

Department of Social Research
University of Helsinki
Finland

RE-EMBODIED:
YOUNG WOMEN, THE BODY QUEST AND AGENCY
IN THE CULTURE OF APPEARANCES

Satu Liimakka

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

To be presented, with the permission of the Faculty of Social Sciences
of the University of Helsinki, for public examination in Hall 6,
University main building, on 8 February 2013 at 12 noon.

Helsinki 2013

Publications of the Department of Social Research 2013:1
Social Psychology

© Satu Liimakka

Cover: Jere Kasanen
Photo: Satu Liimakka

Distribution and Sales:
Unigrafia Bookstore
<http://kirjakauppa.unigrafia.fi/>
books@unigrafia.fi
PL 4 (Vuorikatu 3 A) 00014 Helsingin yliopisto

ISSN-L 1798-9140
ISSN 1798-9132 (Online)
ISSN 1798-9140 (Print)
ISBN 978-952-10-7667-1 (Print)
ISBN 978-952-10-7668-8 (Online)

Unigrafia, Helsinki 2013

ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation explores young Finnish women's body experiences and possibilities for embodied agency within or despite the constraints of their given socio-cultural surroundings. By focusing on the perspective of physical appearance, the study examines young women's possibilities to transform the common experience of body dissatisfaction into a more positive body relation. Theoretically, the study draws from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body, Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and feminist appropriations of these in order to explore both the stability of habitual body experience and the possibilities to transform it.

The study focuses on the body experiences of young, white Finnish women who study in upper secondary school or university. The study is comprised of three sub-studies that explored the accounts of upper secondary school students, students of social sciences and students of women's studies. In order to explore the relationships between an individual, social groups and society as manifesting in the individual's body experience, the study analysed both collectively and individually produced accounts of body experience, focus group discussions and individually written accounts, and utilized in their analysis grounded theory-inspired coding and interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The dissertation argues that the common experiences of self-critical body surveillance and body anxiety among contemporary young women rise from the experience of a representational self, constructed by a culture of appearances. In this study, young women's body experiences were constructed within contradictory demands posed by current cultural beauty and health imperatives *and* the current cultural self imperative requiring individual, resistant agency in not surrendering to the cultural body imperatives. Consequently, the young women were on a quest for the ideal body, the ideal self and an inner experience of well-being beyond the experience of the representational self.

The young women typically utilized a strategy defined in this study as Cartesian agency, emphasizing the young woman's independence from culture, other people and her own body. Yet Cartesian agency mainly maintained a state of bodily alienation. Through new corporeal experiences, in combination with critical (feminist) reflexivity, some of the young women were able to inhabit their bodies in new and more empowering ways. The agency of the body itself in acquiring new ways of being, thus enabling the young women to *re*-embody themselves, helped to cause a rupture in their previous socialization of disembodied selves inhabiting objectified and problematic bodies.

The study contributes to the emerging social psychology of embodiment, to multidisciplinary discussions on embodiment and agency, and to critical health psychology.

Key words: agency, appearance, body, experience, habit(us), young women

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja tarkastelee nuorten suomalaisten naisten ruumiinkokemuksia ja ruumiillisen toimijuuden mahdollisuuksia sosio-kulttuurisen ympäristön muodostamisissa puitteissa. Tutkimus lähestyy ruumiillisuutta ulkonäön näkökulmasta, etsien mahdollisuuksia muuttaa kokemus tyytymättömyydestä omaan ruumiiseen positiivisemmaksi suhteeksi omaan ruumiillisuuteen. Teoreettisesti tutkimus ammentaa Merleau-Pontyn ruumiinfenomenologiasta, Bourdieun refleksiivisestä sosiologiasta ja näiden feministisistä sovelluksista. Tarkastelun kohteena ovat sekä ruumiinkokemuksen habituaalisuus (tavaksi tullut ”itsestään selvä” tapa kokea oma ruumis) että mahdollisuudet muuttaa tätä habituaalisuutta.

Tutkimus keskittyy lukiossa ja yliopistossa opiskeleviin nuoriin naisiin. Tutkimus muodostuu kolmesta osatutkimuksesta: Yksi osatutkimus tarkasteli lukiossa opiskelevien nuorten naisten, toinen sosiaalitieteiden opiskelijoiden ja kolmas nais-tutkimuksen opiskelijoiden kuvauksia ruumiinkokemuksistaan. Tarkastelun kohteena oli yksilön, sosiaalisten ryhmien ja yhteiskunnan välisen suhteen kirjautuminen yksilön ruumiinkokemukseen. Tutkimuksessa analysoitiin sekä ryhmässä että yksin tuotettuja kuvauksia ruumiinkokemuksista, tutkimusaineiston muodostuessa fokusryhmäkeskusteluista ja kirjoituksista. Näitä analysoitiin grounded theory-lähestymistavan koodausta ja tulkitsevaa fenomenologista analyysiä hyödyntäen.

Tämän tutkimuksen mukaan nuorten naisten kokemukset itsekriittisestä oman ruumiin tarkkailusta juontavat juurensa ulkonäköön keskittyvän kulttuurin tuottamasta koetusta minuudesta ulkoisena esityksenä ja kuvana. Nuorten naisten ruumiinkokemukset tässä tutkimuksessa syntyivät kahden kulttuurisen imperatiivin muodostamassa ristiaallokossa: Tämän hetkinen kulttuurinen ruumisimperatiivi edellyttää kaunista ja tervettä ruumista, mutta samanaikaisesti kulttuurinen itsenäisyyttä ja vahvaa toimijuutta korostava minuisimperatiivi edellyttää yksilön kykenevän vastustamaan kulttuurista ruumisimperatiivia. Niinpä nuoret naiset tavoittelivat sekä kulttuurista ihanneruumista, kulttuurista ihanneminuutta että sisäistä hyvinvoinnin kokemusta kulttuuristen imperatiivien ulkopuolelta.

Tässä tutkimuksessa nuoret naiset tyypillisesti tavoittelivat toimijuuden muotoa, jonka olen käsitteellistänyt kartesiolaiseksi toimijuudeksi, pyrkimyksenään tavoittaa riippumaton suhde kulttuuriin, toisiin ihmisiin ja omaan ruumiiseensa. Tämä toimijuuden muoto lähinnä ylläpiti etäistä ja vieraantunutta kokemusta omasta ruumiista. Jotkut nuoret naiset löysivät uuden ja voimaantuneemman tavan olla ruumiissaan uusien ruumiillisten kokemusten ja kriittisen (feministisen) reflektion avulla. Ruumiillinen toimijuus, pohjaten itse ruumiin toimijuuteen ja kykyyn omaksua uudenlaisia tapoja olla, mahdollisti nuorille naisille uudelleen

ruumillistumisen. Lisäksi se tuotti murtuman heidän aiempaan sosialisatioonsa ruumiittomasta minuudesta asuttamassa objektivoitua ja ongelmallista ruumista.

Avainsanat: toimijuus, ulkonäkö, ruumis, kokemus, habitus, nuoret naiset

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my two supervisors, Professor Anna-Maija Pirttilä-Backman and Professor Marja-Liisa (Maisa) Honkasalo, for their encouragement, support, and valuable comments and discussions. I truly appreciated your faith in me to follow my own path and the precious stepping stones, signposts and collective sessions of “map-making” you offered to aid the journey. I am grateful to Anna-Maija for always finding time, patience and understanding, no matter what the problem, and to Maisa for her theoretical and empirical depth and clarity and her precious guidance on scientific writing for international audience.

My uttermost gratitude goes also to the external examiners of this dissertation, Professor Pirkko Markula and Professor Suvi Ronkainen, for their in-depth contemplation of this work. Your insightful and thorough comments and suggestions made this thesis so much better in its final stage.

I also want to express my gratitude to the journal editors, anonymous referees and publishers of the journals in which the four articles included in this thesis were originally published. The referee process with each journal pushed my thinking much further.

This work was funded in its different stages by the Finnish Psychological Society (Anna S. Elonen grant), Urheiluoopistosäätiö (the Sports Institute Foundation), the Finnish Concordia Fund, the EU Marie Curie Programme, the Finnish Cultural Foundation, the University of Helsinki Funds, the Oskar Öflund Foundation, Kansan Sivistysrahasto (the Finnish Educational Fund), the Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation and the Sovako National Graduate School of Social Psychology. Thank you for having faith in this project.

I wish to thank all the young women (and the few young men) who participated in this study, thus making this work possible in the first place.

This work was carried out at the Department of Social Research within the field of social psychology. Professors Klaus Helkama, Anna-Maija Pirttilä-Backman and Karmela Liebkind have each in turn acted as the head of the discipline of social psychology. I thank them and all my colleagues for creating a friendly and supportive work environment. Special thanks go to Päivi Berg for friendship, ideas and inspiration, discussions ranging from research to the “art of living”, and for believing in this work even when I didn’t. I also thank Päivi and Susanna Hannus for the fun, inspiring and informative discussions of our Bourdieu group. I want to thank the initiators of the Finnish Network on the Study of Experience, Professor Juha Perttula, Timo Latomaa and Teemu Suorsa, for providing an encouraging platform to think about experience. Further thanks go to Teemu for his pleasant

and prompt collaboration. I also thank Professors Maria Luísa Lima and Lígia Amâncio for giving me the opportunity to reside at I.S.C.T.E. during the early stage of this project.

Thanks to Julie Uusinarkaus for excellent language revisions throughout the process. All the mistakes remain mine. I thank Ilona Kokko for her research assistance in data collection in sub-study II. I also want to thank students from various courses whose questions and comments prompted me to learn more and think further. I am further grateful to Leena Jäntti for introducing me to new perspectives on embodiment.

My last, but not least, thanks go to family and friends for “being there”. My parents Marja and Jalo Liimakka have always supported me and had faith in me. Thank you for encouraging my intellectual as well as other endeavours. I thank Riitta and Veikko Varanka and Sirkka Leppänen for providing enormous help with child care, enabling me to carry on with this work. Thanks to Annika, Mari and Riitta for their long-term friendship. Jouni has been a truly supportive partner through the ups and downs, providing just the right combination of care, constructive criticism and nature walks, not to mention practical wisdom (“art is never finished, it is just abandoned” was just what I needed to hear during the last stage of this project!). Thank you for your patience, flexibility and “good spirits”! I owe my biggest thanks to my “True Academy”, my wonderful children Inka and Oula. Thanks for being my teachers and co-learners in life and for continuing to restructure my embodied habituality. I dedicate this work to my uncle Ensi Koskinen. Sadly, he passed away just when this book was going into print. Thank you, Ensi, for your creativity, values and big-heartedness.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
TIIVISTELMÄ	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
CONTENTS	9
LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS	11
1 INTRODUCTION	12
2 YOUNG WOMEN AND THE BODY QUEST(ION)	17
2.1 Collective body imperatives and the individualized body	17
2.2 The body quest(ion) in social psychology	19
2.3 Representations of the female body	20
2.4 Body image	23
2.5 The normative body	24
2.6 The moving body	26
2.7 Embodiment, agency and empowerment	27
2.7.1 Critical (feminist) reflexivity	27
2.7.2 Redefinitions of body practices	29
2.7.3 Promoting a positive body image	30
2.7.4 Physical activity and empowerment	31
2.7.5 Agency: mind, body, context	31
3 HABITUAL BODIES: THEORIZING CONTINUITY, CHANGE AND AGENCY	33
3.1 Social, habitual and agentic bodies	34
3.2 Societally structured habituality	36
3.3 Habit(us), change and agency	39
3.4 Exploring young women’s embodied agency	40
4 MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	42
4.1 Group and individual accounts	42
4.1.1 Focus groups	43
4.1.2 Written accounts	44
4.1.3 Grounded theory–inspired coding	45
4.1.4 Interpretative phenomenological analysis	47

4.2	Sub-studies	49
4.2.1	Sub-study I: Body experiences, agency and socio-cultural contexts	49
4.2.2	Sub-study II: Cultural body ideals and individual body practices	50
4.2.3	Sub-study III: Body experiences, agency and the context of women's studies ...	51
5	THE PROBLEMATIC, PROBLEMATIZED AND AGENTIC BODY	53
5.1	The ideal body: The imperatives of beauty and health	53
5.2	The ideal self: The imperatives of independence, resistance and agency	55
5.3	Individual agency and group agency	57
5.4	Cartesian agency and corporeal agency	59
5.5	Re-embodied: Embodiment as empowerment	61
5.6	The gendered genderless habit(us)	63
6	DISCUSSION	66
6.1	Representational selves in the culture of appearances	66
6.2	Embodied transformations	68
6.3	Methodological reflections	69
6.4	Theoretical reflections	71
6.5	Future studies	72
6.6	Practical implications	73
6.7	Conclusion	74
	REFERENCES	75
	APPENDIXES	98
	ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS	105

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following original publications:

- I Liimakka, Satu (2008). The influence of cultural images and other people on young women's embodied agency. *Young – Nordic Journal of Youth Research* 16(2), 131–152. Copyright © Sage Publications Ltd. All rights reserved.
- II Liimakka, Satu (2013). Healthy appearances – distorted body images? Young adults negotiating body motives. *Journal of Health Psychology*. Advance online publication 2 January 2013. DOI: 10.1177/1359105312468189
- III Liimakka, Satu (2011). Cartesian and corporeal agency: Women's studies students' reflections on body experience. *Gender and Education*, 23(7), 811–823.
- IV Liimakka, Satu (2011). 'I am my body': Objectification, empowering embodiment, and physical activity in women's studies students' accounts. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 28(4), 441–460.

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

The original articles are reprinted here with the kind permission from Sage (I, II), Taylor & Francis (III) and Human Kinetics (IV).

1 INTRODUCTION

This doctoral dissertation explores young Finnish women's body experiences and possibilities for embodied agency as located in the socio-cultural context. On a more analytic level, this study is an exploration of the possibilities of individuals to change their learnt body habit(us) (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003) within or despite the constraints of their given socio-cultural surroundings. I approach young women's body experiences with a focus on the perspective of appearance. I also trace body experiences beyond appearance, particularly those experiences that seem to form a "counter experience" to the experience of self-critical appearance monitoring. I locate the young women's body experiences in contemporary highly visualized and consumerist Western culture, driven by beauty and health imperatives (Bordo, 1993; Crawford, 2006; Hesse-Biber, Leavy, Quinn, & Zoino, 2006; Lupton, 1995) and the utopian quest for a "perfect life" (Hollow, 2011). In this cultural context, the self is a continuous bodily project (Shilling, 1993), lived to a great extent as a bodily representation (Turner, 1996), a spectacle (Tseïlon, 1995).

This dissertation approaches the phenomenon of bodily appearance from three intertwining perspectives. First of all, appearance is interpreted in its most conventional way as a body's physical appearance – the body's visual "surface". Second, appearance is understood as a way of appearing as "someone", with particular qualities and attributes, to other people and to one's self. This perspective could be defined as focusing on a "social appearance" – an appearance we may sometimes give without conscious effort, as part of our habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). Third, the intertwining dynamics of physical and social appearance are explored, particularly their inevitable linkage in the lived body experience of young women in contemporary visualized and consumerist Western culture. As Turner (1996, p. 23) argues, the contemporary self-experience is characterized by "a representational self, whose value and meaning is ascribed to the individual by the shape and image of their external body, or more precisely, through their body-image". In other words, the focus is on how one's body is represented to others and to oneself – the body as an external image outruns the body as an internal sensation. Due to the historical and present societal gender order, this kind of "externally" focused body experience is especially typical for women (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Young, 2005).

This study employs a feminist, critical, social psychological perspective in exploring embodiment. The motivating question behind the study is the possibility of change. How can the contradictory and anxiety-laden body relation of many

contemporary young women, as shown by previous studies (Frost, 2001; Grogan, 2008; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Liimakka, 2004a), be transformed into a more positive body relation? In order to locate both the stability of the body experience and the possibilities of transforming it, this work draws theoretically from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body and Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, and the feminist appropriations of these. I explore embodiment as the fundamental basis for one's self. Since we are our bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003), what is learned by our bodies becomes something that we are (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 73). Consequently, our bodies bring our history to all our present-day experiences, framing the range of options and experiences that are available to us (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 2000). However, our bodies also carry the potential for agency and change (Coole, 2005; Crossley, N., 2001; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003). In this study, the body is seen as an active agent that forms an essential part of the agency of the self. This perspective enables exploration of the empowering potentials that embodiment might entail.

According to previous studies (Abbott & Barber, 2010; Frost, 2001; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Liimakka, 2004a, 2004b; Välimaa, 2001), physical appearance forms a major framework for the body experience of girls and young women in contemporary Western societies. How this framework affects each individual young woman differs between individuals, but the fact that it cannot be ignored is shared (Frost, 1999). The "correct" body in contemporary Western society carries the marks of health, fitness and beauty (Bordo, 1993; Crawford, 2006; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006; Lupton, 1995). For women this means, above all, thinness, while the masculine body ideal emphasizes muscularity (Brown, 1999; Grogan, 2008; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Cultural images focus on portraying young, thin, white and heterosexual women – idealized bodies which are beyond the reach of most women (Bordo, 1993; Buote, Wilson, Strahan, Gazzola, & Papps, 2011; Näre & Oksanen, 2008). Further, young women often receive social feedback concerning the physical appearance of their bodies (Aaltonen, 2001; Liimakka, 2004b, pp. 80–86; Tolonen, 2001a). Consequently, they are ushered towards experiencing and moulding their bodies as visual representations (Frost, 2005; Tseëlon, 1995).

However, when young women do focus on their bodily appearance, they risk being labelled as vain and narcissistic (Frost, 1999) or as whorish (Näre, 1992; Saarikoski, 2001). Despite the continuous cultural marketing of a certain body ideal, appearance-centredness is deemed as vanity (Frost, 1999; Gill, Henwood, & McLean, 2005). Appearance is defined as a superficial value both by young people (Välimaa, 2001, p. 92) and by those studying young people (Valtari, 2005, p. 90; Wilska, 2005a, p. 10). Consequently, "doing looks" is something that needs to be explained, excused and minimized (Frost, 1999; Gill et al., 2005). Vanity, however, is an expression describing an individual trait; as such, it moves the attention away from critically exploring the phenomenon of women's collective "vanity". Thus, the contradictory

body experiences of young women, constructed within these contradictory socio-cultural messages, become defined as individual problems (Liimakka, 2004a).

The shape and size of the (gendered) body is a social, cultural and societal question of hierarchies and power relations (Harjunen & Kyrölä, 2007). In this doctoral dissertation I explore the issue of young women's embodied locatedness within societal power relations through focusing on the body experiences of a particular group: young, white, Finnish women who are studying in upper secondary school (referred to as high school in article I) or university. Consequently, this study focuses on young women who are deemed to be well off according to a number of measures, such as in terms of health, educational position and their expected future life paths (Helakorpi, Laitalainen, & Uutela, 2010; Kunttu & Huttunen, 2001; Martelin, Koskinen, Kestilä, & Aromaa, 2005). Yet studies among young women in higher education show that body dissatisfaction and disordered eating practices are common among them (Hensley, 2003; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Among Finnish female students in higher education, 8–9% reported symptoms that suggest eating disorders (Kunttu & Huttunen, 2001). An engagement in practices of body monitoring and body weight control is commonly expressed by Finnish female university students (Autio & Lombardini-Riipinen, 2006; Silvennoinen, 2001). Evans, Rich, and Holroyd (2004) argue that middle-class girls face strong socio-cultural messages to conform to “perfection codes” in terms of both their school achievements and their “body achievements”.

However, appearance concerns seem to be rising among young men as well (Gill et al., 2005; Grogan, 2008; Valtari, 2005). Further, the contemporary labour market poses increasing demands with regard to employees' physical appearance, requiring an amount of aesthetic labour (Warhurst, van den Broek, Hall, & Nickson, 2009; Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003). For some Finnish students in higher education, the pursuit of economic well-being seems to be related to the pursuit of a good physical appearance (Sarpila, 2010). Adolescents are already aware of body weight as a possible factor influencing one's employment (Berg, P., 2010b). Hesse-Biber (2007, p. 188) argues that the beauty, fashion and fitness industries are currently looking for “new recruits for the cult of thinness” from preteen girls, adolescents, straight men, gays, lesbians and ethnic women. Consequently, learning about the experience of the “old recruits” of these industries – particularly the young, white, heterosexual, middle-class young women – can benefit not only these young women as they find a more positive body relation, but also a large population of others who might be at risk of developing a harmful body relation.

An exploration of young women's body experiences and embodied agency is particularly of interest in the Finnish context. Finland is often portrayed as a “model” country of gender equality. Yet the majority of Finns are of the opinion that gender equality has not yet been achieved (Nieminen, 2009). Scholars have argued that

beneath the assumed gender equality lies a Finnish ideology of “genderless gender”, which hides the gendering processes behind a gender-neutral individualistic rhetoric (Lahelma, 2012; Lempiäinen, 2000; Ronkainen, 2001a).

The consumption of products and services related to self-care increased in Finland during the early 2000s, along with an increase in the number of firms offering commercialized fitness, beauty and health services (Sarpila & Räsänen, 2011; Statistics Finland, 2007). In particular, the number of beauty salons has dramatically increased (Statistics Finland, 2007). The consumption of personal care products has increased among both men and women, yet women spend more on their physical appearance (Sarpila & Räsänen, 2011; Wilska, 2005b). Young women’s consumption typically focuses on physical appearance, while young men’s spending is directed towards media and technology products as well as partying and alcohol (Wilska, 2005b). A similar appearance-focused national trend is the increasing popularity of cosmetic surgery in general *and* its continuing genderedness; women still form the overwhelming majority of cosmetic surgery patients (Kinnunen, 2008, p. 340).

Finnish children, particularly girls, are much more dissatisfied with their bodies than their Nordic peers from Sweden and Norway; dissatisfaction with one’s body is alarmingly common in Finnish girls as young as 8 years old (Oksanen, 2005). Ojala and colleagues (2006) found that almost half of 15-year-old Finnish girls perceived themselves as too fat – yet only a fourth of the girls who perceived themselves as fat were overweight according to the body mass index. Though both Finnish men and women reported body dissatisfaction and disordered eating practices in a recent study, these were more common among women (Ålgars et al., 2009; Ålgars, 2012). The gender difference appeared in both body attitudes and practices: 45% of the women (18% of the men) reported an intense fear of being fat; 59% of the women (31% of the men) reported engaging in dieting behaviour, while engagement in self-induced vomiting was reported by as many as 11% of the women (1% of the men) (Ålgars, 2012, p. 52). A gendered cultural fear of fat drives girls and women into extreme dieting behaviours and even eating disorders (Ojala et al., 2006; Puuronen, 2004).

Annfelt (2002) argues that while contemporary Nordic society manifests a higher degree of gender equality than before and enables women to enter many positions in society that were previously reserved for men, a simultaneous trend to this apparent gender neutrality has occurred, within the body. The body has become an area of emphasized gender differences aiming to maintain the traditional marks of heterosexuality, as symbolized in the current body ideals of a small female body with big breasts and a big, muscular male body (Annfelt, 2002; Harjunen & Kyrölä, 2007, p. 11; Grogan, 2008). As such, Annfelt (2002) argues, the body is a current battleground for gender equality. Indeed, studies show that among highly

educated Finnish women – those that “threaten” the masculine hierarchy in work life – a “wrong” kind of body leads to financial losses; overweight women receive a considerably smaller income than thin women (Kauppinen & Anttila, 2005; Sarlio-Lähteenkorva, Silventoinen, & Lahelma, 2004). The income of highly educated thin Finnish women was circa 20% higher than the income of highly educated women measured by body mass index as overweight or obese (Kauppinen & Anttila, 2005). Similar income differences were not found among men (Sarlio-Lähteenkorva et al., 2004).

This doctoral dissertation consists of four published articles and a summary that recapitulates their main results as well as describes the empirical and theoretical background, aims and methods of the study. Chapter 2 presents previous research on young women’s body experiences. I start by outlining the current cultural context for young women’s body experiences and introduce the social psychological discussion on embodiment. I then continue by discussing the (experienced and assumed) problems within young women’s body relations, as located by previous studies. Finally, I present how agency and empowerment in relation to young women’s bodies has been addressed in previous research. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical background of the current study, which draws from Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu and their feminist appropriations in order to *incarnate* the body and agency. In chapter 4, I present the methods and research materials used in this study. Overall, the study is comprised of three sub-studies that address the issue of young women’s body experiences from different perspectives, drawing from accounts by different groups of young women.

The main results of the study are presented in chapter 5. This chapter shows how the young woman’s body appeared in the study as both a problem and as a source of agency, and how the cultural and personal body ideals and practices were both lived and problematized by the young women. Finally, I evaluate the contributions of the study and discuss its implications in chapter 6.

2 YOUNG WOMEN AND THE BODY QUEST(ION)

2.1 COLLECTIVE BODY IMPERATIVES AND THE INDIVIDUALIZED BODY

During the last few decades, the body has been increasingly under societal and social scientific interest and scrutiny. Scholars have argued that this increased visibility and perceived importance of the body is due to major societal and scientific changes and developments, such as the ageing of the population, socio-economic changes in society, the impact of the women's movement and developments and major changes in medical practices and technology (Bayer & Malone, 1996, p. 688; Frank, 1991, p. 39; Shilling, 1993, p. 3; Turner, 1996, p. 3–5). The rise of consumer capitalism has created a large market for body-related pursuits, filled by the beauty, fashion, fitness and health industries, which urge consumers to make the most out of their bodies (Bordo, 1993; Hesse-Biber, 2007). These markets are supported by the mass media production of idealized images of human bodies and messages of how to attain the ideal look and level of health (Markula, 2008; Rich, 2011).

