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**ALTERING BODIES, TRANSFORMING SELVES: EMOTION AND GENDER
ON *EXTREME MAKEOVER***

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines one season of episodes of the television show *Extreme Makeover*. It focuses on the efforts of the show's producers, managers and staff as well of the majority of makeover candidates to frame their surgeries, training/instruction, and stylistic changes as transformative—of both the physical body and essential identity or self. My methods included watching and taking extensive notes on 18 one-hour episodes in the 2004-2005 season and then subjecting them to inductive analysis with a goal of understanding (a) how alterations of the body (particularly via cosmetic surgeries) and (b) how transformations of the self and (c) how femininity and masculinity were depicted on the show. The literature I use to frame my analysis reflects the central themes that I discovered—including the subjective feelings that the makeover candidates reported but also the differential experiences of women versus men. My two analysis chapters reflect these themes. I attempt to situate the study in literature on "reality" television shows, theories of emotions and bodies, and theories of gender. I am especially interested throughout in how the body, or embodiment, is represented in the discourse of the show's authorities and makeover candidates. At the conclusion of my study, I attempt so show how my findings can extend theoretical and empirical work in five areas: on theoretical debates of free choice versus false consciousness in cosmetic surgery, on men's increasing investment in beauty practices, on discussion of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity, on the male gaze, and on the political economy of *Extreme Makeover*.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the reality makeover television program *Extreme Makeover (EM)* with the following aims in mind. I analyze how cosmetic surgery is represented and constructed to viewers through imagery, interaction with makeover professionals, and the accounts of makeover candidates. I examine the emotional and symbolic claims of transformation made by makeover candidates in order to explore how reality television (TV) makeover programs claim identity transformations as well as physical transformations in accord with cosmetic surgery. I also explore how the show represents hegemonic embodiments of masculinity and femininity as desirable for makeover candidates and reflect upon men's participation in "beauty" or body presentation practices. My aim throughout is to analyze how the show represents cosmetic surgery procedures, and, to a lesser extent, style changes, as a means of improving fundamental aspects of the self and/or identity.

In this introductory chapter, I discuss literature on reality television programs, including how a study of *Extreme Makeover* can add to this growing field. I briefly discuss the cosmetic surgery industry and how it relates to media representations of cosmetic surgery such as *Extreme Makeover*. I review literature on narratives and use of narrative forms of analysis, arguing that *Extreme Makeover* provides emotion narratives of how candidates felt about themselves before and after their makeovers. I review literature that frames my analysis chapters on emotion and symbolic transformation and on femininity and masculinity construction. Finally, I review the research questions guiding my analysis and anticipate the significance of my results. I also overview the chapters to follow.

Reality Television and *Extreme Makeover*

Extreme Makeover is examined as a media program that presents the surgical experiences and stories of makeover candidates who receive cosmetic surgery and style makeovers before the camera. Unlike previous studies of cosmetic surgery that have done interviews with men and women who have had cosmetic surgery (Atkinson 2006, Davis 1995, 2003; Dull and West 1991; Gagne and McGaughey 2002), this study examines media representations of cosmetic surgery experiences. To situate my analysis, I provide a brief introduction to the genre of reality television. I review the commercial interests that underlie reality programming and the impact production and commercialization might have on the experiences reported by the makeover candidates on the program.

Extreme Makeover is characterized as reality television, a genre that has received much attention from media scholars. Ouellette and Murray (2004) offer the following definition of reality television:

We define reality TV as an unabashedly commercial genre united less by aesthetic rules or certainties than by the fusion of popular entertainment with a self-conscious claim to the discourse of the real. This coupling, we contend, is what has made reality TV an important generic forum for a range of institutional and cultural developments that include the merger of marketing and “real-life” entertainment, the convergence of new technologies with programs and their promotion, and an acknowledgement of the manufactured artifice that coexists with truth claims.

