw, P., and Cheng, H. (2005) 'The construction of beauty: A cross-cultural analysis of women's magazine advertising', *Journal of Communication*, 55 (1), pp. 56-70.
- Frost, L. (2003) 'Doing Bodies Differently? Gender, Youth, Appearance and Damage', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 6 (1), pp. 53-70.

- Garde-Hansen, J. (2012) 'The "Hip-Op" Generation: Representing the Aging Female Body in Saga Magazine', in Dolan, J. and Tincknell, E. (eds.) *Aging Femininities*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 161-170.
- Gelb, J. (1986) 'Movement strategies: Inside or outside the 'system'', in Dahlerup, D. (ed.) *The new women's movement: Feminism and political power in Europe and the USA*. London: Sage, pp. 103-122.
- Genz, S. (2015) 'MY JOB IS ME: Postfeminist celebrity culture and the gendering of authenticity', *Feminist Media Studies*, 15 (4), pp. 545-561.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2012) *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. (2007a) 'Critical Respect: The Difficulties and Dilemmas of Agency and 'Choice' for Feminism: A Reply to Duits and van Zoonen', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 14 (1), pp. 69-80.
- Gill, R. (2007b) *Gender and the media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. (2007c) 'Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10 (2), pp. 147-166.
- Gill, R. (2016) 'Post-postfeminism?: new feminist visibilities in postfeminist times', *Feminist Media Studies*, 16 (4), pp. 610-630.
- Gill, R. (2017) 'The affective, cultural and psychic life of postfeminism: A postfeminist sensibility 10 years on', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20 (6), pp. 606-626.
- Gill, R. (2021a) 'Being watched and feeling judged on social media', *Feminist Media Studies*, 21 (8), pp. 1387-1392.

- Gill, R. (2021b) *Changing the perfect picture: Smartphones, social media and appearance pressures*. London: City University Press.
- Gill, R. (2021c) 'Neoliberal Beauty', in Leeds Craig, M. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Beauty Politics*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, pp. 9-18.
- Gill, R. and Elias, A.S. (2014) "'Awaken your incredible': Love your body discourses and postfeminist contradictions', *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 10 (2), pp. 179-188.
- Gill, R. and Kanai, A. (2018) 'Mediating Neoliberal Capitalism: Affect, Subjectivity and Inequality', *Journal of Communication*, 68, pp. 318-326.
- Gill, R. and Orgad, S. (2015) 'The confidence culture', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 30 (86), pp. 324-344.
- Gill, R. and Ryan-Flood, R. (2008) 'Secrecy and Silence in Research', *Feminism and Psychology*, 18 (3), pp. 381-383.
- Gillespie, R. (1996) 'Women, the Body and Brand Extension in Medicine: Cosmetic Surgery and the Paradox of Choice', *Women and Health*, 24, pp. 69-85.
- Gimlin, D. (2007) 'Accounting for Cosmetic Surgery in the USA and Great Britain: A Cross-cultural Analysis of Women's Narratives', *Body and Society*, 13 (1), pp. 41-60.
- Giroux, H. (2015) 'Selfie Culture in the Age of Corporate and State Surveillance', *Third Text*, 29 (3), pp. 155-164.
- Glatt, Z. (2022) "'We're all told not to put our eggs in one basket': Uncertainty, precarity and cross-platform labor in the online video influencer industry', *International Journal of Communication, Special Issue on Media and Uncertainty*, 16, pp. 3853-3871.
- Glatt, Z. (2023) 'The intimacy triple bind: Structural inequalities and relational labour in the influencer industry', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, pp. 1-17.

- Glatt, Z. and Banet-Weiser, S. (2021) 'Productive ambivalence, economies of visibility and the political potential of feminist YouTubers', in Cunningham, S. and Craig, D. (eds.) *Creator Culture: An Introduction to Global Social Media Entertainment*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 39-56.
- Goldberg, S. (1979) *Male Dominance*. London: Sphere Books.
- Gordon, L. (2013) 'Socialist Feminism: The Legacy of the "Second Wave"', *New Labor Forum*, 22 (3), pp. 20-28.
- Gray, D.E. (2014) *Doing Research in the Real World*. 3rd edn. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Griffin, C. and Phoenix, A. (1994) 'The Relationship between Qualitative and Quantitative Research: Lessons from Feminist Psychology', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 4, pp. 287-298.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M., and Namey, E.E. (2012) *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Guotu, Z. (2021) *The Overseas Chinese: A long history*. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/courier/2021-4/overseas-chinese-long-history#:~:text=By%20the%20beginning%20of%20the,them%20settled%20in%20Southeast%20Asia> (Accessed: 15 November 2022).
- Gwynne, J. (2013) 'Japan, Postfeminism and the Consumption of Sexual(ised) Schoolgirls in Male-Authored Contemporary Manga', *Feminist Theory*, 14 (3), pp. 325-343.
- Hall, S. (2001) 'Foucault: Power, knowledge and discourse', in Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., and Yates, S.J. (eds.) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 72-81.
- Hall, S. (2011) 'The neo-liberal revolution', *Soundings*, 48, pp. 9-27.

- Hansatit, P. (2014) *A study on gender inequality in Thailand: career experience of Thai female managers*. PhD Thesis. Southern Cross University. Available at: <https://researchportal.scu.edu.au/esploro/outputs/doctoral/A-study-on-gender-inequality-in-Thailand--career-experience-of-Thai-female-managers/991012821198802368> (Accessed: 29 March 2023).
- Harding, S. (1987) *Feminism and Methodology*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Harris, A. and Dobson, A.S. (2015) 'Theorizing agency in post-girlpower times', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 29 (2), pp. 145-156.
- Harrison, R.V. (2017) 'Dystopia as liberation: disturbing femininities in contemporary Thailand', *Feminist Review*, 116, pp. 64-83.
- Hartsock, N. (1990) 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?', in Nicholson, L.J. (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, pp. 157-175.
- Harvey, D. (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Head, J. (2015) *The dark side of cosmetic surgery in Thailand*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-31433890> (Accessed: 16 March 2023).
- Hearn, A. and Banet-Weiser, S. (2020) 'The Beguiling: Glamour in/as Platformed Cultural Production', *Social Media + Society*, January-March 2020, pp. 1-11.
- Henley, D. and Porath, N. (2021) 'Body Modification in East Asia: History and Debates', *Asian Studies Review*, 45 (2), pp. 198-216.
- Hesse-Swain, C. (2006) 'Programming beauty and the absence of Na Lao: Popular Thai TV and identity formation among youth in Northeast Thailand', *GeoJournal*, 66, pp. 257-272.
- Heyes, C.J. (2016) 'All Cosmetic Surgery in "Ethnic": Asian Eyelids, Feminist Indignation, and the Politics of Whiteness', in Heyes, C.J. and Jones, M. (eds.) *Cosmetic Surgery: A Feminist Primer*. New York: Routledge, pp. 191-205.

- Hill, M.S. and Fischer, A.R. (2008) 'Examining objectification theory: Lesbian and heterosexual women's experiences with sexual-and self-objectification', *The Counseling Psychologist*, 36 (5), pp. 745-776.
- Hirunyato, U. (1988) หลักสูตรวทยา [*Principles of Personnel Administration*]. Bangkok: Odean Store Publishing.
- Hirschmann, N.J. (1997) 'Feminist Standpoint as Postmodern Strategy', in Kenney, S.J. and Kinsella, H. (eds.) *Politics and Feminist Standpoint Theories*. New York: Haworth Press, pp. 73-92.
- Hitchcock, G. and Hughes, D. (1995) *Research and the Teacher: A Qualitative Introduction to School-based Research*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Hoang, K.K. (2014) 'Competing technologies of embodiment: Pan-Asian modernity and third world depending in Vietnam's contemporary sex industry', *Gender and Society*, 28 (4), pp. 513-536.
- Hofstede. (n.d.a) *What about South Korea?*. Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=south+korea> (Accessed: 13 September 2023).
- Hofstede. (n.d.b) *What about Thailand?*. Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/thailand/> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Holliday, R., Cheung, O., Cho, J.H., and Bell, D. (2017) 'Trading faces: The 'Korean Look' and medical nationalism in South Korean cosmetic surgery tourism', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 58 (2), pp. 190-202.
- Holliday, R., David, B., Cheung, O., Jones, M., and Probyn, E. (2015) 'Brief encounters: Assembling cosmetic surgery tourism', *Social Science and Medicine*, 124 (2015), pp. 298-304.

- Holliday, R. and Elfving-Hwang, J. (2012) 'Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea', *Body and Society*, 18 (2), pp. 58-81.
- Holliday, R., Jones, M., and Bell, D. (2019) *Beautyscapes: Mapping cosmetic surgery tourism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hollows, J. (2000) *Feminism, Femininity, and Popular Culture*. New York: Manchester University Press.
- hooks, b. (2010) *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. New York: Routledge.
- Hull, G.T., Scott, P.B., and Smith, B. (1982) *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*. Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press.
- Hunter, E.J., Burgers, J.H., and Davidsson, P. (2009) 'Celebrity capital as a strategic asset: Implications for new venture strategies', in Lumpkin, G.T. and Katz, J.A. (eds.) *Entrepreneurial Strategic Content Advances in Entrepreneurship, Firm Emergence and Growth, Vol. 11*. Bingley: Emerald, pp. 137-160.
- Hwang, H.S. and Spiegel, J.H. (2014) 'The Effect of 'Single' vs 'Double' Eyelids on the Perceived Attractiveness of Chinese women', *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*, 34 (3), pp. 374-382.
- International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (2012) *ISAPS International Survey On Aesthetic/Cosmetic Procedures Performed in 2011*. Available at: <https://www.isaps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ISAPS-Results-Procedures-2011-1.pdf> (Accessed: 8 February 2020).
- International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (2016) *ISAPS International Survey on Aesthetic/Cosmetic: Procedures Performed in 2015*. Available at: <https://www.isaps.org/media/t0v babde/2016-isaps-results-1.pdf> (Accessed: 26 July 2023).
- International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (2018) *ISAPS International Survey On Aesthetic/Cosmetic Procedures Performed in 2017*. Available at:

https://www.isaps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ISAPS_2017_International_Survey_Cosmetic_Procedures.pdf

(Accessed: 3 May 2020).

International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (2020) *ISAPS International Survey On Aesthetic/Cosmetic Procedures Performed in 2019*. Available at:

<https://www.isaps.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Global-Survey-2019.pdf> (Accessed: 29 March 2021).

International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (2021) *ISAPS International Survey On Aesthetic/Cosmetic Procedures Performed in 2020*. Available at:

https://www.isaps.org/media/evbbfapi/isaps-global-survey_2020.pdf (Accessed: 16 January 2023).

International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (2022) *ISAPS International Survey On Aesthetic/Cosmetic Procedures Performed in 2021*. Available at:

https://www.isaps.org/media/vdpdanke/isaps-global-survey_2021.pdf (Accessed: 5 December 2023).

International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. (2023) *ISAPS International Survey On Aesthetic/Cosmetic Procedures Performed in 2022*. Available at:

https://www.isaps.org/media/a0qfm4h3/isaps-global-survey_2022.pdf (Accessed: 5 December 2023).

Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2019) *Women in National Parliaments*. Available at:

<http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (Accessed: 16 November 2020).

Ives, M. and Jirenuwat, R. (2023) 'Thailand Is Not Ready to Change': Prime Minister Vote Puts Coalition at Risk. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/18/world/asia/thailand-prime-minister-vote.html>

(Accessed: 19 July 2023).

- Ives, M. and Suhartono, M. (2023) *Lawmakers Block Prime Minister Candidate From New Vote, Drawing Protests*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/19/world/asia/pita-limjaroenrat-prime-minister-thailand.html> (Accessed: 19 July 2023).
- Jackson, P., Stevenson, N., and Brooks, K. (2001) *Making Sense of Men's Magazine*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jackson, P.A. (1999) 'Royal Spirits, Chinese Gods and Magic Monks: Thailand's Boom Time Religions of Prosperity', *Southeast Asia Research*, 7 (3), pp. 245-320.
- Jackson, P.A. (2000) 'An explosion of Thai identities: global queering and re-imagining queer theory', *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 2 (4), pp. 405-424.
- Jackson, P.A. (2004) 'The Thai Regime of Images', *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 19 (2), pp. 181-218.
- Jaisuekul, M. and Teerasu, C. (2017) 'The Study of Thailand's Cosmetic Surgery Market and Attitudes of Surgeons and Foreign Patients towards Cosmetic Surgery in Thailand', *Journal of Community Development Research (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 10 (1), pp. 16-26.
- Jeffreys, S. (2014) *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*. London: Routledge.
- Jenner, B.M. and Myers, K.C. (2019) 'Intimacy, rapport, and exceptional disclosure: a comparison of in-person and mediated interview contexts', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 22 (2), pp. 165-177.
- Jermyn, D. (2016) 'Pretty past it? Interrogating the post-feminist makeover of ageing, style and fashion', *Feminist Media Studies*, 16 (4), pp. 573-589.
- Jerslev, A. (2016) 'In the Time of the Microcelebrity: Celebification and the YouTuber Zoella', *International Journal of Communication*, 10, pp. 5233-5251.

- Jia, X. (2022) 'Victoria's Secret Goes to China: Femvertising and the Failed Promise of Empowerment', in Gwynne, J. (ed.) *The Cultural Politics of Femvertising: Selling Empowerment*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 17-37.
- Jia, X. (2023) 'Co-existing with uncomfortable reflexivity: Feminist fieldwork abroad during the pandemic', in Ryan-Flood, R., Crowhurst, I., and James-Hawkins, L. (eds.) *Difficult Conversations: A Feminist Dialogue*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, pp. 113-129.
- Jones, D.C. and Crawford, J.K. (2006) 'The peer appearance culture during adolescence: Gender and body mass variations', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 35, pp. 257-269.
- Jones, M. (2011) 'Clinics of Oblivion: Makeover Culture and Cosmetic Surgery Tourism', *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 8 (2), pp. 1-17.
- Ju, H. and Lee, S. (2015) 'The Korean Wave and Asian Americans: the ethnic meanings of transnational Korean pop culture in the USA', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, pp. 1-16.
- Jung, S. (2010) 'Chogukjeok Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity: Reading Boys Over Flowers, Coffee Prince and Shinhwa Fan Fiction', in Black, D., Epstein, S., and Tokita, A. (eds.) *Complicated Currents: Media Flows, Soft Power and East Asia*. Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Press, pp. 8.1-8.16.
- Kanai, A. (2018) *Gender and Relatability in Digital Culture: Managing Affect, Intimacy and Value*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kanazawa, S. (2011) 'Intelligence and physical attractiveness', *Intelligence*, 39, pp. 7-14.
- Käng, D.B. (2014) 'Idols of Development: Transnational Transgender Performance in Thai K-Pop Cover Dance', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1 (4), pp. 559-571.
- Käng, D.B. (2017) 'Eastern orientations: Thai middle-class gay desire for 'white Asians'', *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 58 (2), pp. 182-208.

- Käng, D.B. (2021) 'The Duty to Transform: Properly Refining the Body and (Re)defining Oneself in Thailand', *Asian Studies Review*, 45 (2), pp. 272-289.
- Kaw, E. (1993) 'Medicalization of Racial Features: Asian American Women and Cosmetic Surgery', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 7 (1), pp. 74-89.
- Kanayama, T. (2003) 'Ethnographic research on the experience of Japanese elderly people online', *New Media and Society*, 5 (2), pp. 267-288.
- Kim, A.E. (2005) 'Nonofficial Religion in South Korea: Prevalence of Fortunetelling and Other Forms of Divination', *Review of Religious Research*, 46 (3), pp. 284-302.
- Kim, D. (2021) 'Racialized beauty, visibility, and empowerment: Asian American women influencers on YouTube', *Information, Communication and Society*, 26 (6), pp. 1159-1176.
- Kim, J.M. (2011) 'Is 'the Missy' a New Femininity?', in Gill, R. and Scharff, C. (eds.) *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 147-158.
- Kim, J.M. (2012) *Women in South Korea: New Femininities and Consumption*. London: Routledge.
- Kim-Puri, H.J. (2005) 'Conceptualizing gender-sexuality-state-nation: an introduction', *Gender and Society*, 19, pp. 137-159.
- King, N. (2012) 'Doing template analysis', in Symon, G. and Cassell, C. (eds.) *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*. London: SAGE, pp. 426-450.
- Kinser, A.E. (2004) 'Negotiating Spaces for/through Third-Wave Feminism', *National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Journal*, 16 (3), pp. 124-153.
- Kirdsaeng, P. (2020) *This Thai Uni Decided To Cancel Its Faculty Beauty Pageant & Here's Why It's A Bold Move Towards Inclusivity*. Available at: <https://thesmartlocal.co.th/university-beauty-pageants/> (Accessed: 2 February 2023).