In contemporary Western societies, the body signifies a person's social status, group membership and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1996), as well as the individual's health status, sexual status and, consequently, moral status (Crawford, 2006; Lupton, 1995; Skeggs, 1997). Turner (1996, p. 6) argues that we live in a somatic society in which our major political and moral problems are expressed through the conduit of the human body. The body's health and appearance have become indicators of a "good person" who is living a "good life" (Crawford, 2006; Turner, 1996). According to Turner (1996, p. 23), the regulatory control of the body, which was once exercised through religion, is now exercised through consumerism and the fashion industry. Fashioning and moulding the body has become a religion in itself (Kinnunen, 2001a; Puuronen, 2004), appearing to provide "a firm foundation on which to reconstruct a reliable sense of self" (Shilling, 1993, p. 3). Scholars have further argued that the current health promotion draws from religious discourse in presenting a mission to spread the message of what is considered "good" and "bad" (Sykes, Willig, & Marks, 2004).

Contemporary Western culture manifests a particular individualization of the body; the body has become an individual identity project, something to be continuously worked on (Shilling, 1993). However, the cultural body ideal and the individual identity focus on the external surface of the body (Shilling, 1993; Tseëlon, 1995; Turner, 1996). Paradoxically, while the surface of the body is seen as signifying

individual attributes, it is the attributes of the collective culture that direct external individual body actions and how they are perceived.

As members of social groups, such as gender, social class or ethnicity, individuals are positioned differently in relation to the body ideals that are marketed to them and the possibilities of attaining an ideal body (Berg, 2010b; Skeggs, 1997). The diet, weight-loss, cosmetic, fitness and plastic surgery industries benefit from and promote the cultural thin ideal and the striving of women to reach that ideal (Bordo, 1993; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006). Consequently, these industries send the message that shaping one's body to attain the ideal means self-determination, creative self-fashioning, agency and empowerment (Eskes, Duncan, & Miller, 1998; Gill, 2008a; Smith Maguire, 2002).

Similarly, public health campaigns and private health markets present a message of the freedom of individuals to live a good and healthy life and to take care of the self (Crawford, 2006; Fullagar, 2002; Smith Maguire, 2002) and utilize the discourse of empowerment, yet position the "targets" of empowerment as passive recipients of expert knowledge (Sykes et al., 2004). Critical scholars have interpreted this message as positing an "imperative of health" (Lupton, 1995), imposing on individuals a "duty to stay well" (Greco, 1993). The imperative of health management can produce an individual body relation of "continuous self-scrutiny, dissatisfaction and critical evaluation" (Fullagar, 2002, p. 79), forming a spiral of control and anxiety (Crawford, 2006). Weight monitoring has become a citizen's duty, including not only those already determined to be overweight but also those who might become overweight (Harjunen & Kyrölä, 2007, p. 23). The current societal worry and media attention focus on the health risks of being overweight, but the health risks of being underweight are rarely discussed (Campos, Saguy, Ernsberger, Oliver, & Gaesser, 2006; Markula, Burns, & Riley, 2008). Yet Flegal, Graubard, Williamson, and Gail (2005) found that both underweight and obesity were associated with increased mortality, while overweight was not. The societal worry over the "obesity epidemic" has been criticized for overstating the increase in the prevalence of overweight and for being more about the moral panic of a control society than about health (Campos et al., 2006; Markula, 2008; Monaghan, 2005).

In sum, it seems that the current commercial and public interests share the practice of marketing the ideals of individual liberty and empowerment through means that lead to collective body regimentation. In other words, this collective discipline seems to be disguised behind an individualistic practice marketed as empowering. In contemporary society, the body occupies a central place in the crossroads of the individuals' pursuits and aspirations and cultural ideals and moral codes. How do young women negotiate their position with regard to the individually experienced aspirations and the resulting collectively practised perspirations in the pursuit of well-being as a morally good body in contemporary society? I address

this question in the subsequent chapters. Before moving on to discuss the specific questions concerning young women's embodiment, I discuss briefly how the body quest(ion) has been addressed in social psychological research.

2.2 THE BODY QUEST(ION) IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The increasing societal interest in body issues has been followed by a rising interest in the body in social scientific and psychological research, as well as in many other disciplines. In social sciences, the "boom" of body research began to emerge in the 1980s (Oinas, 2001; Turner, 1996). A new journal, *Body & Society*, was launched in 1995. In sociology, a new sub-discipline, sociology of the body, was developed (Oinas, 2001; Frank, 1991). The body question seemed to be at the same time a body quest: (male) scholars were advocating for "bringing the body back in" (e.g., Frank, 1991; Turner, 1996; Shilling, 1993). Then again some feminist scholars argued that the "return to the body" posed the danger of neglecting the history of gendered bodies, in which the woman was defined as the (problematic) body (Bayer & Malone, 1996; Witz, 2000).

Social scientific discussions on the body started from critiquing the traditional mind/body dichotomy and the consequent neglect of the issue of the body in the social sciences (Burkitt, 1999; Crossley, N., 2001; Turner, 1996). Embodiment has been explored from a social constructionist perspective as constructed within power relations (Markula, 2003, 2004; Oinas, 2001) and phenomenologically as a lived experience (Allen-Collinson, 2011; Puuronen, 2004). Recent discussions have explored embodiment and affect (Blackman & Venn, 2010) and the sensory body experience (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2010), and questioned the assumed boundaries between human bodies and between human and non-human bodies (Manning, 2010; Venn, 2010).

Psychological research has also answered the "body call" during the past two decades. In psychology, research on the body has mostly focused on studying body image. A new journal, *Body Image*, was launched in 2004. Similarly to the "body call" previously made by sociologists, contemporary body image researchers argue for the need to put "the *body* back into the study of body image" by acknowledging physiological aspects, such as sensitivity to touch, in the body image experience (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002, p. 510, italics in the original).

Within social psychology, however, the issue of the body has remained undertheorized and underexplored, as noted by some scholars (Lyons & Cromby, 2010; Stam, Lubek, & Radtke, 1998). In social and health psychology, the body has mostly been regarded as passive and separate from the person (Radley, 2000), as a physiological and biological object that forms the backdrop for the psychological

and social phenomena under study (Lyons & Cromby, 2010; Stam, 1996). Social psychological studies have mostly addressed the body question through studying cognitions, representations and discursive constructions, such as perceptions of physical appearance (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992), social representations of the body (Jodelet, 1984) and discourses about the body (Gill et al., 2005; Paulson & Willig, 2008). A more “embodied” research strand has explored non-verbal communication (Hall, 1984; Henley, 1977). A more recently developed social psychological field has begun to explore the embodiedness of cognitions (Schubert & Semin, 2009; Semin & Smith, 2008). Yet, in contrast to sociology, developments in theoretical social psychological perspectives on embodiment are lacking.

Scholars have argued the insufficiency of a mere discursive framework in addressing the materiality of bodies and embodiment on the level of body practices and experiences (Burkitt, 1999; Radley, 1995; Sampson, 1998; Willig, 2007). Some scholars have opted for a material-discursive approach in studying body practices and experiences (Berg, P., 2010a; Ussher, 2008) or a combination of a phenomenological and discursive perspective (Johnson, Burrows, & Williamson, 2004). Phenomenology has been employed to explore the meaning and significance of embodied experience (Willig, 2007, 2008a). Methodological experiments beyond the discursive approach have included memory work (Gillies et al., 2004) and painting pictures (Gillies et al., 2005) of embodied experience.

Overall, current social psychological research seems to be following the more general social scientific tendency in its development from a mind-focused perspective towards a more bodily based exploration of social life. This dissertation contributes a novel theoretical perspective to the emerging social psychology of embodiment in utilizing a combination of Merleau-Ponty’s and Bourdieu’s theorization on habit(us) in an empirical social psychological exploration of bodily habituality. Before elaborating on how the current study addresses embodiment, I present how young women’s body experiences within the socio-cultural context have been theoretically and empirically explored in previous research.

2.3 REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FEMALE BODY

Contemporary Western culture surrounds us with images of idealized bodies. Media images of women are more homogenous than images of men, and idealized images of women are encountered much more frequently (Buote et al., 2011). The current feminine body ideal is characterized by a fit, firm and well-developed body – a look that is hard to attain without strict body regimentation practices of exercise and diet (Bordo, 1993; Markula, 1995; Markula et al., 2008). Markula (1995, p. 424)

found that the feminine ideal in media images of exercise is a contradiction, posing a body that is “firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin”. A similar contradiction characterizes the way girls and young women describe an ideal female body as thin, fit and small, with “natural looks”, yet as curvy and groomed (Aaltonen, 2001, p. 113; Bengs, 2000; Tolonen, 2001b, p. 85).

Currently, fatness is presented in the media as a problem and a threat (Kyrölä, 2007), as comical and signifying indifference about one’s own body (Rossi, 2007). According to Bordo (1993, p. 195), the fit body symbolizes a “correct attitude; it means that one ‘cares’ about oneself and how one appears to others, suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to ‘shape your life’”. Bordo (1993, p. 208) further suggests that the current feminine thin ideal is expressed by “the lean body of the career businesswoman”, stripped of any signs of the maternal body – a symbolic identification with the self-mastery and control of the white male career world.

The cultural body ideal, however, has varied over time – as has women’s body practices. The earlier more voluptuous and plump female body ideal has changed since the 1920s into an idealization of thinness (Grogan, 2008; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Mazur, 1986). During the past decades, variation has occurred in whether the thin body ideal has been accompanied with a boyish look or a large bosom and hourglass figure, a fit and “healthy” look or the appearance of “heroin chic” (Bordo, 1993; Grogan, 2008, p. 23; Mazur, 1986). Scholars (Bordo, 1993; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006; Mazur, 1986; Orbach, 1986) have traced changes within women’s body practices to changes in the cultural body ideal and to wider cultural changes, such as changes in gender relations.

Feminist scholars have argued that cultural images construct a normative standard for an ideal body, a model against which to measure, judge and correct one’s own body (Bordo, 1993; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006; Wolf, 1991). Some scholars argued that women not only evaluate their bodies in relation to cultural images, but, to a great extent, they live their own bodies as representations. Tseëlon (1995) claims that a woman is constructed as a spectacle in current Western society; a woman is simultaneously socially invisible and physically highly visible. Similarly, Frost (2005) theorizes young women’s bodies in consumer capitalism as inhabited and presented visual spaces. Drawing from Goffman’s (1959) idea of everyday life as a stage, Tseëlon (1995, p. 63) argues that a woman is always potentially involved in a presentation of her embodied self to an audience – even when she is alone. Similar arguments about the female body experience as a constant self-surveillance are put forth in some phenomenological feminist accounts (Bartky, 1990; de Beauvoir, 1949/1972; Young, 2005).

The idea of an objectifying culture causing women to be preoccupied by their visual appearance has been formulated into psychological theories and measures,

primarily, objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and the objectified body consciousness scale (McKinley, 1998). These models suggest that women internalize their societal bodily objectification as self-objectification, which can lead to habitual body monitoring, feelings of shame and anxiety, and an increased risk for eating disorders. Objectification theory further states that self-objectification can lead to reduced opportunities for experiencing peak motivational states and a diminished awareness of internal bodily states (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Studies using these models have shown that women monitored their bodies more and experienced more body shame than men (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; McKinley, 1998, 2006). Self-objectification influenced women's eating behaviour (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001), cognitive (Fredrickson et al., 1998) and motor (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005) performance, and sexual satisfaction (Calogero & Thompson, 2009).

Studies show that the current homogenous thin media images have a negative impact on women's body image (Ahern, Bennett, & Kelly, 2011; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Grogan, 2008). The images also influence others' perceptions of women's bodies (Hargreaves, D. A. & Tiggemann, 2003). A study exploring the body attitudes of Fijian adolescent girls found that three years after television was first introduced to their rural community, the girls' body ideal had shifted from the traditional Fijian ideal of large bodies to the Western ideal of thinness (Becker, Burwell, Gilman, Herzog, & Hamburg, 2002; Becker, 2004). Moreover, during this time disordered eating attitudes and behaviours had dramatically increased among the Fijian girls, and the girls explained that they wanted their own bodies to resemble the female bodies they saw on television.

However, Budgeon (2003) points out that perceiving young women's body experiences merely as a product of media image consumption easily leads to an analysis that is too simplified. Instead of being merely passive recipients, spectators of cultural images can reinterpret the stereotypical images in multiple ways (Rossi, 2007; Vänskä, 2006). Then again, focusing merely on a transformative reading of cultural images poses the danger of neglecting the real effects produced by mass cultural representations (Bordo, 1993). Studies show that girls and young women do have a critical attitude towards media images – yet they still feel that these images negatively influence their own body relation (Ahern et al., 2011; Grogan, 2008; Markula, 1995). As Näre (2002, p. 253) claims, “the body remembers the demands even though one's mind would know that there is no need to answer them”.

2.4 BODY IMAGE

Psychological research on body image has focused on quantitatively examining how people experience the visual image of their bodies. A typical finding in body image research has been the commonness of body dissatisfaction in the Western world, particularly among white, heterosexual women (Grogan, 2008). Though boys and men also experience body dissatisfaction (Adams, Turner, & Bucks, 2005), studies show that girls and women are more dissatisfied with their bodies (Bengs, 2000; Grogan, 2008; McCabe et al., 2011; Oksanen, 2005). Then again boys and men may feel that showing an interest in their own body image would threaten their masculinity (Gill et al., 2005; Hargreaves, D. A. & Tiggemann, 2006). In Finland, 62% of girls and 46% of boys from 9 to 12 years old reported dissatisfaction with their outward appearance; among 13-year-old Finnish girls, only 11% were content with their outward appearance (Oksanen, 2005).

Studies show how body dissatisfaction is experienced by women of all ages, throughout their lifespan (Johnston, Reilly, & Kremer, 2004; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001; Tiggemann, 2004). Yet the importance women attach to body shape, weight and appearance, as well as their body monitoring practices, appearance anxiety and disordered eating, decrease as they age (Johnston et al., 2004; Tiggemann, 2004). Young women in their 20s and 30s report higher levels of body monitoring, appearance anxiety and disordered eating practices than older women (Greenleaf, 2005; McKinley, 1999; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001). Further, even though exercise generally increases body satisfaction (LePage & Crowther, 2010), Tiggemann and Williamson (2000) found that among young women, a higher frequency of exercise was related to an increased experience of body dissatisfaction. They suggest that exercise might operate differently for young women than for men and older women. In support of this, Greenleaf (2005) found that older women are more likely than young women to forget their self-consciousness, and thus experience “flow” states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) during exercise.

Studies further show that despite their bodies generally being closer to the Western thin ideal, white girls and women are more dissatisfied with their body appearance and weight, engage more in weight loss behaviours and compare themselves more often to media images than black girls and women (Haff, 2009; Jefferson & Stake, 2009; Ofori, Lafreniere, & Senn, 1998). This can partly be explained by a difference in cultural body ideals (McCabe et al., 2011; Ofori et al., 1998). A study comparing body satisfaction among adolescents in eight countries found that the highest levels of body satisfaction were expressed in countries with a larger size body ideal (McCabe et al., 2011). However, a recent study reported that both white and black women of different ages experienced body dissatisfaction and engaged in disordered eating behaviours (Reel, SooHoo, Summerhayes, &

Gill, 2008). Ofosu and colleagues (1998) suggest that especially black women of higher socio-economic status, working in predominantly white environments, face pressures to comply with the mainstream beauty ideal. In support of this, a study addressing socio-economic status and body image found that physical self-esteem was lowest among girls measured by body mass index as overweight from middle and upper socioeconomic status schools – and greatest among boys from lower socioeconomic status schools, despite being overweight according to body mass index (O’Dea & Caputi, 2001).

To conclude, the experience of body dissatisfaction and the resulting body management practices seem to have less to do with one’s actual body appearance and weight than with the normative body requirements posed for, and, consequently, taken up by, a particular social group. The commonness of body dissatisfaction and body management practices often seem to be high among those whose bodies are already close to the cultural ideal.

2.5 THE NORMATIVE BODY

Feminist scholars have argued that body “disorders” and body dissatisfaction should be seen as symptoms of culture instead of individual pathologies (Bordo, 1993; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006; Markula et al., 2008). Body (dis)orders are produced and experienced in a cultural order that dictates a strict body standard for all (Malson, Riley, & Markula, 2009). Anorexia nervosa has been interpreted as a “crystallization of culture” (Bordo, 1993) and “a metaphor for our age” (Orbach, 1986), providing a way to attempt to fill the contemporary cultural requirements for “ideal citizenship” (Puuronen, 2004). Eating disorders and disordered eating form a continuum among women (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006): both anorectic and non-anorectic women speak in similar ways about body shape and weight, thinness and control of eating (Chesters, 1994).

Burns and Gavey (2008) found that the current cultural discourse of healthy body weight was taken up by women with bulimic practices in justifying their practices, such as vomiting and compulsive exercise, as necessary means for “healthy” weight control and energy regulation. Interpreted from a critical Foucauldian perspective, women’s body experiences are produced by discursive control, such as the current scientific truth production that defines a certain body weight as unhealthy (Markula et al., 2008). Societal power relations manifest in women’s lived body relations (McNay, 2008). For example, the negative cultural attitude towards women’s fatness causes many fat women to experience body shame, which restricts their lives (Harjunen, 2009; Murray, S., 2008; Rice, 2007). Harjunen (2009) found that many fat women lived in a state of liminality: they were trying to lose weight

or planning to lose weight and waited for the time when they could actually begin their lives – as a thin person. The experience of one's body as being in a transitional stage into a better (that is, culturally idealized) "bodyhood" might characterize the contemporary body experience of individuals more generally (Näre & Oksanen, 2008). However, as social bodies, individuals are positioned differently within this potentially shared experience.

Bordo (1993, p. 28) argues that "many, if not most, women also are willing (often, enthusiastic) participants in cultural practices that objectify and sexualize us". Besides drawing from notions of women's self-objectification as a result of societal objectification (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Young, 2005), this tendency has been interpreted through a Foucauldian-inspired perspective as becoming a self-regulated and self-disciplined "docile body" (Bordo, 1993, p. 166; Markula et al., 2008). Drawing from Bourdieu, individuals as members of particular social groups are seen as trying to accumulate the form of cultural capital that is available to them in the current societal order (Berg, P., 2010a, 2010b; Skeggs, 1997). For middle-class young women, a "smart" and controlled body style promises the cultural capital of a career woman and a differentiation from the more overtly "sexual" style of working-class young women (Oinas, 2001; Skeggs, 1997).

The normative cultural body ideal, with its emphasis on young, white, thin female bodies, has also influenced the focus of body research. The field of body image research has mostly focused on exploring white, middle-class body experiences (Grogan, 2008; Ofori et al., 1998), used quantitative samples of young female college students and focused on problems, dissatisfaction and dysfunction, common topics being eating disorders, body weight and physical appearance (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Within feminist research, even though the normative thin ideal has been extensively criticized, women's fatness has been a silenced issue until recently (Harjunen & Kyrölä, 2007, pp. 24–25). Thus, body experiences have been most extensively studied among those whose bodies fall closer to the normative ideal.

Other social groups might embrace alternative cultural values or body ideals. On the other hand, marginalized social groups might have more pressing worries than their physical appearance, such as the influences of racism, classism, heterosexism and poverty (Moore, 2012; Ofori et al., 1998). Yet the current normative body ideal as such is constituted by racism, classism and heterosexism – and is difficult to reach without sufficient economic resources. The dominant Western body ideal excludes, for example, disabled bodies (Murto, 2001), racialized bodies (Moore, 2012) and fat bodies (Harjunen, 2009). The ideal itself and the practices and possibilities of pursuing it create and maintain hierarchical social distinctions (Berg, P., 2010b; Oinas, 2001).

2.6 THE MOVING BODY

In her seminal article, “Throwing like a girl”, published originally in 1980, feminist phenomenologist Young (2005) presents female bodily comportment and motility in an objectifying society as being characterized by three modalities: an ambiguous transcendence, an inhibited intentionality and a discontinuous unity with its surroundings. By ambiguous transcendence, Young (2005, p. 36) refers to a feminine lack of living one’s body as an “open and unbroken directedness upon the world in action”. This incapability is characterized in a woman’s style of throwing a ball through using only a part of her body. By inhibited intentionality, Young refers to feminine motion being simultaneously intentional, with a confident bodily feeling of an “I can” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003, p. 159), and hesitant, with a self-imposed bodily orientation of “I cannot” (Young, 2005, p. 36). The body’s discontinuous unity results from the other two modalities: a body motion mobilizing only a part of the body is discontinuous with itself, and a body not projecting itself fully to its aims is discontinuous with its surroundings.

Young’s account has been supported and criticized. A study by Fredrickson and Harrison (2005) shows that, among adolescent girls, a greater self-objectifying tendency did result in a poorer performance in throwing a softball. Then again in a study by Evaldsson (2003), girls varied their throwing styles in foursquare games according to the physical skills and sex of those they were playing with, ranging from powerful slams to “throwing like a girl”, implying that female physicality should be understood as varied and contextual. Weiss (1999, p. 44) argues that Young’s analysis implies the definition of the masculine style of performing physical tasks as a standard to which the feminine style is compared – and found lacking. Instead, Weiss (1999, p. 48) claims, a societal change is needed in “the way ‘feminine’ bodily existence is identified and differentiated from ‘masculine’ bodily existence in the first place”.

Studies show that women’s body movements and postures are almost always smaller and less open than men’s, and that women also occupy – and are given – less physical space than men (Hall, 1984; Henley, 1977). Female bodily existence is differentiated from masculine bodily existence throughout childhood and youth. Girls are taught to restrict their use of their voice, physical space and body movements more than boys in school (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2000; Gordon, 2006; Tolonen, 2001a) as well as in preschool (Martin, 1998). In Finland, physical education is mostly taught in separate groups for girls and boys, with partly different practices and different, gendered expectations (Berg, P., 2010a). Hierarchical gendered differences are created, maintained and naturalized through the embodied practices of physical education and sport (Beltrán-Carrillo, Devís-Devís, Peiró-Velert, & Brown, 2012). The gendered differentiation continues into

leisure-time choices: boys and men typically engage in team sports and physical activities that build muscles, while girls and women typically engage in individual physical activities that shape and control the body and body weight (Berg, P., 2006; Ojala et al., 2006).

Studies show that men engage in physical activities more than women (Trost, Owen, Bauman, Sallis, & Brown, 2002). Sports have traditionally formed a “fortress” of masculinity (Silvennoinen, 2001, p. 58), with sports deemed as “masculine” receiving higher esteem than “feminine” sports (Hargreaves, J., 1994; Kinnunen, 2001b). The sports participation of girls decreases with age, particularly their involvement with “masculine” sports (Engel, 1994; Hargreaves, J., 1994, p. 155) as well as their participation in sports competitions (Berg, P., 2006). The mainstream cultural expectation seems to be that a woman exercises and does sports mainly to lose weight (Kinnunen, 2001b, p. 127). However, many girls’ and women’s physical activities actually are intertwined with or motivated by appearance and body weight-related reasons (Furnham, Badmin, & Sneade, 2002; Markula, 1995; Ojala et al., 2006; Strelan, Mehaffey, & Tiggemann, 2003).

2.7 EMBODIMENT, AGENCY AND EMPOWERMENT

Thus far I have presented how different research strands have explored, conceptualized and also assumed the problematic body relation of many young women. However, scholars have also suggested different perspectives and solutions to the issues of (young) women’s objectification, appearance management, body dissatisfaction and body image (dis)orders. Though these perspectives share in having as their goal a more positive female body relation, their means towards this end and their implicit and explicit definitions and understandings of embodiment and a positive body relation differ. Next, I present different theoretical and empirical perspectives and debates on young women’s embodiment and agency thematically categorized under four titles: Critical (feminist) reflexivity (2.7.1), Redefinitions of body practices (2.7.2), Promoting a positive body image (2.7.3) and Physical activity and empowerment (2.7.4). I finish by presenting how the current study draws from and aims to complement these perspectives in exploring embodied agency (2.7.5).

2.7.1 CRITICAL (FEMINIST) REFLEXIVITY

Feminists have emphasized the importance of critical awareness as a form of resistance to power. Theoretically, this approach has often drawn from Foucault (e.g., Bordo, 1993; Markula, 2003, 2004), but also, for example, from Bourdieu

(McNay, 2000) and Deleuze (Markula, 2011). Markula (2003, 2004) suggested that resistance to the dominant ideal of a thin and toned female body can be enacted by reconstructing the self through critical self-awareness. Similarly, Hesse-Biber and colleagues (2006, pp. 218–220) draw from the idea of critical awareness in suggesting social activism, media literacy and a “re-visioning of femininity” as ways towards a more positive body image.

The idea of a critical feminist ideology or identity as a possible protective factor against body dissatisfaction has been explored by quantitative studies. Murnen and Smolak (2009, p. 193) found in their meta-analysis of studies on feminism and body image that a feminist identity “helps protect against extreme dissatisfaction with the body”, but for the most part relationships between a feminist identity and thoughts related to the body were weak. Young women in a qualitative study on feminism and body image described that although feminism provided them with the tools to criticize cultural ideals, which changed their thinking, their feelings about beauty ideals remained intact (Rubin, Nemeroff, & Russo, 2004). Thus, critical (feminist) awareness seems to leave women in a state of contradiction: it gives tools for criticizing the cultural body ideal and the motivation to create alternative ideals, yet it does not as such neutralize the impact of the cultural body ideal (Murnen & Smolak, 2009; Rubin et al., 2004).

However, critical (feminist) awareness is a necessary prerequisite for collective action and for conceptualizing one’s individual experience as produced within social and societal structures. Sharing a critical collective perspective may positively influence an individual’s body relation: McKinley’s (2004) study among fat women endorsing fat acceptance showed that those who endorsed the need for social change in attitudes towards fat people had higher levels of body esteem and self-acceptance, and a lower level of body shame, than those who endorsed personal acceptance of fatness only. Further, Markula (2011) utilized her own critical feminist awareness as a tool in attempting to create alternative practices in a Pilates class that she taught. She aimed to create practices within the fitness industry that would function as a feminist intervention in teaching participants to “feel the movement, to find their own rhythm, to find their own bodies” instead of remaining docile towards cultural health and beauty imperatives (2011, p. 75).