This definition helps me to contextualize *Extreme Makeover (EM)* by highlighting the purpose of the show which is to entertain and gain revenue. *EM* delivers viewers to networks so they can sell advertising space for the time slot in which the program airs. *Extreme Makeover* serves the commercial interests of surgeons and others who provide makeover products on the show, who receive commercial tie-ins on the program through on-air promotion of the show’s website. The above definition also highlights an issue often discussed in literature on reality television—whether or not what is shown to viewers is “real” or authentic rather than staged or purposely created for the cameras

(Couldry 2004, Hill 2005). My analysis does not focus on the production of *Extreme Makeover* or go backstage to examine the production process that brought about the images that are shown on screen. Yet, it acknowledges that the media text being analyzed is a commercialized series of images, dialogue, and interactions that are shaped by the commercial interests of producers and others with institutional authority. Rather than focusing on production, I focus on the show that is produced and delivered to viewers—the likely costly, highly produced images that make the cut and are deemed worthy and representative of the statement the producers are attempting to make with program. (The research methods I use to analyze *Extreme Makeover* are described in Chapter 2.)

My examination of *Extreme Makeover* focuses on candidates' emotion narratives and how their femininity and masculinity displays were constructed as both problematic and capable of correction through the course of a makeover. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have studied reality television to examine how social life is depicted and represented in the media. Kraszewski (2004) examines *The Real World*, a show that places a group of “twentysomething” strangers in a house to live as roommates, to examine how racial relations are represented and constructed on the show. Edwards (2004) demonstrates how a variety of reality programs, such as *Survivor* and MTV's *Real World/Road Rules Challenge* construct the possibility of new gender ideologies and norms but ultimately reinforce traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Kompare discusses *The Osbournes*, a show that offers audiences a voyeuristic view into the family of Ozzy Osbourne, outlining how the Osbournes are constructed as an outrageous family through the use of *ignominious body displays* (2004:106) that violate norms and contain moments of humiliation. My analysis of *Extreme Makeover's* construction of emotion narratives, masculinity, and femininity builds on Deery's (2004a) examination of *Extreme Makeover* as “a spectacle, primarily, of female transformation.” I investigate how this spectacle is accomplished through narrative claims of emotional symbolic transformation. My analysis also shows how television represents normative body displays for men and women through an examination of femininity and masculinity construction on the show.

Raphael (2004) suggests that reality television as a genre has flourished because of a unique political economic climate created by the needs of television networks and producers. Networks facing growing production costs for scripted television shows and strikes from labor unions and craft guilds such as the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) have found that reality television is a low cost and low writing demand solution to their production problems. Additionally, reality television series can be produced quickly on small budgets and can offer valuable product placement opportunities, where people on the show are shown using or referencing consumer products in the context of the program itself, in addition to profit gleaned from traditional advertising during commercial breaks. Deery (2004b) has noted that *Extreme Makeover* serves commercial interests by attracting viewers and featuring products within the content of the same television show. In Chapter 5, I reflect on the political economy of *Extreme Makeover*, considering the products that are frequently advertised in the program and the commercial benefits to program sponsors and professionals, such as cosmetic surgeons, who are featured on the show.

This brief overview lays the groundwork for an understanding of *Extreme Makeover* as a commercially envisioned and delivered endeavor. It is oriented to make a profit for the show's network and sponsors. It is not aimed at educating or producing critical insight on cosmetic surgery or society. My argument is that *EM* exploits the insecurities that women and men feel about their physical bodies and appearance by involving them in the normative gender order regarding how the body can be improved. It promotes the ideology that people should be held accountable for displaying proper bodies and that improvements of the body will produce improvements of the self. *Extreme Makeover* does convey a message. This message, already prevalent in society, is reflected in *EM*'s construction of cosmetic surgery and stylistic makeover experiences. Makeovers are depicted as a "joyful," positive route to body and self improvement. *EM* represents bodily transformation as a good, desirable thing while paying minimal attention to the pain, risks, and possible complication of multiple cosmetic surgeries. *EM* does not, in short, offer an even-handed view of cosmetic surgery. Rather, it presents cosmetic surgery as the solution of choice to defects and deficiencies of the physical body and emotional self.

Why Cosmetic Surgery?