- Kivits, J. (2005) 'Online interviewing and the research relationship', in Hine, C. (ed.) *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 35-50.
- Kluckhohn, F.R. and Strodtbeck, F. (1961) *Variations in Value Orientations*. Evanston, IL: Row Peterson.
- Komolvadhin, N. (2008) *New Economy and Gender Relations in Thailand: The Implications of the Internet*. PhD Thesis. London School of Economics and Political Science. Available at: <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/2315/> (Accessed: 12 January 2020).
- Kristensen, T. (2023) 'Hate, Disgust, and Restrictive Eating: Abusive Comments on Body-Inclusive Posts on Instagram', in Dalton, D. and Smith, A. (eds.) *Gender, Sexuality and the UN's SDGs. Sustainable Development Goals Series*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 215-235.
- Kroløkke, C. and Sørensen, A.S. (2006) *Gender Communication Theories and Analyses: From Silence to Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Kümpel, A.S., Karnowski, V., and Keyling, T. (2015) 'News Sharing in Social Media: A Review of Current Research on News Sharing Users, Content, and Networks', *Social Media + Society*, July-December 2015, pp. 1-14.
- Larner, W. (2000) 'Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality', *Studies in Political Economy*, 63 (1), pp. 5-25.
- Lazar, M.M. (2006) "'DISCOVER THE POWER OF FEMININITY!': Analyzing global "power femininity" in local advertising', *Feminist Media Studies*, 6 (4), pp. 505-517.
- Lazar, M.M. (2017) "'Seriously Girly Fun!': Recontextualising Aesthetic Labour as Fun and Play in Cosmetics Advertising', in Elias, A., Gill, R., and Scharff, C. (eds.) *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 51-66.
- Lee, S.J. (2011) 'The Korean Wave: The Seoul of Asia', *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 2 (1), pp. 85-93.

- Lee, J. and Abidin, C. (2022) *The popularity of the Korean oegugin (foreign) influencer is on the rise. But there is a dark side to this pop-nationalism*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/the-popularity-of-the-korean-oegugin-foreign-influencer-is-on-the-rise-but-there-is-a-dark-side-to-this-pop-nationalism-191671> (Accessed: 9 November 2022).
- Lerner, G. (1986) *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Letherby, G. (2003) *Feminist research in theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Leung, W. and Cossu, A. (2019) 'Digital entrepreneurship in Taiwan and Thailand: Embracing precarity as a personal response to political and economic change', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22 (2), pp. 264-280.
- Leve, M., Rubin, L., and Pusic, A. (2011) 'Cosmetic Surgery and Neoliberalisms: Managing Risk and Responsibility', *Feminism and Psychology*, 22 (1), pp. 122-141.
- Levy, A. (2005) *Female Chauvinist Pigs: The Rise of Raunch Culture*. New York: Free Press.
- Lewis, J., Ritchie, J., Ormston, R., and Morrell, G. (2014) 'Generalising from qualitative research', in Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., McNaughton Nicholls, C., and Ormston, R. (eds.) *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: SAGE, pp. 347-366.
- Liao, S. (2021) 'Wang Hong Fashion Culture and the Postfeminist Time in China', *Fashion Theory*, 25 (5), pp. 663-685.
- Limkangvanmongkol, V. (2018) *When A Nobody Becomes A Somebody: Understanding Beauty Bloggers in Thailand*. PhD Thesis. University of Illinois at Chicago. Available at: https://indigo.uic.edu/articles/thesis/When_A_Nobody_Becomes_A_Somebody_Understanding_Beauty_Bloggers_in_Thailand/10792670/1 (Accessed: 26 March 2023).
- Limkangvanmongkol, V. and Abidin, C. (2019) 'Net Idols and Beauty Bloggers' Negotiations of

- Race, Commerce, and Cultural Customs: Emergent Microcelebrity Genres in Thailand', in Abidin, C. and Brown, M.L. (eds.) *Microcelebrity Around the Globe: Approaches to Cultures of Internet Fame*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing, pp. 95-106.
- Littler, J. (2013) 'The Rise of the 'Yummy Mummy': Popular Conservatism and the Neoliberal Maternal in Contemporary British Culture', *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 6, pp. 227-243.
- Littler, J. (2017) *Against Meritocracy*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Loos, T. (2020) 'Thailand Protests at a Tipping Point: Insights from Tamara Loos', interviewed by Kuo, M.A. for *Diplomat*, 17 November. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/thailand-protests-at-a-tipping-point/> (Accessed: 3 April 2023).
- Lumby, C. (2011) 'Past the Post in Feminist Media Studies', *Feminist Media Studies*, 11 (1), pp. 95-100.
- Luo, W. (2012) 'Selling Cosmetic Surgery and Beauty Ideals: The Female Body in the Web Sites of Chinese Hospitals', *Women's Studies in Communication*, 35 (1), pp. 68-95.
- Lupton, D. (2016) *The quantified self*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ma, H. (2022) 'Inner and outer beauty: exploring female beauty in contemporary China', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 32 (6), pp. 562-574.
- MacCallum, F. and Widdows, H. (2018) 'Altered images: Understanding the influence of unrealistic images and beauty aspirations', *Health Care Analysis*, 26, pp. 235-245.
- Mackay, F. (2015a) 'Political Not Generational: Getting Real About Contemporary UK Radical Feminism', *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest*, 14 (4), pp. 427-442.
- Mackay, F. (2015b) *Radical Feminism: Feminist Activism in Movement*. Basingstoke: Palgrave

Macmillan UK.

MacKinnon, C. (1987) *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

MacKinnon, C. (1989) *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Maguire, M. and Delahunt, B. (2017) 'Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars', *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 9 (3), pp. 1-14.

Malterud, K., Siersma, V.D., and Guassora, A.D. (2016) 'Sample Size in Qualitative Interview Studies: Guided by Information Power', *Qualitative Health Research*, 26 (13), pp. 1753-1760.

Marwick, A.E. (2012) 'The Public Domain: Social Surveillance in Everyday Life', *Surveillance and Society*, 9 (4), pp. 378-393.

Marwick, A.E. (2013) *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Marwick, A.E. (2015) 'Instafame: Luxury selfies in the attention economy', *Public Culture*, 27, pp. 137-160.

Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd edn. London: Sage.

McC Campbell, A.S., Jongpipitporn, C., Umar, I., and Ungaree, S. (1999) 'Seniority-based promotion in Thailand: it's time to change', *Career Development International*, 4/6, pp. 318-320.

McCann, H. (2015) 'Pantomime Dames Queer Femininity Versus 'Natural Beauty' in *Snog, Marry, Avoid*', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 30 (85), pp. 238-251.

McCurdy, J. (2006) 'Beautiful eyes: characteristics and application to aesthetic surgery', *Facial Plastic Surgery*, 22 (3), pp. 204-214.

- McRobbie, A. (2004) 'Post-Feminism and Popular Culture', *Feminist Media Studies*, 4 (3), pp. 255-264.
- McRobbie, A. (2007) 'TOP GIRLS?', *Cultural Studies*, 21 (4-5), pp. 718-737.
- McRobbie, A. (2009) *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage.
- McRobbie, A. (2015) 'Notes on the Perfect', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 30 (83), pp. 3-20.
- McRobbie, A. (2020) *Feminism and the Politics of Resilience*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Menon, A.V. (2017) 'Reconstructing race and gender in American cosmetic surgery', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40 (4), pp. 597-616.
- Menon, A.V. (2019) 'Cultural gatekeeping in cosmetic surgery: Transnational beauty ideals in multicultural Malaysia', *Poetics*, 75, pp. 1-11.
- Miller, J. (2014) 'Making Up is Masculine: The increasing Cultural Connections between Masculinity and Make-Up', *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion*, 1 (3), pp. 241-253.
- Miller, L. (2021) 'Deracialisation or Body Fashion? Cosmetic Surgery and Body Modification in Japan', *Asian Studies Review*, 45 (2), pp. 217-237.
- Millet, K. (1977) *Sexual Politics*. London: Virago Press.
- Mitchell, D. (2010) *Governmentality, Power, and Rule in Modern Society*. London: Sage.
- Mitchem, D.G., Zeitsch, B.P., Wright, M.J., Martin, N.G., Hewitt, J.K., and Keller, M.C. (2015) 'No Relationship Between Intelligence and Facial Attractiveness in a Large, Genetically Informative Sample', *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 36 (3), pp. 240-247.
- Mohanty, C.T. (2013) 'Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique', *Signs*, 38 (4), pp. 967-991.

- Mokkhasen, S. (2016) *Govt wants less sex, more 'Thainess' for Motor Show pretties*. Available at: <https://www.khaosodenglish.com/life/2016/03/18/1458291041/> (Accessed: 19 August 2023).
- Mora, L. (2022) *Examining the self-representation of hijab fashion bloggers as a postfeminist phenomenon: discourses of empowerment and their limitations*. PhD Thesis. Keele University. Available at: <https://eprints.keele.ac.uk/id/eprint/10739/> (Accessed: 15 June 2023).
- Muangtum, N. (2022) *สรุป 52 Insight สำคัญจาก Thailand Digital Stat 2022 ของ We Are Social [Summary of 52 Important Insights from Thailand Digital Stat 2022]*. Available at: <https://www.everydaymarketing.co/trend-insight/insight-thailand-digital-stat-2022-we-are-social/> (Accessed: 14 August 2023).
- Mulder, N. (1996) *Inside Thai society: An interpretation of everyday life*. Amsterdam: Pepin Press.
- Mulvey, L. (1975) 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', *Screen*, 16 (3), pp. 6-18.
- Murray, S. (2007) 'Corporeal knowledges and deviant bodies: Perceiving the fat body', *Social Semiotics*, 17 (3), pp. 361-373.
- Negrin, L. (2002) 'Cosmetic Surgery and the Eclipse of Identity', *Body and Society*, 8 (4), pp. 21-42.
- Nishimuta, Y. (2008) 'The Interpretation of Racial Encounters: Japanese Students in Britain', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34 (1), pp. 133-150.
- Northrop, J. (2012) *Reflecting on Cosmetic Surgery: Body image, Shame and Narcissism*. London: Routledge.
- Oakley, A. (1981) 'Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms', in Roberts, H. (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*. London: Routledge, pp. 30-61.

- Oakley, A. (2000) *Experiments in knowing: Gender and method in the social sciences*. New York: The New Press.
- Oakley, A. (2016) 'Interviewing Women Again: Power, Time and the Gift', *Sociology*, 50 (1), pp. 195-213.
- Olson, K. and Shopes, L. (1991) 'Crossing Boundaries, Building Bridges: Doing Oral History among Working-Class Women and Men', in Gluck, S.B. and Patai, D. (eds.) *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. London: Routledge, pp. 189-204.
- Ong, A. (2006) *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Opie, A. (1992) 'Qualitative Research: Appropriation of the "Other" and Empowerment', *Feminist Review*, 40, pp. 52-69.
- Orgad, S. and Gill, R. (2022) *Confidence Culture*. London: Duke University Press.
- Ounjit, W. (2015) 'Social and Cultural Dimensions of Adolescent Sexual Relationships in Thailand', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 171, pp. 606-612.
- Page, T. (2017) 'Vulnerable Writing as a Feminist Methodological Practice', *Feminist Review*, 115, pp. 13-29.
- Pateman, C. (1988) *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Peng, A.Y. (2020) 'Alipay adds "beauty filters" to face-scan payments: a form of patriarchal control over women's bodies', *Feminist Media Studies*, 20 (4), pp. 582-585.
- Peng, A.Y. (2022) 'Gender Essentialism in Chinese Reality TV: A Case Study of *You Are So Beautiful*', *Television and New Media*, 23 (7), pp. 743-760.
- Pengpid, S. and Peltzer, K. (2013) 'Bullying and its associated factors among school-aged adolescents in Thailand', *Scientific World Journal*, 2013, pp. 1-7.

Persaud, W.H. (2005) 'Gender, Race and Global Modernity: A Perspective from Thailand', *Globalizations*, 2 (2), pp. 210-227.

Petcharavej Hospital. (2021) *Midlife Crisis* วิกฤตวัยกลางคน [*Midlife Crisis: Crisis of Middle Adulthood*]. Available at: https://www.petcharavejhospital.com/th/Article/article_detail/Midlife-Crisis-Symptoms-in-People-Over-40 (Accessed: 14 August 2023).

Phoborisut, P. (2020) *The 2020 Student Uprising in Thailand: A Dynamic Network of Dissent*. Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute.

Phoenix, A. (2010) 'Suppressing intertextual understandings: Negotiating interviews and analysis', in Ryan-Flood, R. and Gill, R. (eds.) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*. London: Routledge, pp. 161-176.

Phoenix, A. (2023) 'Foreword', in Ryan-Flood, R., Crowhurst, I., and James-Hawkins, L. (eds.) *Difficult Conversations: A Feminist Dialogue*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, pp. xiii-xvi.

Pitts-Taylor, V. (2007) 'Becoming/Being a Cosmetic Surgery Patient: Semantic Instability and the Intersubjective Self', *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 10, pp. 119-128.

Plook Magazine. (2020) จะทำอย่างไรกับ 'Beauty Privilege' ในโรงเรียน เมื่อคนหน้าตาดีทำอะไรก็ดีไปหมด [*How to deal with 'Beauty Privilege' in schools when good-looking people are good at whatever they do*]. Available at: <http://www.plookfriends.com/blog/content/detail/83349/> (Accessed: 19 October 2022).

Pradhan, I. (2023) *Book Review: Confidence Culture by Shani Orgad and Rosalind Gill*. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2023/02/08/book-review-confidence-culture-by-shani-orgad-and-rosalind-gill/> (Accessed: 6 April 2023).

- Qiao, F. (2019) 'Conceptualizing Interactivity on Social Media and Exploring the Effects of Interactivity on Consumers' Engagement with Online Social-Interactions', *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 9 (3), pp. 1-13.
- Ramazanoğlu, C. (ed.) (1993) *Up against Foucault: Explorations of some tensions between Foucault and feminism*. London: The Psychology Press.
- Ramazanoğlu, C. and Holland, J. (2002) *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices*. London: Sage.
- Redmond, S. (2014) *Celebrity and the Media*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Retallack, H., Ringrose, J., and Lawrence, E. (2016) '‘Fuck Your Body Image’: Teen Girls' Twitter and Instagram Feminism in and Around School', in Coffey, J., Budgeon, S., and Cahill, H. (eds.) *Learning Bodies*. Singapore: Springer, pp. 85-103.
- Riley, S., Evans, A., and Mackiewicz, A. (2016) 'It's just between girls: Negotiating the postfeminist gaze in women's 'looking talk'', *Feminism and Psychology*, 26 (1), pp. 94-113.
- Riley, S., Evans, A., and Robson, M. (2023) *Postfeminism and Body Image*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Riley, S. and Scharff, C. (2012) 'Feminism versus femininity? Exploring feminist dilemmas through cooperative inquiry research', *Feminism and Psychology*, 23 (2), pp. 207-223.
- Ringrose, J. and Rawlings, V. (2015) 'Posthuman performativity, gender and 'school bullying': Exploring the material-discursive intra-actions of skirts, hair, sluts, and poofs', *Confero Essays on Education Philosophy and Politics*, 3 (2), pp. 1-37.
- Ringrose, J. and Regehr, K. (2023) 'Difficult research effects/affects: An intersectional-discursive-material-affective look at racialised sexualisation in public advertising', in Ryan-Flood, R., Crowhurst, I., and James-Hawkins, L. (eds.) *Difficult Conversations: A Feminist Dialogue*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, pp. 63-89.