McNay (2000, 2008) argues for an alternative perception of agency beyond the dichotomy between (discursive) domination and (discursive) resistance. Drawing from Bourdieu’s theorization of habitus, she notes how many things are learnt by the body on a pre-reflexive level, preventing their explicit articulation (McNay, 2000, p. 39). Thus, the embodied habitus includes “dimensions of embodied experience that might escape processes of reflexive self-monitoring”, such as “deep-seated, often unconscious investments in conventional images of masculinity and femininity which cannot easily be reshaped” (2000, p. 41). In sum, critical (feminist) reflexivity

as a form of agency can critically reflect only that which has been explicitly brought to its consciousness, yet critical reflexivity may as such be insufficient in transforming a body relation.

2.7.2 REDEFINITIONS OF BODY PRACTICES

Some feminist scholars have started to question the negative cultural and earlier feminist connotations attached to appearance management, pointing out that “doing looks” also involves experiences of pleasure (Baumgardner & Richards, 2004; Frost, 1999). Scholars have argued that beauty practices, such as make-up and clothing (Frost, 1999) or plastic surgery (Davis, 1995; Kinnunen, 2008), can function as tools for agentic self-creation and identity construction. For example, Budgeon (2003, p. 36) suggests viewing young women’s bodies as events in “the ongoing process of the constitution of self-identity”. However, though constructing a visual identity through one’s body involves pleasure, it can also create experiences of alienation and inadequateness (Frost, 2005). Further, not everyone has the economic and other means for shaping one’s bodily identity through practices such as cosmetic surgery, nor is there any guarantee that these practices leave the agent more satisfied in the long run (Kinnunen, 2008; Leve, Rubin, & Pusic, 2011).

A current scholarly feminist debate revolves around whether to emphasize young women as agents in making their autonomous choices (Baumgardner & Richards, 2004; Duits & van Zoonen, 2006, 2007) or the cultural constraints imposing particular “choices” on young women (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2004a, 2004b). In analysing the current Dutch public debate about girls’ clothing, dwelling on headscarves, belly shirts and g-strings, Duits and van Zoonen (2006, 2007) argue that this debate denies the agency and autonomy of the girls in framing boys’ “deviant” clothing in the realm of freedom of speech, while girls’ bodies and sexuality are defined as requiring public intervention and control. They emphasize the need to differentiate between the way the girls themselves construct the meanings behind their clothing choices and the way the public and feminist discussions construct the meaning of a young woman “revealing” her body as indecent or sexually problematic.

Then again Gill (2007) argues that young women’s “agency”, “autonomy” and “choice” need to be understood as actualized in a broader commercialized cultural context, highlighting a particular kind of sexualized self-presentation. According to Gill (2008a, p. 44), contemporary advertising depicts young women as empowered sexual agents, yet these images reproduce the current narrow body ideal, focus on young women’s sexual attractiveness instead of their sexual pleasure and confine agency to the consumerist aestheticization of one’s physical appearance.

Studies show that the current cultural representations of young women as active embodied agents – with beautiful, (hetero)sexually desirable bodies – create obligations for young women to present their own body practices as voluntary choices, “for themselves”, yet the young women have a complex relationship to these images (Baker, 2010; Malson, Halliwell, Tischner, & RÚdólfssdóttir, 2011; Stuart & Donaghue, 2011).

2.7.3 PROMOTING A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

Within body image research, studies have qualitatively examined factors that might contribute to a positive body image. Adolescents who had reported being satisfied with their physical appearance held a functional view of their bodies and accepted their bodily “imperfections”, and the majority of them were physically active, engaged in team sports and found exercise to be fun (Frisén & Holmqvist, 2010). Similarly, female college students with a positive body image highlighted a functional view of their bodies and focused on their body’s “assets” instead of “imperfections” (Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, & Augustus-Horvath, 2010). In addition, they appreciated the unique beauty of their bodies, expressed love for their bodies, took care of their bodily needs and filtered out negative information.

Studies have also explored the effectiveness of body image interventions. Interventions have often focused on changing the way an individual perceives her/his body and/or the media images. Thus, they have focused on “correcting individuals’ attitudes” (Markula et al., 2008, p. 6). Cognitive-behavioural therapy interventions have been found to improve body image, yet the high importance given to physical appearance remained (Jarry & Ip, 2005). Body image education programmes teaching media literacy to young people and young adults have improved media literacy, yet they do not necessarily have a significant impact on body image (Irving & Berel, 2001; Richardson, Paxton, & Thomson, 2009). Thus, a change in individuals’ attitudes and perceptions does not necessarily imply a change in their body relation.

On the other hand, a meta-analysis found that exercise interventions significantly improved body image and that exercisers had a more positive body image than non-exercisers (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006). However, the duration, type and motivation for exercise influence the outcome (Burgess, Grogan, & Burwitz, 2006; LePage & Crowther, 2010; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008). The next section addresses physical activity from the perspective of feminist sports research.

2.7.4 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Feminist sports scholars have explored the possibilities of sport, exercise and physical activity to produce empowering body experiences or even collective empowerment for women (Deem & Gilroy, 1998; Theberge, 1987, 2003). Some scholars have argued that women's participation in physical activities traditionally defined as masculine, such as team sports, martial arts or weight training, can challenge the prevailing gender ideology, increase women's self-confidence and provide a sense of female community (McCaughey, 1997; Migliaccio & Berg, E. C., 2007; Scott, B. A. & Derry, 2005). Advocates of physical feminism (McCaughey, 1997; Roth & Basow, 2004) have emphasized the need to transform women's bodies by developing physical strength and the ability to resist violations of women's bodies physically through means such as self-defense.

On the other hand, others have found that various forms of physical activity, ranging from exercise (Grimshaw, 1999) to firefighting (Yarnal, Hutchinson, & Chow, 2006) and pole dancing (Holland, 2010), can positively transform the way a woman experiences her body. Interpreted from a phenomenological perspective, new physical experiences enable the young woman to inhabit her body and the surrounding world in new ways (Chisholm, 2008; Grimshaw, 1999; Lökman, 2011). Lökman (2011) found that female beginners learning a self-defense sport, aikido, acquired an increased body awareness which enabled them to question their learnt gendered embodiment. Physical activities have increased women's feelings of bodily connectedness, an effect which might be strongest for those with few or negative previous experiences of physical activity (Grimshaw, 1999; McDermott, 2000; Wright & Dewar, 1997).

However, engaging in exercise, sport and physical activity can also involve or increase experiences of body dissatisfaction (Frederick & Shaw, 1995; Liimakka, 2004b; Markula, 1995; Maguire & Mansfield, 1998). Besides experiences of enjoyment, young women describe perceiving physical activity as a duty, involving feelings of guilt and inadequacy (Bulley, Donaghy, & Payne, 2009). Further, the positive improvements within women's body relations produced by physical activity might be due to changes in their physical appearance; as such, they do not address women's thoughts about beauty ideals nor reduce the pursuit for the perfect body (Mutrie & Choi, 2000).

2.7.5 AGENCY: MIND, BODY, CONTEXT

In sum, the suggested solutions for renegotiating young women's body relations or the way body relations are perceived seem to draw from the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy in emphasizing either the strategies of the mind or the strategies of the

body. Critical (feminist) reflexivity, redefinitions of body practices and body image interventions of the mind might leave an individual's learnt *bodily* habit(us) intact. Then again, mere physical activity might leave the individual's quest to attain the cultural body ideal intact. Yet, a combination of critical (feminist) reflexivity and physical activity has enabled positive changes in young women's body relations (Scott, B. A. & Derry, 2005).

Drawing from Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2003) idea of the body as the original subject, the strategies of the mind can only brush the surface of the embodied subject. Further, Bourdieu (2000, p. 172) states that since social order is inscribed in the body, simply changing how one thinks is not enough to change a bodily habitus – instead, a bodily countertraining is needed. Yet, he also emphasizes the importance of critical reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). Thus, by drawing from their ideas and from the insights provided by previous research, the current study sets out to explore and theorize young women's body experiences and possibilities for agency from an *embodied* socio-cultural perspective.

3 HABITUAL BODIES: THEORIZING CONTINUITY, CHANGE AND AGENCY

The social psychological focus of the current study is in its perspective, which explores the dynamics between an individual, social groups and the wider society, as manifested in the individual's body experience. Consequently, the study draws from different levels of analysis in social psychology, ranging from the intra-personal and interpersonal to the positional and ideological levels (Doise, 1986; Murray, M., 2000). The combination of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body and Bourdieu's reflexive sociology enables me to utilize these different levels of analysis. Phenomenology focuses on personal experiences, yet also takes into account the world of interpersonal communication. Bourdieu's approach complements this by focusing on social positions and cultural ideologies as embodied within individuals' habitus.

The starting point of the current study is the embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003, 1968) and social (Crossley, N., 1996; Mead, 1934/67) agent, always embedded in wider societal structures and power hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 2000). The study focuses on gender as a form of social hierarchy (McNay, 1999) and the experiences of lived embodiment as produced by a particular embodied, gendered locatedness (Bigwood, 1991; Young, 2005). Conceptually, the study draws from Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2003) ideas on the habitual body and Bourdieu's (1977, 1990, 2000) theorization of habitus in order to locate both the stability and the possibilities of transformation in an individual's body experience. Scholars have found the combination of Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu productive in exploring embodiment (Csordas, 1990; Crossley, 2001; Spencer, 2009). Yet this theoretical combination has not been previously utilized in social psychological explorations of (female) embodiment, nor in studies of young women's embodiment and agency. Thus, the current study provides a new theoretical perspective in these fields.

The combination of Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty and their feminist appropriations enables me to discuss embodied habituality as a group-level experience which is shaped by societal power structures, yet as individually and agentially lived. Bourdieu's theorization of habitus provides a way to address experience as connected to wider social structures and power, thus focusing on "the subject's direct understanding of her conditions of existence" (McNay, 2008, p. 181). As such, it provides a contextual and relational approach to experience (see Scott, J., 1991, for a feminist critic on the study of experience). Further, Bourdieu's approach

provides a perspective for approaching social psychological group phenomena as embodied practices. Yet his account presupposes an enormous communality in the experiences of individuals due to their group membership (Weiss, 2008) and fails to address the issue of individual agency (Crossley, N., 2001) and the process of acquiring – and thus, transforming – habitus (Noble & Watkins, 2003).

Then again Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach allows space for individual trajectories and agency and provides a theoretical basis for addressing the process of acquiring body habits (Crossley, N., 2001; Weiss, 2008). Yet phenomenology lacks an explicit discussion on the influence of societal power relations in constructing individual experiences (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 174), a problem scholars have tried to address by emphasizing a feminist (Allen-Collinson, 2011) or critical (Langdrige, 2008) perspective in their phenomenological studies.

Next, I start by presenting Merleau-Ponty's ideas on bodily habituality and agency (section 3.1), followed by Bourdieu's ideas on body habitus as constructed within societal power relations and critical reflexivity as a possible means to transform it (section 3.2). After that, the current study's approach to agency is presented (section 3.3). Finally, I introduce the aims of the study (section 3.4).

3.1 SOCIAL, HABITUAL AND AGENTIC BODIES

Phenomenology explores phenomena from the perspective of human experience (Laine & Kuhmonen, 1995, pp. 39–40). The world is explored through the way it presents itself to us (Heinämaa, 1996, p. 17). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body, thus, approaches the world as appearing to us through our bodies. According to Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003, p. 169), we attach ourselves to the world through our bodies; the body is our anchorage in the world and our “general medium for having a world”. Further, Merleau-Ponty argues that *we are our bodies* (1945/2003), and as such, we are part of the flesh of the world (1968).

The radicality of Merleau-Ponty's approach is in locating the body as the original subject. Merleau-Ponty places the body in a position that has been reserved for consciousness or reasoning in traditional philosophy (Laine & Kuhmonen, 1995). For Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003, p. 159), consciousness is not primarily a consciousness of the mind (“I think”), but an embodied consciousness of bodily knowing and ability (“I can”). As located in the body, consciousness emerges as a “being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body”, as intentionality expressing itself through bodily motility (1945/2003, p. 160). Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003, p. 94) further argues that consciousness of one's body is gained through the world and that consciousness of the world is gained through the body.

Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, the body-world relation is dynamic and intertwined. Merleau-Ponty's ideas are in direct opposition to the traditional Cartesian perspective, which perceives the self as a mental consciousness separate from all external objects, including one's own body (Grosz, 1994, pp. 6–7; Laine & Kuhmonen, 1995, pp. 40–42). Heinämaa (1996, p. 67) interprets Merleau-Ponty as aiming to construct a philosophy that would recognize the reciprocity between the subject and the world, but that would not be determined by either. In his last, unfinished work, Merleau-Ponty (1968) introduces the concept of flesh, referring with it to the intertwining, the chiasm, of one's own body with other bodies, things and the world. As flesh, the body and the world belong to the same fabric: "The world seen is not 'in' my body, and my body is not 'in' the visible world ultimately: as flesh applied to a flesh, the world neither surrounds it nor is surrounded by it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 138).

As a body that is open to the world and the world's affect on it (Bigwood, 1991), the body is always a social body, emerging in social (Crossley, N., 2001) as well as natural (Bigwood, 1991) relations. Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003, p. 421) notes that we carry the social inseparably within us. Similarly, philosopher and social psychologist Mead (1934/67, p. 140) argues that the self "is essentially a social structure", arising in social experience. Thus, "no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between our own selves and the selves of others" (Mead, 1934/67, p. 164), nor between our bodies and other human and non-human bodies and nature (Bigwood, 1991; Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003, p. 122) distinguishes between two coexisting perspectives: "my body for me" and "my body for others". Approaching a partly similar thematic from a different perspective, Mead (1934/67) argues that in order to develop a conscious sense of the self, we need to learn to see our selves through the attitudes that other individuals have towards us. Further, these particular attitudes of other individuals need to be organized into social or group attitudes, that is, into the attitudes of "the generalized other" towards us (1934/67, p. 158). However, Mead (1934/67) notes that the incorporation of the attitude of the generalized other works as a form of social control, influencing an individual's self perception. In the case of young women, the incorporation of the attitude of the generalized other, when involving bodily objectification, produces experiences of being a body for others (Liimakka, 2004a).

The most essential aspect of Merleau-Ponty's work for the current study is his discussion on bodily habit. For Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003), as well as for Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 2000), the layers of our previous experience form the habits of our being in the present. Habit consists of the various forms of bodily know-how and skills we have acquired, forming a learnt "purposive orientation towards situations with a specific meaning" (Crossley, N., 2001, p. 127). Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003,

p. 166) defines habit as “knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made”. In other words, habits are acquired and acted out through the body. As “a system which is open on to the world, and correlative with it” (1945/2003, p. 166), our bodily habit is deeply affected by the world.

Merleau-Ponty describes the habituality of the body as both the ability to stabilize and the capacity to incorporate new skills and abilities (Crossley, N., 2001). Consequently, part of our habituality is the possibility to change our habits and expand the range and meaning of our experiences (Weiss, 2008). As habitual bodies we have the ability to incorporate abilities, objects and other people into part of our bodily schema, our bodily know-how (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003, pp. 164–166). As an example, Merleau-Ponty describes how a blind man’s walking stick within time becomes incorporated within the man’s body schema, and thus **transforms from its original status as an outside object into something that is experientially part of the man’s body and its movements**. As such, habit is also a basis for our agency: “Habit expresses our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments” (1945/2003, p. 166). Thus, it is habit that “enables us to engage the world in new and different ways” (Weiss, 2008, p. 236).

Acquiring a new habit involves acquiring a new meaning – and it is the body, often through its movements, which understands and grasps the new meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003). Moving our bodies is a way “to gain an ever more variegated sense of ourselves and to be capable of manipulating the world and acquiring new skills” (Rouhiainen, 2008, p. 246). Consequently, changing the way she moves can change the way a woman inhabits her body and the world – an aspect which has been explored by feminist scholars (Chisholm, 2008; Grimshaw, 1999; Wright & Dewar, 1997).

However, feminists have pointed out that Merleau-Ponty’s account lacks an acknowledgement of a gendered body, as located within societal hierarchies (Stawarska, 2006; Young, 2005), and have argued for the necessity to locate women’s experiences within both the materiality of the body and societal structures (Allen-Collinson, 2011). In order to fully address the societal constructedness of bodily habituality – and to locate the exploration of agency within power relations (Ronkainen, 2008) – the current study utilizes Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology.

3.2 SOCIETALLY STRUCTURED HABITUALITY

Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990, 2000) argues that as members of social groups, such as social class or gender, individuals learn to incorporate societal hierarchies in their bodily dispositions, tastes and affects. These learnt bodily ways of being form

a habitus, “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 82–83). As inscribed in the body, habitus functions outside discourse or consciousness (1977), forming “a corporeal knowledge” that provides a practical understanding of the world (2000, p. 135). Consisting of our past experiences, habitus produces a “practical hypotheses” which guides our present choices (1990, p. 54) and produces particular desires and aspirations that symbolize happiness for an individual (2000, p. 150).

A particular group habitus arises out of similar societal conditions producing similar experiences in individuals within that social group. This provides a “practical mutual understanding” among the members of a social group (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 145). Further, as products of “similar conditions and conditionings”, individuals find in the conduct of their peers “the ratification and legitimation” of their own conduct, which further enforces among them a perspective of the current state of things as natural and self-evident (2000, p. 145). However, this does not mean that, for example, all women from a working-class background have the same experiences. Rather, Bourdieu (1977) perceives habitus as providing a statistical likelihood for members of a particular social group to have confronted similar situations and experiences.

In referring to habitus as “history turned into nature”, Bourdieu (1977, p. 78) argues that individuals are a product of their history without consciously realizing it. Thus, our history and the societal conditions that created it become internalized in our bodily dispositions. This forgotten history creates a perspective in which the shared social and societal world appears as self-evident and natural for members of a particular social group. Bourdieu (1977, pp. 164–166) calls this shared, taken-for-granted perspective of social reality *doxa*. *Doxa* belongs to the universe of the undiscussed and undisputed. Consequently, the shared group experience as a product of societal power hierarchies remains beyond the universe of things that can be talked about – or thought about.

Bourdieu (1977, 1990) discusses habitus as a structured structure and a structuring structure – in other words, as a structure that through internalizing the logic of its original structuring continues to structure itself by the same logic. Though habitus can change in response to new experiences (Bourdieu, 2000), the changes happen within the “conditioned and conditional freedom” imposed by the historical and social conditions that structured the habitus (1990, p. 55). Since habitus is a “principle of regulated improvisations” (1977, p. 78), even rebellion against the habitus happens in habitual ways (Weiss, 2008, p. 230). Thus, in Bourdieu’s account, habitus tends to confirm itself and seek conditions of its realization instead of change. Bourdieu does suggest, however, that social change is possible through critical reflexivity.

In Bourdieu's theory, habitus is always related to the social field, that is, the social and societal context that structured it. He argues that during moments of objective crisis, when the field changes and the habitus is no longer compatible with the field, the habitus becomes visible. This enables the individual to take a critical distance from the habitus, which was previously constructed as self-evident doxa, and through critical reflexivity find possibilities for initiating social change (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 168–169). The questioning of self-evident doxa enables an individual to challenge the dominant social order and discourses through verbalizing the repressed experiences that previously belonged to the universe of the undiscussed (1977, pp. 168–171). Bourdieu (2000, p. 163) further argues that since those who occupy awkward, less advantaged social positions “are forced to keep watch on themselves and consciously correct the ‘first movements’ of a habitus that generates inappropriate or misplaced behaviours”, they are more likely to become aware of that which is taken for granted by others. Thus, a marginal social position with an “anxious habitus” might facilitate critical reflexivity.

Some feminists have found Bourdieu's discussion of habitus as overdetermined in terms of structures imposing themselves on (female) agents (Lovell, 2000; McNay, 1999). In *Masculine Domination*, a book focusing explicitly on gender, Bourdieu (2001) describes women's submission in rather universalistic terms and focuses on discussing women's complicity with their domination, without much acknowledgement of occasions of resistance (Fowler, 2003; McNay, 1999). Consequently, feminists appropriating Bourdieu's ideas have often explored the possibilities for gender change within habitus (e.g., Hills, 2006; McLeod, 2005; McNay, 2000, 2008). McNay (1999, p. 109) argues that Bourdieu's concept of the social field has important implications for exploring gender identity and change, since “the embodied potentialities of the habitus are only ever realized in the context of a specific field”. McNay (1999) suggests that the late capitalist society provides possibilities for individuals to move across different social fields, thus potentially intensifying the lack of fit between the gendered habitus and the field and creating space for reflexive awareness and social transformation. Then again Adkins (2003, p. 22) suggests that, instead of a potential force of social transformation, reflexivity could be defined as “a habit of gender in late modernity”, a part of contemporary women's habitual gendered way of being.

In his later production, Bourdieu (2000) seems to modify his earlier ideas on habitus and critical reflexivity. He argues that “giving way to habits of thought”, as in emphasizing consciousness-raising as a means for political liberation, ignores “the extraordinary inertia which results from the inscription of social structures in bodies” (2000, p. 172). Thus, critical reflexivity is not enough to change a bodily habitus. Instead, “only a thoroughgoing process of countertraining, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete's training, durably transform habitus”

(2000, p. 172). Bourdieu seems to refer to the necessity of a *bodily* countertraining in order to restructure one's bodily structuredness. However, Bourdieu did not elaborate on how this process of countertraining could happen. The current study utilizes Merleau-Ponty's explication of bodily habituality, including the idea of the body as an agent of change, in order to elaborate the possible process of bodily countertraining.

3.3 HABIT(US), CHANGE AND AGENCY

In order to explore the possibility of change within young women's habitual body relations, the current study utilizes the concept of agency. Agency has often been conceptualized and explored as resistance towards the dominant ideologies and discourses. As such, agency has been considered to require critical reflection. In perceiving agency foremost as a capability for critical reflexivity and/or as a capability for discursive resistance, agency is located in the sphere of the (conscious) mind. However, power relations and agency are also negotiated and acted out within and through bodies (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Berg, P., 2010a; Coole, 2007). The body realizes its own agency through its material capacities for situating itself differently, acting differently and experiencing differently (Coole, 2005, 2007; Ronkainen, 1999, p. 220), as well as through emerging anew in its self and world relations (Bigwood, 1991; Coole, 2005), thus restructuring its habituality (Crossley, N., 2001; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003; Weiss, 2008).

Honkasalo (2006, 2008, 2009) notes that we have learned to think of agency as consisting of something mental and individual, something that is based on choice, rationality and intention, and which brings with it societal change. This perspective is incapable of theorizing agency as embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003), as sometimes irrational and unconscious (London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004), as a relational and reciprocal action that is dependent on other agents and their motions (Honkasalo, 2009; Kennelly, 2009), and as sometimes being mainly about a "small" agency of enduring within one's condition (Honkasalo, 2006, 2008, 2009). Feminists have further argued for the need to address agency in terms of real-life practices, emotions and selfhood, as well as raising the possibility of collective agency (London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004; McNay, 1999, 2000, 2003).

The current study assumes that, as habitual bodies, the possibility to restructure one's bodily habituality is a necessary prerequisite for agency. I further assume that the restructuring of bodily habituality can happen with the help of critical reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1977), but it also requires that the body acquires new habits (Bourdieu, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003) and new forms of relating to itself and to its

surroundings (Bigwood, 1991; Coole, 2005). Further, the transformations within our body-world relation do not necessarily require our explicit awareness (Weiss, 2008, p. 237).

Theoretically, I base the possibility to restructure one's bodily habituality on Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2003) definition of habit as a body's capacity to incorporate abilities, objects and people into its habituality. Thus, as argued by N. Crossley (2001), it is our very habituality that enables a change within our individual and collective habituality. **Social transformation is possible only because the "events of the present do not pass away into nothing but rather cumulate and sediment"; consequently, our "actions of today have a durable impact upon the actions of tomorrow" (Crossley, N., 2001, p. 135).** In other words, the habit(us) we have constructed is the basis for constructing a new habit(us). For Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 2000), habitus restricts our understanding of it and the possibilities for transformation. However, the structuredness of habit(us) can be seen as a necessary **frame and platform on which to build and initiate agency and change within the habit(us) and the structures that structured it.**

The current study addresses agency as a relationship between possibilities, resources and conditions (Ronkainen, 2008, p. 388) for experiencing one's body in particular ways within current societal power relations. Thus, I perceive agency as "a specific engagement with the world whose meaning can only be derived from its location in the social order" (McNay, 2008, p. 163). I explore the realization of agency as happening both through and within critical reflexivity *and* the world of the corporeal. Thus, I argue that new or changed meanings can be acquired and created by a critical, conscious reflection of the mind *and* by new ways of inhabiting one's body and/or the world, produced by individual and collective corporeal practices, **orientations and sensations which can sometimes be unconscious or unintended.** Further, I maintain that these forms of agency actualize in social and corporeal relations to others, sometimes in forms that might appear to the outside observer as small or insignificant.

3.4 EXPLORING YOUNG WOMEN'S EMBODIED AGENCY

According to previous research (see chapter 2), the body relation of many contemporary Western young women involves experiences and practices of body dissatisfaction, habitual body monitoring and appearance management. This has been found to be the case particularly among white, heterosexual, middle-class young women (Evans et al., 2004; Grogan, 2008; Hesse-Biber, 2007). This study sets out to explore the body experiences of contemporary young, white, Finnish women who study in an upper secondary school or university. I further explore

their possibilities for embodied agency and change within their habitual body and world relations.

I assume that an individual's habitual body experience is constructed in relation to societal power relations manifesting in the collective group habitus, yet individuals and social groups also possess capabilities for a variety of agencies within and in relation to wider social, cultural and societal power structures. Further, the body itself possesses the capability to transform its habituality. The study sets out to explore the following questions:

- What kind of body experiences and practices do the young women describe in their accounts? (I, II, III, IV)
- What kind of cultural, group and individual body ideals do the young women express? (I, II, III)
- How are the young women's descriptions of body experiences and practices related to their descriptions of socio-cultural body ideals and contexts? (I, II, III)
- What kind of agencies are sought and found in the young women's accounts? (I, III, IV)
- How could a negatively experienced body relation be transformed into a more positive one? (IV)

4 MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1 GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS

To explore the relationships between an individual, social groups and society as manifesting in the individual's body experience from a social psychological perspective, I utilized in this dissertation different qualitative research methods and materials. The choice of different methods was guided by the assumption that the group level is an important mediator in the individual-society relation.