Cosmetic surgery has become increasingly popular and more visible in the United States in recent years. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS 2007) reports that 7.4 million cosmetic surgeries were performed in 2000, a number that had increased to just under 11 million by 2006, a 48% increase. While this figure represents impressive growth, it may be only the tip of the iceberg. Researchers (Davis 1995; Dull and West 1991) report that maintaining accurate statistics on the number of cosmetic surgery procedures performed every year is impossible because most surveys only capture procedures that are done in hospitals by registered plastic surgeons. Because many surgical operations are performed in private offices and clinics by medical professionals who are not registered with professional associations, it is hard to say how many procedures are performed in any given year.

The top five procedures performed in 2006 reported to the ASPS included breast augmentation, nose reshaping, liposuction, eyelid surgery, and the tummy tuck (ASPS 2007). Not surprisingly, women were the recipients of 90% of cosmetic surgeries in 2006. The ASPS (2007) estimates that over 11 billion dollars (\$11,355,870,657) was spent in the United States in 2006 on cosmetic surgery. Cosmetic surgery has become a major beauty industry in the western world, joining the diet industry, weight loss and fitness products, and hair, makeup and fashion industries that direct the majority of their products towards women who want to improve their bodies and their looks.

The growing trend in using body technologies like cosmetic surgery to change or enhance appearance has not gone unexamined by sociologists. Many have written on women's motivations for receiving cosmetic surgery (Davis 1995, 2005; Gagne and McGaughey 2002), men's experiences with cosmetic surgery (Atkinson 2006), the history of cosmetic and plastic surgeries as medical procedures (Sullivan 2001) and gender effects in surgeons' assessments of potential surgical candidates (Dull and West 1991). Women respondents in these studies of cosmetic surgery mentioned media influences among the factors that led them to consider cosmetic surgery as a way to change what they did not like about their bodies. For example, Davis' (1995) sample of Dutch women made off-hand remarks about television or women's magazines as

contributors to their dissatisfaction with their own bodies. One woman remembered a magazine article which stated, “Dissatisfied with your breasts? Then do something about it!” The article prompted her to talk with her daughter about the possibilities of surgery, which she ultimately underwent (Davis 1995:123).

The effects of the media in drawing attention to cosmetic surgery have not gone unnoticed by those in the cosmetic surgery industry. Through a press release in 2004, the then president of the ASPS, Dr. Rod Rohrich, reflected on the significant growth in the cosmetic surgery industry in the past year stating, “This past year’s growth may be attributed to the attention plastic surgery received from the entertainment industry, which spotlighted plastic surgery, and perhaps, created a larger interest from the public” (ASPS 2004). One way the plastic surgery industry received additional attention is through reality television programs that feature cosmetic surgery, including *Extreme Makeover*.

I now turn to a discussion of narrative analysis, which I utilize to describe the underlying consumerist functions of candidates’ claims of transformation and to describe candidates’ presentation of stories that relate their physical bodies and emotion before, during, and after their makeover.

Narratives and Narrative Analysis

I draw on the work of Waskul and Vannini (2006), Edgley (2006) and Wilson (2004) in labeling the stories and accounts of cosmetic surgery provided on *Extreme Makeover* as narratives. *Extreme Makeover* is a reality show that features cosmetic surgery narratives from makeover candidates. On the program, makeover candidates take viewers through their cosmetic surgery *story* that was produced as part of a reality television program. I focus on the emotional accounts within candidates’ narratives in Chapter 3, charting how they construct emotional change throughout their makeover. These emotion narratives are different from traditional sociological approaches to narrative in that they are part of a reality program that is produced with commercial interests. However, I do not refer to the discussion of makeover candidates’ masculinity and femininity as narratives in Chapter 4. They do not fit the parameters of narratives as I understand them, detailed below. In Chapter 4, I examine how candidates are

constructed as deficient in femininity and masculinity through their own accounts and through interactions with and comments made by others on *Extreme Makeover*.