- Ringrose, J. and Renold, E. (2010) 'Normative cruelties and gender deviants: the performative effects of bully discourses for girls and boys in school', *British Educational Research Journal*, 36 (4), pp. 573-596.
- Ringrose, J. and Walkerdine, V. (2008) 'Regulating the Abject: The TV make-over as site of neo-liberal reinvention toward bourgeois femininity', *Feminist Media Studies*, 8 (3), pp. 227-246.
- Ritzer, G. (2003) 'Rethinking Globalization: Glocalization/Grobalization and Something/Nothing*', *Sociological Theory*, 21 (3), pp. 193-209.
- Roberts, M. (2007) 'The fashion police: Governing the self in *What not to wear*', in Tasker, Y. and Negra, D. (eds.) *Interrogating postfeminism: Gender and the politics of popular culture*. Durham, NC: Duke university press, pp. 227-248.
- Robertson, R. (1995) 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity', in Featherstone, M. and Robertson, R. (eds.) *Global Modernities*. London: Sage, pp. 24-44.
- Robson, C. (2011) *Real World Research*. 3rd edn. Padstow: Wiley.
- Rogan, F. (2018) *Social Media, Bedroom Cultures and Femininity: Exploring the Intersection of Culture, Politics and Identity in the Digital Media Practices of Girls and Young Women in England*. PhD Thesis. University of Birmingham. Available at: <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/8199/> (Accessed: 14 March 2023).
- Rogan, F. (2022) *Digital Femininities: The Gendered Construction of Cultural and Political Identities Online*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Rongmuang, D., McElmurry, B.J., McCreary, L.L., Park, C.G., Miller, A.G., and Corte, C. (2011) 'Regional Differences in Physical Appearance Identity Among Young Adult Women in Thailand', *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 33 (1), pp. 106-120.

- Rose, G. (1997) 'Situating Knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics', *Progress in Human Geography*, 21, pp. 305-320.
- Rottenberg, C. (2014) 'The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism', *Cultural Studies*, 28 (3), pp. 418-437.
- Rottenberg, C. (2016) 'Neoliberal Feminism and the Future of Human Capital', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 42 (2), pp. 329-248.
- Roulston, K. (2010) *Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Roy, S.D. (2022) *Social Media and Capitalism: People, Communities and Commodities*. Wakefield, QC, Canada: Daraja Press.
- Ryan-Flood, R. (2003) *Disruptive (M)Others: Lesbian parenting in Sweden and Ireland*. PhD Thesis. London School of Economics and Political Science. Available at: <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/68/> (Accessed: 16 August 2023).
- Ryan-Flood, R. (2010) 'Keeping mum: Secrecy and silence in research on lesbian parenthood', in Ryan-Flood, R. and Gill, R. (eds.) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*. London: Routledge, pp. 188-199.
- Ryan-Flood, R. (2014) 'Staying Connected: Irish lesbian and gay narratives of family', in Connolly, L. (ed.) *The 'Irish' Family*. London: Routledge, pp. 187-201.
- Ryan-Flood, R., Crowhurst, I., and James-Hawkins, L. (2023) 'Introduction', in Ryan-Flood, R., Crowhurst, I., and James-Hawkins, L. (eds.) *Difficult Conversations: A Feminist Dialogue*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, pp. 1-7.
- Ryan-Flood, R. and Gill, R. (2010) 'Introduction', in Ryan-Flood, R. and Gill, R. (eds.) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-11.

- Sandhu, D., Singh, B., Tung, S., and Kundra, N. (2012) 'Adolescent Identity Formation, Psychological Well-being, and Parental Attitudes', *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, (27) 1, pp. 89-105.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A. (2019) *Research Methods for Business Students*. 8th edn. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Sawicki, J. (1991) *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body*. London: Routledge.
- Scharff, C. (2009) *Young women's dis-identification with feminism: negotiating heteronormativity, neoliberalism and difference*. PhD Thesis. London School of Economics and Political Science. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4187537.pdf> (Accessed: 27 July 2023).
- Scharff, C. (2010) 'Young women's negotiations of heterosexual conventions: Theorizing sexuality in constructions of 'the feminist'', *Sociology*, 44 (5), pp. 827-842.
- Scharff, C. (2016) 'The psychic life of neoliberalism: Mapping the contours of entrepreneurial subjectivity', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 33, pp. 107-122.
- Schmidt, E-M., Décieux, F., Zartler, U., and Schnor, C. (2022) 'What makes a good mother? Two decades of research reflecting social norms of motherhood', *Journal of Family, Theory and Review*, 15, pp. 57-77.
- Schrape, J-F. (2016) *Social Media, Mass Media and the 'Public Sphere': Differentiation, Complementarity and Co-existence*. SOI Discussion Paper 2016-01. Stuttgart: University of Stuttgart. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/147409> (Accessed: 6 September 2023).
- Seewan, S. and Benjarongkij, Y. (2014) 'The Influencing Factors Pressuring Thai Women on Decision Making on Beauty and Appearance Transformation', *Journal of Public Relations and Advertising*, 7 (2), pp. 125-137.

- Senft, T.M. (2008) *Camgirls: Celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Seo, Y., Cruz, A.G.B., and Fifita, I.M.E. (2020) 'Cultural globalization and young Korean women's acculturative labor: K-beauty as hegemonic hybridity', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, pp. 1-19.
- Sharp, E.A. and Ganong, L. (2011) "'I'm a loser, I'm not married, let's all just look at me": Ever-single women's perceptions of their social environment', *Journal of Family Issues*, 32, pp. 956-980.
- Shilling, C. (1993) *The body and social theory*. London: Sage.
- Shilling, C. (2016) *The Body: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Singhakowinta, J. (2014) 'Media Valorization of Feminine Beauty in Thai Public Discourse', *Kasetsart Journal (Social Sciences)*, 35, pp. 337-345.
- Singpliam, P. (2022a) "'Darling, Beauty is Pain": Female Empowerment, Neoliberal Rationality and Class: a Postfeminist Analysis of *This is Me Vatanika*', *Manusya: Journal of Humanities*, 25, pp. 1-22.
- Singpliam, P. (2022b) 'Social Media, Body Norms, and Gendered Bodies: The Case Study of Conformity and Plausible Negotiation with the Ideal Body Image', *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies*, 22 (3), pp. 589-600.
- Sinnott, M. (2012) 'Korean-Pop, *Tom Gay Kings*, *Les Queens* and the Capitalist Transformation of Sex/Gender Categories in Thailand', *Asian Studies Review*, 36 (4), pp. 453-474.
- Siriyuvasak, U. and Shin, H. (2007) 'Asianizing K-pop: production, consumption and identification patterns among Thai youth', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 8 (1), pp. 109-136.

- Skeggs, B. (1994) 'Situating the Production of Feminist Ethnography', in Maynard, M. and Purvis, J. (eds.) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*. Basingstoke: Taylor & Francis, pp. 72-93.
- Skeggs, B. (2002) *Formations of class and gender: Becoming Respectable*. Reprint. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Smith, D.E. (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, D.E. (1990) *Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling*. New York: Routledge.
- Smith, D.E. (1997) 'Comment on Hekman's "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited"', *Signs*, 22 (2), pp. 392-398.
- Smith, L.T. (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd edn. London: Zed Books.
- Sombatpoonsiri, J. (2018) 'Conservative Civil Society in Thailand', in Youngs, R. (ed.) *The Mobilisation of Conservative Civil Society*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pp. 27-32.
- Song, H. (2023) 'Mothers' baking blogs: negotiating sacrificial and postfeminist neoliberal motherhood in South Korea', *Feminist Media Studies*, 23 (1), pp. 216-231.
- Sontag, S. (1997) 'The Double Standard of Aging', in Pearsall, M. (ed.) *The Other Within Us: Feminist Explorations Of Women And Aging*. New York: Routledge, pp. 19-24.
- Sringernyuang, L., Felix, M.S., Torut, B., Wongjinda, S., Chaimongkol, U., and Wongjinda, T. (2020) 'Thailand: Case Studies of Filial Piety, Family Dynamics, and Family Finances - Unexpected Findings of a Country-Wide Research of The Evaluation of Project

- Performance Supported by Older Persons Fund', *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, 20 (1), pp. 145-158.
- Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1993) *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Steinem, G. (1992) *Revolution from within: a book of self-esteem*. London: Little, Brown.
- Stewart, K. and William, M. (2005) 'Researching online populations: the use of online focus groups for social research', *Qualitative Research*, 5 (4), pp. 395-416.
- Stuart, A. and Donaghue, N. (2011) 'Choosing to conform: The discursive complexities of choice in relation to feminine beauty practices', *Feminism and Psychology*, 22 (1), pp. 98-121.
- Sukoco, N.D., Purnomo, D., and Hadiwijoyo, S.S. (2022) 'The Effect of Body Shaming on the Existence of Generation Z Confidence', *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal*, 5 (3), pp. 23329-23341.
- Tait, S. (2007) 'Television and The Domestication of Cosmetic Surgery', *Feminist Media Studies*, 7 (2), pp. 119-135.
- Tasker, Y. and Negra, D. (2007) 'Introduction: Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture', in Tasker, Y. and Negra, D. (eds.) *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham, UK: Duke University Press, pp. 1-26.
- Taylor, A. (2012) *Single women in popular culture: The limits of postfeminism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Taylor, M.C. (2005) 'Interviewing', in Holloway, I. (ed.) *Qualitative Research in Health Care*. New York: Open University Press, pp. 39-55.
- Teeratanabodee, W. (2021) 'Feminism and the Pro-Democracy Cause in Thailand', *ISEAS Perspective*, 2021 (94), pp. 1-11.

- Teeratanabodee, W. (2023) ‘Thailand’s 2020–2021 Pro-Democracy Protests: Diversity, Conflict, and Solidarity’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, pp. 1-25.
- ThailandClinics. (2018) ราคา ศัลยกรรม จะสวยทั้งที่ เตรียมงบเท่าไรก็ดี [*Cosmetic Surgery Prices: To become pretty, how much budget to prepare*]. Available at:
<https://thailandclinics.com/%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A8%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A1/> (Accessed: 15 August 2023).
- Thongsawang, S., Rehbein, B., and Chantavanich, S. (2020) ‘Inequality, Sociocultures and Habitus in Thailand’, *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 35 (3), pp. 493-524.
- Thornham, S. and Pengpeng, F. (2010) “‘JUST A SLOGAN’: Individualism, post-feminism, and female subjectivity in consumerist China’, *Feminist Media Studies*, 10 (2), pp. 195-211.
- Tiendlom, V. (2018) *Beauty on Order: Thai Women and Korean-Style Cosmetic Surgery*. PhD Thesis. Thammasat University. Available at:
<https://cis.tu.ac.th/uploads/ci/academic-work/phd-thesis/61visakha.pdf> (Accessed: 10 August 2023).
- Tiggemann, M., Hayden, S., Brown, Z., and Veldhuis, J. (2018) ‘The Effect of Instagram “Likes” on Women’s Social Comparison and Body Dissatisfaction’, *Body Image*, 26, pp. 90-97.
- Tokunaga, R.S. (2011) ‘Social networking site or social surveillance site? Understanding the use of inter-personal electronic surveillance in romantic relationships’, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27, pp. 705-713.
- Trakulsuksawasd, K., Ingsiriwat, P., and Wangsillapakun, T. (2021) ‘Fortune Factor: Redefining Fortune-telling in Urban Society’, *Rangsit University International Research Conference 2021*. Rangsit University, 30 April. Pathum Thani: Research Institute of Rangsit

- University. Available at: <https://rsucon.rsu.ac.th/proceeding/article/3003> (Accessed: 29 March 2023).
- Tyler, I. (2011) 'Pregnant Beauty: Maternal Femininities under Neoliberalism', in Gill, R. and Scharff, C. (eds.) *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 21-36.
- Tzani, C. (2018) *Childhood bullying can cause lifelong psychological damage – here's how to spot the signs and move on*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/childhood-bullying-can-cause-lifelong-psychological-damage-heres-how-to-spot-the-signs-and-move-on-100288> (Accessed: 1 March 2023).
- UK Parliament. (2022) *The impact of body image on physical and mental health examined*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1674/the-impact-of-body-image-on-mental-and-physical-health/news/161508/the-impact-of-body-image-on-physical-and-mental-health-examined/> (Accessed: 24 July 2023).
- University of Birmingham. (2021) *University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Research*. Available at: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/research.pdf> (Accessed: 13 March 2023).
- Vähäsantanen, K. and Saarinen, J. (2013) 'The power dance in the research interview: Manifesting power and powerlessness', *Qualitative Research*, 13, pp. 493-510.
- Van Esterik, P. (2000) *Materializing Thailand*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Virasorn, N., Thongrin, S., and Lomchavakarn, P. (2020) 'Facebook media use, advertising strategy and impact on decision-making of men in Bangkok for undergoing facial surgery', *The Golden Teak : Humanity and Social Science Journal*, 26 (2), pp. 166-179.
- Wakefield, M.E. and Yarborough, C. (2006) 'Chinese face reading goes west: From the clinic to the quotidian everyday applications of oriental physiognomy', *Acupuncture Today*, 8 (4).

Available at: <https://www.acupuncturetoday.com/mpacms/at/article.php?id=31502>

(Accessed: 14 February 2023).

Walby, S. (1989) 'Theorising Patriarchy', *Sociology*, 23 (2), pp. 213-234.

Walby, S. (1990) *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Walby, S. (1996) 'Key Concepts in Feminist Theory', *Feminist Research Centre in Aalborg*, December (33), pp. 1-18.

Walby, S. (1997) *Gender Transformations*. London: Routledge.

Walby, S. (2007) 'Complexity Theory, Systems Theory, and Multiple Intersecting Social Inequalities', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 37 (4), pp. 449-470.

Walby, S., Armstrong, J., and Strid, S. (2012) 'Intersectionality: Multiple Inequalities in Social Theory', *Sociology*, 46 (2), pp. 224-240.

Wallis, C. (2015) 'Gender and China's Online Censorship Protest Culture', *Feminist Media Studies*, 15 (2), pp. 223-238.

Ward, J. and Winstanley, D. (2003) 'The absent presence: Negative space within discourse and the construction of minority sexual identity in the workplace', *Human Relations*, 56 (10), pp. 1255-1280.

Weedon, C. (1997) *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wen, H. (2009) "'Being Good-Looking Is Capital": Cosmetic Surgery in China Today', *Asian Anthropology*, 8 (1), pp. 89-107.

Wen, H. (2013) *Buying Beauty: Cosmetic Surgery in China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Wen, H. (2021) 'Gentle yet Manly: Xiao xian rou, Male Cosmetic Surgery and Neoliberal Consumer Culture in China', *Asian Studies Review*, 45 (2), pp. 253-271.

- Westmarland, N. (2001) 'The Quantitative/Qualitative Debate and Feminist Research: A Subjective View of Objectivity', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2 (1/13). Available at: <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/974/2124> (Accessed: 13 February 2021).
- Whelehan, I. (2000) *Overloaded: Popular culture and the future of feminism*. London: Women's Press.
- Whelehan, I. and Gwynne, J. (eds.) (2014) *Ageing, Popular Culture and Contemporary Feminism: Harleys and Hormones*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Whiteman, J. (2023) 'Unmasking the ideological work of violence in music videos: findings from ethnographic audience research into contemporary sexual politics', *Feminist Media Studies*, pp. 1-19.
- Widdows, H. (2018a) *If you want to lose weight, ask yourself: is this really self-improvement?*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/if-you-want-to-lose-weight-ask-yourself-is-this-really-self-improvement-89803> (Accessed: 6 January 2021).
- Widdows, H. (2018b) *Perfect Me: Beauty as an Ethical Ideal*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Widdows, H. (2020) 'Structural injustice and the Requirements of Beauty', *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Spring 2020, pp. 1-19.
- Widdows, H. (2022a) 'II—No Duty to Resist: Why Individual Resistance is an Ineffective Response to Dominant Beauty Ideals', *The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 122 (1), pp. 27-46.
- Widdows, H. (2022b) 'To resist the rising demands of beauty, we should start by abstaining from body shame', *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, 6 June. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/heather-widdows-tyranny-of-beauty-and-the-shame-game/13917542> (Accessed: 28 January 2023).