More specifically, I utilized in this dissertation both collectively and individually produced accounts of body experience, namely, focus group discussions (I, II) and individually written accounts (I, III, IV). I assumed that utilizing a focus group method would provide an exploration of normative, socially shared understandings as formed, expressed and suppressed within a particular group context (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). Moreover, I expected the individually written accounts to contain more personal accounts, possibly providing a different perspective on the group norms expressed in the social context of focus groups. These assumptions are supported by previous research (Gill, 2008b; Gill et al., 2005; Liimakka, 2004a, 2004b). This utilization of two different data collection methods enabled me to better contextualize the young women's accounts in a particular situation and to examine possible differences in their accounts of body experiences, practices and ideals as produced in the group context of focus groups and in the individual context of writing an account. Further, it enabled exploring whether group and individual contexts differ in the way the young women describe, present and enact agency.

I also utilized two different methods of analysis, coding inspired by grounded theory (I, II) and an interpretative phenomenological analysis (III, IV), in order to elaborate on their socially shared understandings and the nuances of individual experiences. These two methods of analysis were chosen in order to enable both a phenomenological exploration of the experiential accounts and an exploration of the social processes within the focus groups.

This dissertation consists of three sub-studies. Next, I briefly describe the methods for data collection and analysis used in this study (4.1). After that, I present the three sub-studies (4.2).

4.1.1 FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are organized group discussions exploring specific topics given by the facilitator of the discussion (Bloor et al., 2001; Wilkinson, 2008). While interviews are typically characterized by interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, in focus group research the participants are encouraged to interact with each other (Bloor et al., 2001). This characteristic of focus group discussions creates interactive situations that “have a life of their own” (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993, p. 51), thus requiring the facilitator of the discussion to have a basic knowledge of group dynamics and the ability to moderate a group process (Wilkinson, 2008).

Wilkinson (2008, p. 187) argues that in comparison to interviews, focus groups are more naturalistic, resembling everyday conversation, because “they typically include a range of communicative processes – such as storytelling, joking, arguing, boasting, teasing, persuasion, challenge and disagreement”. Thus, focus groups can be seen as providing a platform for social performances, such as performing gender (Gill, 2008b, p. 105; Gill et al., 2005). However, focus group data is not tied to any particular interpretative framework, but is open to different methods of analysis (Wilkinson, 2008). Yet scholars have argued that the social and interactional side of focus groups should be integrated within the analysis of focus group data (Smithson, 2000; Wilkinson, 2008). Further, the “interactional complexity” of focus groups has been argued to be more likely to invoke evaluations and positionings than expressions of individual experiences, thus making a phenomenological analysis of focus group data challenging (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 71).

The recommended number of participants within a single group discussion typically ranges from four to eight (Wilkinson, 2008). This number of participants guarantees a range of opinions, yet still makes it possible to identify speakers when transcribing the discussion from a tape recorder. In the current dissertation, the number of participants in each focus group ranged from two to eight. In this study, **group discussions with eight participants seemed to produce a stronger opposition between the “dominant voices” (Smithson, 2000) and the silent ones.** The group discussions with four to five participants produced a more balanced interaction among the participants while still providing a range of perspectives. The group discussion with only two participants resembled an intimate discussion between friends – which, in this particular case, it was.

As events of communication, focus groups enable exploring the interaction between the social and the personal (Millward, 1995). Focus groups provide insights particularly into group norms, group and communication processes, and the processes of socially constructing knowledge (Bloor et al., 2001; Kitzinger, 1994). Yet focus groups can also provide a context which mobilizes the “latent identifications and common experiences shared by group members” (Farnsworth

& Boon, 2010, p. 610). Focus group data is influenced by the social interaction emerging in the group situation (Hydén & Bülow, 2003; Smithson, 2000). A group can stimulate new thoughts and ideas, counter-arguments and diverse perspectives in its participants (Frey & Fontana, 1993; Millward, 1995). A group situation can also suppress individual expressions and create conflicts and pressures (Bloor et al., 2001; Frey & Fontana, 1993). Still, tensions and disagreements might prove especially fruitful in the analysis through enabling, for example, an exploration of ideologies and experiences that inform people's accounts (Kitzinger, 1994; Smithson, 2000).

A tension might also emerge if group discussion participants perceive the facilitator and/or the discussion topics as representing a different (more privileged) social world from their own (Nairn, Munro, & Smith, 2005), thus making the amount of similarity between the facilitator and the discussion participants in terms of group memberships, such as gender, social class and age, an important issue to consider (Smithson, 2000). However, a group situation can enable participants to join together in resisting the positions that are offered to them by the facilitator (Nairn et al., 2005), possibly reducing the effects of the power relation between the researcher and the research participants.

4.1.2 WRITTEN ACCOUNTS

In contrast to focus groups and individual interviews, written accounts as a method of collecting data provide an "interaction free zone" to some extent; the individual has no verbal and nonverbal reactions from an interviewer or peer discussants to observe while forming her responses to the topic. Thus, although the social context is still implicitly present (Mead, 1934/67), writing might provide a situation in which a young woman may more freely elaborate on her personal understandings about the topic and the way she expresses this understanding. For example, writing a diary creates a space in which a writer can "expose or evaluate herself without it being inappropriate or frightening" (Jokinen, 2004, p. 119) and ponder her own perspectives in relation to the perspectives offered by others (Jokinen, 2004; Willig, 2009). Thus, reflecting on one's experience through writing can provide a way towards "constructing, and holding on to" one's "own truth" (Willig, 2009, p. 182).

Within phenomenological research, many scholars have analysed their own written narratives of their experiences, often produced within a longer period of time (Allen-Collinson, 2011; Bigwood, 1991; Willig, 2009). Writing a singular written account as a research participant, as in the current study, differs from keeping a long-term diary as a researcher. Yet writing a singular account in a research context may still enable those assumed to be "critically reflexive" in

particular to engage in reflective meaning-making activity. For young people, the act of writing individually may offer a safe space to elaborate on their own thoughts and experiences on sensitive body topics (see Aaltonen, 2001; Silvennoinen, 2001).

Written accounts can take the form of a multitude of styles, ranging from very structured to meditative and fragmentary contemplations (Silvennoinen, 2004). The content and form of written accounts is influenced, among other things, by the instructions and the context of writing. In comparison to interaction-based research methods, the researcher's lesser influence on the content of written accounts is both a benefit and a drawback. The context of individual writing may contain fewer requirements to adapt to social or group norms or to the researcher's implicit expectations and enable more reflection in relation to, for example, social norms. However, since the researcher may have no further opportunity to make further inquiries about the content of the written accounts, many issues of interest might remain unexplored or unclear. Thus, some studies have combined written accounts with verbal accounts produced in individual interviews (Puuronen, 2004) or group discussions (Välimaa, 2001), a combination that is also utilized in memory work (Haug et al., 1987; Gillies et al., 2004; Oinas, 2001).

4.1.3 GROUNDED THEORY-INSPIRED CODING

Grounded theory is a data-based method of analysis aiming to build a theory from the research material or in relation to the research material (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The originators of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967), criticized social science research for focusing on testing theoretical hypotheses without problematizing the actual theories. Instead, they assumed that a data-based process of analysis would help to construct a theory that corresponds to the researched reality. However, due to disagreements between its original creators, the grounded theory approach has since developed into two different strands (Morse et al., 2009; Silvonen & Keso, 1999). Despite these differences, the "second generation" of grounded theory researchers is searching for a common ground between the different versions of grounded theory (Morse et al., 2009). Further, new developments have been advanced, such as a constructivist formulation of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009).

Recently, many studies have begun to utilize grounded theory as a method of analysis while simultaneously drawing from a particular theoretical approach (e.g., Swoboda, 2006). Thus, Willig (2008b) distinguishes two forms of using grounded theory: the full version and the abbreviated version. The abbreviated version makes use of coding inspired by grounded theory in order to identify and categorize meaning and experience. The current dissertation followed the abbreviated version. Thus, following Willig (2008b, p. 45), I have conceptualized my approach as "grounded

theory–inspired coding”. I used grounded theory–inspired coding to map the social contexts framing individual experiences and the social processes in accounting for body experiences and agency.

More specifically, I followed the grounded theory approach developed by Strauss and Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), but only utilized their suggested techniques of coding and categorizing. The process of data analysis begins with open coding: events, interactions or actions are compared with others for similarities and differences in order to give them codes, in other words, “conceptual labels” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12). In the current dissertation, I coded the data line by line, utilizing many of the expressions used by the research participants. The following stage of axial coding groups codes together as categories and relates the categories to each other. Finally, the process of selective coding aims to define a central category and unify all the categories around it. The emerging theory or model is then integrated around the central category. Throughout the analysis, the formulated codes and categories are compared to each other in order to define the hierarchical relations between them. Thus, grounded theory is described as a method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Throughout the analytic process, tools such as writing memos and drawing diagrams are utilized in order to develop and reflect upon the emerging ideas and interpretations of the data.

In this study, I applied grounded theory (I, II) as a procedure of analysis in utilizing its coding process, as described above. Thus, instead of a new theory, the end result of my analysis process is a model that I constructed based on grounded theory–inspired coding and categorizing of the data with the help of insights from my chosen theoretical framework. Consequently, I did not even try to approach the data without (experiential or theoretical) preconceptions. The original grounded theory ideal of approaching the data without preconceptions is nowadays mostly considered to be impossible to realize (Charmaz, 2008; Willig, 2008b).

I chose grounded theory–inspired coding as a method for analysing the focus group data, since it allowed me to explore the experiential accounts *as produced* within a social group process, yet without reducing the described experiences to mere discursive constructions nor reducing the socially constructed experiential accounts to single individuals. The emphasis of grounded theory on processes (Charmaz, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) makes it suitable for exploring the social and communicative processes emerging in the focus group context. Epistemologically, I locate my approach of grounded theory–inspired coding in the middle ground between a realist and a social constructionist orientation of grounded theory due to my emphasis on contextuality and reflexivity in the analysis (see Willig, 2008b).

4.1.4 INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) focuses on a detailed study of personal lived experience and the meanings and sense making that the participants attach to and engage in in relation to their experiences (Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2011). Theoretically, IPA draws from phenomenology, hermeneutics and an idiographic focus on particularity (Smith et al., 2009). The method is described as phenomenological due to its focus on experiences and as hermeneutical because it emphasizes the centrality of interpretation. IPA involves a “double hermeneutic” process: the researcher is trying to make sense of the research participant, who is trying to make sense of the researched phenomenon (2009, p. 35). Thus, the accounts of experience produced by the research participants and the researcher are perceived as always involving interpretation.

IPA draws from both constructionist and realist ontology in seeing the person as a “cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 54). Though IPA assumes “a chain of connection between people’s talk and their thinking and emotional state” (2008, p. 54), it is acknowledged that the researcher has no direct access to the “true” or “inner” experiences of the research participants (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006, p. 110). Yet the data is still assumed to “tell us something about people’s involvement in and orientation towards the world, and/or about how they make sense of this” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 47). Thus, IPA attempts to achieve a glimpse of “a person’s current subjective mode-of-engagement with some specific context or aspect of the world” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 109). Experience can be explored, for example, through exploring what is important for a person in a particular context or addressing the person’s key “objects of concern” (2006, p. 111). Both the shared and the particular aspects of experience are of interest (Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2011).

The aim in an IPA study is to understand a particular phenomenon from the perspective of a particular group of individuals, to present “an intimate portrayal of individual experience” (Smith & Osborn, 2004, p. 230). Consequently, the experiences of a small, homogenous group of individuals are studied. Data collection should employ methods that allow the participants to provide detailed accounts in their own words (Smith et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviews are considered the most useful data collection method, along with other subjective accounts, such as diaries (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). Most IPA studies utilize interviews. Focus groups are seen as problematic in the study of individual experience due to the dynamics of social interaction influencing the produced accounts (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). Some IPA studies, however, have analysed focus group data, yet this has required developing an analysis protocol drawing from discursive elements (Palmer, Larkin, de Visser, & Fadden, 2010; Tomkins & Eatough, 2010).

The process of analysis in IPA is somewhat similar to grounded theory in proceeding from initial notes and comments towards grouping comments into themes, and finally condensing the results into a few main themes (Smith & Osborn, 2004, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). Both IPA and grounded theory utilize a systematic process of identifying themes and categories, work from individual cases towards an overall picture, and employ categorization in order to systematically reduce the data into key themes that characterize the explored phenomenon (Willig, 2008b, p. 72).

Thus far, IPA has been the most extensively utilized within health psychology (Smith, 2011). Some scholars have found IPA's utilization of philosophical phenomenology (Giorgi, 2010) and its phenomenological emphasis on participant accounts, open-ended data collection and researcher's self reflexivity (Allen-Collinson, 2009) to be insufficient. Further, some IPA studies have been found to lack an interpretative emphasis (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The current study explicitly employed Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and analysed participant accounts produced with open-ended instructions, including the researcher's own account. Further, I positioned and interpreted the individuals' experiential accounts within the wider socio-cultural context and the context of data collection in order to "make sense of the mutually constitutive relationship between 'person' and 'world'" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 117).

In comparison, interpretative phenomenological analysis and grounded theory both share a commitment to openness towards the research material and a similar process of analysis proceeding from codes/notes towards categories/themes in order to construct a theory or model around one or several central categories/themes. However, in opposition to the varied forms of grounded theory, IPA is more focused and explicit in defining its ontological and epistemological assumptions arising from particular theoretical roots. Grounded theory enables the collection of a large amount of data in order to make generalizations from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 15), while IPA prefers a detailed analysis of a small amount of data in order to produce a detailed description of experience that has theoretical generalizability (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 56). Some of the differences between grounded theory and IPA can be located in the time and research contexts of their emergence, grounded theory being developed by sociologists in the 1960s and interpretative phenomenological analysis by psychologists in the 1990s.

Instead of using these methods for comparative purposes, however, the current study employs different methods that complement each other to produce a multilayered account of individual(ized) body experiences within socio-cultural contexts. Next, the three sub-studies using different mixtures of the methods discussed above are presented.

4.2 SUB-STUDIES

4.2.1 SUB-STUDY I: BODY EXPERIENCES, AGENCY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

This sub-study explored young women's accounts of body experiences and agency as related to socio-cultural contexts and ideals and as produced in a group (focus groups) and individual (written accounts) context.

The data of the sub-study consists of three focus group discussions and 22 individually written accounts by 19 young Finnish women. The young women were aged between 17 and 18 years. They studied in upper secondary schools (referred to as high schools in article I) in Helsinki. The research material was collected in 2001. The individual accounts were written after the group discussions.

One focus group consisted of eight participants from an upper secondary school emphasizing sports, and another of eight participants from a regular upper secondary school. These focus group discussions were held at the schools of the participants. The participants were selected randomly by their teachers. The third focus group consisted of two participants who knew each other beforehand but studied at the time in different schools, one at a Steiner-based upper secondary school and the other at a regular upper secondary school. This group discussion was held at a youth centre for girls. One young woman participated in the study only by writing an individual account. These three young women volunteered to take part in the study after reading my announcement of the research project in a youth magazine.

I focused on accounts from upper secondary school students, a group that has been extensively studied in previous research (see chapter 2), in order to explore their possibilities for embodied agency. As future adult consumers, this group of young women is heavily targeted with cultural messages about attaining the ideal feminine body. The construction of the research context itself, in offering young women particular representations (see article I), enabled me to explore their ways of relating to those representations. In order to provide the possibility for multiple perspectives and experiences to be expressed in the study, young women from different school contexts were asked to participate in the study.

The focus group discussions focused on the themes of physical appearance, cultural body ideals, the body within social relations and everyday embodiment in general (see appendix A). To facilitate the group discussions, at the beginning of each discussion I showed five images of women cut out of magazines and asked the young women to comment on them (I). The length of the focus group discussions ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. The focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim.

After the group discussion I asked the young women to write about their body experiences. I gave the young women 13 topics to choose from (see appendix B). Most young women wrote on one topic, but three of them wrote two separate pieces about different topics. The length of the written accounts varied from a few sentences to two pages. The written accounts apparently formed a space in which the young women could comment, oppose or elaborate on the topics discussed in the focus group – and even present perspectives contrary to those they had expressed in the group discussion.

The contexts of conducting the focus groups differed. The participants from the upper secondary school emphasizing sports had seen me the day before the group discussion (their teacher had asked me to give a short presentation about social psychology to their class). Thus, I had a chance to tell them about the study in person. The participants from the regular upper secondary school had had no personal contact with me before the group discussion. One of them asked me before the group discussion if I wanted to determine in the study whether they are anorectics. The focus group held at the youth centre consisted of two friends who had volunteered to take part in the study; their focus group discussion contained the most personal tone and mostly lacked the self presentations I interpreted as being produced within other group discussions (see sections 5.2 and 5.3).

The analysis of the focus group discussions and written accounts utilized grounded theory–inspired coding, as presented in section 4.1.3. The results of the sub-study are presented in article I.

4.2.2 SUB-STUDY II: CULTURAL BODY IDEALS AND INDIVIDUAL BODY PRACTICES

This sub-study explored young women's accounts of body ideals and body practices as produced in the group context of a focus group.

The data is comprised of four focus group discussions. The participants were Finnish first and second year students studying social sciences, most with a major in social psychology, in a university in southern Finland. Their age ranged from 19 to 23 years. Of the 16 participants, 14 were women and 2 men. Two focus groups were comprised of women only, and two groups included one man. The focus groups were conducted in 2004 in the university facilities. The length of the focus group discussions ranged from one to two hours.

The focus group participants were presented ten statements, always in the same order, and they were asked to comment on the statements. The statements were chosen as a means to provoke lively discussion and debate. The statements focused on embodiment, spatiality and culture (see appendix C). In this dissertation I focused

on analysing the young women's discussion of three particular statements that presented arguments about body relations, social attention to bodies and body care. The discussion about these three statements formed a cohesive whole in all the groups.

The focus group discussions were facilitated by a young, female social sciences student who had previous experience in conducting interviews. Presumably, she embodied a similar habit(us) as most of the participants in this sub-study. This might have enabled a more relaxed social interaction. It is also possible that her presence as a facilitator reinforced the presence of a particular taken-for-granted group habit(us) in relation to embodiment. I assumed that the students of social sciences were likely to be familiar with the current health knowledge. Through their studies, they acquire tools for both absorbing and criticizing this knowledge (Autio & Lombardini-Riipinen, 2006).

The focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. I analysed the group discussions over the three particular body statements by utilizing grounded theory-inspired coding (see section 4.1.3), with the aim of creating a model that condenses the main themes and their interconnections in the young adults' talk over these particular statements. The rest of the discussion was used as a background to reflect upon the group context and the contents of the whole discussion.

The results of the sub-study are presented in article II.

4.2.3 SUB-STUDY III: BODY EXPERIENCES, AGENCY AND THE CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

This sub-study explored young women's written accounts of body experiences and women's studies as a possible context influencing young women's body experiences and agency and their interpretations of these.

The data of this sub-study consists of 13 accounts about body experience written by Finnish university students of women's studies. The participants were young women aged between 23 and 28 years, from three different Finnish universities. Their major disciplines ranged from the humanities and social sciences to theology – at the time, women's studies could not be studied as a major subject in Finland. All of the young women had been studying women's studies to some extent, and the majority of them had completed the basic courses or more in women's studies.

I assumed that the written accounts by the students of women's studies would reflect their familiarity with feminist idea(l)s on embodiment, such as the idea of critical (feminist) reflexivity. Silvennoinen (2001) found that in writing about their own body experiences, university students of physical education related their accounts to the ideas on embodiment that were presented to them during their studies.

The written accounts were collected at a two-day national meeting of students of women's studies as part of a workshop on body experience, which I directed in 2002. I utilized the workshop as a context for collecting data, yet the workshop was not originally organized for research purposes, but as a part of the student-led programme of the national meeting. The theme of the meeting was the body. The workshop consisted of a short presentation, in which I discussed different perspectives on women's embodiment, and after this, the participants engaged in a reflective activity of writing accounts of bodily experience followed by a general discussion. The written accounts were first and foremost meant to be individual self-reflections. The participants had the choice of keeping their written accounts to themselves or allowing them, anonymously, to be included in my study. The participants were informed of this choice before they started writing. Slightly more than half of the participants permitted me to use their accounts. The study includes my own written account from the workshop. This enabled reflexivity about my assumptions and experiences on embodiment.

The participants were asked to write under the title "My experience of my body". The title was accompanied with brief but open instructions to allow the participants to define the content of their accounts as freely as possible (see appendix D). The length of the written accounts ranged from one to three pages. I analysed the written accounts using interpretative phenomenological analysis (see section 4.1.4).

The results of this sub-study are presented in articles III and IV. The next chapter presents the main results from all the sub-studies compiled together.

5 THE PROBLEMATIC, PROBLEMATIZED AND AGENTIC BODY

This chapter presents the main results of the study. The original results from each sub-study are presented in the articles (I, II, III, IV). Here I focus on compiling and recapitulating the results from all three sub-studies into a coherent whole. When necessary, I engage in comparisons between the sub-studies and/or the types of data. Despite differences in the given topics of the focus group discussions and written accounts, similar themes were discussed by the young women in all three sub-studies. How they discussed the themes, however, varied between the sub-studies and between the two types of data. The topics presented here mostly contain findings from more than one sub-study.

In the following, the first two sections discuss young women's body experiences as constructed in relation to two contemporary socio-cultural ideals: the ideal of a healthy and beautiful body (section 5.1) and the ideal of a resistant, independent and agentic self (section 5.2). The next two sections present the forms of agency the young women aimed at and utilized in their body and world relations: individual and group agency (section 5.3) and Cartesian and corporeal agency (section 5.4). Corporeal agency as a potentially promising form of agency, yet lacking a sufficient exploration and conceptualization in research, is further elaborated on through the young women's descriptions of their experiences of empowering embodiment (section 5.5). The last section (section 5.6) explores a theme that was explicitly problematized by only a few young women, yet implicitly discussed by many others: the female body as located within the current Finnish heterosexual gender order.

5.1 THE IDEAL BODY: THE IMPERATIVES OF BEAUTY AND HEALTH

The most often mentioned perspective on embodiment in all three sub-studies was physical appearance, despite the differences in the given discussion topics and titles of the written accounts. This perspective was common even among the students of social sciences and women's studies, who were not prompted with the word "appearance" or related expressions. Appearance was mostly discussed in relation to the current cultural body ideal, described as combining slimness, fitness and beauty.

Välilmaa (2001, p. 104) notes that since the Western body ideal is familiar to all, individuals need to form their own stance toward the ideal. Most of the young

women in the current study made explicit attempts to define their own relationship to the prevailing cultural ideal, yet the sub-studies revealed differences in their ways of doing this. The upper secondary school students typically discussed their personal relation to the cultural ideal as “mediated” by other people (I). The students of social sciences discussed the relatedness between individual body relations and the dominant cultural body ideal by evaluating individuals’ motives for engaging in body practices (II). Among the students of women’s studies, many drew from feminist ideas, such as women’s bodily oppression and objectification, in discussing the relation between their own body experiences and the cultural body ideal (III).

The current cultural body ideal and the practices of trying to acquire the ideal body were mostly criticized in the focus group discussions (I, II), while in the individually written accounts, the young women often “confessed” to trying to achieve the ideal body or feeling that they should try to achieve it, despite their criticism of the ideal (I, III). The experiential accounts of physical appearance contained expressions of dissatisfaction and satisfaction, anxiety and pleasure – usually described as resulting from the perceived amount of resemblance between one’s own body and the cultural ideal.

The students of social sciences also identified health as an attribute of the normative cultural body ideal (II). Some of them noted how the current cultural and societal discourses often combine health and appearance in their marketing of particular body ideals. They further argued that the pursuit of health can lead to unhealthy body practices and outcomes, such as body image distortions. Similarly, many scholars (Bordo, 1993; Kwan, 2009; Markula et al., 2008) have argued that the ideals of health and beauty intertwine in the current cultural body discourse. Why then was health critically discussed by only some of the young women in the current study?

The beauty imperative may influence young women’s body relation more than the health imperative. Alternatively, the beauty imperative may be more readily “available” for critical discussion and reflexion. Beauty as a normative cultural expectation posed on women has a long history (Tseëlon, 1995). In contrast, the current societal emphasis on health campaigning directed at a general population (Crawford, 1980, 2006; Lupton, 1995), involving *every body* (Harjunen & Kyrölä, 2007, p. 23), can be argued to be a newer phenomenon, at least in its present form. Thus, the idea of health as a culturally imposed normative requirement might yet mostly remain in the cultural sphere of undisputed and undiscussed doxa (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 168). Then again, the idea of appearance as a cultural imperative imposed on women has been in the feminist sphere of dispute and critical reflection for a long time (e.g., de Beauvoir, 1949/1972; Bordo, 1993; Wolf, 1991), thus enabling critical reflection on this imperative. Consequently, within individual(ized) body relations, appearance becomes defined as a “bad” motive while health is maintained

as a “good” motive – in relation to the same body practices (II; Liimakka, 2004b). Further, university studies may better enable criticism of the health ideal than the upper secondary school context. Yet the context of women’s studies might emphasize women’s objectification through appearance to such an extent that other ideals contributing to the cultural body norm might remain unaddressed.

5.2 THE IDEAL SELF: THE IMPERATIVES OF INDEPENDENCE, RESISTANCE AND AGENCY

Besides the beauty and health imperatives defining the ideal body, the young women’s accounts in the current study manifested another set of normative imperatives defining the ideal self: independence, resistance and agency. These imperatives require the self to resist the beauty and health imperatives and to remain independent and agentic in relation to the culturally imposed ideals. These imperatives were manifest in all three sub-studies.