A *narrative* is, according to Riessman (1993), a way of telling or delivering a story or account as a personal reflection that is created within interactions (how *EM*, which is not a personal reflection, is considered a narrative is addressed shortly). A narrative gives an account of what has happened, drawing on one's cultural context, and telling the story helps to create a sense of self or how one wants to be known. Mason-Schrock (1996) presented data from transsexuals as narratives, suggesting that transsexuals learned how to become newly gendered selves in part through collaboratively constructing biographical accounts or self-narratives in support groups about their common life experiences. Davis (2003:75) describes interviewees who had undergone cosmetic surgery as providing "women's narratives [on] cosmetic surgery." They provided details from every stage of the process—how she felt before the surgery, why she wanted it, what happened during the procedure, and how her surgical experience concluded. Riessman (1993:17-18) suggests that several features are common among narratives: they have "a beginning, a middle, and an end" and they include six common elements in their structure: "an abstract (summary of the substance of the narrative), orientation (time, place, situation, participants), complicating action (sequence of events), evaluation (significance and meaning of the action, attitude of the narrator), resolution (what finally happened) and coda (returns the perspective to the present). *Extreme Makeover's* production of cosmetic surgery and makeover experiences closely follows this format, giving an abstract of what happens at the top of the program, accounting for a series of makeover events, providing evaluation of what happened from the makeover candidates themselves, giving resolution at the final reveal when the makeover candidate is shown finished, and signifying coda with concluding remarks from the makeover candidate on their experience.

Most narratives studied by sociologists are personal narratives, given to an interviewer by an interviewee, and constructed within their interaction together (Riessman 1993). However, some scholars use the term *narrative* to discuss accounts that follow the narrative structure described above in a variety of ways. Waskul and Vannini (2006:12) suggest "the narrative body is situated in the stories we tell to

ourselves and the stories others tell *about* their own bodies and the bodies of others,” thus *Extreme Makeover* may be viewed as a media program that provides narratives of the body through representing the stories and makeover experiences of makeover candidates. Edgley (2006:243) analyzes *consumer narratives* of the body present in television commercials for fitness products and other sites that “chronicle the struggles of the health or fitness offender as they move through predictable cycles of tragedy and triumph.” What is key about Edgley’s use of the term *narrative* is that it is an account given by a person of their experience, which covers the before, during, and after of a particular event. Wilson (2004:324) calls the plot line over a season of the reality show *Big Brother*¹ a *reality narrative*:

It emerged minute by minute on the streaming Web feeds, but was controlled, produced and structured through the selective editing of the producers for the nightly television recap. The ‘characters’ were real people living in a fishbowl, surrounded by cameras and creating an emerging narrative shaped partially by the producers’ constraints, but open enough to allow for improvisation.

Wilson’s conception of reality narrative is useful in noting the collaborative context in which narratives on reality television are created as a joint production between people or “characters” on the show and producers.

I use the term narrative to refer to how *Extreme Makeover* is structured as a reality program that features stories of cosmetic surgery experiences from the beginning through the end. I also discuss how *EM* functions as a consumer narrative of cosmetic surgery, providing accounts from makeover candidates that construct a transition from tragedy and despair to elation and victory through the use of consumer products. Additionally, I use the term narrative to refer to candidates’ emotional transformations outlined in Chapter 3.

Emotions are a key focus on *Extreme Makeover*. They are evoked when candidates describe the reasons they are interested in cosmetic surgery and how they relate to their physical bodies and other people in their lives before their makeover. The on-camera descriptions provided by candidates at every stage of their makeover process

¹ Wilson (2004) examines the first season of *Big Brother* produced and aired in the United States. The show was presented in real time on the Internet through webcasting and was also aired as produced summary compilations of footage during prime time television.

outline detailed emotions and reflections on how the changing physical body impacts the self. Therefore, I use the term emotion narrative to describe candidates' accounts of subjective experiences during their *Extreme Makeover* experience. I further discuss the use of the term narrative in Chapter 2 on research methods. To provide a context for my primary analysis chapters (3 and 4), I now turn to reviewing literature on emotion and symbolic transformation as well as gender, beauty, femininity and masculinity in order to anticipate and situate the findings that those chapters contain.