- Wilson, A. (2011) 'Foreign Bodies and National Scales: Medical Tourism in Thailand', *Body and Society*, 17 (2 and 3), pp. 121-137.
- Winch, A. (2013) *Girlfriends and Postfeminist Sisterhood*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Winch, A. (2015) 'Brand intimacy, female friendship and digital surveillance networks', *New Formations*, 84-85, pp. 228-245.
- Winch, A. (2017) "'Does Feminism Have a Generation Gap?': Blogging, Millennials and the Hip Hop Generation', *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 22 (1), pp. 207-221.
- Winch, A., Littler, J., and Keller, J. (2016) 'Why "intergenerational feminist media studies"?', *Feminist Media Studies*, 16 (4), pp. 557-572.
- Winichakul, T. (2015) 'The Hazing Scandals in Thailand Reflect Deeper Problems in Social Relations', *Yusof Ishak Institute*, 56, pp. 1-9.
- Wissinger, E.A. (2015a) '#NoFilter: Models, Glamor Labour, and the Age of the Blink', *Interface*, 1 (1), pp. 1-20.
- Wissinger, E.A. (2015b) *This Year's Model: Fashion, Media, and the Making of Glamour*. London: New York University Press.
- Wissinger, E.A. (2016) 'Glamour labour in the age of Kardashian', *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty*, 7 (2), pp. 141-152.
- Wolf, N. (1991) *The Beauty Myth: How images of beauty are used against women*. New York: Morrow.
- Wongsurawat, W. (2008) 'Contending for a Claim on Civilization: The Sino-Siamese Struggle to Control Overseas Chinese Education in Siam', *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 4 (2), pp. 161-182.
- Woo, K.J. (2004) 'The Beauty Complex and the Cosmetic Surgery Industry', *Korea Journal*, 44 (2), pp. 52-82.

Wood, H. and Skeggs, B. (2004) 'Notes on Ethical Scenarios of Self on British Reality TV', *Feminist Media Studies*, 4 (2), pp. 205-208.

World Economic Forum. (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. Available at:
<https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality/>
 (Accessed: 3 April 2023).

World Economic Forum. (2021) *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. Available at:
<https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021/> (Accessed: 3 April 2023).

World Economic Forum. (2022) *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*. Available at:
<https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/> (Accessed: 3 April 2023).

World Economic Forum. (2023) *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*. Available at:
<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/> (Accessed: 18 November 2023).

Yang, J. (2017) 'Holistic Labour: Gender, Body and the Beauty and Wellness Industry in China', in Elias, A., Gill, R., and Scharff, C. (eds.) *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 117-131.

Yardley, L. (2000) 'Dilemmas in Qualitative Research', *Psychology and Health*, 15, pp. 215-228.

Yeh, D. (2020) 'Covid-19, Anti-Asian Racial Violence, and The Borders of Chineseness', *British Journal of Chinese Studies*, 10.

Yip, J., Ainsworth, S., and Hugh, M.T. (2019) 'Beyond Whiteness: Perspectives on the Rise of the Pan-Asian Beauty Ideal', in Johnson, G., Thomas, K., Harrison, A.K., and Grier, S. (eds.) *Race in the Marketplace*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 73-85.

- Young, I.M. (1990) *Throwing Like a Girl: And Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Zack, N. (2005) *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Zhang, Q. and Liu, Q. (2020) 'A Study of the Differences between Chinese and Western Cultures from the Perspective of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory', *East African Scholars Journal of Education, Humanities and Literature*, 3 (4), pp. 125-128.

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheets

English Version – To the CS Recipients

Participant Information Sheet for Cosmetic Surgery Recipients

Thank you for your interest in participating in this project. My name is Chalisa Chintrakarn, a PhD student in the Department of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology at the University of Birmingham, UK. The working title of my PhD research is *The Motivations of Young Thai Women for Undergoing Cosmetic Surgery*. The project will make a substantial contribution to the fields of gender and sociology.

Description of the Project

Thai people are preoccupied with consumer culture that includes body enhancement. Thailand is known as one of the top countries in Asia concerning undergoing cosmetic surgery, such that the procedure has been normalised in the country. Yet, to date, the Thai cosmetic surgery phenomenon has been rarely researched within gender studies. Even public discussion on beauty demands for women and men in Thailand has not received significant attention. Hence, this PhD project mainly examines the narratives of young Thai women regarding their cosmetic surgical modification and Thai gender relations. Since academics have focused on the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity, this study also investigates what are the specific beauty standards that shape these narratives.

You are a Thai woman aged 21-39 who have undergone cosmetic surgery in any country for aesthetic (not reconstructive) purposes. Moreover, you currently reside in Thailand and have spent most of your life in the country. As such, interviewing you will enable this project to meet the following research purposes. These are to enlighten the connections between cosmetic surgery and Thai gender relations, and to explore preferred beauty standards in the cosmetic surgery context of young Thai women.

Participation

Due to Covid-19, the participation is entirely online. Your written/oral consent for taking part in the research will be required by the start of the interview. Written consent is preferred, but oral consent is also accepted in case you have no access to a printer and scanner or you cannot provide an electronic signature. The interview will be held in Thai language via Zoom, will be video-recorded or audio-recorded, and will last for approximately 1 hour. Whilst audio recording is acceptable, video

recording is preferred owing to the ability to see each other's non-verbal communication. I will physically write only keywords based on your responses in my personal note during the interview. The interview time will be agreed by both you and the researcher, and a reminder will be sent around 1 hour prior to the interview. You can ask me questions during the interview, but I will respond to these questions at the end of the interview. For security reasons, you will have to sign in to your interview with a password assigned by myself. I will distribute the interview transcript to you within 12 days of conducting the interview. You can request to make some amendments to your own transcript within 3 weeks of receiving the transcript. If requested, you would have to insert comments in the Microsoft Word files instead of changing the text itself.

There are two potential minor risks of participating in the project with regards to the surgery recipients like you, which will be minimised. The first risk is the emotional impact of the interview on some young Thai women who had cosmetic surgery. To lessen this, you can refuse to answer certain questions throughout the interviews. The research also allows you to withdraw from this project if you feel uncomfortable – without providing me any reason. You can leave the project up until 6 weeks after your interview. If withdrawn within the timeframe, there would be no consequences of leaving this study, and data gathered throughout the interview with you and your signed consent form would be destroyed after the withdrawal. You cannot leave this study after this 6-week period. In addition, Samaritans Thailand (Facebook Messenger: Samaritan.Thailand; URL: <http://www.samaritansthai.com/>) may be helpful for mental health anytime after your interview or even after the completion of this research. The second possible risk is that participants may be inevitably surrounded by several others while being interviewed, which might raise a risk regarding confidentiality. In mitigating this, you can choose a place for the interview. You are advised to find a private space at your home or office for the interview, with only you being present throughout. This will minimise you from the risks of Covid-19 as well.

Whilst there will be no compensation for partaking in this study, these potential risks are significantly outweighed by the following potential benefits of the project:

- 1) Interviews can generally be an opportunity for participants to unburden themselves and lead to positive life changes.
- 2) This study can inspire other academics to research other topics of beauty demands in the context of Thai culture, such as non-surgical beauty practices like Botox and body hair removal.
- 3) Various Thai media outlets can make sense of the account of participants in this study, in

order to raise awareness of aesthetic demands in Thailand and the consequences of surgical modification.

Data confidentiality/anonymity

- All data files will be securely retained, and none of the data will be stored outside the European Union and the European Economic Area.³²
- Signed consent forms, with participants' signatures and real names written, will be kept for at least 10 years and can be seen only by my supervisors and me.
- Only the supervisors and I can access recorded interview videos and audios in which all participants' actual names may be mentioned.
- Only I can access the physical personal note that consists of only keywords based on interviewees' responses.
- The videos and audios and the personal note will be destroyed before signed consent forms (i.e. once this project is completed).
- Other data files (transcribed, translated, and analysed data) will be pseudo-anonymised. While your race, ethnicity, social class, relationship status, and occupation shall be mentioned in these files for the comprehensive data analysis, any specific details about your identities, such as the workplace name, will not be displayed in these documents. The pseudonyms of the same participant will vary between these files to ensure the data of each interviewee are non-identifiable. Transcribed, translated, and analysed data will be retained for at least 10 years. Unlike signed consent forms, access to them will be limited to others who are granted upon request. However, there will be no risk of identification of any participants, as no particular details regarding their identities will be shown to any third party.

Results of the Study

Research findings will be used in not only the PhD thesis but also potential future publications, such as journal articles and books, as well as presentations. Only my supervisors and I can use these research findings. Indeed, rather than participants' real names, pseudonyms will be used in these works.

³² Following the UK leaving the European Union participants were aware that the researcher was based in the UK, with data stored on the University of Birmingham databases as agreed upon in their consent form.

Contact Details

Should you have any questions regarding participating in the project, please contact me via email [email redacted]. You can also get in touch with the supervisors, Dr. Kelly Hall ([email redacted]) and Dr. Julie Whiteman ([email redacted]).

Remarks

I am still finding more participants. Therefore, please contact me if you know any young cosmetic surgery recipient who matches the aforesaid sample criteria of this study.

Yours sincerely,

Chalisa,

PhD student, University of Birmingham

Thai Version – To the CS Recipients

เอกสารชี้แจงผู้ร่วมโครงการวิจัย (สำหรับผู้ผ่านการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งมาแล้ว)

ขอบคุณสำหรับความสนใจในการเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยนี้ ดิฉันชื่อ ชาลิสา นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก
แผนกนโยบายสังคม สังคมศาสตร์ และอาชีววิทยา มหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮม สหราชอาณาจักร
หัวข้อของงานวิจัยนี้คือ เหตุูงใจของหญิงสาวไทยในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง
โครงการนี้จะประโยชน์ต่อการศึกษาเรื่องเพศ (gender) และสังคมศาสตร์ (sociology)

คำบรรยายเกี่ยวกับโครงการ

คนไทยให้ความสนใจในวัฒนธรรมการบริโภครวมทั้งการเสริมความงาม ประเทศไทยเป็นหนึ่งใน
ประเทศในเอเชียที่รู้จักกันดีในเรื่องการศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง ถึงขนาดว่าการศัลยกรรมนี้เป็นเรื่องธรรมดาใน
ประเทศ อย่างไรก็ตาม จนบัดนี้ การทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของคนไทยไม่ค่อยได้ถูกศึกษาวิจัยภายในวงการเพศศึกษา
แม้แต่การสนทนาสาธารณะเรื่องอิทธิพลด้านความงามสำหรับผู้หญิงและผู้ชายไทยนั้นยังไม่ได้ได้รับความสนใจมากพอ
ดังนั้น หลักๆแล้ว โครงการปริญญาเอกนี้จะสำรวจการบรรยายของหญิงสาวไทยเกี่ยวกับการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง
และความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงและผู้ชายไทย นอกจากนี้ การศึกษานี้จะตรวจสอบมาตรฐานความงามที่มี
อิทธิพลต่อการบรรยายนั้น เพราะนักวิชาการโดยทั่วไปได้ให้ความสำคัญกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเพศ เชื้อชาติ (race)
และชาติพันธุ์ (ethnicity)

ท่านเป็นผู้หญิงไทยอายุ 21-39 ปี ที่เคยทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งในประเทศใดก็ได้เพื่อความสวยงาม
(ไม่ใช่เพื่อการแก้ไขจากอุบัติเหตุ) นอกจากนี้ ขณะนี้ท่านอาศัยอยู่ในไทย และในชีวิตส่วนใหญ่อยู่ไทย ดังนั้น
การสัมภาษณ์ท่านจะช่วยให้โครงการนี้ตรงตามจุดประสงค์ของงานวิจัย นั่นก็คือ 1) ให้ความรู้เกี่ยวกับ
ความเกี่ยวข้องกันระหว่างการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งและความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงและผู้ชายไทย และ 2)
สำรวจมาตรฐานความงามในบริบทของการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของหญิงสาวไทย

การเข้าร่วมงานวิจัย

เนื่องด้วยเหตุการณ์โควิด 19 การเข้าร่วมงานวิจัยนี้จะดำเนินการทางออนไลน์ทั้งหมด ท่านจะต้องให้การยินยอมเข้าร่วมงานวิจัยด้วยการเขียนหรือปากเปล่าก่อนการสัมภาษณ์ การยินยอมด้วยการเขียนจะเป็นที่ต้องการมากกว่า แต่การยินยอมด้วยปากเปล่าก็ยอมรับได้ในกรณีที่ท่านไม่สามารถเข้าถึงเครื่องพิมพ์หรือสแกนเนอร์ หรือไม่สามารถให้ลายเซ็นอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ การสัมภาษณ์นี้จะภาษาไทยทางซูม (Zoom) จะถูกอัดวิดีโอหรืออัดเสียง และจะใช้เวลาประมาณ 1 ชั่วโมง ถึงแม้ว่าการอัดเสียงจะยอมรับได้ การอัดวิดีโอจะเป็นที่ต้องการมากกว่า เพราะจะทำให้เห็นการสื่อสารแบบไม่ใช้คำพูด (non-verbal communication) ของกันและกัน ดิฉันจะเขียนเฉพาะคำหลัก (keywords) ตามคำตอบของท่านในบันทึกส่วนตัวของดิฉันในระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ ดิฉันและท่านจะกำหนดเวลาของการสัมภาษณ์ร่วมกัน และดิฉันจะส่งการแจ้งเตือนเกี่ยวกับการสัมภาษณ์ประมาณ 1 ชั่วโมงก่อนการสัมภาษณ์ ท่านสามารถถามคำถามดิฉันได้ระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ แต่ดิฉันจะตอบคำถามของท่านตอนท้ายของการสัมภาษณ์ เพื่อความปลอดภัย ท่านจะต้องใส่รหัสผ่านที่ดิฉันกำหนดให้เพื่อที่จะเข้าการสัมภาษณ์ ดิฉันจะส่งบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์ให้ท่านภายใน 12 วันหลังจากการสัมภาษณ์ท่าน ท่านสามารถขอแก้ไขบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์ได้ภายใน 3 สัปดาห์หลังจากที่ได้รับบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์แล้ว ถ้าขอแก้ไข ท่านจะต้องใส่คอมเมนต์ในไฟล์ Microsoft Words ของบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์แทนที่จะแก้ไขตัวเนื้อหาในไฟล์

สำหรับผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการที่ผ่านการทำคัดลยกรรมตกแต่งมาแล้ว ความเสี่ยงเล็กน้อยที่อาจเกิดขึ้นจากการเข้าร่วมการวิจัยจะสามารถทำให้ลดน้อยลงได้ ความเสี่ยงแรกคือผลกระทบทางอารมณ์ของการสัมภาษณ์ต่อผู้ที่ผ่านการทำคัดลยกรรมตกแต่งบางท่าน ดังนั้น เพื่อที่จะทำให้ความเสี่ยงนี้ลดน้อยลง ท่านสามารถปฏิเสธที่จะตอบคำถามบางคำถามตลอดการสัมภาษณ์ งานวิจัยนี้อำนวยาให้ท่านถอนตัวจากโครงการนี้ได้หากท่านไม่สะดวกใจ โดยไม่ต้องให้เหตุผลใดๆ ท่านสามารถถอนตัวได้จนถึง 6 สัปดาห์หลังการให้สัมภาษณ์ ถ้าถอนตัวภายในระยะเวลาที่กำหนดแล้วจะไม่ผลตามมาของการออกจากการศึกษานี้ แล้วไฟล์ข้อมูลที่รวบรวมตลอดการสัมภาษณ์ท่านและแบบฟอร์มการยินยอมของท่านจะถูกลบหลังจากการถอนตัว ท่านไม่สามารถออกจากการศึกษานี้ได้หลังจาก 6

สัปดาห์หลังการให้สัมภาษณ์ นอกจากนี้ ศูนย์ฮอตไลน์คลายทุกข์ สมาริตันส์ ประเทศไทย (เฟสบุ๊ก แมสเซนเจอร์: Samaritan.Thailand; เว็บไซต์: <http://www.samaritansthai.com/>) อาจจะเป็นประโยชน์ตลอดเวลาหลังการสัมภาษณ์หรือแม้กระทั่งหลังจากเสร็จสิ้นการวิจัยนี้แล้ว ความเสี่ยงที่สองที่อาจเกิดขึ้นคือ ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการอาจถูกรายล้อมไปด้วยท่านอื่นๆระหว่างการให้สัมภาษณ์ ซึ่งอาจก่อให้เกิดความเสี่ยงเกี่ยวกับการรักษาความลับของข้อมูลในการลดปัญหาที่อาจเกิดขึ้นนี้ ท่านสามารถเลือกสถานที่สำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ได้ ท่านควรหาพื้นที่ส่วนตัวที่บ้านหรือที่ทำงานของท่านสำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ โดยที่มิต่านอยู่คนเดียวตลอดการสัมภาษณ์ วิธีนี้จะช่วยลดความเสี่ยงของโควิด 19 ได้เช่นกัน