The ideal of a “strong” and resistant individual was most clearly visible in the written accounts of the students of women’s studies (III). In writing about appearance and sexuality, the students of women’s studies seemed to draw from the ideal of an “independent girl” (Bjerrum Nielsen & Rudberg, 2007) in aiming to gain independence from cultural ideals, other people and their own bodies. In this perspective, the ideal self manages to resist the influence of cultural ideals and the objectification, oppression and sexualization of her body. However, when an attempt at this type of “strong” resistant agency fails, the self is perceived as incompetent and faulty, as incapable of living up to the standards of a “good feminist” (Rubin et al., 2004, p. 33). The idea of personal and collective resistance as part of a proper feminist habitus, requiring continuous work with one’s attitudes and practices, can partly be traced to second-wave feminism. For example, Bordo (1993, p. 184, italics in the original), in writing about body practices, argues that “we must *work to keep* our daily practices in the service of resistance to gender domination, not in the service of ‘docility’ and gender normalization”. Conforming to cultural standards is thus perceived as surrendering to the cultural ideology of femininity and to the objectifying, masculine gaze (Haug et al., 1987).

The ideal of an independent, resistant and autonomous individual can also be traced to a wider Western ideology of individualism (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This ideology expects young women to show autonomy and independence in relation to the cultural beauty ideal, yet the culture signals through continuous visual presentations that (female) beauty is an important value shared by others in the collective (I, III). This cultural contradiction forms the ground for young women’s contradictory body experiences (Liimakka, 2004a, 2004b). In the focus

group discussions, the young women's self-presentations drew from the ideal of independence and non-conformity in relation to the cultural body ideal (I, II). Yet according to the written accounts, the actual experience of reaching independence and resistance in relation to the cultural body ideal had been less successful (I, III).

From the perspective of individual experience, the ideology of collective or individual resistance to objectifying practices produces a continuous moral self-evaluation in terms of the amount of one's resistance or surrender (III). Thus, the imperative of resistance, drawing both from Western individualism and feminist ideals, has similarities to the imperatives of health and beauty in producing a critical moral evaluation of one's own body practices *and* the body practices of others (II). Consequently, instead of producing a collective resistant "front", this perspective might produce group divisions among individuals and an inner craving to belong to the morally "superior" group – the group of resistant, strong, "healthy" agents (see Crawford, 1994; Liimakka, 2004b; Oinas, 2001). The tendency to construct group divisions on the basis of the morality of body practices manifested in the way the upper secondary school students and the students of social sciences used health in drawing boundaries between themselves and the unhealthy "other" (I, II) (Crawford, 1994; Willig, 2009). However, the written accounts, along with some implicit expressions and silences in the group discussions, imply that at least some of the young women actually fell into the category that they themselves defined as "unhealthy".

Satisfaction with one's body was a goal mentioned by many of the young women, particularly the upper secondary school students. Appearing as an individual who is satisfied with her body and accepts it the way it is almost forms a norm in itself (III, p. 814). One way to solve the contradiction between conforming to the cultural body ideal or conforming to the cultural ideal of resistance and independence is to attain – or claim – a status of satisfaction with one's body in which the body *appears* as good enough (that is, slim, beautiful and healthy enough) and the self *appears* as autonomous enough (as not conforming too much to the body ideal). This was manifest in the way the students of social sciences positioned themselves as "healthy", yet they simultaneously resisted the health imperative (see for similar results Crossley, M. L., 2003). Thus, an individual young woman needs to mould her body *and* her attitude – but within the appropriate limits that maintain a self-image of appearing as agentic and autonomous (III; Liimakka, 2004a).

Further, the self imperative of independence, resistance and agency is in line with current commercial strategies. Scholars have noted how the image of an empowered and agentic "new girl" is used as a marketing strategy to attract contemporary young women (Gill, 2007, 2008a; Malson et al., 2011). In opposition to the positions of a "vulnerable girl" (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005, pp. 45–48) or an "abused girl", the ideal identity of an "independent girl" (Bjerrum Nielsen & Rudberg, 2007), a

“new, robust, young woman with agency and a strong sense of self” (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 39) may seem attractive. As Bordo (1993, p. 296) notes, people “want to feel that they are self-determining agents” and thus tend to “believe their own choices to be individual, freely motivated, ‘for themselves’”.

The ideal of an autonomous and independent individual can also partly emerge from the Finnish context. Finnish culture maintains a mythic belief in the strong individual, who is an independent and self-sufficient survivor (Ronkainen, 2001b, p. 148). Thus, agency becomes defined in opposition to weakness and dependency. In the context of gendered violence, Ronkainen (2001b, 2008) analyses how our dichotomical thinking separates agency from victimhood, making the position of the victim culturally undesirable and hard to obtain. She describes how the Finnish welfare state demands that the victim of violence take up the position of a strong agent responsible for ending the violence (2008). The same perspective can be applied to the cultural contradiction that works to construct the young women’s relation to the dominant cultural body ideal: a strong and agentic self – a Western, consumerist, Finnish and feminist ideal – is seen as responsible for preventing her own “victimization” by the gendered cultural body ideal.

5.3 INDIVIDUAL AGENCY AND GROUP AGENCY

In the previous section I argued that agency forms in itself an imperative in contemporary Western society. This imperative of agency draws from an individualistic understanding – it is the individual who needs to resist and be independent. Typically, agency has been perceived as an individual and mental activity (Honkasalo, 2006, 2008, 2009), thus drawing from a Cartesian perspective emphasizing the individual’s mind as separate from the individual’s body and the minds and bodies of other individuals (Grosz, 1994, p. 7). In this and the subsequent section, I discuss the different forms of agency that seemed to be realized in the young women’s accounts. I focus particularly on accounts that seem to expand the traditional understanding of agency in describing agency as a relational (Honkasalo, 2009; Kennelly, 2009) and corporeal (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003) phenomenon.

According to Ronkainen (1999, pp. 216–220), agency requires the capability to take a reflective distance and be able to negotiate new or changed meanings. The upper secondary school students, the students of social sciences and the students of women’s studies all engaged in these strategies of agency both individually and as a group. Some of the upper secondary school students highlighted the individuality of their own bodies, in opposition to the cultural ideal as a mass product, and defined the culturally ideal womanhood as a spectacle (I). Further, they distanced themselves from the cultural body ideal and their own body practices, at least temporarily,

through laughing together at the cultural ideal and at their own attempts to achieve the ideal. The students of social sciences distanced themselves from the cultural body ideal by posing it as a marketing strategy, something that is “fed” to people, and by distancing themselves from those who comply excessively with the ideal (II). The students of women’s studies negotiated the meaning of the cultural body ideal by locating it as following a particular gendered logic, rooted in current societal power relations (III).

By drawing from both group and individual accounts, the current study provided multiple perspectives on the possibility of group agency. The focus group situations motivated young women to give agentic self-presentations – they wanted to *appear* as agents in the eyes of the others (I, II). A group situation can emphasize resistance and agency as a group norm and, consequently, induce individuals to give agentic self-presentations. However, it is also possible that individuals find it easier to resist the influence of cultural ideals in a group situation – possibly on the levels of performance *and* personal experience (I). The peers in the group situation can offer a context where young women can both initiate and reciprocate acts of agency and resistance. In the focus group discussions with the upper secondary school students, the young women were supported by their peers in an ironical mimicking, criticizing and mocking of the cultural body ideal (I). Shared laughter, irony and irritation in relation to the cultural ideal seemed to bond the young women together, at least temporarily. Further, laughing together in the group discussion at other people’s comments about their bodies enabled the young women to shift the positions of objectification: those commenting on their bodies became objects of laughter and evaluation, even though it happened after the actual situations of becoming objectified. Through “rehearsing” together the strategies of resistance within a group situation, the young women may be better “armed” to realize these rehearsed strategies of agency in future real life situations.

Thus, group resistance, despite possible individual problems remaining under the surface, can function as an important venue for building up positions of agency in relation to the cultural body ideal. Scholars have noted that talking with each other about their body projects can create a sense of community and an experience of a shared project among girls (Routarinne, 1992, p. 109; Tolonen, 2001b, pp. 81–82). Yet the same group talk can also reinforce the experience of body imperfection as a self-evident and unavoidable part of young women’s life, thus confirming the necessity of engaging in body projects in attempt to reach the cultural ideal. According to Bourdieu (2000, p. 145), the experience of sharing a habitus reinforces it, since perceiving the similar perspectives, practices and experiences of other people with the same habituality legitimizes and ratifies the habitus.

For the students of women’s studies, the feminist “group” consciousness introduced to them through their studies might have given them various tools for

aiming at a more agentic body relation. Though feminism contains diverse ideas, the basic notion of the possibility of resistance against the prevailing gender ideology may enable agency as such – it presents individual and collective agency as possible. However, the group-level idea(I) of a “strong” feminist agent may also create a problematic imperative in itself (III), as discussed in the previous section. Different feminist “paradigms” have attempted to solve this problem in various ways. To put it simply, second-wave feminism poses the idea of a resistant group agency based on the assumed similarity of women’s experiences, while third-wave feminism describes a creative but rather individualistic agency somewhat based on the assumption that an individual experience of agency is equal to agency (Baumgardner & Richards, 2004; Bordo, 1993; Braithwaite, 2002; London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004). The currently emerging new “paradigm” of material feminisms aims to explore agency also from the perspectives of bodies and nature (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008), yet it is unlikely that many of the students of women’s studies in this study were familiar with this perspective at the time of data collection.

5.4 CARTESIAN AGENCY AND CORPOREAL AGENCY

The written accounts by the students of women’s studies manifested two types of agency. The accounts on *agency relating to the body* focused around attempts of resistance to the dominant cultural body ideal and conventional heterosexual roles. The accounts on *agency within the body* expressed experiences of overcoming the mind/body dichotomy and connecting bodily to the surrounding world. I conceptualize the accounts on agency relating to the body as *Cartesian agency* and the accounts on agency within the body as *corporeal agency* (III). Though the traditional Cartesian mind/body dichotomy formed an implicit frame for all the young women’s accounts in the current study, only the students of women’s studies discussed this dichotomy explicitly. Thus, the current and the following section focus mainly on their accounts.

By defining certain accounts on agency as Cartesian, I refer to an individualistic understanding of agency that emphasizes the young woman’s independence from culture, other people and her own body (III). As discussed in section 5.2, this type of agency, consisting of resistance, individuality and autonomy, forms a self-imperative in contemporary Western cultures. Cartesian agency lies within the assumed superiority and activity of the mind in relation to the inferior passivity of the body (Grosz, 1994, pp. 3–4); the young woman needs to change the way her mind perceives her body. This was something that many of the upper secondary school students, students of social sciences and students of women’s studies expressed that they attempt to do. However, this study, as well as other studies (Markula, 1995;

Rubin et al., 2004; Tolonen, 2001b), shows that changing one's *thinking* does not necessarily change one's *feelings* about the body. Or, in other words, drawing from Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2003) ideas on the body as the locus of perception, changing the way the mind perceives the body does not change the *body's* perception of itself and the world.

However, Cartesianism was a framework employed by the young women in their accounts on embodiment more generally, not just in relation to agency. The mind/body dichotomy is a culturally available discursive resource in describing physical experience (Gillies et al., 2004), probably partly because many body experiences are difficult to verbalize (Gillies et al., 2005; Jackson, 1994; Uotinen, 2010). Leder (1990) further argues that the whole mind/body dichotomy is borne out of the way we usually experience our bodies as an absence – we don't notice our bodies until we are forced to, for example, through illness, pain or other people's objectifying attention to our bodies. Studies show how distancing one's self from the body is a commonly utilized strategy in attempting to maintain agency when confronting a serious illness (Willig, 2009), suffering from chronic pain (Jackson, 1994; Osborn & Smith, 2006) or living with an ageing body (Paulson & Willig, 2008). Yet it is likely that the attempts at Cartesian agency work to maintain – or even enhance – the state of bodily alienation that apparently characterizes many young women's body relations.

In contrast, the women's studies students' descriptions of corporeal agency described the body as an agent that acts. They described corporeal agency as arising from the body and/or in bodily situations and contexts, such as in physical action (III, IV). These descriptions consisted of experiences of overcoming the mind/body dichotomy and experiences of bodily connection or merging with the surrounding world. Moments of experiencing corporeal agency led young women into realizing new capabilities, potentialities and strengths within their bodies. In these experiences, something changed in the way the young women inhabit their bodies and the way they inhabit the world as embodied agents.

The descriptions of corporeal agency contradict the idea that agency is found mainly as an individual independent of her body and the surrounding world. While Cartesian agency seems to be associated with the mind's capacity to create new meanings through critical reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1977; McNay, 1999) and to differentiate the self from the body and other bodies, corporeal agency is based on the bodily capacity to acquire new habits and create new meanings (Crossley, N., 2001; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003), to experience a mind-body connection and to experience connections between the embodied self and other bodies (Bigwood, 1991).

The typically suggested solution to the individual(ized) problem of a self-critical appearance consciousness, also sought by many of the young women in

the current study, is a critical (for some, feminist) consciousness in relation to the dominant cultural body ideal. The current study suggests that a new *bodily* consciousness is a necessary complement to critical reflexivity in order to transform an individual's embodied habit(us). The problem with mere critical reflexivity is that its transformative potential remains in the sphere of the mind, leaving the individual's embodied feelings and dispositions (Bourdieu, 2000) as well as embodied perceptions about the self and the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003) intact. The bodily process of transforming one's body experience, as described by the students of women's studies, is further elaborated on in the next section.

5.5 RE-EMBODIED: EMBODIMENT AS EMPOWERMENT

Since most young women have been socialized into a "still" and restricted physicality (Gordon et al., 2000; Hills, 2006; Young, 2005), momentary experiences of corporeal agency can be seen as a form of bodily countertraining as such in distracting an alienated and disembodied habit(us). Thus, embodiment can be empowering in transforming the young woman's previous experience of the mind watching self-critically over one's body into a new experience of an embodied self. Some of the students of women's studies explicitly described body experiences that had transformed the way they inhabit their bodies and the world (IV). Their self experience was transformed, at least momentarily, from an experience of "what I should be" or "what I should look like" to an experience of "I am", I exist. These transformations are probably due to a combination of critical feminist reflexivity *and* a (deliberate or accidental) process of bodily countertraining.

Some of the students of women's studies described their realization of "I am my body" as a key to a better self-body relation (IV). Their previous, rather dualist experience of a separate, problematic body was replaced with the experience of mind-body wholeness. Further, this experience was linked to the experience of a body-world connection. Some of the women's studies students described positive experiences in which there was no clear dividing line between their bodies and the world around them – their bodies inhabited the world and were being inhabited by the world, in a state of merging, as described by Bigwood (1991) and Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003, 1968). These experiences of mind-body connection and body-world connection formed a counter experience to what Young (2005, pp. 36–38) calls a typical feminine bodily orientation: an experience of a bodily "I cannot" and the body's discontinuous unity with itself and its surroundings. Further, they enabled the young women to experience "peak motivational states", which, according to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997, pp. 183–184), are inhibited by the experience of an objectified body.

The contexts that the students of women's studies described as providing them these empowering body experiences were sport, exercise, dance, sex and illness (IV). Why did physical activity have such a central role in the positively experienced transformations in one's body habit(us)? Merleau-Ponty (1945/2003) located bodily intentionality and the possibility to acquire new meanings, knowledge and skills in bodily movement (see also Rouhiainen, 2008). Physical activity provides a possibility to restructure one's bodily habituality in accommodating the body to new movements, postures, positions and positioning within its surroundings (Chisholm, 2008; Grimshaw, 1999; Tarr, 2008). Further, in enabling experiences of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Stelter, 2000; Willig, 2008a) physical activity may help young women to momentarily tune out of their habitual body relation (Crossley, N., 2004, p. 53). Since many women may lack previous positive experiences of physical activity (Haravon Collins, 2002; McDermott, 2000; Wright & Dewar, 1997) and feel awkward in their moving bodies (Young, 2005), physical activity can provide them with a new sense of actively being "in" one's body (Scott, B. A., & Derry, 2005).

However, engaging in sport, exercise and physical activity can also help to maintain – or increase – experiences of body dissatisfaction, self-critical appearance consciousness and body monitoring (Bulley et al., 2009; Liimakka, 2004b; Markula, 1995). As discussed by the students of social sciences, apparently "healthy" body practices, such as sport and exercise, can mask "unhealthy" pursuits of the cultural body ideal, possibly producing a distorted body image (II). Further, it may be difficult for women to take up social and physical space among the fields of sport, exercise and physical activity, which still carry traditional, hierarchical notions of gender and embodiment (Berg, P., 2010a; Hills, 2006; Thorpe, 2009).

Overall, the key to a better body relation among the students of women's studies in the current study seems to have been becoming *more embodied* (Liimakka, 2011) – a positively experienced *re-embodiment*. This can happen in many ways; physical activity is but one possible mode. The empowering body experiences described by some of the students of women's studies likely result from a combination of new experiences of physicality *and* their previous familiarization with feminist ideas. Feminism might enable women to identify and problematize their bodily alienation as a gendered experience, and consequently, seek out ways to redefine and reconnect with their bodies (IV). In a study by Wright and Dewar (1997), women described empowering experiences of bodily connectedness and sensual pleasure brought by their engagement in various physical activities – *and* most of the women self-identified as feminists. However, they still experienced pressure from the cultural body ideal as negatively influencing their own body relation, as did the women's studies students in the current study. An appearance-focused gender habit(us) structured collectively and individually over years and strongly supported by the current socio-cultural ideals is unlikely to experience a total transformation.

Further, individual possibilities for experiencing empowering embodiment and utilizing corporeal agency are structured by social and societal contexts. For example, athletes have described having experiences of easiness, euphoria and melting together with the environment when practising their sport (Stelter, 2000). Yet, factors such as an experience or a fear of sexual harassment can intervene with this euphoric merging (Allen-Collinson, 2011, p. 308). The next section ponders the limits of realizing corporeal agency and empowering embodiment by contextualizing young women's body experiences and agency within the current Finnish heterosexual gender order.

5.6 THE GENDERED GENDERLESS HABIT(US)

Besides the beauty and health imperatives, the normative cultural ideas of heterosexual gender relations also somewhat framed the young women's accounts, though often in an implicit form. A (gendered) habit(us) as inscribed in the body manifested in what was taken for granted and what was seen as "natural" and shared among the members of the same group. In the following, I focus on both what was discussed and what remained within the doxic world of the "undiscussed" and "undisputed" (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 166–168).

Gender issues were addressed differently in each sub-study. The upper secondary school students discussed heterosexual gender roles in relation to the cultural body ideal (I). They debated whether women's motivation to "do looks" stems from men's expectations or from women's beauty competition with each other. Both explanations, however, fall within the naturalized gender order which associates beauty work with women. They criticized the objectifying cultural ideology of female appearance as an asset to be evaluated by men and noted how they often received both wanted and unwanted feedback about their bodies in heterosexual contexts. This attention, whether experienced positively or negatively, often worked to enhance the young woman's consciousness of her physical appearance, thus reinforcing the distant and evaluative body relation (see also Calogero, Herbozo, & Thompson, 2009). Yet the heterosexual context was mostly missing in the upper secondary school students' accounts of agency; agency seemed to be found in solitude or in a group of young women.

In the accounts of the students of women's studies, heterosexual gender relations were most often discussed – and problematized – in relation to sexuality (III). Many of their descriptions of sexuality problematized the cultural roles of the woman (as the desired one) and the man (as the one who desires her) in sexual encounters. This attitude seemed to lead some of the young women into problematizing their own reactions and attitudes or denying sexuality altogether

in order to resist the position of the objectified and/or oppressed body. Although some of the women's studies' students gave positive descriptions of sexuality, overall heterosexual sexuality appeared as an area involving self-critical awareness about "complying" with conventional heterosexual roles. Descriptions of their own sexual desire were rare – instead, a desire for a resistant form of agency dominated the stage.

Somewhat similar attitudes – an avoidance of sexuality, sexual attractiveness and sexual desire – were expressed by Finnish students of women's studies in a study by Oinas (2001). Scholars (Bjerrum Nielsen & Rudberg, 2007; Oinas, 2001) have argued that women's sexual desire and heterosexuality is a missing theme in the Nordic discourse on gender equality. According to Oinas (2001, p. 186), Nordic equality feminism encourages girls and young women "to develop strong and independent identities, but at the cost of denying the developing body and sexuality". This results in a self presentation as "asexual-but-heterosexual", producing a disembodied middle-class identity of a "smart career woman", which is in opposition to the sexual and embodied working-class female habitus (Oinas, 2001, p. 75; Skeggs, 1997). For middle-class young women, this style may promise a position of appearing as a "strong" and independent agent, yet this position reinforces the disembodied habit(us) consisting of a distanced and self-critical body relation (III).

However, "Nordic new feminism", as conceptualized by Mühleisen (2007), has begun to counter the ideologies of the Nordic equality feminism with third-wave feminist ideas, arguing for the need for pleasure in relation to sexuality and consumer culture. According to Mühleisen (2007, p. 177), this trend is stronger in Nordic countries outside of Finland (but see Kontula, 2009, for a Finnish example of "Nordic new feminism"). The accounts of the women's studies students in the current study support this idea, seemingly drawing mainly from the second-wave feminist ideology. Overall, the current study supports the argument that "heterosexual agency as practices, life expectations and identity" needs to be brought to the centre of feminist debate (Oinas, 2001, p. 188).

The students of social sciences mostly referred only implicitly to gender in relation to embodiment, unless they were explicitly asked about gender. Thus, their discussions gave an impression of a gender neutral body in relation to the cultural beauty and health imperatives, with momentary "blips" of a few explicit referrals to gender (II). Scholars (Lahelma, 2012; Lempiäinen, 2000; Ronkainen, 2001a) have argued that beneath the assumed gender equality, Finnish society draws from an ideology of "genderless gender". According to Ronkainen (2001a, p. 45), "genderless gender" is created through a combination of a gender-neutral rhetoric of the individual self and hidden gendering processes, such as the sexualization of the female body. The ideology of "genderless gender" makes gendering processes

unspeakable (2001a); thus, it leaves young women mute in facing gendered phenomena, such as body dissatisfaction.

The subject position of an abstract individual without a gendered body may sound appealing for middle-class young women in promising agency, independence and the cultural capital of a “smart career woman” (Oinas, 2001, p. 75; Ronkainen, 2001a, pp. 51–52). However, the ideal of a genderless body – or, vice versa, the ideal of a disembodied gender – leaves the issue of the heterosexual gender order as inscribed in the bodily habit(us) with particular “self-evident” practices, hierarchies and desires intact. This might be one reason why descriptions of embodied agency within heterosexual contexts were mostly missing in the young women’s accounts.

It appears that a “proper” Finnish heterosexual habit(us) combines a somewhat gendered “look” with a genderless “outlook” on life. Thus, the ideologies of “bigger breasts” and gender equality (Annfelt, 2002) are fitted together on the level of everyday life practices, creating a doxic state of a naturalized, embodied gender order. A part of this gender order is a naturalization of the current state of young women worrying about their physical appearance. The Finnish culture might contain an imperative of equality, requiring a belief that the ideal of gender neutrality provides gender equality and, thus, that the *appearance* of gender neutrality should not be disturbed by explicit referrals to gender. Within the practices of monitoring and moulding one’s body, a belief in the agentic and resistant self and in the achieved gender equality, manifesting in gender neutrality, is supported by an ideology stating that doing looks is mainly about self-care – a belief that is in line with the current marketing strategies of the beauty, fitness and health industries.

6 DISCUSSION

I have focused in this dissertation on young Finnish women's body experiences and agency as enabled and restricted by socio-cultural contexts. One of the main results of this study is the "double burden" rising from the contradictory demands posed by the cultural body imperative *and* the cultural self imperative. I contextualize this thematic as embedded within the current commercialized, visualized and individualistic Western culture, a context I define as a "culture of appearances" (see section 6.1), producing an experience of a representational self (Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1996). I demonstrated in this dissertation that the current ideal self representation involves more than just the "correct" bodily appearance and health: it requires the representation of the self as an independent and resistant agent (I, II, III). In other words, this study found resistant individual agency itself to be a normative cultural ideal.

In showing the commonness of a self-critical and dissatisfied body relation and body monitoring practices as well as the centrality of physical appearance in young women's body experience, this dissertation confirms the results from previous studies (Frost, 2001; Grogan, 2008; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001; Välimaa, 2001). The ideal of a strong, independent and empowered "new girl" (Aapola et al., 2005; Bjerrum Nielsen & Rudberg, 2007) merely contributes to the social norm of appearing as a "strong" and resistant agent – leaving the experiences of body imperfection unchanged.

6.1 REPRESENTATIONAL SELVES IN THE CULTURE OF APPEARANCES

A central part of the young women's accounts in the current study was their personal relation to the socio-cultural expectation to present themselves as having a beautiful, fit and healthy body. For many, this relation contained experiences of dissatisfaction with the body and attempts to shape their bodies to fit the cultural norm – and attempts to resist the cultural body ideal and experiences of dissatisfaction with the self when resistance fails. I argue that the current Western context, defined here as the "culture of appearances", structures young women's body experiences and possibilities for embodied agency through highlighting the (female) self as foremost a representational self. I further maintain that the young women's focus on their external appearance is a reflection of both the current socio-cultural focus on the physical appearance of young women particularly (see

chapters 1 and 2) *and* the current overall cultural focus on external appearances of all kinds.

In current Western culture, the potential body, a virtual ideal fashioned by the cultural imagery, has become the criterion for one's own body (Näre & Oksanen, 2008). Hollow (2011, p. 27) argues that the individual body has become the material through which and upon which the current utopian impulse for self-improvement and the quest for a "perfect life" is to be performed. Yet Hollow (2011) maintains that the utopic "good place", which is something other than the current reality, can never be reached. Thus, individuals aiming to reach these ideals end up being dissatisfied with both their "failing" bodies and their "failing" selves (III). Dissatisfaction arises out of being between the ideal and the real, in striving to reach the impossible (Liimakka, 2004a, p. 8; Näre & Oksanen, 2008, p. 263).