Symbolic Transformation, Emotion, Identity and the Self

I characterize the emotional transition claims of makeover candidates on *EM* as a *symbolic transformation* of the self. I adapt this term from Ferris (2004) who used it to describe the resolution of callers' dilemmas on the radio program *Loveline*.² Because of the nature of the program, the repair and resolution of problems presented could not be certain, thus the hosts sought *symbolic* change of the self through callers' claims that they will follow the advice given. I view the problems, both physical and emotional, of candidates on *Extreme Makeover* in a similar way. While candidates often claim to be "a new person," I label their transformations symbolic due to the conditions under which they are produced. The makeover experience profiled on *EM* occurs in a span of about eight weeks, which may not be enough time for candidates to fully negotiate a new sense of self. Additionally, candidates' transformations are constructed as part of a reality show with commercial interests, thus their testimonies are edited and approved by producers, meaning that they may not be completely original or authentic statements. I label them as symbolic to reflect these underlying conditions.

According to Thoits (1989:318), emotions involve:

- (a) appraisals of a situational stimulus or context, (b) changes in physiological or bodily sensations, (c) the free or inhibited display of expressive gestures, and (d) a cultural label applied to specific constellations of one or more of the first three

² On *Loveline*, young adults call in with questions about life and love that are answered by two hosts, one who provides comedy and another who is a physician.

components. All four components need not be present simultaneously for an emotion to be experienced or to be recognized by others.

I examine makeover candidates' claims of experiencing cosmetic surgery and style makeovers, their claims of bodily sensations from those events, and the expressions or animations they perform on-camera related to their interpretation of the situation. I analyze these as emotion narratives (Sarbin 2001) that are experienced through embodied actors and socially constructed as part of the social situation and context. Thus, the emotional narratives given by makeover candidates on *Extreme Makeover* are shaped by their experiences of having cosmetic surgery and fashion makeovers and are likely shaped by the production of the reality television program around them as well.

Sociologists have offered multiple configurations of identity. Some have used it to indicate a social category, such as racial or gendered identities (White 1992). Others have conceptualized identity to mean a larger sense of who one is. I adopt a conceptualization of identity and the self as interrelated, following Burke (2003:1):

...[I]identity is used in a sense somewhat between the view of identity as a social category and the view of identity as a unique individual. In this view, an identity is contained in the meaning of the self—what it means to be who one is.

Kondo (1990) also utilizes an integrated conception of self and identity. Her ethnographic work (1990) demonstrates the interplay between Japanese identities, particularly work and family identities, and selves—all of which are under constant construction. Kondo (1990:48) suggests that *selves* (plural) are negotiated through the interplay between multiple identities that social actors hold:

Identity is not a static *object*, but a creative *process*; hence *crafting selves* is an ongoing—indeed a lifelong—occupation. *Crafting selves* implies a concept of agency: that human beings create, construct, work on, and enact their identities, sometimes creatively challenging the limits of the cultural constraints which constitute both what we call selves and the ways those selves can be crafted.

Thus, the ways people conceptualize their identities, categories that represent aspects of their lives, is very much related to shaping their sense of self. Makeover candidates on *EM* negotiate new embodied identities, or a sense of what it means to be the person living

and experiencing their physical bodies, in relation to a larger global self, that they claim is also shaped by their makeover experience.

I analyze the narrative claims of emotional transition made by *Extreme Makeover* candidates in order to examine how the relationship between the body and the self is represented on television. *EM* candidates detail “before” emotional experiences they attribute to physical bodies that failed to meet ideal cultural standards. Their emotional stories change “after” their cosmetic surgery as they experience their makeover journey, providing claims of renewed confidence and a changing sense of self. I now turn to a brief review of literature on gender to provide context for Chapter 4 that discusses the construction of femininity, masculinity, and beauty norms for women and men.

Gender, Beauty, Femininity and Masculinity

Gender as an institution (Martin 2003, 2006; Lorber 1994) specifies particular practices for men and women that are associated with their gender statuses. While many theorists conceptualize gender as a pervasive organizing pattern in social life, Martin is clear that conceptualizing gender as an institution in fact helps us to examine how differences in physical bodies affects the social world. She reminds us that “institutions are constituted and reconstituted by embodied agents” (2004:1257), meaning that real people with material bodies engage in practices which constitute the gender institution. However, she states that “Gender ‘does things’ with and to bodies but gender is not explainable or reducible to the body” (2004:1260), suggesting that while physical differences in bodies may be one aspect of gender inequality, bodies are not the only site where gender inequality is produced. I examine how gender differences are reproduced through the recommendation of specific gender practices, or the ways men and women are instructed to “do gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987) on *Extreme Makeover*.