แม้ว่าจะไม่มีคำตอบแทนสำหรับการเข้าร่วมในการศึกษานี้ ประโยชน์ที่เป็นไปได้ของโครงการจะมีมากกว่าความเสี่ยงที่อาจเกิดขึ้น ดังต่อไปนี้

1. โดยทั่วไป การให้สัมภาษณ์อาจเป็นโอกาสสำหรับผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการในการระบายความในใจและนำไปสู่การเปลี่ยนแปลงในชีวิตในเชิงบวก
2. การศึกษานี้สามารถสร้างแรงบันดาลใจให้นักวิชาการท่านอื่นได้ค้นคว้าเรื่องอื่นๆเกี่ยวกับอิทธิพลด้านความงามในบริบทของวัฒนธรรมไทย เช่น การเสริมความงามโดยไม่ต้องผ่าตัดอย่างโบท็อกซ์และการกำจัดขนตามร่างกาย
3. มีเดียหรือสื่อไทยหลายสำนักจะสามารถเข้าใจเรื่องราวเกี่ยวกับศัลยกรรมความงามของผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการนี้เพื่อให้ประชาชนไทยตระหนักถึงอิทธิพลด้านความงามในไทยและผลที่ตามมาของการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งมากขึ้น

การรักษาความลับและการไม่ระบุชื่อ

- ไฟล์ข้อมูลทั้งหมดจะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างปลอดภัยและจะไม่ถูกเก็บนอกขอบเขตสหภาพยุโรปและเขตเศรษฐกิจยุโรป

- แบบฟอร์มการยินยอมการเข้าร่วมโครงการพร้อมลายเซ็นและนามจริงของผู้เข้าร่วม

จะถูกเก็บอย่างน้อย 10 ปี และมีเพียงหัวหน้างานและดิฉันเท่านั้นที่สามารถเห็นเนื้อหาในฟอร์มได้

- หัวหน้างานและดิฉันเท่านั้นที่จะสามารถเข้าถึงวิดีโอและคลิปเสียงสัมภาษณ์ซึ่งอาจจะมีนามจริงของผู้เข้าร่วมทุกคนอยู่ได้
- ดิฉันเท่านั้นที่จะสามารถเข้าถึงบันทึกส่วนตัวที่มีแค่คำหลัก (keywords) ตามคำตอบของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์
- วิดีโอ คลิปเสียง และบันทึกส่วนตัวจะถูกทำลายก่อนแบบฟอร์มการยินยอม (ทันทีหลังจากโครงการนี้ได้เสร็จสมบูรณ์)

- ไฟล์ข้อมูลอื่นๆ (ข้อมูลที่ถูกลบความ แปล และวิเคราะห์) จะถูกระบุด้วยนามแฝงแทน

ชาติพันธุ์ (ethnicity) ชนชั้นทางสังคม สถานะความสัมพันธ์ และอาชีพของท่าน จะถูกอ้างถึงในไฟล์เหล่านี้สำหรับการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลที่ครอบคลุม แต่รายละเอียดเฉพาะใดๆ ที่เกี่ยวกับตัวตนของท่าน เช่น ชื่อที่ทำงาน

จะไม่ถูกแสดงในไฟล์เหล่านี้ นามแฝงของผู้เข้าร่วมท่านเดียวกันนั้นจะแตกต่างกันไประหว่างไฟล์เหล่านี้เพื่อให้แน่ใจว่าข้อมูลของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์แต่ละคนนั้นไม่สามารถระบุตัวตนได้ ข้อมูลที่ถูกลบความ แปล

และวิเคราะห์จะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างน้อย 10 ปี การเข้าถึงข้อมูลเหล่านี้จะจำกัดเฉพาะผู้อื่น

(นอกจากหัวหน้างานและดิฉัน) ที่ได้รับการอนุญาตตามคำขอเท่านั้น อย่างไรก็ตามจะไม่มีความเสี่ยง

เกี่ยวกับการระบุตัวตนของผู้เข้าร่วมใดๆ เนื่องจากโครงการนี้จะไม่แสดงรายละเอียดตัวตน

ของผู้เข้าร่วมต่อบุคคลที่สาม

ผลลัพธ์ของการศึกษา

ผลการวิจัยจะถูกนำไปใช้ไม่เพียงแต่ในวิทยานิพนธ์ปริญญาเอกของดิฉันเท่านั้น แต่ยังรวมถึงสิ่งพิมพ์

อื่นๆ ในอนาคตด้วย อาทิเช่น บทความวารสาร หนังสือ ตลอดจนการนำเสนอต่างๆ (presentations)

หัวหน้างานและดิฉันเท่านั้นที่จะใช้ผลการวิจัยนี้ได้ นามแฝงของผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการจะถูกใช้ในงานเหล่านี้

ข้อมูลติดต่อ

หากท่านมีคำถามใดๆเกี่ยวกับการเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้ ท่านสามารถติดต่อดิฉันมาได้ทางอีเมล [email redacted]
[redacted]. ท่านสามารถติดต่อหัวหน้างานได้เช่นกัน [ดร. เคลลี ฮอล (email redacted) และ
ดร. จูลี ไวท์แมน (email redacted)]

หมายเหตุ

ดิฉันยังคงหาผู้เข้าร่วมเพิ่มเติม ดังนั้นกรุณาติดต่อดิฉันหากท่านรู้จักหญิงสาวไทยที่ผ่าน
การทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งมาแล้วที่ตรงตามเกณฑ์ข้างต้น

ขอแสดงความนับถืออย่างยิ่ง

ชาลิสา

นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก มหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮม

English Version – To the Cosmetic Surgeons

Participant Information Sheet for Cosmetic Surgeons

Thank you for your interest in participating in this project. My name is Chalisa Chintrakarn, a PhD student in the Department of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology at the University of Birmingham, UK. The working title of my PhD research is *The Motivations of Young Thai Women for Undergoing Cosmetic Surgery*. The project will make a substantial contribution to the fields of gender and sociology.

Description of the Project

Thai people are preoccupied with consumer culture that includes body enhancement. Thailand is known as one of the top countries in Asia concerning undergoing cosmetic surgery. Yet, to date, the Thai cosmetic surgery phenomenon has been rarely researched within gender studies. Even public discussion on beauty demands for women and men in Thailand has not received significant attention. Hence, this PhD project mainly examines the narratives of young Thai women regarding their cosmetic surgical modification and Thai gender relations. Since academics have focused on the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity, this study also investigates what are the specific beauty standards that shape these narratives.

You are a Thai cosmetic surgeon who has had this job in Thailand for 2 years or more. Moreover, you currently reside in Thailand and have spent most of your life in the country. As such, interviewing you will allow me to grasp how various Thai women aged 21-39 have largely justified their decisions for undergoing surgery within a medical setting. It shall also enable the project to understand how these women have addressed their pre-surgical preferences concerning particular beauty standards with these practitioners. Consequently, the interview will enable this project to meet the following research purposes. These are to enlighten the connections between cosmetic surgery and Thai gender relations, and to explore preferred beauty standards in the cosmetic surgery context of young Thai women.

Participation

Due to Covid-19, the participation is entirely online. Your written/oral consent for taking part in the research will be required by the start of the interview. Written consent is preferred, but oral consent is also accepted in case you have no access to a printer and scanner or you cannot provide an electronic signature. The interview will be held in Thai language via Zoom, will be video-recorded

or audio-recorded, and will last for approximately 1 hour. Whilst audio recording is acceptable, video recording is preferred owing to the ability to see each other's non-verbal communication. I will physically write only keywords based on your responses in my personal note during the interview. The interview time will be agreed by both you and the researcher, and a reminder will be sent around 1 hour prior to the interview. You can ask me questions during the interview, but I will respond to these questions at the end of the interview. For security reasons, you will have to sign in to your interview with a password assigned by myself. I will distribute the interview transcript to you within 12 days of conducting the interview. You can request to make some amendments to your own transcript within 3 weeks of receiving the transcript. If requested, you would have to insert comments in the Microsoft Word files instead of changing the text itself.

You can refuse to answer certain questions throughout the interviews. If you feel uncomfortable, the research allows you to withdraw from the project without providing me any reason. You can withdraw up until 6 weeks after the interview. If withdrawn within the timeframe, there would be no consequences of leaving this study, and data gathered throughout the interview with you and your signed consent form would be destroyed after the withdrawal. You cannot leave this study after this 6-week period.

Regarding the surgeons, the potential minor risk of participating in the project is that participants may be inevitably surrounded by several others while being interviewed, which might raise a risk related to confidentiality. To lessen this, you can choose a place for the interview. You are advised to find a private space at your home or office for your interview, with only you being present throughout. This will minimise you from the risks of Covid-19 as well.

Whilst there will be no compensation for partaking in this study, this possible risk is significantly outweighed by the following potential benefits of this project:

- 1) This study can inspire other academics to research other topics of beauty demands in the context of Thai culture, such as non-surgical beauty practices like Botox and body hair removal.
- 2) Various Thai media outlets can make sense of the cosmetic surgery accounts of participants in this study, in order to raise awareness of aesthetic demands in Thailand and the consequences of surgical modification.

Data confidentiality/anonymity

- All data files will be securely retained, and none of the data will be stored outside the European Union and the European Economic Area.³³
- Signed consent forms, with participants' signatures and real names written, will be kept for at least 10 years and can be seen only by my supervisors and me.
- Only the supervisors and I can access recorded interview videos and audios in which participants' actual names may be mentioned.
- Only I can access the physical personal note that consists of only keywords based on interviewees' responses.
- The videos and audios and the personal note will be destroyed before signed consent forms (i.e. once this project is completed).
- Other data files (transcribed, translated, and analysed data) will be pseudo-anonymised, and any specific details about you, for example the workplace name, will not be shown in these files. The pseudonyms of the same participant will vary between these files to ensure the data of each interviewee are non-identifiable. Transcribed, translated, and analysed data will be retained for at least 10 years, but, unlike signed consent forms, access to them will be limited to others who are granted upon request. However, there will be no risk of identification of any participants, as no particular details regarding their identities will be shown to any third party.

Results of the Study

Research findings will be used in not only the PhD thesis but also potential publications, such as journal articles and books, as well as presentations. Only my supervisors and I can use these research findings. Indeed, rather than participants' real names, pseudonyms will be used in these works.

Contact Details

Should you have any questions regarding participating in the project, please contact me via email [email redacted]. You can also get in touch with the supervisors, Dr. Kelly Hall [email redacted] and Dr. Julie Whiteman ([email redacted]).

³³ Following the UK leaving the European Union participants were aware that the researcher was based in the UK, with data stored on the University of Birmingham databases as agreed upon in their consent form.

Remarks

I am still finding more participants. Therefore, please contact me if you know any cosmetic surgeon who matches the aforementioned sample criteria of this study.

Yours sincerely,

Chalisa,

PhD student, University of Birmingham

Thai Version – To the Cosmetic Surgeons

เอกสารชี้แจงผู้ร่วมโครงการวิจัย (สำหรับศัลยแพทย์ชาวไทย)

ขอบคุณสำหรับความสนใจในการเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยนี้ ดิฉันชื่อ ชาลิสา นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก

แผนกนโยบายสังคม สังคมศาสตร์ และอาชีววิทยา มหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮม สหราชอาณาจักร

หัวข้อของงานวิจัยนี้คือ *เหตุจูงใจของหญิงสาวไทยในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง*

โครงการนี้เป็นประโยชน์ต่อการศึกษาเรื่องเพศ (gender) และสังคมศาสตร์ (sociology)

คำบรรยายเกี่ยวกับโครงการ

คนไทยให้ความสนใจในวัฒนธรรมการบริโภครวมทั้งการเสริมความงาม ประเทศไทยเป็นหนึ่งใน

ประเทศในเอเชียที่รู้จักกันดีในเรื่องศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง อย่างไรก็ตาม จนบัดนี้ การทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของคนไทย

ไม่ค่อยได้ถูกศึกษาวิจัยภายในวงการ gender studies แม้แต่การสนทนาสาธารณะเรื่องอิทธิพลด้านความงาม

สำหรับผู้หญิงและผู้ชายไทยนั้นยังไม่ได้ได้รับความสนใจมากพอ ดังนั้น หลักๆแล้ว โครงการปริญญาเอกนี้จะสำรวจ

การบรรยายของหญิงสาวไทยเกี่ยวกับการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งและความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงและผู้ชายไทย

นอกจากนี้ การศึกษานี้จะตรวจสอบมาตรฐานความงามที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการบรรยายนั้น เพราะนักวิชาการโดยทั่วไป

ได้ให้ความสำคัญกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเพศ เชื้อชาติ (race) และชาติพันธุ์ (ethnicity)

ท่านเป็นศัลยแพทย์ชาวไทยที่มีอาชีพนี้ในไทยมาแล้วตั้งแต่ 2 ปีขึ้นไป นอกจากนี้ ขณะนี้ท่านอาศัยอยู่ในไทย

และในชีวิตส่วนใหญ่อยู่ไทย ดังนั้น การสัมภาษณ์ท่านจะช่วยให้ดิฉันเข้าใจว่าคนไข้ผู้หญิงที่อายุ 21-39 ปีนั้นได้

ให้เหตุผลในการตัดสินใจเข้ารับการศัลยกรรมตกแต่งภายในสถานพยาบาลอย่างไร นอกจากนี้ยังช่วยให้โครงการนี้

เข้าใจว่าคนไข้เหล่านี้ได้กล่าวถึงความชอบเกี่ยวกับมาตรฐานความงามกับแพทย์ศัลยกรรมชาวไทยอย่างไร

ผลที่สุดก็คือการสัมภาษณ์นี้จะทำให้โครงการตรงตามจุดประสงค์ของงานวิจัย นั่นก็คือ 1) ให้ความรู้เกี่ยวกับความ

เกี่ยวข้องกันระหว่างการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งและความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงและผู้ชายไทย และ 2)

สำรวจมาตรฐานความงามในบริบทของการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของหญิงสาวไทย

การเข้าร่วมงานวิจัย

เนื่องด้วยเหตุการณ์โควิด 19 การเข้าร่วมงานวิจัยนี้จะดำเนินการทางออนไลน์ทั้งหมด ท่านจะต้องให้การยินยอมเข้าร่วมงานวิจัยด้วยการเขียนหรือปากเปล่าก่อนการสัมภาษณ์ การยินยอมด้วยการเขียนจะดีกว่า แต่การยินยอมด้วยปากเปล่านั้นก็ยอมรับได้ในกรณีที่ท่านไม่สามารถเข้าถึงคอมพิวเตอร์หรือสแกนเนอร์ หรือไม่สามารถให้ลายเซ็นอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ การสัมภาษณ์นี้จะภาษาไทยทางซูม (Zoom) จะถูกอัดวิดีโอหรืออัดเสียง และจะใช้เวลาประมาณ 1 ชั่วโมง ถึงแม้ว่าการอัดเสียงจะยอมรับได้ การอัดวิดีโอจะเป็นที่ต้องการมากกว่า เพราะว่า จะทำให้เห็นการสื่อสารแบบไม่ใช่คำพูด (non-verbal communication) ของกันและกัน ดิฉันจะเขียนเฉพาะคำหลัก (keywords) ตามคำตอบของท่านในบันทึกส่วนตัวของดิฉันในระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ ดิฉันและท่านจะกำหนดเวลาของการสัมภาษณ์ร่วมกัน และดิฉันจะส่งการแจ้งเตือนเกี่ยวกับการสัมภาษณ์ประมาณ 1 ชั่วโมงก่อนการสัมภาษณ์ ท่านสามารถถามคำถามดิฉันได้ระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ แต่ดิฉันจะตอบคำถามของท่านตอนท้ายของการสัมภาษณ์ เพื่อความปลอดภัย ท่านจะต้องใส่รหัสผ่านที่ดิฉันกำหนดให้เพื่อที่จะเข้าการสัมภาษณ์ ดิฉันจะส่งบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์ให้ท่านภายใน 12 วันหลังจากการสัมภาษณ์ท่าน ท่านสามารถขอแก้ไขบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์ได้ภายใน 3 สัปดาห์หลังจากที่ได้รับบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์จากดิฉันแล้ว ถ้าขอแก้ไข ท่านจะต้องใส่คอมเมนต์ในไฟล์ Microsoft Words ของบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์แทนที่จะแก้ไขตัวเนื้อหาในไฟล์