Still, the impulse to attain the perfect body and self remains and must continuously be worked on (Hollow, 2011; Näre & Oksanen, 2008). Cultural body norms pose a continuous threat – or even a continuous state – of social dys-appearance (Leder, 1990, p. 96), an experience of one's body appearing as faulty and in need of correction (Bordo, 1993; Wolf, 1991). While the ideal body and the ideal self can never be reached, individuals can still work to maintain the external *representation* of these: to manifest an external *appearance* of the ideal beauty, health and agency – or at least manifest an external appearance of *trying* to reach these. After all, to show indifference in relation to these ideals would mean taking the risk of appearing immoral (Bordo, 1993; Crawford, 2006; Lupton, 1995).

The current cultural importance of physical appearances manifests, for example, in the increasing popularity and normalization of plastic surgery (Kinnunen, 2008; Leve et al., 2011), the increasing importance of physical appearance within work life (Warhurst et al., 2009; Witz et al., 2003) and the expanding markets of the beauty, fitness and health industries (Crawford, 2006; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006; Sarpila & Räsänen, 2011) as well as lifestyle magazines (Hollow, 2011). The impulse to reach for utopic body ideals is enhanced by continuous media messages about "fixing" one's external bodily appearance and health (Kyrölä, 2007; Markula, 2008; Rich, 2011). Thus, in current Western culture, young women are "programmed" to focus on external appearances.

The young women in the current study responded to the culture of appearances in two ways. On one hand, they were involved in a quest for the ideal body that would realize the ideals of beauty and health. At the same time, they were involved in a quest for an ideal self that would realize the ideals of agency, resistance and autonomy in relation to the cultural body imperatives. On the other hand, they were involved in another quest for an inner experience of well-being beyond the experience of the representational self. In other words, they were trying to reach the normative ideal body and the ideal self in their external physical and social

appearance while simultaneously trying to reach a subjective lived experience of their own bodies.

6.2 EMBODIED TRANSFORMATIONS

The experience of a representational self helps to elaborate why particular body experiences and forms of agency were experienced as empowering by the young women. These experiences mainly consisted of moments of forgetting the experienced importance of one's physical and social appearance. During these moments the habitual self experience of body monitoring, focusing on how one's body appears to others, was replaced by an experience of "I am my body", "I exist" (IV). These moments were often characterized by the *body* emerging as the subject of experience; instead of one's mind critically evaluating the body, as if being outside the body, the young woman was experiencing herself and her surroundings from *within* the body (see Scott, B.A., & Derry, 2005).

The described experiences of a body-mind connection and of bodily merging with one's surroundings form a "counter experience" to the experiences produced by the cultural body and self imperatives. The body and self imperatives found in this study draw from and reproduce the traditional Cartesian mind/body dichotomy in emphasizing the body as separate from the self and highlighting the importance of the mind gaining control over the body. This study found that Cartesian agency, emphasizing the mind, was not enough to change a bodily habit(us) – instead, corporeal agency, drawing from the agency of the body, was needed. Corporeal agency was actualized through finding new ways of moving and experiencing one's body; the body acquired novel ways of being and relating to itself and to its environment. Thus, one of the main findings of this study is that a long-term bodily habit(us) can be transformed, at least slightly, by the agency of the body itself, along with a critical reflexivity.

The momentary experiences of "I am my body", "this is me", accompanied by self-acceptance and a lack of critical evaluation of one's body, cause a blip in the female socialization in which *appearing for others* in a socially normative way is a central question. The physical appearance of a woman's body, as well as women's bodily behaviour, has historically been, and still is, considered a central moral issue, particularly in terms of sexuality (Duits & van Zoonen, 2006; Näre, 1992; Tseëlon, 1995). Consequently, women's bodily appearance and conduct are under public (Aaltonen & Honkatukia, 2002; Duits & van Zoonen, 2006) and personal (Saarikoski, 2001) surveillance and control.

However, at least some of the positive transformations in the embodied habit(us) seemed to happen within contexts which have been argued to be objectifying

environments, such as a gym or aerobics class (Brace-Govan, 2002; Lloyd, 1996; Maguire & Mansfield, 1998). As such, they might end up reinforcing the representational aspects of the experience of the self. Yet experiencing moments of forgetting the self-critical body surveillance *within* a context that might typically produce the body surveillance experience can be empowering as such in momentarily breaking a habitual bodily engagement with the culture of appearances. The context that originally constructed the habit(us) might provide a necessary platform, a frame, for possible changes as well.

6.3 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The current study explored the accounts of different groups of young women, utilized different research methods and drew from two theoretical perspectives. Thus, the study used triangulation in order to perceive young women's embodiment and agency from multiple perspectives (Yardley, 2008).

The combination of focus group discussions and written accounts was productive in demonstrating the differences in the young women's self presentations between the group and individual contexts. The utilization of grounded theory–inspired coding and interpretative phenomenological analysis in the same dissertation is more problematic: they are based on different theoretical backgrounds. Yet they also share much in common (chapter 4). The interpretative phenomenological analysis enabled me to explore the nuances of embodied experience. However, I did not want to examine the complex social interactions of focus groups phenomenologically; interpretative phenomenological analysis follows a different logic in exploring subjective meaning making within individually produced accounts (Smith et al., 2009). Utilizing grounded theory–inspired coding enabled me to attend to the social logic of constructing accounts in the context of focus groups, but still to relate the analysis to my chosen theoretical perspective.

The analysis in this study is based on my own (obviously) subjective interpretations. One likely context for my interpretations stems from my own “insider information” as a former upper secondary school student and a former student of social sciences and women's studies; another comes from my own embodied experience, something which I was able to address by studying my own account of body experiences, which was included in the written accounts (III, IV). Presentations of my work in seminars and conferences, feedback from anonymous referees of international journals and students' analysis of small parts of my data in courses on qualitative research methods have provided me with opportunities to remain open to alternative interpretations (see Willig, 2012, p. 59).

In discussing the possibility of transforming one's bodily habituality, this study has relied most on the accounts by the students of women's studies. Overall, their articulations of their body experiences were nuanced and highly reflective. The "density" of their accounts in relation to the questions in my study probably stems from my own background in women's studies and from the feminist emancipatory motivation of this dissertation. Further, their written accounts were produced in an informal meeting of students of women's studies, with the body as the theme of the meeting. Thus, they might have been particularly interested in the issues of the body and women's studies.

The body has long been a central issue in feminism and women's studies. Due to their likely familiarity with feminist theories of the body, the students of women's studies might have had a more conscious and reflexive relation to their own embodiment. As a group, the upper secondary school students and the students of social sciences likely lacked this "theoretically conscious" relation to embodiment. In general, young people may find corporeality a difficult topic to verbalize (Välilmaa, 2001). Thus, the open approach in the data collection, asking the students of women's studies to "write about your experiences of your body", might have been too challenging for the other two groups. Instead, they were given particular body topics to talk and write about.

The different methods and given topics in the data collection among the three groups of young women is both a limitation and a strength of the current study. Obviously, a "real" comparison between these three groups is impossible due to the differences in the data collection. Instead of comparisons, the current study aimed at providing a nuanced interpretation of contemporary young women's possibilities for realizing embodied agency. On a meta-level, this study followed the basic idea of grounded theory in collecting data with a view to developing a theoretical frame (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Each sub-study in this dissertation is a theoretical sample providing a particular perspective on embodiment and agency. As such, the current study provides "glimpses" into the different socio-cultural contexts of young women in experiencing and making sense of embodiment and agency.

Qualitative research aims at an in-depth exploration of rather small number of carefully selected individuals or cases in order to provide theoretical generalizability (Yardley, 2008, p. 238). The current study provides a general theoretical outline suggesting that the body experiences of contemporary Finnish young women are likely to be constructed in relation to cultural body and self imperatives. Yet one needs to be cautious in making theoretical generalizations. The accounts in this study were produced within particular contexts during a particular time; contemporary young women might describe different body experiences.

A major methodological limitation of this study is the utilization of mere verbal accounts in studying embodied experience. Language-based methods are likely to

be insufficient for exploring corporeal experiences (Liimakka, 2012). Verbalizing one's body experiences requires an amount of conscious reflection, thus leaving **body experiences and forms of agency that are below the threshold of being able to verbally reflect on them beyond the scope of the current study.** Further, drawing on **verbal accounts may lead to an overemphasis on themes that are culturally available** discursive resources, such as the mind/body dichotomy (Gillies et al., 2004, 2005).

6.4 THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

One of the main contributions of the current study is its theoretical and empirical discussion on the agency of the body. In this study, mere critical reflexivity did not help to affect significant changes within the self-critical body relation of many young women, as is shown by other studies as well (Markula, 1995; Murnen & Smolak, 2009; Rubin et al., 2004). Yet through corporeal experiences, in combination with critical reflexivity, some of the young women were able to inhabit their bodies in new and more empowering ways. Thus, in line with some other scholars (Coole, 2005; Honkasalo, 2006, 2009), I argue that agency should be rethought as something that extends further than how it is currently understood as consisting of rationality, mentality and consciousness and being located within an individual. Instead, agency should be perceived as inherently corporeal (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2003), as rising from a spectrum of agentic capacities (Coole, 2005), sometimes unexpectedly (Crossley, N., 2001) and acted out in relation to or with other bodies, individuals and collectivities (Coole, 2007; Honkasalo, 2009).

The phenomenological emphasis in this dissertation enabled me to stay open to the effects of the young women's accounts to change my perceptions of embodiment and agency (Willig, 2012, p. 37). As a result of a long process of analysis, I came up with the theme of corporeal agency – something that I was not originally “looking for”. In starting this study, my own understanding of agency was based on the dominant cultural Cartesian model emphasizing the mind's control over the body, without my realizing this. The data-based “finding” of corporeal agency prompted me to further sophisticate my chosen theoretical perspective. This led me to focus on the corporeal process of transforming bodily habituality. Overall, this study has followed a circular process of moving between theory and data. The theory has enabled me to open myself to the data, and the data has enabled me to open myself to the theory.

The combination of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body and Bourdieu's reflexive sociology enabled me to *embody* the body, to address the body as corporeal and material, and to study the embodied relation between individual experiences and collective structures. Even more importantly, it enabled me to explore and theorize

the possibility of transforming a bodily habit(us). This theoretical framework could well be applied in future social psychological studies addressing embodiment, particularly in studies with a critical, political and/or emancipatory emphasis.

It is important to evaluate what consequences the interpretations in this dissertation might have for those whose body experiences it claims to represent (Willig, 2012, pp. 60–61). My focus on individual experiences of bodily empowerment might reinforce the individualistic ideology and the “empowerment discourse” that markets the ideal of individual freedom, yet urges individuals to engage in collective body regimentation practices (see section 2.1). Then again, this dissertation can be read as providing a counter-narrative to the dominant cultural narrative assuming and reinforcing (young) women’s body anxiety as inevitable and “natural”. Women’s “normative discontent” (Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1984) with their bodies may have become a gendered norm in itself. M. Murray (2000) argues that critical health psychologists should help in developing counter-narratives to the cultural master narratives that maintain the prevailing power structures. Thus, the current study may offer avenues for young women to explore (and express) alternative ways of embodying themselves within or despite the given cultural constraints.

6.5 FUTURE STUDIES

This study found that an individual bodily habit(us) can change through corporeal agency and critical reflexivity. Yet I was unable to elaborate on how, when and under what circumstances this process can happen. Consequently, future studies should address questions such as: What is the relation between critical reflexivity and corporeal agency in realizing individual (or even collective) change? What kind of contextual factors enable and restrict the realization of corporeal agency? Corporeal agency could also be utilized to explore the construction of body experiences within bodily sub-cultures that have emerged and gained popularity recently, such as burlesque. What kind of transformations within individual (or collective) bodily habituality – if any – might engagement in alternative body cultures enable?

The possible role of the group as a “mediator” in the embodied relation between an individual and society requires further research. For example, experiencing empowering moments of re-embodiment or entering into a conscious process of bodily countertraining *as a group* might have stronger effects both collectively and personally than mere individually experienced re-embodiments. In this study, phenomena I conceptualized as “group agency” and “corporeal agency” appeared to be distinct. Yet combining these two forms of agency together, with critical reflexivity involved, in future research could prove useful. A preliminary example of this is

provided by a women's studies course taught by B. A. Scott and Derry (2005), combining critical feminist reflexivity within a group context of lectures with a **bodily countertraining through practising particular physical activities together**. The students reported gaining a new, more empowered experience of their bodies from **taking part in the course**.

Another major issue for future studies is the development of methods and approaches that enable studying embodiment from a less language-based perspective. Further, the scope of body research should be broadened to those embodying more marginal positions in society.

6.6 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation demonstrated that a negatively experienced habitual body relation can be modified, yet mere strategies of the mind are insufficient to effect this change. In developing educative and/or therapeutic body image interventions and empowerment programs, a more bodily based approach should be utilized, in combination with providing tools for critical reflexivity. Further, the empowering potentials of a group context should be utilized. Body image interventions and empowerment programs should incorporate elements of **bodily countertraining** (e.g., physical activity, dance), critical individual reflexivity (e.g., writing a diary) and critical collective reflexivity (e.g., facilitated group discussions). A positively experienced re-embodiment can be enacted in many ways, such as finding **empowering new ways to move one's body in dance or physical activities**. Yet care needs to be taken in order not to invoke the habitual experience of bodily objectification in these activities. In order to have empowering effects, physical activities and other explorations of new physicalities should offer enough "flow" experiences to allow the individual momentarily to forget to carry out body surveillance. Increasingly popular leisure time practices emphasizing body-mind wholeness, such as yoga, seem to address the same thematic as the results of this study, thus providing a promising avenue for exploring the possibilities to experience **the embodied self in more empowering ways**.

In addition, professionals in educational contexts, particularly in contexts explicitly involving the body, such as physical education, should be attentive to the possible gendered messages and cultural body imperatives that they might be implicitly or explicitly implying through their verbal and nonverbal practices. In addressing young people's health and well-being, uncritical reference to current cultural body ideals should be avoided. Instead of focusing on measures and ideals directly linked with external physical and social appearances, such as body weight, professionals should focus on enabling young people to find positive corporeal

experiences of being in their bodies. Thus, young people should be encouraged to focus on their subjective experiences of well-being (“how am I?”) instead of emphasizing the importance of the representational self (“how do I look?”) measured according to current market standards.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The current dissertation demonstrated that individual body experiences are constructed within societal power relations and are deeply affected by cultural ideals and norms and social contexts. Yet it also showed that the body is much more than a passive recipient – it is an active agent in creating and re-creating its relation to itself and to its physical and social environments. In this study, young women’s resistance to cultural body imperatives by drawing from the self imperatives of independence and agency merely maintained a state of bodily alienation while not appearing to help much in confronting cultural body ideals. This Cartesian agency draws from and contributes to the traditional mind/body dichotomy. Yet corporeal agency, based on the body’s ability to incorporate abilities, objects and new skills into its know-how and to emerge anew in relations to itself and the world, enabled some young women to re-embody themselves in empowering ways. This likely happened with the help of critical reflexivity, enacted individually and in a group.

The culture of appearances urges individuals into an endless quest after the ideal body and self. Based on this study, I suggest that an alternative “quest” might be more productive – the body’s quest towards re-embodying itself.

REFERENCES

- Aaltonen, S. (2001). Ruumiin rajat ja sukupuolinen häirintä [The borders of the body and sexual harassment]. In A. Puuronen & R. Välimaa (Eds.), *Nuori ruumis* [The young body] (pp. 107–120). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Aaltonen, S., & Honkatukia, P. (2002). Kovat kimmat otsikoissa ja otsikoiden takana [Tough girls in the headlines and behind headlines]. In S. Aaltonen & P. Honkatukia (Eds.), *Tulkintoja tytöistä* [Readings on girls] (pp. 207–223). Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society & Finnish Youth Research Network.
- Aapola, S., Gonick, M., & Harris, A. (2005). *Young femininity: Girlhood, power and social change*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Abbott, B. D., & Barber, B. L. (2010). Embodied image: Gender differences in functional and aesthetic body image among Australian adolescents. *Body Image*, 7(1), 22–31.
- Adams, G., Turner, H., & Bucks, R. (2005). The experience of body dissatisfaction in men. *Body Image*, 2(3), 271–283.
- Adkins, L. (2003). Reflexivity: Freedom or habit of gender? *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20(6), 21–42.
- Ahern, A. L., Bennett, K. M., & Kelly, M. (2011). A qualitative exploration of young women's attitudes towards the thin ideal. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 16(1), 70–79.
- Alaimo, S., & Hekman, S. (2008). Introduction: Emerging models of materiality in feminist theory. In S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 1–19). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Albrecht, T. L., Johnson, G. M., & Walther, J. B. (1993). Understanding communication processes in focus groups. In D. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 51–64). London: Sage.
- Allen-Collinson, J. (2009). Sporting embodiment: Sports studies and the (continuing) promise of phenomenology. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, 1(3), 279–296.
- Allen-Collinson, J. (2011). Feminist phenomenology and the woman in the running body. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 5(3), 297–313.
- Allen-Collinson J., & Hockey, J. (2010). Feeling the way: Notes toward a haptic phenomenology of distance running and scuba diving. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 46(3), 330–345.
- Annfelt, T. (2002). More gender equality – bigger breasts? Battles over gender and the body. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 10(3), 127–136.

- Autio, M., & Lombardini-Riipinen, C. (2006). Tahroja ruokaympyrässä – nuorten näkemyksiä terveydestä ja terveellisestä elämäntavasta [Stains on the food pyramid – young people’s views of health and a healthy lifestyle]. In S. Karvonen (Ed.), *Onko sukupuolella väliä? Hyvinvointi, terveys, pojat ja tytöt [Genderized health and well-being: Does gender matter?]* (pp. 42–52). Helsinki: The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, the Finnish Youth Research Network and the National Institute for Health and Welfare.
- Baker, J. (2010). Claiming volition and evading victimhood: Post-feminist obligations for young women. *Feminism & Psychology, 20*(2), 186–204.
- Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Baumgardner, J., & Richards, A. (2004). Feminism and femininity: Or how we learned to stop worrying and love the thong. In A. Harris (Ed.), *All about the girl: Culture, power and identity* (pp. 59–68). New York: Routledge.
- Bayer, B. M., & Malone, K. R. (1996). Feminism, psychology and matters of the body. *Theory & Psychology, 6*(4), 667–692.
- Beauvoir, S. de (1972). *The second sex*. London: Jonathan Cape. (Orig. *Le Deuxième Sexe*, 1949.)
- Becker, A. E. (2004). Television, disordered eating, and young women in Fiji: Negotiating body image and identity during rapid social change. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry, 28*(4), 533–559.
- Becker, A. E., Burwell, R. A., Gilman, S. E., Herzog D. B., & Hamburg, P. (2002). Eating behaviours and attitudes following prolonged exposure to television among ethnic Fijian adolescent girls. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 180*(6), 509–514.
- Beltrán-Carrillo, V. J., Devís-Devís, J., Peiró-Velert, C., & Brown, D. H. K. (2012). When physical activity participation promotes inactivity: Negative experiences of Spanish adolescents in physical education and sport. *Youth & Society, 44*(1), 3–27.
- Bengts, C. (2000). *Looking good: A study of gendered body ideals among young people*. Umeå: Umeå University.
- Berg, P. (2006). What sets us in motion? Physical exercise and sports hobbies in Finland 1981–2002. In M. Liikkanen, R. Hanifi, & U. Hannula (Eds.), *Individual choices, permanency of cultures: Changes in leisure 1981–2002* (pp. 141–175). Helsinki: Statistics Finland.
- Berg, P. (2010a). *Ryhmärajoja ja hierarkioita: Etnografinen tutkimus peruskoulun yläasteen liikunnanopetuksesta* [Group distinctions and hierarchies: An ethnographic study on physical education] (Social psychological studies 22). Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Department of Social Research.

- Berg, P. (2010b). Ruumis on sielun peili? Liikuntakasvatus minän hallintana [The body is the mirror for the soul? Physical education as self governance]. In K. Komulainen, S. Keskitalo-Foley, M. Korhonen, & S. Lappalainen (Eds.), *Yrittäjyyskasvatus hallintana* [Enterprise education as governance] (pp. 124–155). Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Bigwood, C. (1991). Renaturalizing the body (with the help of Merleau-Ponty). *Hypatia*, 6(3), 54–73.
- Bjerrum Nielsen, H., & Rudberg, M. (2007). Fun in gender – Youth and sexuality, class and generation. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 15(2–3), 100–113.
- Blackman, L., & Venn, C. (2010). Affect. *Body & Society*, 16(1), 7–28.
- Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M., & Robson, K. (2001). *Focus groups in social research*. London: Sage.
- Bordo, S. (1993). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, western culture, and the body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian meditations*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brace-Govan, J. (2002). Looking at bodywork: Women and three physical activities. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 26(4), 403–420.
- Braithwaite, A. (2002). The personal, the political, third-wave and postfeminisms. *Feminist Theory*, 3(3), 335–344.
- Brocki, J.M., & Wearden, A. J. (2006). A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and Health*, 21(1), 87–108.
- Brown, D. (1999). The social meaning of muscle. In A. Sparkes & M. Silvennoinen (Eds.), *Talking bodies: Men's narratives of the body and sport* (pp. 99–117). Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, Sophi.
- Budgeon, S. (2003). Identity as an embodied event. *Body & Society*, 9(1), 35–55.
- Bulley, C., Donaghy, M., & Payne, A. (2009). Personal meanings, values and feelings relating to physical activity and exercise participation in female undergraduates. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 14(6), 751–760.
- Buote, V. M., Wilson, A. E., Strahan, E. J., Gazzola, S. B., & Papps, F. (2011). Setting the bar: Divergent sociocultural norms for women's and men's ideal appearance in real-world contexts. *Body Image*, 8(4), 322–334.

- Burgess, G., Grogan, S., & Burwitz, L. (2006). Effects of a 6-week aerobic dance intervention on body image and physical self-perceptions in adolescent girls. *Body Image, 3*(1), 57–66.
- Burkitt, I. (1999). *Bodies of thought: Embodiment, identity & modernity*. London: Sage.
- Burns, M., & Gavey, N. (2008). Dis/orders of weight control: Bulimic and/or “healthy weight” practices. In S. Riley, M. Burns, H. Frith, S. Wiggins, & P. Markula (Eds.), *Critical bodies: Representations, identities and practices of weight and body management* (pp. 139–154). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Calogero, R. M., Herbozo, S., & Thompson, J. K. (2009). Complimentary weightism: The potential costs of appearance-related commentary for women’s self-objectification. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 33*(1), 120–132.
- Calogero, R. M., & Thompson, K. J. (2009). Potential implications of the objectification of women’s bodies for women’s sexual satisfaction. *Body Image, 6*(2), 145–148.
- Campos, P., Saguy, A., Ernsberger, P., Oliver, E., & Gaesser, G. (2006). The epidemiology of overweight and obesity: Public health crisis or moral panic? *International Journal of Epidemiology, 35*(1), 55–60.
- Cash, T. F., & Pruzinsky, T. (2002). Future challenges for body image theory, research, and clinical practice. In T. F. Cash & T. Pruzinsky (Eds.), *Body image: A handbook of theory, research, and clinical practice* (pp. 509–516). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2008). Grounded theory. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 81–110). London: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2009). Shifting the grounds: Constructivist grounded theory methods. In J. M. Morse, P. N. Stern, J. Corbin, B. Bowers, K. Charmaz, & A. E. Clarke (Eds.), *Developing grounded theory: The second generation* (pp. 127–193). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Chesters, L. (1994). Women’s talk: Food, weight and body image. *Feminism & Psychology, 4*(3), 449–457.
- Chisholm, D. (2008). Climbing like a girl: An exemplary adventure in feminist phenomenology. *Hypatia, 23*(1), 9–40.
- Coole, D. (2005). Rethinking agency: A phenomenological approach to embodiment and agentic capacities. *Political Studies, 53*(1), 124–142.
- Coole, D. (2007). Experiencing discourse: Corporeal communicators and the embodiment of power. *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations, 9*(3), 413–433.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology, 13*(1), 3–21.

- Crawford, R. (1980). Healthism and the medicalization of everyday life. *International Journal of Health Services*, 10(3), 365–388.
- Crawford, R. (1994). The boundaries of the self and the unhealthy other: Reflections on health, culture and aids. *Social Science and Medicine*, 38(10), 1347–1365.
- Crawford, R. (2006). Health as a meaningful social practice. *health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 10(4), 401–420.
- Crossley, M. L. (2003). “Would you consider yourself a healthy person?”: Using focus groups to explore health as a moral phenomenon. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 8(5), 501–514.
- Crossley, N. (1996). *Intersubjectivity: The fabric of social becoming*. London: Sage.
- Crossley, N. (2001). *The social body: Habit, identity and desire*. London: Sage.
- Crossley, N. (2004). The circuit trainer’s habitus: Reflexive body techniques and the sociality of the workout. *Body & Society*, 10(1), 37–69.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Csordas, T. J. (1990). Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology. *Ethos*, 18(1), 5–47.
- Davis, K. (1995). *Reshaping the female body: The dilemma of cosmetic surgery*. New York: Routledge.
- Deem, R., & Gilroy, S. (1998). Physical activity, life-long learning and empowerment – Situating sport in women’s leisure. *Sport, Education and Society*, 3(1), 89–104.
- Dion, K., Berscheid, E., & Walster, E. (1972). What is beautiful is good. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 24(3), 285–290.
- Doise, W. (1986). *Levels of explanation in social psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Duits, L., & van Zoonen, L. (2006). Headscarves and porno-chic: Disciplining girls’ bodies in the European multicultural society. *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 13(2), 103–117.
- Duits, L., & van Zoonen, L. (2007). Who’s afraid of female agency? A rejoinder to Gill. *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 14(2), 161–170.
- Eagly, A. H., Ashmore, R. D., Makhijani, M. G., & Longo, L. C. (1991). What is beautiful is good, but...: A meta-analytic review of research on the physical attractiveness stereotype. *Psychological Bulletin*, 110(1), 109–128.
- Engel, A. (1994). Sex roles and gender stereotyping in young women’s participation in sport. *Feminism & Psychology*, 4(3), 439–448.
- Eskes, T. B., Duncan, M. C., & Miller, E. M. (1998). The discourse of empowerment: Foucault, Marcuse, and women’s fitness texts. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 22(3), 317–344.