Femininity and masculinity are systems of practice associated with gender. They serve as resources for men and women to draw on in order to construct gendered identities, practices and displays (Messerschmidt 2000). Connell (2005) suggests that masculinities and femininities are defined and constructed together and in opposition to one another; what is “masculine” is the contrast of what is “feminine.” Lorber (1994)

argues that the emphasis on difference through femininity and masculinity practices helps to legitimate the gender institution and systems of inequality in western society. Most theorists of gender agree that the gender institution privileges men and subordinates women, through labeling cultural constructs such as norms of dress, expected patterns of interaction, and certain role prescriptions as “masculine” or “feminine” practices (Lorber 1994). I examine the kinds of practices and displays that are considered to be lacking in femininity for women and masculinity for men and the corrective procedures and training that are shown as “correcting” them to aid them in becoming preferred embodiments of gender.

Connell (1987, 2005 and with Messerschmidt 2005; also Martin 2003) offers a conception of gender as practice and proposes that one way that men are dominant within social relations is through the exercise of a *hegemonic masculinity* that displays and legitimates patriarchy. Connell theorizes multiple masculinities, or configurations of men’s practices, and says that while not all men display hegemonic masculinities, they still confer privilege as long as women are defined as subordinates in the gender institution (Bird 2005). While the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic, Connell does not conceptualize a form of hegemonic femininit(ies). Rather, he prefers the term *emphasized femininities* for preferred feminine embodiments and practices; he claims that femininities cannot hold hegemonic status due to women’s subordinate relationship to men in the gender order (Connell 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). I return to Connell’s theoretical configurations of masculinity and femininity in Chapters 4 and 5.

Gender is central to the construction of the beauty system that governs the recommended practices and displays on *Extreme Makeover*. Wolf (1991) suggests that while women are making strides towards equality in the workplace and other institutions, *the beauty myth*—the idea that women must be pretty, poised, young, fashionable, and sexually attractive—preoccupies women with beauty and appearance and is one of the remaining ways that patriarchy inhibits women. Women have long been associated with nature and the body, while men have been associated with knowledge and the mind, forming a dualistic conception of the relationships between men/women and mind/body (Connell 2005, Bordo 2003). “For if, for whatever the specific historical content of the duality, *the body* is the negative term, and if woman *is* the body, then women *are* that

negativity, whatever it may be” (Bordo 2003:5). Women’s association with the body and the expectation that they display beautiful bodies, as defined by cultural ideals, has been viewed as a site of gender domination. Chinese women’s foot binding and women of the Victorian Era’s use of corsets, for example—limited their mobility and ability to provide for themselves, reinforcing patriarchal conceptions of men as providers and women as objects to be displayed (Hesse-Biber 1996, Sullivan 2001). Connell (1987) suggests that current western notions of feminine beauty continue to serve men’s interests through necessitating the consumption of beauty products produced by corporations largely comprised of men. Bartky (1990) labels the system of beauty businesses the “fashion-beauty complex” and argues that it serves capitalist interests through selling beauty products and mass media programs and advertisements, all of which remind women of the body work they must perform to conform to (impossible) standards of feminine beauty.

I discuss gender, beauty and emotion as embodied accomplishments. Waskul and van der Riet (2002:488) suggest that “a person does not ‘inhabit’ a static object body but is subjectively embodied in a fluid, emergent, and negotiated process of being.” In other words, social actors are involved in the process of making physical bodies social bodies through the use of cultural practices and customs, such as tattooing or piercing (Sullivan 2001). I discuss how makeover candidates embody gender, including practices and displays associated with femininity and masculinity, and aim to embody beauty through shaping their physical bodies to meet cultural standards. West and Zimmerman (1987) have viewed gender as an accomplishment that social actors achieve through interaction. The physical body plays a large part in enacting and displaying gender; it is the site of accomplishment. Schrock, Reid and Boyd (2005) show gender as an embodied achievement through examining how male-to-female transsexuals embody womanhood through retraining, redecorating, and reshaping their physical bodies. Embodying beauty is a large part of accomplishing womanhood. I utilize Brumberg’s (1997) conception of *the body as project* to discuss how makeover candidates attempt to embody beauty. Brumberg writes on the obsessive nature of young women to constantly worry about their body size and use diet and exercise techniques to attempt to create themselves into decorative objects. She considers their body work, and other aims to mold the physical