ท่านสามารถปฏิเสธที่จะตอบคำถามบางคำถามตลอดการสัมภาษณ์ ถ้าหากท่านไม่สะดวกใจ งานวิจัยนี้อ่อนุญาตให้ท่านถอนตัวจากโครงการได้โดยไม่ต้องให้เหตุผลใดๆ ท่านสามารถถอนตัวได้จนถึง 6 สัปดาห์หลังการให้สัมภาษณ์ ถ้าถอนตัวภายในระยะเวลาที่กำหนดแล้วจะไม่มีผลตามมาของการออก

จากการศึกษาแล้วไฟล์ข้อมูลที่รวบรวมตลอดการสัมภาษณ์ท่านและแบบฟอร์มการยินยอมของท่านจะถูกเก็บ
หลังจากการถอนตัว ท่านไม่สามารถออกจากการศึกษานี้ได้หลังจาก 6 สัปดาห์หลังการให้สัมภาษณ์

สำหรับท่านที่เป็นศิษย์แพทย์ชาวไทย ความเสี่ยงเล็กน้อยที่อาจเกิดขึ้นจากการเข้าร่วมการวิจัยคือ
ท่านอาจถูกรายล้อมไปด้วยท่านอื่นๆระหว่างการให้สัมภาษณ์ ซึ่งอาจก่อให้เกิดความเสี่ยงเกี่ยวกับการ
รักษาความลับ เพื่อที่จะลดปัญหาที่อาจเกิดขึ้นนี้ ท่านสามารถเลือกสถานที่สำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ได้
ท่านควรหาพื้นที่ส่วนตัวที่บ้านหรือที่ทำงานของท่านสำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ โดยที่มิต่านอยู่ผู้เดียวตลอด
การสัมภาษณ์ วิธีนี้จะช่วยลดความเสี่ยงของโควิด 19 ได้เช่นกัน

แม้ว่าจะไม่มีคำตอบแทนสำหรับการเข้าร่วมในการศึกษานี้ ประโยชน์ที่เป็นไปได้ของโครงการ
จะมีมากกว่าความเสี่ยงที่อาจเกิดขึ้น ดังต่อไปนี้

1. การศึกษานี้สามารถสร้างแรงบันดาลใจให้นักวิชาการท่านอื่นได้ค้นคว้าเรื่องอื่นๆที่เกี่ยวกับอิทธิพล
ด้านความงามในบริบทของวัฒนธรรมไทย เช่น การเสริมความงามโดยไม่ต้องผ่าตัดอย่างโบท็อกซ์
และการกำจัดขนตามร่างกาย
2. มีเดียหรือสื่อไทยหลายสำนักจะสามารถเข้าใจเรื่องราวเกี่ยวกับศัลยกรรมความงามของผู้เข้าร่วม
โครงการนี้ เพื่อให้ประชาชนไทยตระหนักถึงอิทธิพลด้านความงามในไทยและผลที่ตามมาของการทำ
ศัลยกรรมตกแต่งมากขึ้น

การรักษาความลับและการไม่ระบุชื่อ

- ไฟล์ข้อมูลทั้งหมดจะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างปลอดภัยและจะไม่ถูกเก็บนอกขอบเขตสหภาพยุโรป
และเขตเศรษฐกิจยุโรป
- แบบฟอร์มการยินยอมการเข้าร่วมโครงการพร้อมลายเซ็นและนามจริงของผู้เข้าร่วมจะถูกเก็บ
อย่างน้อย 10 ปี และมีเพียงหัวหน้างานและดิฉันเท่านั้นที่สามารถเห็นเนื้อหาในฟอร์มได้

- หัวหน้างานและดิฉันเท่านั้นที่จะสามารถเข้าถึงวิดีโอและคลิปเสียงสัมภาษณ์ซึ่งอาจจะมีนามจริงของผู้เข้าร่วมอยู่ได้
- ดิฉันเท่านั้นที่จะสามารถเข้าถึงบันทึกส่วนตัวที่มีแค่คำหลัก (keywords) ตามคำตอบของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์
- วิดีโอ คลิปเสียง และบันทึกส่วนตัวจะถูกทำลายก่อนแบบฟอร์มการยินยอม (ทันทีหลังจากโครงการนี้ได้เสร็จสมบูรณ์)
- ไฟล์ข้อมูลอื่นๆ (ข้อมูลที่ถูกถอดความ แปล และวิเคราะห์) จะถูกระบุด้วยนามแฝงแทน รายละเอียดเฉพาะใดๆ ที่เกี่ยวกับตัวตนของท่าน เช่น ชื่อที่ทำงาน จะไม่ถูกแสดงในไฟล์เหล่านี้
นามแฝงของผู้เข้าร่วมคนเดียวกันนั้นจะแตกต่างกันไประหว่างไฟล์เหล่านี้เพื่อให้แน่ใจว่าข้อมูลของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์แต่ละท่านนั้นไม่สามารถระบุตัวตนได้ ข้อมูลที่ถูกถอดความ แปล และวิเคราะห์จะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างน้อย 10 ปี การเข้าถึงข้อมูลเหล่านี้จะจำกัดเฉพาะผู้อื่น (นอกจากหัวหน้างานและดิฉัน) ที่ได้รับการอนุญาตตามคำขอเท่านั้น อย่างไรก็ตาม จะไม่มีความเสี่ยงเกี่ยวกับการระบุตัวตนของผู้เข้าร่วมใดๆ เนื่องจากโครงการนี้จะไม่แสดงรายละเอียดตัวตนของผู้เข้าร่วมต่อบุคคลที่สาม

ผลลัพธ์ของการศึกษา

ผลการวิจัยจะถูกนำไปใช้ไม่เพียงแต่ในวิทยานิพนธ์ปริญญาเอกของดิฉันเท่านั้น แต่ยังรวมถึงสิ่งพิมพ์อื่นๆ ด้วย อาทิเช่น บทความวารสาร หนังสือ ตลอดจนการนำเสนอต่างๆ (presentations) หัวหน้างานและดิฉันเท่านั้นที่จะใช้ผลการวิจัยนี้ได้ นามแฝงของผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการจะถูกใช้ในงานเหล่านี้

ข้อมูลติดต่อ

หากท่านมีคำถามใดๆ เกี่ยวกับการเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้ ท่านสามารถติดต่อดิฉันมาได้ทางอีเมล [redacted email redacted]. ท่านสามารถติดต่อหัวหน้างานได้เช่นกัน [ดร. เคลลี ฮอล (email redacted) และ ดร. จูลี ไวท์แมน (email redacted)]

หมายเหตุ

ดิฉันยังคงหาผู้เข้าร่วมเพิ่มเติม ดังนั้นกรุณาติดต่อดิฉันหากท่านรู้จักศัลยแพทย์ชาวไทย

ที่ตรงตามเกณฑ์ข้างต้น

ขอแสดงความนับถืออย่างยิ่ง

ชาลิสา

นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก มหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮม

Appendix 2: Consent Forms

English Version – To the CS Recipients

Consent form for Cosmetic Surgery Recipients

1. I understand that data about me are being collected as part of the project entitled *The Motivations of Young Thai Women for Undergoing Cosmetic Surgery* by Chalisa Chintrakarn, a PhD student in the Department of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology at the University of Birmingham, UK.
2. I have read the participant information sheet and have been allowed to ask questions to the researcher and the supervisors in order to clarify any doubts.
3. I am aware of not only the potential emotional impact of the interview on me but also my rights to withdraw from the study up until 6 weeks after my interview if feeling uncomfortable – without giving any reasons. There would be no consequences of this withdrawal. If withdrawn within the timeframe, data gathered throughout the interview with me and my signed consent form would be removed after that. I cannot leave this study beyond 6 weeks after the interview. Furthermore, I can refuse to answer certain questions throughout the interview.
4. I confirm that I will find a suitable space for my interview via Zoom, with only me being present, as having people around might raise a risk regarding confidentiality.
5. I am aware that the interview will be video-recorded or audio-recorded via Zoom, and I can request to make some amendments to my transcript within 3 weeks of receiving the transcript.
6. I understand that all data files of this project will be securely retained in the University of Birmingham databases for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. Only the researcher can access the physical personal note that consists of only keywords based on interviewees' responses. Signed consent forms and recorded interview videos and audios can be accessed only by the researcher and her supervisors. Access to transcribed, translated, and analysed data will be limited to others who are granted upon request. Nonetheless, any specific details about my identities and real name will not be revealed to any third party. The signed consent forms and transcribed, translated, and analysed data files will be kept for at least 10 years to allow for verification. By participating in this project, I am consenting to the University storing my information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.

7. I understand that research findings of this study and written extracts from the interview will be used in not only the PhD thesis but also potential future publications and presentations. Only the supervisors and the researcher can use these research findings. Instead of participants' real names, pseudonyms will be used in these works.

Based upon the above, I agree to take part in this project.

Name, signature and date

Name of participant:

Date:

Signature:

Name of researcher:

Date:

Signature:

Thai Version – To the CS Recipients

แบบฟอร์มการยินยอมการเข้าร่วมโครงการ (สำหรับผู้ผ่านการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งมาแล้ว)

1. ดิฉันเข้าใจว่าข้อมูลทั้งหมดของการสัมภาษณ์นี้จะถูกรวบรวมเพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของโครงการที่มีชื่อว่า เหตุจูงใจของหญิงสาวไทยในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง โดย ชาลิสา นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก แผนกนโยบายสังคม สังคมศาสตร์ และอาชีววิทยา มหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮม สหราชอาณาจักร
2. ดิฉันได้อ่านเอกสารชี้แจงผู้ร่วมโครงการวิจัยแล้วและได้รับอนุญาตให้ถามคำถามผู้วิจัยและหัวหน้างานเพื่อที่จะคลายข้อสงสัยใดๆ
3. ดิฉันรู้ไม่เพียงแต่ผลกระทบทางอารมณ์ที่อาจเป็นไปได้ของการสัมภาษณ์นี้ต่อดิฉันเท่านั้น แต่ดิฉันก็รู้ถึงสิทธิของดิฉันที่จะถอนตัวจากการศึกษานี้จนถึง 6 สัปดาห์หลังการให้สัมภาษณ์หากไม่สะดวกใจ โดยไม่ต้องให้เหตุผลใดๆ แล้วจะไม่มีผลที่ตามมาของการออกจากการศึกษานี้ ถ้าถอนตัวภายในระยะเวลาที่กำหนดแล้วไฟล์ข้อมูลที่รวบรวมตลอดการสัมภาษณ์กับดิฉันและแบบฟอร์มการยินยอมของดิฉันจะถูกลบหลังจากนั้น ดิฉันไม่สามารถออกจากการศึกษานี้ได้หลังจาก 6 สัปดาห์หลังการให้สัมภาษณ์ นอกจากนี้ ดิฉันสามารถปฏิเสธที่จะตอบคำถามบางคำถามตลอดการสัมภาษณ์
4. ดิฉันยืนยันว่าจะหาพื้นที่ที่เหมาะสมสำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ทางซูม (Zoom) โดยที่มีดิฉันอยู่ผู้เดียวตลอดการสัมภาษณ์ เพราะท่านอื่นๆที่อยู่รัยล้อมอาจก่อให้เกิดความเสี่ยงเกี่ยวกับการรักษาความลับของข้อมูล
5. ดิฉันรู้ว่าการสัมภาษณ์นี้จะถูกอัดวิดีโอหรืออัดเสียง และดิฉันสามารถขอแก้ไขบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์ได้ภายใน 3 สัปดาห์หลังจากที่ได้รับบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์แล้ว
6. ดิฉันเข้าใจว่าไฟล์ข้อมูลทั้งหมดของการสัมภาษณ์จะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างปลอดภัยในฐานะข้อมูลของมหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮมเพื่อการวิจัย ทางสถิติและการตรวจสอบ ผู้วิจัยท่านนั้นจะสามารถเข้าถึงบันทึกส่วนตัวที่มีแค่คำหลัก (keywords) ตามคำตอบของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์ หัวหน้างานและผู้วิจัยท่านนั้นจะสามารถเห็นแบบฟอร์มการยินยอมการเข้าร่วมโครงการพร้อมลายเซ็นวิดีโอและคลิปเสียงสัมภาษณ์ที่บันทึกไว้ ส่วนการเข้าถึงข้อมูลที่ถูกถอดความ แปล และวิเคราะห์นั้นจะจำกัดเฉพาะผู้อื่น (นอกจากหัวหน้างานและผู้วิจัย) ที่ได้รับการอนุญาตตามคำขอเท่านั้น อย่างไรก็ตาม รายละเอียดเฉพาะใดๆเกี่ยวกับตัวตนและนามจริงของดิฉันจะไม่ถูกเปิดเผยต่อบุคคลที่สาม แบบฟอร์มการยินยอมพร้อมลายเซ็นและข้อมูลที่ถูกถอดความ แปล และวิเคราะห์นั้นจะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างน้อย 10 ปีเพื่อการตรวจสอบข้อมูล ในการเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้ ดิฉันยินยอมให้

มหาวิทยาลัยจัดเก็บข้อมูลของดินตามวัตถุประสงค์ที่ระบุไว้ข้างต้น ข้อมูลจะได้รับการประมวลผลโดยมหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮมตามบทบัญญัติของพระราชบัญญัติคุ้มครองข้อมูลปี 2018

7. ดินเข้าใจว่าผลการวิจัยและเอกสารจากการสัมภาษณ์จะถูกนำไปใช้ไม่เพียงแต่ในวิทยานิพนธ์ปริญญาเอกเท่านั้น แต่ยังรวมไปถึงสิ่งพิมพ์ใดๆในอนาคตด้วย ตลอดจนการนำเสนอต่างๆ หัวหน้างานและผู้วิจัยเท่านั้นที่จะใช้ผลการวิจัยนี้ได้นามแฝงของผู้เข้าร่วมจะถูกใช้ในงานเหล่านี้แทนนามจริง

จากข้อมูลข้างต้น ดินตกลงที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้

ชื่อ, ลายเซ็น และวันที่

ชื่อของผู้เข้าร่วม:

วันที่:

ลายเซ็น:

ชื่อของผู้วิจัย:

วันที่:

ลายเซ็น:

English Version – To the Cosmetic Surgeons

Consent form for Cosmetic Surgeons

1. I understand that data about me are being collected as part of the project entitled *The Motivations of Young Thai Women for Undergoing Cosmetic Surgery* by Chalisa Chintrakarn, a PhD student in the Department of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology at the University of Birmingham, UK.
2. I have read the participant information sheet and have been allowed to ask questions to the researcher and the supervisors in order to clarify any doubts.
3. I am aware of my rights to withdraw from the study up until 6 weeks after my interview if feeling uncomfortable – without giving any reasons. There would be no consequences of this withdrawal. If withdrawn within the timeframe, data gathered throughout the interview with me and my signed consent form would be removed after that. I cannot leave this study beyond 6 weeks after the interview. Furthermore, I can refuse to answer certain questions throughout the interview.
4. I confirm that I will find a suitable space for my interview via Zoom, with only me being present, as having people around might raise a risk regarding confidentiality.
5. I am aware that the interview will be video-recorded or audio-recorded via Zoom, and I can request to make some amendments to my transcript within 3 weeks of receiving the transcript.
6. I understand that all data files of this project will be securely retained in the University of Birmingham databases for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. Only the researcher can access the physical personal note that consists of only keywords based on interviewees' responses. Signed consent forms and recorded interview videos and audios can be accessed only by the researcher and her supervisors. Access to transcribed, translated, and analysed data will be limited to others who are granted upon request. Nonetheless, any specific details about my identities and real name will not be revealed to any third party. The signed consent forms and transcribed, translated, and analysed data files will be kept for at least 10 years to allow for verification. By participating in this project, I am consenting to the University storing my information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.

7. I understand that research findings of this study and written extracts from the interview will be used in not only the PhD thesis but also potential future publications and presentations. Only the supervisors and the researcher can use these research findings. Instead of participants' real names, pseudonyms will be used in these works.