- Evaldsson, A.-C. (2003). Throwing like a girl? Situating gender differences in physicality across game contexts. *Childhood, 10*(4), 475–497.
- Evans, J., Rich, E., & Holroyd, R. (2004). Disordered eating and disordered schooling: What schools do to middle class girls. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 25*(2), 123–142.
- Farnsworth, J., & Boon, B. (2010). Analysing group dynamics within the focus group. *Qualitative Research, 10*(5), 605–624.
- Feingold, A. (1992). Good-looking people are not what we think. *Psychological Bulletin, 111*(2), 304–341.
- Flegal, K. M., Graubard, B. I., Williamson, D. F., & Gail, M. H. (2005). Excess deaths associated with underweight, overweight, and obesity. *JAMA – The Journal of the American Medical Association, 293*(15), 1861–1867.
- Frank, A. W. (1991). For a sociology of the body: An analytical review. In M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth, & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The body: Social process and cultural theory* (pp. 36–102). London: Sage.
- Frederick, C. J., & Shaw, S. M. (1995). Body image as a leisure constraint: Examining the experience of aerobic exercise classes for young women. *Leisure Sciences, 17*(2), 57–73.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T.-A. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21*(2), 173–206.
- Fredrickson, B. L., Roberts, T.-A., Noll, S. M., Quinn, D. M., & Twenge, J. M. (1998). That swimsuit becomes you: Sex differences in self-objectification, restrained eating, and math performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(1), 269–284.
- Frey, J. H., & Fontana, A. (1993). The group interview in social research. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 20–34). Newbury Park: Sage.
- Frisén, A., & Holmqvist, K. (2010). What characterizes early adolescents with a positive body image? A qualitative investigation of Swedish girls and boys. *Body Image, 7*(3), 205–212.
- Frost, L. (1999). “Doing looks”: Women, appearance and mental health. In J. Arthurs & J. Grimshaw (Eds.), *Women's bodies: Discipline and transgression* (pp. 117–136). London: Cassell.
- Frost, L. (2001). *Young women and the body: A feminist sociology*. London: Palgrave.
- Frost, L. (2005). Theorizing the young woman in the body. *Body & Society, 11*(1), 63–85.

- Fullagar, S. (2002). Governing the healthy body: Discourses of leisure and lifestyle within Australian health policy. *health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 6(1), 69–84.
- Furnham, A., Badmin, N., & Sneade, I. (2002). Body image dissatisfaction: Gender differences in eating attitudes, self-esteem, and reasons for exercise. *The Journal of Psychology*, 136(6), 581–596.
- Gill, R. (2007). 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), 69–80.
- Gill, R. (2008a). Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in contemporary advertising. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(1), 35–60.
- Gill, R. (2008b). Body talk: Negotiating body image and masculinity. In S. Riley, M. Burns, H. Frith, S. Wiggins, & P. Markula (Eds.), *Critical bodies: Representations, identities and practices of weight and body management* (pp. 101–116). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gill, R., Henwood, K., & McLean, C. (2005). Body projects and the regulation of normative masculinity. *Body & Society*, 11(1), 37–62.
- Gillies, A., Harden, A., Johnson, K., Reavey, P., Strange, V., & Willig, C. (2004). Women’s collective constructions of embodied practices through memory work: Cartesian dualism in memories of sweating and pain. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 43(1), 99–112.
- Gillies, A., Harden, A., Johnson, K., Reavey, P., Strange, V., & Willig, C. (2005). Painting pictures of embodied experience: The use of nonverbal data production for the study of embodiment. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2(3), 199–212.
- Giorgi, A. (2010). Phenomenology and the practice of science. *Existential Analysis: Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis*, 21(1), 3–22.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Gordon, T. (2006). Girls in education: Citizenship, agency and emotions. *Gender and Education*, 18(1), 1–15.
- Gordon, T., Holland, J., & Lahelma, E. (2000). *Making spaces: Citizenship and difference in school*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Greco, M. (1993). Psychosomatic subjects and the “duty to be well”: Personal agency within medical rationality. *Economy and Society*, 22(3), 357–372.
- Greenleaf, C. (2005). Self-objectification among physically active women. *Sex Roles*, 52(1/2), 51–62.

- Grimshaw, J. (1999). Working out with Merleau-Ponty. In J. Arthurs & J. Grimshaw (Eds.), *Women's bodies: Discipline and transgression* (pp. 91–116). London: Cassell.
- Grogan, S. (2008). *Body image: Understanding body dissatisfaction in men, women and children*. London: Routledge.
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Haff, D. R. (2009). Racial/ethnic differences in weight perceptions and weight control behaviors among adolescent females. *Youth & Society*, 41(2), 278–301.
- Hall, J. A. (1984). *Nonverbal sex differences: Accuracy of communication & expressive style*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Haravon Collins, L. (2002). Working out the contradictions: Feminism and aerobics. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 26(1), 85–109.
- Hargreaves, D. A., & Tiggemann, M. (2003). Female “thin ideal” media images and boys’ attitudes toward girls. *Sex Roles*, 49(9/10), 539–544.
- Hargreaves, D. A., & Tiggemann, M. (2006). “Body image is for girls”: A qualitative study of boys’ body image. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 11(4), 567–576.
- Harjunen, H. (2009). *Women and fat: Approaches to the social study of fatness* (Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research 379). Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.
- Harjunen, H., & Kyrölä, K. (2007). Johdanto: Lihavuustutkimusta toisin [Introduction: Fat studies in a different way]. In K. Kyrölä & H. Harjunen (Eds.), *Koolla on väliä! Lihavuus, ruumismormit ja sukupuoli* [Size matters! Fatness, body norms and gender] (pp. 9–47). Helsinki: Like.
- Haug, F. and others (1987). *Female sexualization: A collective work of memory*. London: Verso.
- Hautaniemi, P. (2001). Ihonväri ja syrjintä nuoren somalimiehen arjessa [Ethnicity and discrimination in the everyday life of a young Somali man]. In A. Puuronen & R. Välimaa (Eds.), *Nuori ruumis* [The young body] (pp. 153–169). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Hausenblas, H. A., & Fallon, E. A. (2006). Exercise and body image: A meta-analysis. *Psychology and Health*, 21(1), 33–47.
- Heinämaa, S. (1996). *Ele, tyylit ja sukupuoli: Merleau-Pontyn ja Beauvoirin ruumiinfenomenologia ja sen merkitys sukupuolikysymykselle* [Gesture, style and gender: Merleau-Ponty’s and Beauvoir’s phenomenology of the body and its relevance for the gender issue]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

- Helakorpi, S., Laitalainen, E., & Uutela, A. (2010). *Suomalaisen aikuisväestön terveyskäyttäytyminen ja terveys, kevät 2009* [Health behaviour and health among the Finnish adult population, Spring 2009]. Helsinki: National Institute for Health and Welfare.
- Henley, N. M. (1977). *Body politics: Power, sex & nonverbal communication*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc.
- Hensley, L. (2003). Stepping of the scale: Promoting positive body image in college students. In B. Ropers-Huilman (Ed.), *Gendered futures in higher education: Critical perspectives for change* (pp. 55–76). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2007). *The cult of thinness*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hesse-Biber, S., Leavy, P., Quinn, C. E., & Zoino, J. (2006). The mass marketing of disordered eating and eating disorders: The social psychology of women, thinness and culture. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 29(2), 208–224.
- Hills, L. A. (2006). Playing the field(s): An exploration of change, conformity and conflict in girls' understandings of gendered physicality in physical education. *Gender and Education*, 18(5), 539–556.
- Holland, S. (2010). *Pole dancing, empowerment and embodiment*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hollow, M. (2011). Perfect lives: Lifestyle magazines and utopian impulses in contemporary British society. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15(1), 17–30.
- Honkasalo, M.-L. (2006). "Aika aikaa kutakin": Naisnäkökulmia toistoon ja toimijuuteen [Women's perspectives on time, repetition and agency]. In T. Kupiainen & S. Vakimo (Eds.), *Välmatkoilla: Kirjoituksia etnisyydestä, kulttuurista ja sukupuolesta* [Distances: Writings on ethnicity, culture and gender] (pp. 103–121). Joensuu: The Finnish Folklore Society.
- Honkasalo, M.-L. (2008). Enduring as a mode of living with uncertainty. *Health, Risk & Society*, 10(5), 491–503.
- Honkasalo, M.-L. (2009). Grips and ties: Agency, uncertainty, and the problem of suffering in North Karelia. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 23(1), 51–69.
- Hydén, L.-C., & Bülow, P. H. (2003). Who's talking: Drawing conclusions from focus groups – some methodological considerations. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6(4), 305–321.
- Irving, L. M., & Berel, S. R. (2001). Comparison of media-literacy programs to strengthen college women's resistance to media images. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25(2), 103–111.

- Jackson, J. (1994). Chronic pain and the tension between the body as subject and object. In T. J. Csordas (Ed.), *Embodiment and experience: The existential ground of culture and self* (pp. 201–228). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jarry, J. L., & Ip, K. (2005). The effectiveness of stand-alone cognitive-behavioural therapy for body image: A meta-analysis. *Body Image, 2*(4), 317–331.
- Jefferson, D. L., & Stake, J. E. (2009). Appearance self-attitudes of African American and European American women: Media comparisons and internalization of beauty ideals. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 33*(4), 396–409.
- Jodelet, D. (1984). The representation of the body and its transformations. In R. M. Farr & S. Moscovici (Eds.), *Social representations* (pp. 211–238). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, S., Burrows, A., & Williamson, I. (2004). “Does my bump look big in this?” The meaning of bodily changes for first-time mothers-to-be. *Journal of Health Psychology, 9*(3), 361–374.
- Johnston, O., Reilly, J., & Kremer, J. (2004). Women’s experiences of appearance concern and body control across the lifespan: Challenging accepted wisdom. *Journal of Health Psychology, 9*(3), 397–410.
- Jokinen, E. (2004). Päiväkirjat tiedon lajina [Diaries as a form of knowledge]. In M. Liljeström (Ed.), *Feministinen tietäminen: Keskustelua metodologiasta* [Feminist knowing: Discussions on methodology] (pp. 118–140). Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Kauppinen, K., & Anttila, E. (2005). Onko painolla väliä: hoikat, lihavat ja normaalipainoiset naiset työelämän murroksessa? [Does body weight matter? Thin, fat and normal weight women in the changing work life]. *Työ ja ihminen, 19*(2), 239–256.
- Kennelly, J. J. (2009). Youth cultures, activism and agency: Revisiting feminist debates. *Gender and Education, 21*(3), 259–272.
- Kinnunen, T. (2001a). *Pyhät bodarit: Yhteisöllisyys ja onni täydellisessä ruumiissa* [The holy bodybuilders: Communalities and happiness in the perfect body]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Kinnunen, T. (2001b). Ruumiiden ja tilojen kohtaaminen kuntosalilla ja aerobicissa. In A. Puuronen & R. Välimaa (Eds.), *Nuori ruumis* [The young body] (pp. 121–134). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Kinnunen, T. (2008). *Lihaan leikattu kauneus: Kosmeettisen kirurgian ruumiillistuneet merkitykset* [Beauty carved in flesh: The embodied meanings of cosmetic surgery]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 16*(1), 103–121.

- Kontula, A. (2009). *Tästä äiti varoitti* [Mother warned about this]. Helsinki: Like.
- Kunttu, K., & Huttunen, T. (2001). *Korkeakouluopiskelijoiden terveystutkimus 2000* [Student health survey 2000: A national survey among Finnish university students]. Helsinki: The Social Insurance Institution.
- Kwan, S. (2009). Competing motivational discourses for weight loss: Means to ends and the nexus of beauty and health. *Qualitative Health Research, 19*(9), 1223–1233.
- Kyrölä, K. (2007). Lihavuusvaara! Pelon politiikka ja lihava ruumiillisuus Helsingin Sanomissa [Fat epidemic! Politics of fear and fat embodiment in the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat]. In K. Kyrölä & H. Harjunen (Eds.), *Koolla on väliä! Lihavuus, ruumismormit ja sukupuoli* [Size matters! Fatness, body norms and gender] (pp. 49–82). Helsinki: Like.
- Lahelma, E. (2012). Female paths to adulthood in a country of “genderless gender”. *Gender and Education, 24*(1), 1–13.
- Laine, T., & Kuhmonen, P. (1995). *Filosofinen antropologia: Ihmisen kokonaisuutta etsimässä* [Philosophical anthropology: Looking for the wholeness of a human being]. Jyväskylä: Atena.
- Langdrige, D. (2008). Phenomenology and critical social psychology: Directions and debates in theory and research. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2*(3), 1126–1142.
- Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 102–120.
- Leder, D. (1990). *The absent body*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lempiäinen, K. (2000). Being Finnish as a context for gender: A case study on sociological texts. In S. Leppänen & J. Kuortti (Eds.), *Inescapable horizon: Culture and context* (Publications 64) (pp. 87–111). Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, The Research Unit for Contemporary Culture.
- LePage, M. L., & Crowther, J. H. (2010). The effects of exercise on body satisfaction and affect. *Body Image, 7*(2), 124–130.
- Leve, M., Rubin, L., & Pusic, A. (2011). Cosmetic surgery and neoliberalisms: Managing risk and responsibility. *Feminism & Psychology, 22*(1), 122–141.
- Liimakka, S. (2004a). Nuori nainen, ongelmainen? Nuorten naisten ristiriitainen ruumissuhde [Problems of being a young woman? Young women’s contradictory relationships with their bodies]. *Nuorisotutkimus, 22*(1), 3–16.
- Liimakka, S. (2004b). *Hyvät, pahat ja ristiriitaiset: Ruumiillisuus nuorten naisten sosiaalisina käsityksinä ja yksilöllisinä kokemuksina* [The good, the bad and the contradictory: Young women’s embodiment as social representations and individual experiences] (Unpublished licenciate’s thesis). University of Helsinki, Department of Social Research, Helsinki.

- Liimakka, S. (2011). Ruumis, kokemus, muutos: Ruumiinkokemus Merleau-Pontyn ja Bourdieun avulla tulkittuna [The body, experience, change: Readings on body experience with the help of Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu]. In T. Latomaa & T. Suorsa (Eds.), *Kokemuksen tutkimus II: Ymmärtävän psykologian syntyhistoriaa ja kehityslinjoja* [Research on experiences II: Origins and developments of hermeneutic psychology] (pp. 146–173). Rovaniemi: Lapland University Press.
- Liimakka, S. (2012). Kokemus, kieli ja kokemuksen mieli – metodologisia pohdintoja [Experience, language and the meaning of experience – methodological reflections]. In L. Kiviniemi, K. Koivisto, T. Latomaa, M. Merilehto, P. Sandelin, & T. Suorsa (Eds.), *Kokemuksen tutkimus III: Teoria, käytäntö, tutkija* [Research on experiences III: Theory, practice, researcher] (pp. 101–114). Rovaniemi: Lapland University Press.
- Lloyd, M. (1996). Feminism, aerobics and the politics of the body. *Body & Society*, 2(2), 79–98.
- London Feminist Salon Collective (2004). The problematization of agency in postmodern theory: As feminist educational researchers, where do we go from here? *Gender and Education*, 16(1), 25–33.
- Lovell, T. (2000). Thinking feminism with and against Bourdieu. *Feminist Theory*, 1(1), 11–32.
- Lupton, D. (1995). *The imperative of health: Public health and the regulated body*. London: Sage.
- Lyons, A. C., & Cromby, J. (2010). Social psychology and the empirical body: Rethinking the relationship. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 4(1), 1–13.
- Lökman, P. (2011). Becoming aware of gendered embodiment. In E. Kennedy & P. Markula (Eds.), *Women and exercise: The body, health and consumerism* (pp. 266–279). New York: Routledge.
- Malson, H., Halliwell, E., Tischner, I., & Rúðólfssdóttir, A. (2011). Postfeminist advertising laid bare: Young women’s talk about the sexually agentic woman of ‘midriff’ advertising. *Feminism & Psychology*, 21(1), 74–99.
- Malson, H., Riley, S., & Markula, P. (2009). Beyond psychopathology: Interrogating (dis)orders of body weight and body management. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 19(5), 331–335.
- Manning, E. (2010). Always more than one: The collectivity of a life. *Body & Society*, 16(1), 117–127.
- Markula, P. (1995). Firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin: The postmodern aerobicizing female bodies. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 12(4), 424–453.
- Markula, P. (2003). The technologies of the self: Sport, feminism, and Foucault. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 20(2), 87–107.

- Markula, P. (2004). "Tuning into one's self": Foucault's technologies of the self and mindful fitness. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 21(3), 302–321.
- Markula, P. (2008). Governing obese bodies in a control society. *Junctures*, 11(2), 53–65.
- Markula, P. (2011). "Folding": A feminist intervention in mindfull fitness. In E. Kennedy & P. Markula (Eds.), *Women and exercise: The body, health and consumerism* (pp. 60–78). New York: Routledge.
- Markula, P., Burns, M., & Riley, S. (2008). Introducing critical bodies: Representations, identities and practices of weight and body management. In S. Riley, M. Burns, H. Frith, S. Wiggins, & P. Markula (Eds.), *Critical bodies: Representations, identities and practices of weight and body management* (pp. 1–22). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224–253.
- Martelin, T., Koskinen, S., Kestilä, L., & Aromaa, A. (2005). Terveyden ja toimintakyvyn vaihtelu asuinalueen, koulutuksen ja kotitaloustyyppin mukaan [The variation in health and ability to function according to residential area, education and living arrangements]. In S. Koskinen, L. Kestilä, T. Martelin, & A. Aromaa (Eds.), *Nuorten aikuisten terveysterveys: Terveysterveys 2000 -tutkimuksen perustulokset 18–29-vuotiaiden terveydestä ja siihen liittyvistä tekijöistä* [The health of young adults: Baseline results of the Health 2000 study on the health of 18 to 29-year-olds and the factors associated with it] (publications B7) (pp. 134–148). Helsinki: The National Public Health Institute.
- Martin, K. A. (1998). Becoming a gendered body: Practices of preschools. *American Sociological Review*, 63(4), 494–511.
- Mazur, A. (1986). U.S. trends in feminine beauty and overadaptation. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 22(3), 281–303.
- McCabe, M. P., Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M., Mellor, D., Ricciardelli, L., Skouteris, H., & Mussap, A. (2011). Body satisfaction among adolescents in eight different countries. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 17(5), 693–701.
- McCaughey, M. (1997). *Real knockouts: The physical feminism of women's self-defense*. New York: New York University Press.
- McDermott, L. (2000). A qualitative assessment of the significance of body perception to women's physical activity experiences: Revisiting discussions of physicalities. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17(4), 331–363.
- McKinley, N. M. (1998). Gender differences in undergraduates' body esteem: The mediating effect of objectified body consciousness and actual/ideal weight discrepancy. *Sex Roles*, 39(1/2), 113–123.

- McKinley, N. M. (1999). Women and objectified body consciousness: Mothers' and daughters' body experience in cultural, developmental, and familial context. *Developmental Psychology, 35*(3), 760–769.
- McKinley, N. M. (2004). Resisting body dissatisfaction: Fat women who endorse fat acceptance. *Body Image, 1*(2), 213–219.
- McKinley, N. M. (2006). Longitudinal gender differences in objectified body consciousness and weight-related attitudes and behaviours: Cultural and developmental contexts in the transition from college. *Sex Roles, 54*(3/4), 159–173.
- McLeod, J. (2005). Feminists re-reading Bourdieu: Old debates and new questions about gender habitus and gender change. *Theory and Research in Education, 3*(1), 11–30.
- McNay, L. (1999). Gender, habitus and the field: Pierre Bourdieu and the limits of reflexivity. *Theory, Culture & Society, 16*(1), 95–117.
- McNay, L. (2000). *Gender and agency: Reconfiguring the subject in feminist and social theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McNay, L. (2003). Agency, anticipation and indeterminacy in feminist theory. *Feminist Theory, 4*(2), 139–148.
- McNay, L. (2008). *Against recognition*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McRobbie, A. (2004a). Notes on postfeminism and popular culture: Bridget Jones and the new gender regime. In A. Harris (Ed.), *All about the girl: Culture, power and identity* (pp. 3–14). New York: Routledge.
- McRobbie, A. (2004b). Postfeminism and popular culture. *Feminist Media Studies, 4*(3), 255–264.
- Mead, G. H. (1967). *Mind, self, and society: From the standpoint of a social behaviourist*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. (Orig. 1934.)
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2003). *Phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge. (Orig. *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 1945).
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Migliaccio, T. A., & Berg, E. C. (2007). Women's participation in tackle football: An exploration of benefits and constraints. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 42*(3), 271–287.
- Millward, L. J. (1995). Focus groups. In G. M. Breakwell, S. Hammond, & C. Fife-Shaw (Eds.), *Research methods in psychology* (pp. 274–292). London: Sage.
- Monaghan, L. F. (2005). Discussion piece: A critical take on the obesity debate. *Social Theory & Health, 3*(4), 302–314.
- Moore, M. R. (2012). Intersectionality and the study of black, sexual minority women. *Gender & Society, 26*(1), 33–39.

- Morse, J. M., Stern, P. N., Corbin, J., Bowers, B., Charmaz, K., & Clarke, A. E. (Eds.). (2009). *Developing grounded theory: The second generation*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Murnen, S. K., & Smolak, L. (2009). Are feminist women protected from body image problems? A meta-analytic review of relevant research. *Sex Roles, 60*(3–4), 186–197.
- Murray, M. (2000). Levels of narrative analysis in health psychology. *Journal of Health Psychology, 5*(3), 337–347.
- Murray, S. (2008). *The "fat" female body*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Murto, P. (2001). Vammaisen nuoren ruumiillisuus ja sen kohtaaminen [Encountering a disabled young body]. In A. Puuronen & R. Välimaa (Eds.), *Nuori ruumis* [The young body] (pp. 187–205). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Mutrie, N., & Choi, P. Y. (2000). Is "fit" a feminist issue? Dilemmas for exercise psychology. *Feminism & Psychology, 10*(4), 544–551.
- Mühleisen, W. (2007). Mainstream sexualization and the potential for Nordic new feminism. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 15*(2–3), 172–189.
- Nairn, K., Munro, J., & Smith, A. B. (2005). A counter-narrative of a "failed" interview. *Qualitative Research, 5*(2), 221–244.
- Nieminen, T. (2009). *Gender equality barometer 2008* (Publications 2009:2). Helsinki: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.
- Noble, G., & Watkins, M. (2003). So, how did Bourdieu learn to play tennis? Habitus, consciousness and habituation. *Cultural Studies, 17*(3/4), 520–538.
- Näre, S. (1992). Liisa Älä! Älä! -maassa: Tyttöjen autonomian säätely [Alice, don't! The regulation of girls' autonomy]. In S. Näre & J. Lähteenmaa (Eds.), *Letit liehumaan: Tyttökulttuuri murroksessa* [Shake your hair: Girls' culture in the process of change] (pp. 25–36). Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society.
- Näre, S. (2002). Intimisoituvan kulttuurin muistijälkiä tytöissä [Memories of the culture of intimacy in girls]. In S. Aaltonen & P. Honkatukia (Eds.), *Tulkintoja tytöistä* [Readings on girls] (pp. 251–268). Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society & Finnish Youth Research Network.
- Näre, S., & Oksanen, A. (2008). Virtuaaliruumiillisuus imaginaarisena väkivaltana: Kärsimysjäähäpeätyttöjenjapoikiensuhteessaruumiiseen [Virtual corporeality as imaginary violence: Pain and shame in children's relation to their bodies]. In S. Näre & S. Ronkainen (Eds.), *Paljastettu intiimi: Sukupuolistuneen väkivallan dynamiikkaa* [Intimacy revealed: The dynamics of gendered violence] (pp. 258–280). Rovaniemi: Lapland University Press.
- O'Dea, J. A., & Caputi, P. (2001). Association between socioeconomic status, weight, age and gender, and the body image and weight control practices of 6- to 19-year-old children and adolescents. *Health Education Research, 16*(5), 521–532.

- Ofosu, H. B., Lafreniere, K. D., & Senn, C. Y. (1998). Body image perception among women of African American descent: A normative context? *Feminism & Psychology, 8*(3), 303–323.
- Oinas, E. (2001). *Making sense of the teenage body: Sociological perspectives on girls, changing bodies, and knowledge*. Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press.
- Ojala, K., Vuori, M., Välimaa, R., Tynjälä, J., Villberg, J., & Kannas, L. (2006). Pojat nostavat painoja ja tytöt pudottavat niitä – WHO-koululaistutkimuksen tuloksia [Boys increasing the weight while girls are dropping it – Results from the WHO Health behaviour in school-aged children study]. In S. Karvonen (Ed.), *Onko sukupuolella väliä? Hyvinvointi, terveys, pojat ja tytöt* [Genderized health and well-being: Does gender matter?] (pp. 72–82). Helsinki: The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, the Finnish Youth Research Network and the National Institute for Health and Welfare.
- Oksanen, A. (2005). Bodies in chains: Consumer culture as black pedagogy and body dissatisfaction among Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian children. In T. Hoikkala, P. Hakkarainen, & S. Laine (Eds.), *Beyond health literacy – Youth cultures, prevention and policy* (pp. 63–88). Helsinki: Finnish Youth Research Network.
- Orbach, S. (1986). *Hunger strike: The anorectic's struggle as a metaphor for our age*. New York: Avon Books.
- Osborn, M., & Smith, J. A. (2006). Living with a body separate from the self. The experience of the body in chronic benign low back pain: an interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Scandinavian Journal for Caring Sciences, 20*(2), 216–222.
- Palmer, M., Larkin, M., de Visser, R., & Fadden, G. (2010). Developing an interpretative phenomenological approach to focus group data. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 7*(2), 99–121.
- Paulson, S., & Willig, C. (2008). Older women and everyday talk about the ageing body. *Journal of Health Psychology, 13*(1), 106–120.
- Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2008). Relations among exercise type, self-objectification, and body image in the fitness centre environment: The role of reasons for exercise. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9*(6), 855–866.
- Puuronen, A. (2004). *Rasvan tyttäret: Etnografinen tutkimus anorektisen kokemustiedon kulttuurisesta jäsentymisestä* [Daughters of fat: An ethnographic study of the cultural formulation of anorexic behaviour]. Helsinki: Finnish Youth Research Network.
- Radley, A. (1995). The elusive body and social constructionist theory. *Body & Society, 1*(2), 3–23.