body to cultural standards as *body projects*. I view the cosmetic surgery makeovers featured on *EM* as body projects, undergone with the goal of more closely embodying cultural standards of gender and beauty.

I examine feminine standards of beauty on *Extreme Makeover*, noting those feminine embodiments that are seen as deficient or lacking in femininity and the actions that are done to women to correct them. What standards are women held to? What constitutes feminine bodies and actions on *Extreme Makeover*?

While some scholars suggest that there is increasing pressure on men to embody cultural ideals of masculinity (Bordo 1999, Atkinson 2006), most theorists of the body emphasize that this pressure cannot be compared to the inequality women have experienced both presently and historically through the body as a site of domination (Davis 2002; 2003). I investigate men's increased investment in body projects as shown on *Extreme Makeover* and consider how this reflects gender and power. I also discuss men's preferred embodiments and relate them to Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (Chapter 5).

I do not provide an extensive literature review at the front end of this dissertation. Rather, I integrate literature in the substantive findings in Chapters 3 and 4 and situate them in a wider body of literature in the Discussion in Chapter 5.

Research Questions and Contributions

I explore the presentation of cosmetic surgery makeovers on *Extreme Makeover* in order to investigate how people who are shown on television receiving cosmetic surgery are characterized. This research is based upon the tenets that the media, as a social institution, have the ability to shape and influence people's perceptions about the social world. The way subjects and issues are represented in the media are representative of the larger culture which produces it. My question is how *Extreme Makeover* portrays the experience of cosmetic surgery on television, and in particular, how it portrays emotions and the embodiment of femininity and masculinity in regard to cosmetic surgery. I hope to contribute to the literature on cosmetic surgery by adding a discussion of media portrayals of cosmetic surgery accounts. I also hope to add to literature on

reality television through a discussion of how popular culture may shape the understandings of viewers' and society's perception of cosmetic surgery.

The key questions I ask regard the emotional and physical “problems” that are presented by *Extreme Makeover* candidates and how these “problems” are corrected through the course of the makeover by engaging in cosmetic surgery. I suggest that investigating the emotional motivations behind having cosmetic surgery are important because they provide a frame for understanding cosmetic surgery patients and the problems they endure. I also ask about the kinds of emotional changes that makeover candidates claim to receive during their makeover process. From this examination, I believe sociologists can learn how popular culture represents the relationship between the self and the (physical) body. My examination of emotional trajectories on *Extreme Makeover* contributes to an analysis of consumer narratives that involve emotional change in relation to cosmetic surgery. We can learn how those with vested consumer interests attempt to appeal to viewers through claims of symbolic transformation, that is, overstated claims of emotional and self alteration attributed to cosmetic surgery and stylistic makeovers on *EM*.

I also explore how femininity and masculinity are represented on *Extreme Makeover*. Many of the women makeover candidates suggest that they feel “unfeminine” or “not like a real woman,” while masculinity pursuits are less blatant from men. What bodily traits are shown as unfeminine and as unmasculine on the show? How are women “made over” to achieve better or more femininity, and how are men transformed into more masculine men? By what standards are women and men evaluated? I examine the body projects (Brumberg 1997) that are used to shape men and women into acceptable bodily representations of their gender. This analysis of femininity and masculinity reveals and explores the cultural standards of beauty for women and men that are represented in the medium of commercial television. This research identifies embodiment standards for men and women and reveals the kinds of bodies and embodiments that are problematized by popular culture. I hope also to add to the literature on men's cosmetic surgery experiences.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 describes the data and research methods used in this study. Chapter 3 explores the emotion narratives of *Extreme Makeover* candidates as they describe their problems “before” the makeover, including their physical body, emotional state, and life situations, and it shows how they transition to an “after” symbolic representation of transformation. Chapter 4 examines how and why women and men are characterized as lacking femininity or masculinity, and also reviews the ways that bodily deficiencies are “corrected” through the makeover process. Chapter 5 summarizes the study’s key findings and considers how the analysis may advance theoretical understanding and conceptualization of thought on gender, embodiment and the self.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