Based upon the above, I agree to take part in this project.

Name, signature and date

Name of participant:

Date:

Signature:

Name of researcher:

Date:

Signature:

Thai Version – To the Cosmetic Surgeons

แบบฟอร์มการยินยอมการเข้าร่วมโครงการ (สำหรับศัลยแพทย์ชาวไทย)

1. ผม/ดิฉันเข้าใจว่าข้อมูลทั้งหมดของการสัมภาษณ์นี้จะถูกรวบรวมเพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของโครงการที่มีชื่อว่า *เหตุจูงใจของหญิงสาวไทยในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง* โดย ชาลิสา นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก แผนกนโยบายสังคม สังคมศาสตร์ และอาชีววิทยา มหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮม สหราชอาณาจักร
2. ผม/ดิฉันได้อ่านเอกสารชี้แจงผู้ร่วมโครงการวิจัยแล้วและได้รับอนุญาตให้ถามคำถามผู้วิจัยและหัวหน้างานเพื่อที่จะคลายข้อสงสัยใดๆ
3. ผม/ดิฉันรู้สิทธิของตนเองที่จะถอนตัวจากการศึกษานี้ จนถึง 6 สัปดาห์หลังการให้สัมภาษณ์หากไม่สะดวกใจ โดยไม่ต้องให้เหตุผลใดๆ แล้วจะไม่มีผลที่ตามมาของการออกจากการศึกษานี้ ถ้าถอนตัวภายในระยะเวลาที่กำหนดแล้ว ไฟล์ข้อมูลทั้งหมดตลอดการสัมภาษณ์กับผม/ดิฉันและแบบฟอร์มการยินยอมของผม/ดิฉันจะถูกลบหลังจากนั้น ผม/ดิฉันไม่สามารถออกจากการศึกษานี้ได้หลังจาก 6 สัปดาห์หลังการให้สัมภาษณ์ นอกจากนี้ ผม/ดิฉันสามารถปฏิเสธที่จะตอบคำถามบางคำถามตลอดการสัมภาษณ์
4. ผม/ดิฉันยืนยันว่าจะหาพื้นที่ที่เหมาะสมสำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ทางซูม (Zoom) โดยที่ผม/ดิฉันอยู่ผู้เดียวตลอดการสัมภาษณ์ เพราะท่านอื่นๆ ที่อยู่รายล้อมอาจก่อให้เกิดความเสี่ยงเกี่ยวกับการรักษาความลับของข้อมูล
5. ผม/ดิฉันรู้ว่าการสัมภาษณ์นี้จะถูกอัดวิดีโอหรืออัดเสียง และผม/ดิฉันสามารถขอแก้ไขบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์ได้ภายใน 3 สัปดาห์หลังจากที่ได้รับบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์แล้ว
6. ผม/ดิฉันเข้าใจว่าไฟล์ข้อมูลทั้งหมดของการสัมภาษณ์จะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างปลอดภัยในฐานะข้อมูลของมหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮมเพื่อการวิจัย ทางสถิติและการตรวจสอบ ผู้วิจัยเท่านั้นที่จะสามารถเข้าถึงบันทึกส่วนตัวที่มีคำหลัก (keywords) ตามคำตอบของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์ หัวหน้างานและผู้วิจัยเท่านั้นที่จะสามารถเห็นแบบฟอร์มการยินยอมการเข้าร่วมโครงการ พร้อมลายเซ็น วิดีโอและคลิปเสียงสัมภาษณ์ที่บันทึกไว้ ส่วนการเข้าถึงข้อมูลที่ถูกถอดความ แปลและวิเคราะห์นั้นจะจำกัดเฉพาะผู้อื่น (นอกจากหัวหน้างานและผู้วิจัย) ที่ได้รับการอนุญาตตามคำขอเท่านั้น อย่างไรก็ตาม รายละเอียดเฉพาะใดๆ เกี่ยวกับตัวตนและนามจริงของผม/ดิฉันจะไม่ถูกเปิดเผยต่อบุคคลที่สาม แบบฟอร์มการยินยอมพร้อมลายเซ็นและ

ข้อมูลที่ถูกถอดความ แปล และวิเคราะห์นั้นจะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างน้อย 10 ปีเพื่อการตรวจสอบข้อมูล ในการเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้
 ผม/ดิฉันยินยอมให้มหาวิทยาลัยจัดเก็บข้อมูลของผม/ดิฉันตามวัตถุประสงค์ที่ระบุไว้ข้างต้น ข้อมูลจะได้รับการประมวลผล
 โดยมหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮมตามบทบัญญัติของพระราชบัญญัติคุ้มครองข้อมูลปี 2018

7. ผม/ดิฉันเข้าใจว่าผลการวิจัยและเอกสารจากการสัมภาษณ์จะถูกนำไปใช้ไม่เพียงแต่ในวิทยานิพนธ์ปริญญาเอกเท่านั้น
 แต่ยังรวมไปถึงสิ่งพิมพ์ใดๆ ตลอดจนการนำเสนอในการประชุมต่างๆ หัวหน้างานและผู้วิจัยเท่านั้นที่จะใช้ผลการวิจัยนี้ได้
 นามแฝงของผู้เข้าร่วมจะถูกใช้ในงานเหล่านี้แทนนามจริง

จากข้อมูลข้างต้น ผม/ดิฉันตกลงที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้

ชื่อ, ลายเซ็น และวันที่

ชื่อของผู้เข้าร่วม:

วันที่:

ลายเซ็น:

ชื่อของผู้วิจัย:

วันที่:

ลายเซ็น:

Appendix 3: Participant Recruitment Posters

The CS Recipients Poster Version³⁴ – created by me



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

กำลังหาผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัย เหตุจูงใจของหญิงสาวไทย ในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง

- ดิฉันเป็นนักศึกษาปริญญาเอก มหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮม สหราชอาณาจักร
- ดิฉันกำลังหาผู้หญิงไทยอายุ 21-39 ปีที่อาศัยอยู่ในไทย เพื่อที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยปริญญาเอกเกี่ยวกับการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของหญิงสาวไทย ผู้หญิงเหล่านี้จะต้องเคยทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งที่ประเทศใดก็ได้เพื่อความสวยงาม ไม่ใช่เพื่อการแก้ไขจากอุบัติเหตุ
- โครงการนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อที่จะ 1) ให้ความรู้เกี่ยวกับความเกี่ยวข้องกันระหว่างการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งและความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงและผู้ชายไทย และ 2) สืบหามาตรฐานความงามในบริบทของการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของหญิงสาวไทย
- การเข้าร่วมงานวิจัยนี้จะดำเนินทางออนไลน์ทั้งหมด จะมีการสัมภาษณ์ออนไลน์หนึ่งครั้งซึ่งจะใช้เวลาประมาณ 1 ชั่วโมง การสัมภาษณ์จะเป็นภาษาไทยทางซูม (Zoom) และจะถูกอัดวิดีโอหรืออัดเสียง เวลาของการสัมภาษณ์จะถูกกำหนดโดยนักวิจัยและผู้เข้าร่วม
- การศึกษานี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อนักวิชาการท่านอื่น และมีเดียหรือสื่อไทย
- ถ้าสนใจที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้ กรุณาติดต่อ (email redacted)

Call for Participants: *The Motivations of Young Thai Women for Undergoing Cosmetic Surgery*

- I am a PhD student at the University of Birmingham in United Kingdom.
- I am currently recruiting Thailand-based Thai women aged 21-39 to take part in the PhD project on cosmetic surgery of young Thai women. They must have undergone cosmetic surgery in any country for aesthetic purposes, rather than for reconstructive purposes.
- This project aims 1) to enlighten the connections between cosmetic surgery and Thai gender relations; and 2) to explore preferred beauty standards in the cosmetic surgery context of young Thai women.
- Participation is entirely online. It involves one online interview that lasts approximately 1 hour. The interview is held in Thai language via Zoom and is video-recorded or audio-recorded. The interview time is decided by both the researcher and the participant.
- This study will be beneficial for other academics and Thai media.
- If interested in taking part in this project, please contact:
(email redacted)



³⁴ The décor image was not created by me. Yet, under the Pixabay Content License, it was free for me to use without attribution.

The Cosmetic Surgeons Poster Version³⁵ – created by me



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

กำลังหาผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัย เหตุจูงใจของหญิงสาวไทย ในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง

- ดิฉันเป็นนักศึกษาปริญญาเอก มหาวิทยาลัยเบอร์มิงแฮม สหราชอาณาจักร
- ดิฉันกำลังหาศัลยแพทย์ชาวไทยที่อาศัยอยู่ในไทย โดยไม่คำนึงถึงอายุและเพศ เพื่อที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยปริญญาเอกเกี่ยวกับการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของหญิงสาวไทย ศัลยแพทย์เหล่านี้จะต้องมีอาชีพนี้ในไทยมาแล้วตั้งแต่ 2 ปีขึ้นไป
- โครงการนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อที่จะ 1) ให้ความรู้เกี่ยวกับความเกี่ยวข้องกันระหว่างการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งและความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงและผู้ชายไทย และ 2) สำรวจมาตรฐานความงามในบริบทของการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของหญิงสาวไทย
- การเข้าร่วมงานวิจัยนี้จะดำเนินการทางออนไลน์ทั้งหมด จะมีการสัมภาษณ์ออนไลน์หนึ่งครั้งซึ่งจะใช้เวลาประมาณ 1 ชั่วโมง การสัมภาษณ์จะเป็นภาษาไทยทางซูม (Zoom) และจะถูกอัดวิดีโอหรืออัดเสียง เวลาของการสัมภาษณ์จะถูกกำหนดโดยนักวิจัยและผู้เข้าร่วม
- การศึกษานี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อนักวิชาการท่านอื่น และมีเดียหรือสื่อไทย
- ถ้าสนใจที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้ กรุณาติดต่อ (email redacted)

Call for Participants: *The Motivations of Young Thai Women for Undergoing Cosmetic Surgery*

- I am a PhD student at the University of Birmingham in United Kingdom.
- I am currently recruiting Thailand-based Thai cosmetic surgeons regardless of age and gender to take part in the PhD project on cosmetic surgery of young Thai women. They must have had this job in the country for 2 years or more.
- This project aims 1) to enlighten the connections between cosmetic surgery and Thai gender relations; and 2) to explore preferred beauty standards in the cosmetic surgery context of young Thai women.
- Participation is entirely online. It involves one online interview that lasts approximately 1 hour. The interview is held in Thai language via Zoom and is video-recorded or audio-recorded. The interview time is decided by both the researcher and the participant.
- This study will be beneficial for other academics and Thai media.
- If interested in taking part in this project, please contact:
(email redacted)



³⁵ The décor images were not created by me. Yet, under the Pixabay Content License, they were free for me to use without attribution.

Appendix 4: Interview Topic Guides and Schedules

Interview Topic Guide and Schedule for Cosmetic Surgery Recipients

คู่มือหัวข้อสัมภาษณ์และกำหนดการสำหรับผู้ผ่านการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งมาแล้ว

*Note: many of these questions may be followed by impromptu questions, as this project uses a semi-structured interview approach.

[Personalising pre-interview introduction]

The working title of my PhD research is *The Motivations of Young Thai Women for Undergoing Cosmetic Surgery*.

หัวข้อ ณ ตอนนี้งานวิจัยนี้คือ เหตุจูงใจของหญิงสาวไทยในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง

[Briefly confirming research purposes]

To enlighten the connections between cosmetic surgery and Thai gender relations.

To explore preferred beauty standards in the Thai cosmetic surgery context.

จุดประสงค์ของงานวิจัยคือ 1) ให้ความรู้เกี่ยวกับความเกี่ยวข้องกันระหว่างการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งและความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเพศของไทย และ 2) สรรวจมาตรฐานความงามในบริบทของการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งในไทย

Please feel free to express your own opinions, as this research is independent from any organisations or social media groups. I will not reveal your real name to the third party anyway.

คุณแสดงความคิดเห็นของคุณตรงๆได้เลยนะคะ เพราะว่างานวิจัยนี้ไม่เกี่ยวข้องกับองค์กรหรือกลุ่ม social media ใดๆ ยังไงก็ไม่เปิดเผยชื่อต่อบุคคลที่สามอยู่แล้ว

As noted in the information sheet, this interview will last approximately 1 hour. Do you think you have sufficient time now?

ตามที่ระบุไว้ในเอกสารชี้แจงผู้ร่วมโครงการวิจัย การสัมภาษณ์นี้จะใช้เวลาประมาณ 1 ชม. คุณคิดว่าคุณมีเวลาเพียงพอตอนนี้ไหมคะ

Before the interview, could you please confirm that you have had cosmetic surgery for beauty purposes, not for reconstructive/medical purposes?

ก่อนการสัมภาษณ์ คุณยืนยันได้ไหมคะว่าเคยทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งเพื่อความสวยงาม ไม่ใช่เพื่อการแก้ไขจากอุบัติเหตุ

Would it be okay if I recorded the interview?

จะโอเคไหมคะถ้าดิฉันจะอัดการสัมภาษณ์

Would you prefer me to audio-record or video-record the interview?

คุณอยากให้ดิฉันอัดเสียงหรืออัดวิดีโอการสัมภาษณ์คะ

Can I start the recording now?

ดิฉันเริ่มอัดตอนนี้ได้ไหมคะ

Introductory interview questions

I would like to ask you some background information to start with.

เดี๋ยวจะขอเริ่มโดยการถามข้อมูลทั่วไปนะคะ

1. How old are you?

คุณอายุเท่าไรคะ

2. Please tell me where you were raised and which province you currently live.

กรุณابอกได้ไหมคะว่าโตที่ไหนและตอนนี้อยู่จังหวัดไหนคะ

3. How would you describe your ethnicity?

คุณบรรยายชาติพันธุ์ (ethnicity) ของคุณอย่างไรคะ

4. How about your education history and your professional life?

แล้วถ้าเป็นประวัติการศึกษาและชีวิตการทำงานของคุณอะคะ

5. Please tell me about your average monthly income. [post in the Zoom chat]

กรุณาบอกรายได้ต่อเดือนโดยประมาณของคุณหน่อยได้ไหมคะ [โพสต์ทางแชท]

6. How about your relationship status?

แล้วถ้าเป็นสถานะความสัมพันธ์ของคุณอะคะ

7. Which sex/gender are you attracted to in terms of love?

เพศไหนที่คุณชอบคะ ถ้าเป็นเรื่องความรัก

8. What type(s) of cosmetic surgery have you gone through? And when and where did you have it?

คุณได้ผ่านการศัลยกรรมตกแต่งแบบไหนมาบ้างคะ แล้วทำมาเมื่อไหร่และที่ไหนอะคะ

9. What triggered you to have cosmetic surgery?

อะไรเป็นจุดที่ทำให้คุณตัดสินใจทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งคะ

10. How did you select the place to undergo the procedure(s)?

คุณเลือกสถานที่ที่ไปทำยังไงหรือคะ

11. How did you consult with the doctor(s)?

คุณปรึกษากับคุณหมออย่างไรหรือคะ

12. How was the recovery period(s)?

ระยะพักฟื้นเป็นอย่างไรบ้างคะ

13. How did you pay for your cosmetic surgery?

คุณจ่ายเงินสำหรับการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งของคุณอย่างไรคะ

14. Could you please inform me your main reason(s) for undergoing cosmetic surgery?

คุณสามารถบอกเหตุผลหลักของคุณในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งได้ไหมคะ

Topic 1: Key motives and gender relations

15. To what extent are you satisfied with your post-op looks? Why?

คุณพึงพอใจกับหน้าตาหรือรูปลักษณ์ของคุณหลังการทำศัลยกรรมมากน้อยแค่ไหนคะ เพราะอะไรคะ

16. Do you feel the surgery has impacted on any aspects of your life, such as work, friendship, love, family, and your own mental health? If so, how?/If not, why?

คุณรู้สึกว่าการทำศัลยกรรมมีผลกระทบต่อแง่มุมใดๆในชีวิตของคุณไหมคะ อย่างเช่น งาน มิตรภาพ ความรัก ครอบครัว และสุขภาพจิตของคุณเอง ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น อย่างไรคะ/ถ้าไม่เป็นเช่นนั้น เพราะอะไรคะ

17. Since your cosmetic surgery, have you observed any differences in the ways your friends in each gender have treated you? Please explain.