- Radley, A. (2000). Health psychology, embodiment and the question of vulnerability. *Journal of Health Psychology, 5*(3), 297–304.
- Reel, J. J., SooHoo, S., Summerhayes, J. F., & Gill, D. L. (2008). Age before beauty: An exploration of body image in African-American and Caucasian adult women. *Journal of Gender Studies, 17*(4), 321–330.
- Rice, C. (2007). Becoming “the fat girl”: Acquisition of an unfit identity. *Women’s Studies International Forum, 30*(2), 158–174.
- Rich, E. (2011). “I see her being obese!”: Public pedagogy, reality media and the obesity crisis. *health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine, 15*(1), 3–21.
- Richardson, S. M., Paxton, S. J., & Thomson, J. S. (2009). Is *BodyThink* an efficacious body image and self-esteem program? A controlled evaluation with adolescents. *Body Image, 6*(2), 75–82.
- Rodin, J., Silberstein, L., & Striegel-Moore, R. (1984). Women and weight: A normative discontent. *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 32*, 267–307.
- Ronkainen, S. (1999). *Ajan ja paikan merkitsemät: Subjektiviteetti, tieto ja toimijuus* [Marked by time and space: Subjectivity, knowledge and agency]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Ronkainen, S. (2001a). Gendered violence and genderless gender: A Finnish perspective. *Kvinder, Kön och Forskning, 10*(2), 45–57.
- Ronkainen, S. (2001b). Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja uhriutumisen paradoksit [Sexualised violence and victimisation]. *Sosiaalilääketieteellinen aikakauslehti, 38*, 139–151.
- Ronkainen, S. (2008). Kenen ongelma väkivalta on? Suomalainen hyvinvointivaltio ja väkivallan toimijuus [Violence – whose problem? The Finnish welfare state and the agency of violence]. *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka, 73*(4), 388–401.
- Rossi, L.-M. (2007). Kyllin hyviä mainosruumiiksi? Hyväksytyn vartalon rajojen venyttämistä (televisio)mainonnassa [Bodies good enough to be in advertisements? Stretching the borders of the acceptable in (television) advertisements]. In K. Kyrölä & H. Harjunen (Eds.), *Koolla on väliä! Lihavuus, ruumisnormit ja sukupuoli* [Size matters! Fatness, body norms and gender] (pp. 133–159). Helsinki: Like.
- Roth, A., & Basow, S. A. (2004). Femininity, sports, and feminism: Developing a theory of physical liberation. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 28*(3), 245–265.
- Rouhiainen, L. (2008). Somatic dance as a means of cultivating ethically embodied subjects. *Research in Dance Education, 9*(3), 241–256.

- Routarinne, S. (1992). "Läskit tursottavat perseestä" – tyttöjen keskustelukulttuuria [Talking about fat – girls' conversational culture]. In S. Näre & J. Lähteenmaa (Eds.), *Letit liehumaan: Tyttökulttuuri murroksessa* [Shake your hair: Girls' culture in the process of change] (pp. 103–113). Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society.
- Rubin, L. R., Nemeroff, C. J., & Russo, N. F. (2004). Exploring feminist women's body consciousness. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28(1), 27–37.
- Saarikoski, H. (2001). *Mistä on huonot tytöt tehty?* [What are bad girls made of?]. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Sampson, E. E. (1998). Life as an embodied art: The second stage – beyond constructionism. In B. M. Bayer & J. Shotter (Eds.), *Reconstructing the psychological subject: Bodies, practices and technologies* (pp. 21–32). London: Sage.
- Sarlio-Lähteenkorva, S., Silventoinen, K., & Lahelma, E. (2004). Relative weight and income at different levels of socioeconomic status. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(3), 468–472.
- Sarpila, O. (2010). Kauniina kaiken ikää – hyvä ulkonäkö suomalaisten korkeakouluopiskelijoiden elämäntavoitteena [Beauty through lifespan – a good physical appearance as life goal for Finnish university students]. *Futura*, 29(3), 7–18.
- Sarpila, O., & Räsänen, P. (2011). Personal care consumption in Finland: Trends in the early 2000s. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 31(7/8), 441–455.
- Schubert, T. W., & Semin, G. R. (2009). Embodiment as a unifying perspective for psychology. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 39(7), 1135–1141.
- Scott, B. A., & Derry, J. A. (2005). Women IN their bodies: Challenging objectification through experiential learning. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 33(1/2), 188–209.
- Scott, J. (1991). "The evidence of experience". *Critical Inquiry*, 17(4), 773–797.
- Semin, G. R., & Smith, E. R. (Eds.). (2008). *Embodied grounding: Social, cognitive, affective, and neuroscientific approaches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shilling, C. (1993). *The body and social theory*. London: Sage.
- Silvennoinen, M. (2001). Ruumiillisuus liikunnanopettajaopiskelijoiden kerronnassa [Embodiment in the narratives of students of physical education studies]. In A. Puuronen & R. Välimaa (Eds.), *Nuori ruumis* [The young body] (pp. 45–59). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Silvennoinen, M. (2004). The many levels of sports narration. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 5(2), Art. 20. Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0402208>.

- Silvonen, J., & Keso, P. (1999). Grounded theory aineistolähtöisen analyysin mallina [Grounded theory as a model for a data-based analysis]. *Psykologia*, *34*(2), 88–96.
- Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of class and gender: Becoming respectable*. London: Sage.
- Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *1*(1), 39–54.
- Smith, J. A. (2011). Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Health Psychology Review*, *5*(1), 9–27.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. London: Sage.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2004). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In G. M. Breakwell (Ed.), *Doing social psychology research* (pp. 229–254). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 53–80). London: Sage.
- Smith Maguire, J. (2002). Body lessons: Fitness publishing and the cultural production of the fitness consumer. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *37*(3–4), 449–464.
- Smithson, J. (2000). Using and analyzing focus groups: Limitations and possibilities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *3*(2), 103–119.
- Spencer, D. C. (2009). Habit(us), body techniques and body callusing: An ethnography of mixed martial arts. *Body & Society*, *15*(4), 119–143.
- Stam, H. J. (1996). Introduction: The body's psychology and the psychology's body. *Theory & Psychology*, *6*(4), 555–557.
- Stam, H. J., Lubek, I., & Radtke, H. L. (1998). Repopulating social psychology texts: Disembodied “subjects” and embodied subjectivity. In B. M. Bayer & J. Shotter (Eds.), *Reconstructing the psychological subject: Bodies, practices and technologies* (pp. 153–186). London: Sage.
- Statistics Finland (2007). Fokus: Hyvinvointipalvelut kasvussa [Focus: The growing sector services for personal well-being]. Retrieved from http://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2007/art_2007-03-28_004.html?s=5 (accessed 15 April 2012).
- Stawarska, B. (2006). From the body proper to flesh: Merleau-Ponty on intersubjectivity. In D. Olkowski & G. Weiss (Eds.), *Feminist interpretations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty* (pp. 91–106). University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Stelter, R. (2000). The transformation of body experience into language. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, *31*(1), 63–77.

- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. London: Sage.
- Strelan, P., Mehaffey, S. J., & Tiggemann, M. (2003). Self-objectification and esteem in young women: The mediating role of reasons for exercise. *Sex Roles, 48*(1/2), 89–95.
- Stuart, A., & Donaghue, N. (2011). Choosing to conform: The discursive complexities of choice in relation to feminine beauty practices. *Feminism & Psychology, 22*(1), 98–121.
- Swoboda, D. A. (2006). The social construction of contested illness legitimacy: A grounded theory analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(3), 233–251.
- Sykes, C. M., Willig, C., & Marks, D. F. (2004). Discourses in the European Commission's 1996-2000 Health Promotion Programme. *Journal of Health Psychology, 9*(1), 131–141.
- Tarr, J. (2008). Habit and conscious control: Ethnography and embodiment in the Alexander Technique. *Ethnography, 9*(4), 477–497.
- Theberge, N. (1987). Sport and women's empowerment. *Women's Studies International Forum, 10*(4), 387–393.
- Theberge, N. (2003). "No fear comes": Adolescent girls, ice hockey, and the embodiment of gender. *Youth & Society, 34*(4), 497–516.
- Thorpe, H. (2009). Bourdieu, feminism and female physical culture: Gender reflexivity and the habitus-field complex. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 26*(4), 491–516.
- Tiggemann, M. (2004). Body image across the adult life span: Stability and change. *Body Image, 1*(1), 29–41.
- Tiggemann, M., & Lynch, J. E. (2001). Body image across the life span in adult women: The role of self-objectification. *Developmental Psychology, 37*(2), 243–253.
- Tiggemann, M., & Williamson, S. (2000). The effect of exercise on body satisfaction and self-esteem as a function of gender and age. *Sex Roles, 43*(1/2), 119–127.
- Tolonen, T. (2001a). *Nuorten kulttuurit koulussa: Ääni, tila ja sukupuolten arkiset järjestykset* [Voice, space and gender in youth cultures at school]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Tolonen, T. (2001b). Tyttöjen käsityksiä ihannenaiveudesta [Girls' conceptions about ideal womanhood]. In A. Puuronen & R. Välimaa (Eds.), *Nuori ruumis* [The young body] (pp. 73–88). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Tomkins, L., & Eatough, V. (2010). Reflecting on the use of IPA with focus groups: Pitfalls and potentials. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 7*(3), 244–262.

- Trost, S. G., Owen, N., Bauman, A. E., Sallis, J. F., & Brown, W. (2002). Correlates of adults' participation in physical activity: Review and update. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, 34(12), 1996–2001.
- Tseëlon, E. (1995). *The masque of femininity: The presentation of woman in everyday life*. London: Sage.
- Turner, B. S. (1996). *The body and society: Explorations in social theory*. London: Sage. (Orig. 1984.)
- Uotinen, J. (2010). Aistimuksellisuus, autoetnografia ja ruumiillinen tietäminen [The senses, autoethnography and corporeal knowledge]. *Elore*, 17(1), 86–95.
- Ussher, J. M. (2008). Reclaiming embodiment within critical psychology: A material-discursive analysis of the menopausal body. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(5), 1781–1798.
- Valtari, M. (2005). Ulkonäön merkitys, elämän tavoitteet ja niiden yhteydet kulutukseen [The significance of appearance, life goals and their connection with consumerism]. In T.-A. Wilska (Ed.), *Erilaiset ja samanlaiset: Nuorisobarometri 2005* [Different and similar: Youth Barometer 2005] (pp. 82–97). Helsinki: Finnish Youth Research Network and Advisory Council for Youth Affairs.
- Venn, C. (2010). Individuation, relationality, affect: Rethinking the human in relation to the living. *Body & Society*, 16(1), 129–161.
- Välimaa, R. (2001). Nuoret ja ulkonäön merkitys [Young people and the significance of physical appearance]. In A. Puuronen & R. Välimaa (Eds.), *Nuori ruumis* [The young body] (pp. 89–106). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Vänskä, A. (2006). *Vikuroivia vilkaisuja: Ruumis, sukupuoli, seksuaalisuus ja visuaalisen kulttuurin tutkimus* [Bucking glances: On body, gender, sexuality and visual culture research] (Studies in art history 35). Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Institute for Art Research.
- Warhurst, C., van den Broek, D., Hall, R., & Nickson, D. (2009). Lookism: The new frontier of employment discrimination? *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 51(1), 131–136.
- Weiss, G. (1999). *Body images: Embodiment as intercorporeality*. New York: Routledge.
- Weiss, G. (2008). Can an old dog learn new tricks? Habitual horizons in James, Bourdieu, and Merleau-Ponty. In G. Weiss (Ed.), *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary encounters with Merleau-Ponty* (pp. 223–240). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Wilkinson, S. (2008). Focus groups. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 186–206). London: Sage.
- Willig, C. (2007). Reflections on the use of a phenomenological method. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 4(3), 209–225.

- Willig, C. (2008a). A phenomenological investigation of the experience of taking part in “extreme sports”. *Journal of Health Psychology, 13*(5), 690–702.
- Willig, C. (2008b). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press / McGraw Hill.
- Willig, C. (2009). ”Unlike a rock, a tree, a horse or an angel...”: Reflections on the struggle for meaning through writing during the process of cancer diagnosis. *Journal of Health Psychology, 14*(2), 181–189.
- Willig, C. (2012). *Qualitative interpretation and analysis in psychology*. Maidenhead: Open University Press / McGraw Hill.
- Wilska, T.-A. (2005a). Johdanto [Introduction]. In T.-A. Wilska (Ed.), *Erilaiset ja samanlaiset: Nuorisobarometri 2005* [Different and similar: Youth Barometer 2005] (pp. 6–10). Helsinki: Finnish Youth Research Network and Advisory Council for Youth Affairs.
- Wilska, T.-A. (2005b). Nuoret kuluttajat – samanlaisia vai erilaisia? [Young consumers – similar or different?]. In T.-A. Wilska (Ed.), *Erilaiset ja samanlaiset: Nuorisobarometri 2005* [Different and similar: Youth Barometer 2005] (pp. 66–81). Helsinki: Finnish Youth Research Network and Advisory Council for Youth Affairs.
- Witz, A. (2000). Whose body matters? Feminist sociology and the corporeal turn in sociology and feminism. *Body & Society, 6*(2), 1–24.
- Witz, A., Warhurst, C., & Nickson, D. (2003). The labour of aesthetics and the aesthetics of organization. *Organization, 10*(1), 33–54.
- Wolf, N. (1991). *The beauty myth*. London: Vintage.
- Wood-Barcalow, N. L., Tylka, T. L., & Augustus-Horvath, C. L. (2010). “But I like my body”: Positive body image characteristics and a holistic model for young-adult women. *Body Image, 7*(2), 106–116.
- Wright, J., & Dewar, A. (1997). On pleasure and pain: Women speak out about physical activity. In G. Clarke & B. Humberstone (Eds.), *Researching women and sport* (pp. 80–95). London: Macmillan Press.
- Yardley, L. (2008). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 235–251). London: Sage.
- Yarnal, C. M., Hutchinson, S., & Chow, H.-W. (2006). “I could probably run a marathon right now”: Embodiment, space, and young women’s leisure experience. *Leisure Sciences, 28*(2), 133–161.
- Young, I. M. (2005). *On female body experience: “Throwing like a girl” and other essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ålgars, M. (2012). *Shapes and sizes: Body image, body dissatisfaction and disordered eating in relation to gender and gender identity*. Turku: Åbo Akademi University.

Ålgars, M., Santtila, P., Varjonen, M., Witting, K., Johansson, A., Jern, P., & Sandnabba, N. K. (2009). The adult body: How age, gender, and body mass index are related to body image. *Journal of Aging and Health, 21*(8), 1112–1132.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A (SUB-STUDY I)

RYHMÄKESKUSTELUN RUNKO / THE FOCUS GROUP STRUCTURE

1. **Kuvat** / Images

(The participants were shown five images of women cut out of magazines)

- Mitä ajatuksia kuvat herättävät? / How do you feel about these images?
- Mikä kuvien ruumiista haluaisit olla ja mikä et haluaisi olla, jos yksi pitäisi valita? Miksi? / If you had to choose one of these bodies to be your body, which one would you choose? Which one would you not choose? Why?

2. **Ihannainen** / The ideal woman

- Miltä näyttää ”hyväntekevä nainen”? / What does a “good-looking” woman look like?
- Millainen naisen keho tulee olla? / What should a woman’s body be like?
- Mitä odotuksia kohdistuu naisen kehoon? / What kind of expectations are there about women’s bodies?

3. **Ruumiin koko** / Body size

- Mikä on ”oikean kokoinen” vartalo? Onko sellaista? / What is the “right size” for a body? Is there one?
- Oletko itse laihduttanut? Tunnetko henkilöitä, jotka ovat? / Have you ever tried to lose weight? Do you know people who have tried to lose weight?

4. **Tietoisuus omasta kehosta** / Body consciousness

- Kuinka usein ajatukset kohdistuvat omaan krooppaan? Millaisissa tilanteissa? / How often do you think about your own body? In what kind of situations?

5. **Muiden kommentit omasta kehosta** / Other people’s comments about one’s own body

- Mitä muut ovat kommentoineet kehostasi? Positiivista vai negatiivista? / What kind of comments have other people made about your body? Have the comments been positive or negative?
- Ketkä ovat kommentoineet? Millaisissa tilanteissa? / Who has made comments about your body? In what kind of situations?

- Miten koet / olet kokenut omaan kehoosi kohdistuvan huomion?
/ How do you experience / have you experienced the attention that others pay to your body?
- Oletko itse kommentoinut toisille kehosta? / Have you made comments to other people about their bodies?

6. Vaatteet / Clothing

- Miten tykkäät pukeutua? / How do you like to dress?
- Nykyistä muotia väitetään välillä liian paljastavaksi. Sanotaan, että nuorille tytöille myydään liian seksikkäitä vaatteita (esim. Helsingin Sanomat, IltaSanomat). Mitä mieltä olet tästä? Onko muoti liian paljastavaa?
/ Some have claimed that contemporary fashion is too revealing. National newspapers have published articles arguing that young girls are being sold clothes that are too sexy. How do you feel about this? Is fashion too revealing?

7. Urheilu ja liikunta / Sport and exercise

- Urheiletko paljon? Millaista liikuntaa harrastat? / Do you engage in physical activities? How much? What kind of physical activities?
- Miksi urheilla / miksi ei? / Why should one take part in physical activities / why not?
- Onko liikunta kehon rääkkäämistä vai hellimistä? / Do you find exercise to be torture or pleasant?
- Millaaisia muistoja (koulu)liikuntaan liittyy? Onko keho tuntunut sutjakkaalta vai kömpelöltä? / What kind of memories do you have about physical education? Did you experience your body as trim or clumsy?

8. Kehon vaikutus elämään / The body's influence in one's life

- Mikä on kehon vaikutus elämään? Paljonko vaikuttaa? / How / how much does the body influence your life?

9. Sukupuoli ja keho / Gender and the body

- Jos olisit mies, luuletko että kokisit kehosi samalla tavoin kuin nyt? Mikä olisi toisin? / If you were a man, do you think you would experience your body in the same way that you do now? What would be different?
- Mitä merkitsee elää juuri naisen ruumiissa? Mikä siinä on positiivista, mikä negatiivista? / What does it mean to live in a woman's body? What is positive/negative about it?

APPENDIX B (SUB-STUDY I)

THE TOPICS GIVEN FOR THE WRITTEN ACCOUNTS

The number in parentheses indicates how many accounts were written from each topic.

1. Ruumiiseen liittyvä mieleen jäänyt muisto / A memory of my body (0)
2. Oma ruumis vihollisena/ystävänä / My body as an enemy/a friend (1)
3. Muiden kommentit ruumiistani / Other people's comments about my body (0)
4. Syöminen / Eating (5)
5. Mitä minulle merkitsee elää naisen ruumiissa? / What does it mean to me to be living in a woman's body? (4)
6. Liikunta ja ruumis / Physical activity and the body (1)
7. Tilanteita, joissa ruumiini on ollut korostuneessa asemassa / Situations that have highlighted my body (0)
8. Terve/sairas ruumis / A healthy/unhealthy body (0)
9. Seksi, seksuaalisuus ja seksikkyys / Sex, sexuality and sexiness (1)
10. Oma ruumis – kaunis vai ruma? / My own body – beautiful or ugly? (5)
11. Ruumiin minulle tuottamia kokemuksia / Experiences of my body (0)
12. Vaatteet ja meikit ruumiin verhona tai paljastajana / Clothes and make-up as covering or uncovering the body (3)
13. Millainen naisen ruumiin tulee olla? / What should a woman's body be like? (2)

APPENDIX C (SUB-STUDY II)

FOKUSRYHMÄKESKUSTELUN VÄITTEET / THE FOCUS GROUPS: STATEMENTS

Note: The current study focused only on the discussions on statements **6**, **7** and **8**.

1. Suomessa ihmiset haluavat pitää paljon fyysistä etäisyyttä toisiin ihmisiin.
/ In Finland people want to keep a lot of physical distance from each other.
 - Millaisissa tilanteissa on hyvä pitää paljon/vähän etäisyyttä? / In what situations is it good to have a lot of physical distance / a short physical distance?
2. Jotkut ihmiset haluavat enemmän tilaa ympärilleen kuin toiset ihmiset.
/ Some people want to have more physical space around them than other people.
 - Ketkä tai millaiset ihmiset haluavat enemmän tilaa ympärilleen? / What kind of people want to have more space?
 - Kuinka paljon tilaa itse haluatte ympärillenne? Haluatteko saman verran tilaa eri tilanteissa? / How much space do you want to keep around you? Is it the same in different situations?
3. Matkustaessaan julkisissa liikennevälineissä, ihmiset tekevät tietoisia päätöksiä siitä mihin he istuutuvat tai missä he seisovat. / When travelling on public transport vehicles, people make conscious decisions about where to be seated or where to stand.
 - Kun itse matkustatte julkisilla liikennevälineillä, kuten metrolla, bussilla tai ratikalla, valitsetteko jollain tietyillä kriteereillä mihin menette istumaan? / When you travel on a metro, in a bus, in a tram or on other public transport, do you have some criteria for how you choose your place?
4. Julkisissa liikennevälineissä on mukavampaa istua sellaisten ihmisten läheisyydessä, jotka ovat samankaltaisia kuin itse. / When travelling on public transportation, it is more comfortable to sit next to people who are similar to yourself.
 - Onko ihmisiä keiden läheisyydessä istut itse mieluiten? Vältätkö joidenkin ihmisten lähellä istumista? Miksi? / Who are the people you feel most comfortable sitting next to? Do you sometimes avoid sitting next to some people? Why?

5. Naiset ja miehet käyttävät tilaa eri tavalla. / Women and men use space differently.
 - Miksi/miksi ei? / Why/why not?
6. **Suomessa ihmisillä on luonnollinen ja helppo suhde ruumiiseensa.** / In Finland people have a natural and easy relationship with their bodies.
 - Jos kyllä/ei, miten se näkyy? / If yes/no, in what ways do people show this?
7. **Suomessa ihmiset kiinnittävät paljon huomiota toisten ihmisten kehoihin.** / In Finland people pay a lot of attention to other people's bodies.
 - Jos kyllä/ei, miten se näkyy? / If yes/no, in what ways does this happen?
8. **On tärkeää pitää huolta omasta kehostaan.** / It is important to take care of one's body.
 - Millä tavoilla kehosta tulisi pitää huolta? / In what ways should one take care of one's body?
9. Jotkut urheilulajit ovat sopivampia miehille, kuten jalkapallo, ja jotkut urheilulajit ovat sopivampia naisille, kuten aerobic. / Some sports are more suitable for men, such as football, and some sports are more suitable for women, such as aerobics.
 - Miksi/miksi ei? / Why/why not?
10. Naisten ja miesten kehot eivät eroa toisistaan kovin paljon. / Women's and men's bodies are not very different from each other.
 - Antaisitteko esimerkkejä eroista/samanlaisuuksista? / Can you give examples of differences/similarities?

APPENDIX D (SUB-STUDY III)

THE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN FOR THE WRITTEN ACCOUNTS

Kokemukseni omasta ruumiistani

Sana ruumis viittaa tässä kehoosi, jossa elät jokapäiväistä elämääsi. Kirjoita siitä, millainen kokemus oma ruumiisi on ollut tai on sinulle. Millaisia kokemuksia omaan ruumiiseesi liittyy? Voit kirjoittaa ensimmäiseksi mieleesi tulevasta asiasta, mutta halutessasi voit myös rauhassa pysähtyä pohtimaan kirjoituksesi aihetta.

Tärkeää on, että kirjoitat sinun omasta kokemuksestasi, henkilökohtaisesti. Kokemus voi olla tarkka tai epämääräinen. Se voi olla yksittäinen tapaus, useita tapauksia tai kokonaisvaltainen. Kokemuksesi voivat liittyä tähän hetkeen, menneisyyteen tai muutoksiin elämäsi varrella. Kokemus voi olla positiivinen, negatiivinen tai neutraali. Kokemus voi olla yksi ja yhtenäinen, mutta kokemuksia voi myös olla useita rinnakkaisia, peräkkäisiä tai ristiriitaisia. Kokemus voi olla vaikka tunnelma, tunne, muisto, arvio tai elämys – tai jotain ihan muuta. Kokemus voi olla välitön, suora ja hetkellinen tai välittynyt. Kunhan kirjoittamasi kokemus/kokemukset ovat *sinun omia kokemuksiasi omasta ruumiistasi* (kursiivi alkuperäisessä).

My experience of my body

The word body refers here to your body in which you live your everyday life. Write about what kind of experience your body has been or is to you. What kind of experiences do you associate with your body? You can write about the first thing that comes to your mind, but if you wish, you can also take some time to think about the topic of your written account.

It is important that you write about your own personal experience. An experience can be specific or vague. It can be a single incident, several incidents or comprehensive. Your experiences can be about this moment, the past or about changes during your life. An experience can be positive, negative or neutral. An experience can be single and coherent, but there can also be several experiences side by side, after each other, or contradictory to each other. An experience can be, for example, an atmosphere, a feeling, a memory or an evaluation – or something else completely. An experience can be immediate, direct and momentary, or mediated. As long as the experience/experiences you write about are *your experiences of your own body* (italics in the original instructions).