ตั้งแต่การทำศัลยกรรมของคุณ คุณสังเกตเห็นความแตกต่างในการที่เพื่อนแต่ละเพศปฏิบัติตัวกับคุณไหมคะ กรุณาอธิบายหน่อยค่ะ

18. Since your cosmetic surgery, have you observed any differences in the ways your colleagues in each gender have treated you? Please explain.

ตั้งแต่การทําศัลยกรรมของคุณ คุณสังเกตเห็นความแตกต่างระหว่างเพื่อนร่วมงานแต่ละเพศในการปฏิบัติตัวกับคุณไหมคะ กรุณาอธิบายหน่อยค่ะ

19. Did social media and mass media motivate you to surgically enhance your looks? If so, how? /If not, why?

โซเชียลมีเดียและสื่อมวลชน (mass media) กระตุ้นให้คุณทําศัลยกรรมไหมคะ ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น อย่างไรคะ/ ถ้าไม่เป็นเช่นนั้น เพราะอะไรคะ

20. Could you please identify the source of the greatest motivation for you to undergo cosmetic surgery; for example, the media, other specific people, yourself, or anything else?

คุณสามารถระบุแหล่งที่มาของแรงจูงใจที่มากที่สุดสำหรับคุณในการทําศัลยกรรมไหมคะ ยกตัวอย่างเช่น มีเดีย คนอื่น ตัวคุณเอง หรือสิ่งอื่นใดคะ

21. Which period of your life did you get motivated to have cosmetic surgery the most? Why?

ช่วงไหนในชีวิตของคุณที่ทำให้คุณอยากทําศัลยกรรมมากที่สุดอะคะ เพราะอะไรคะ

22. In your opinion, in Thailand, on which gender does aesthetics have the greatest impact? Why?

ในความคิดของคุณ ความงามมีอิทธิพลต่อเพศไหนมากที่สุดในไทยหรือคะ เพราะอะไรคะ

Topic 2: Specific beauty standards

23. In your opinion, what are women's ideal body images in Thailand?

ในความคิดของคุณ อะไรคือพิมพ์นิยมของผู้หญิงในไทยคะ

24. Which beauty standards do you feel are dominant in Thailand? And why?

มาตรฐานความงามไหนที่คุณรู้สึกว่ามีอิทธิพลในไทยคะ แล้วเพราะอะไรคะ

25. Is there anyone in the media who you have aspired to look like before and after cosmetic surgery? If so, who specifically, and why?/If not, why?

มีคนในมีเดียคนไหนที่คุณอยากหน้าตาเหมือนไหมคะ ก่อนและหลังศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น ใครเป็นพิเศษคะ เพราะอะไรคะ/ถ้าไม่เป็นเช่นนั้น เพราะอะไรคะ

26. What aesthetic styles did you personally favour with regards to your cosmetic surgery? Why?

ส่วนตัวคุณเองชอบความงามแบบไหนคะ ถ้าพูดถึงการทําศัลยกรรมของคุณ เพราะอะไรคะ

Topic 3: Thai society

27. Do you believe Thai society is materialistic? Why?

คุณเชื่อว่าสังคมไทยวัตถุนิยม (materialistic) ไหมคะ เพราะอะไรคะ

28. Do you think cosmetic surgery has been popular in Thailand? Why/why not?

คุณคิดว่าการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งเป็นที่นิยมในไทยไหมคะ เพราะอะไรคะ

29. How about comparing to other countries?

ถ้าเทียบกับประเทศอื่นละคะ

30. Why did you choose to have cosmetic surgery in Thailand/any other country?

ทำไมคุณถึงเลือกทำที่ไทยหรือประเทศอื่นละคะ

31. Do you think there is gender inequality in Thailand? And has this changed in recent years?

คุณคิดว่าในไทยนั้นมีความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศไหมคะ แล้วมันได้เปลี่ยนไปไหมคะในปีที่ผ่านมาไม่นาน

32. How do you think of gender inequality in Thailand down the line?

แล้วคิดอย่างไรกับความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศในไทยในอนาคตอะคะ

33. What are your thoughts about feminism? Is it popular in Thailand? Why?

คุณคิดอย่างไรกับสตรีนิยมหรือเฟมินิสต์คะ มันเป็นที่นิยมในไทยไหมคะ เพราะอะไรคะ

Concluding interview questions

I would like to turn now to some concluding questions.

เดี๋ยวจะขอถามคำถามสรุปนะคะ

34. Do you personally think the surgery was worth the investment? Why?

โดยส่วนตัวแล้ว คุณคิดว่าการทำศัลยกรรมมันคุ้มค่าแก่การลงทุนไหมคะ เพราะอะไรคะ

35. If you had been able to go back in time, would you still have undergone cosmetic surgery?

ถ้าคุณย้อนเวลากลับไปได้ คุณยังจะทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งไหมคะ

36. What sex/gender were the doctor(s)?

คุณหมอเป็นเพศอะไรหรอคะ

37. What kind(s) of beauty practices, such as make-up and Botox, do you engage with in day-to-day lives?

ในชีวิตประจำวัน คุณได้เสริมความงาม เช่นแต่งหน้าและโบท็อกซ์ อย่างไรบ้างคะ

38. Since the start of Covid-19, have you seen any changes in how you feel about beauty? If so/If not, why?

ตั้งแต่เริ่มมีโควิด 19 คุณเห็นการเปลี่ยนแปลงในความรู้สึกของคุณเกี่ยวกับความงามไหมคะ
ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น/ถ้าไม่เป็นเช่นนั้น เพราะอะไรคะ

39. How do you see yourself in the next 5 years?

คุณมองตัวเองใน 5 ปีข้างหน้ายังไงคะ

40. Is there anything that you would like to add?

คุณมีอะไรจะอยากจะเสริมไหมคะ

[Asking them to reconfirm their willingness to take part in this project]

[Reconfirming them their rights to request to amend their own transcripts within 3 weeks of receiving the transcripts. They cannot share or show the transcripts to anybody else.]

[Reconfirming them their rights to withdraw from this study if they feel uncomfortable up until 6 weeks after their interviews]

[Recruitment request (if they know a young Thai cosmetic surgery recipient who matches the participant criteria of this study)]

[Expressing gratitude to them for the participation]

Interview Topic Guide and Schedule for Thai Cosmetic Surgeons

คู่มือหัวข้อสัมภาษณ์และกำหนดการสำหรับศัลยแพทย์ชาวไทย

*Note: many of these questions may be followed by impromptu questions, as this project uses a semi-structured interview approach.

[Personalising pre-interview introduction]

The working title of my PhD research is *The Motivations of Young Thai Women for Undergoing Cosmetic Surgery*.

หัวข้อ ณ ตอนนี้งานวิจัยนี้คือ เหตุจูงใจของหญิงสาวไทยในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง

[Briefly confirming research purposes]

To enlighten the connections between cosmetic surgery and Thai gender relations, and to explore preferred beauty standards in the Thai cosmetic surgery context.

จุดประสงค์ของงานวิจัยคือ 1) ให้ความรู้เกี่ยวกับความเกี่ยวข้องกันระหว่างการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งและความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเพศของไทย และ 2) สรรวจมาตรฐานความงามในบริบทของการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่ง

All of the questions are concerned with those who had cosmetic surgery for aesthetic purposes (not for reconstructive/medical purposes)

คำถามทั้งหมดจะเกี่ยวกับคนที่เคยทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งเพื่อความงามนะคะ (ไม่ใช่คนที่เคยทำเพื่อการแก้ไขจากอุบัติเหตุ)

Please feel free to express your own opinions, as this research is independent from any organisations or social media groups. I will not reveal your real name to the third party anyway.

คุณแสดงความคิดเห็นของคุณตรงๆได้เลยนะคะ เพราะว่างานวิจัยนี้ไม่เกี่ยวข้องกับองค์กรหรือกลุ่ม social media ใดๆ ยังไงก็ไม่เปิดเผยชื่อต่อบุคคลที่สามอยู่แล้ว

As noted in the information sheet and the consent form, this interview will last approximately 1 hour. Do you think you have sufficient time now?

ตามที่ระบุไว้ในเอกสารชี้แจงผู้ร่วมโครงการวิจัยและแบบฟอร์มการยินยอมการเข้าร่วม การสัมภาษณ์นี้จะใช้เวลาประมาณ 1 ชม. คุณคิดว่าคุณมีเวลาเพียงพอตอนนี้ไหมคะ

Would it be okay if I recorded the interview?

จะโอเคไหมคะถ้าดิฉันจะอัดการสัมภาษณ์

Would you prefer me to audio-record or video-record the interview?

คุณอยากให้ดิฉันอัดเสียงหรืออัดวิดีโอการสัมภาษณ์นี้คะ

Can I start the recording now?

ดิฉันเริ่มอัดตอนนี้ได้ไหมคะ

Introductory interview questions

1. Please tell me briefly about your professional background as a cosmetic surgeon.

กรุณาเล่าคร่าวๆ background การทำงานของคุณในการเป็นศัลยแพทย์ได้ไหมคะ

2. Which gender makes up the largest proportion of your patients? Why do you think this is?

คนไข้ของคุณส่วนใหญ่เป็นเพศอะไรหอะคะ คุณคิดว่ามันเป็นเพราะอะไรคะ

3. Which age ranges are most of your patients in?

คนไข้ของคุณส่วนใหญ่อยู่ช่วงอายุไหนคะ

4. Could you please detail the general process patients experience when consulting about and undertaking cosmetic surgery?

กรุณายกยละเอียดขั้นตอนโดยทั่วไปที่คนไข้เจอเมื่อปรึกษาเกี่ยวกับศัลยกรรมและทำศัลยกรรมจริงได้ไหมคะ

5. Does your patients' reasoning for wanting to undergo cosmetic surgery affect your decision to accept them as patients? If so, how?

การให้เหตุผลของคนไข้เกี่ยวกับความต้องการทำศัลยกรรมนั้น มันมีผลกระทบต่อการตัดสินใจของคุณที่จะรับพวกเขา มาเป็นคนไข้ไหมคะ ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น มันมีผลกระทบอย่างไรคะ

Questions 6-18: FOCUSING ON Thailand-based Thai women aged 21-39 who had cosmetic surgery.

6. Do most of your patients aged 21-39 reside in Bangkok or elsewhere in Thailand? And how about their hometowns?

คนไข้ที่อายุ 21-39 ปีของคุณส่วนใหญ่อาศัยอยู่ในกรุงเทพหรือที่อื่นในไทยคะ แล้วถ้าเป็นจังหวัดที่เกิดและโตของคนไข้เหล่านี้จะคะ

7. Which social classes are most of your patients in?

คนไข้ของคุณส่วนใหญ่อยู่ในชนชั้นทางสังคมหรือ social class ไหนคะ

8. Which jobs do most of your patients have?

คนไข้ของคุณส่วนใหญ่มีอาชีพอะไรคะ

9. How do most of your patients pay for cosmetic surgery?

คนไข้ของคุณส่วนใหญ่จ่ายเงินสำหรับการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งอย่างไรคะ

10. Compared to the pre-Covid age, have you performed more or fewer cosmetic surgery

procedures on Thai women aged 21-39 since the start of the pandemic? Why do you think this is?

ถ้าเทียบกับช่วงก่อนโควิด คุณทำศัลยกรรมให้ผู้หญิงไทยอายุ 21-39 ปี เป็นจำนวนมากขึ้นหรือน้อยลงตั้งแต่เริ่มมีโควิดมาอะคะ คุณคิดว่ามันเป็นเพราะอะไรคะ

11. Since you became a cosmetic surgeon, what type(s) of surgery have you carried out the most on Thai women who live in Thailand in this age range? Why?

ตั้งแต่คุณเริ่มเป็นแพทย์ศัลยกรรมตกแต่งมา คุณทำศัลยกรรมแบบไหน (ส่วนไหนของร่างกาย) มากที่สุดให้ผู้หญิงไทยที่อาศัยอยู่ในไทยในช่วงอายุนี้อะคะ เพราะอะไรคะ

Topic 1: Surgery recipients' key motives and various social characteristics

12. How have your patients aged 21-39 who live in Thailand justified their decisions for cosmetic surgery?

คนไข้ของคุณที่อายุ 21-39 ปีที่อาศัยอยู่ในไทยเหล่านี้ ให้เหตุผลในการทำศัลยกรรมกับคุณอย่างไรคะ

13. Does their justification vary with regards to race, ethnicity, and class? If so, how?

การให้เหตุผลของคนไข้เหล่านี้แตกต่างกันตามเชื้อชาติ (race) ชาติพันธุ์ (ethnicity) และชนชั้น (class) ไหมคะ ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น แตกต่างกันอย่างไรคะ

14. As far as you are concerned, what is the source of the greatest motivation for them to undertake cosmetic surgery; for example, the media, themselves, or anyone or anything else?

เท่าที่คุณทราบ แหล่งที่มาของแรงจูงใจที่มากที่สุดต่อคนไข้เหล่านี้ในการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งคืออะไรคะ ยกตัวอย่างเช่น มีเดีย ตัวเอง หรือใครหรือสิ่งอื่นใดคะ

15. Does their justification vary according to their relationship status? If so, how?

การให้เหตุผลของคนไข้เหล่านี้แตกต่างกันไปตามสถานะความสัมพันธ์ไหมคะ ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น แตกต่างกันอย่างไรคะ

16. Does their justification differ from that of Thai women in different age ranges? If so, how?

การให้เหตุผลของคนไข้เหล่านี้แตกต่างจากผู้หญิงไทยในช่วงอายุอื่นไหมคะ ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น แตกต่างกันอย่างไรคะ

Topic 2: Specific beauty standards

17. What aesthetic styles do most of your patients aged 21-39 who live in Thailand favour, for example white, East Asian, and Thai? And why?

คนไข้ของคุณที่อายุ 21-39 ปีที่อาศัยอยู่ในไทย ส่วนใหญ่ชอบความงามแบบไหนคะ เช่น ฝรั่ง เอเชียตะวันออก และไทย แล้วเพราะอะไรคะ

18. Which celebrities have many of them taken as a role model for cosmetic surgery? Why do you think this is?

ดาราคอนไหนที่คนไข้ที่อายุ 21-39 ปีที่อาศัยอยู่ในไทยจำนวนมาก เอามาเป็นแบบสำหรับการทำศัลยกรรมตกแต่งคะ คุณคิดว่ามันเป็นเพราะอะไรคะ

Concluding interview questions

Topic 3: Thai society

19. Could you please explain the popularity of cosmetic surgery in Thailand in relation to other countries?

กรุณาอธิบายชื่อเสียงของศัลยกรรมตกแต่งในไทยเมื่อเทียบกับประเทศอื่นๆได้ไหมคะ

20. Has cosmetic surgery in Thailand been well-known among foreigners? If so, from which countries?

การศัลยกรรมตกแต่งในไทยเป็นที่รู้จักในหมู่คนต่างประเทศไหมคะ ถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น จากประเทศอะไรบ้างคะ

21. In Thailand, what kind(s) of cosmetic surgery are the most popular in general? Why do you think this is?

ในไทย การทำศัลยกรรมแบบไหนที่เป็นที่นิยมมากที่สุดคะถ้าพูดโดยทั่วไป คุณคิดว่ามันเป็นเพราะอะไรคะ

22. In your view, which sex/gender accounts for the majority of Thai cosmetic surgeons? Why do you think this is?

ในความคิดของคุณ ศัลยแพทย์ไทยส่วนใหญ่เป็นเพศอะไรคะ คุณคิดว่ามันเป็นเพราะอะไรคะ

23. Has it been competitive to become a specialist in cosmetic surgery in Thailand?

คนแข่งกันเรียนศัลยกรรมตกแต่งในไทยไหมคะ

24. Is there anything that you would like to add?

คุณมีอะไรจะอยากจะเสริมไหมคะ

[Asking them to reconfirm their willingness to take part in this project]

[Reconfirming them their rights to request to amend their own transcripts within 3 weeks of receiving the transcripts. They cannot share or show the transcripts to anyone else]

[Reconfirming them their rights to withdraw from this study if they feel uncomfortable up until 6 weeks after their interviews]

[Expressing gratitude to them for the participation]

[Recruitment request (if they know any Thai cosmetic surgeon who matches the participant criteria of this study)]