This chapter describes the methods used to collect and analyze data for this dissertation. I first discuss why *Extreme Makeover* was chosen for analysis and the terminology I use to refer to people who appear on the program. I then provide an overview of the organization of a typical episode of *Extreme Makeover* so readers who are not familiar with the program can gain an understanding of the show's structure. Next, I describe my data collection methods and sample, my approach to analysis, and I describe the primary makeover candidates and the cosmetic surgery procedures on the show. I also describe how I present data in the form of transcripts from *Extreme Makeover*.

Why *Extreme Makeover*?

Episodes of *Extreme Makeover* offer a unique resource for examining media discourses on cosmetic surgery in relation to changes in physical and social bodies. That is, depictions of cosmetic surgery and other makeover processes offer examples of media discourse on the kinds of bodies that are perceived as in need of change, the kinds of body projects that are recommended for improving the physical body and the emotional rewards that can be gained from improvement experiences.

I chose *Extreme Makeover* over other reality makeover shows such as *The Swan*, *Dr. 90210* and *I Want a Famous Face* for several reasons. *Extreme Makeover* was the first of such shows to debut and therefore pioneered the genre of reality makeover shows, (many of which are aired on cable networks). *Extreme Makeover* was aired on a major television network (ABC) and may have garnered increased visibility among viewers, particularly those who do not subscribe to cable television. Although the word *extreme* is in the title of the program, *Extreme Makeover* is arguably less sensationalist than some of

the other reality makeover shows such as the FOX network's *The Swan*, which selects one of the two makeover candidates on every episode as the "most changed" who goes on to compete in a beauty pageant with other makeover candidates at the end of the season for the title of "The Swan"—the most beautiful and dramatic makeover. MTV's series *I Want a Famous Face* follows young women and men who elect to have cosmetic surgery in order to look more like their favorite celebrities. Thus, while *Extreme Makeover* features men and women who receive multiple surgeries and dramatic style makeovers, the motivations of the makeover candidates and the presentation of their makeover narratives is arguably more realistic than many of the other reality makeover programs that seem to go beyond cosmetic surgery and style improvements.

Terminology

People on *Extreme Makeover* who are shown getting cosmetic surgery and makeovers are called "makeover candidates" by surgeons, trainers, stylists, and others on the show. Therefore, I adopt the term and refer to "makeover candidates" throughout this document. I identify three types of makeover candidates, again taking my cue from terminology used on the program. *Primary* or *full makeover candidates* are those who get the most air time and receive extreme cosmetic surgery as well as clothing and style makeovers. Most episodes of *Extreme Makeover* focus on two primary or full makeover candidates, toggling back and forth between different stages of their makeover experience. Many *EM* episodes also feature another kind of makeover candidate who receives considerably less attention on the program; they are called *mini-makeovers* or *makeover updates*. *Mini-makeover candidates* are persons who are shown getting style makeovers in brief clips; they do not receive cosmetic surgery. *Updates* provide follow-up information on former primary makeover candidates, showing how they are doing post-makeover. They generally include scenes that address how satisfied they are with their surgical procedures, how are they doing in their daily lives, and what, if anything, in their lives has improved. Sometimes the follow-ups or mini-makeovers "go with" the theme of the episode of the primary candidates' story. For example, on one episode, the mini-makeover candidate, Christy, was the fiancée of the primary candidate Fritz. On

other episodes, there seems to be no connection between the mini-makeovers and the primary candidates. My analysis focuses on the experiences of primary makeover candidates.

Other terms include the “Extreme Team” and “makeover mansion.” The “Extreme Team” is comprised of the surgeons, stylists, trainers, dentists, dermatologists, and other professionals who aid in the makeover for a particular candidate. Since each candidate has unique makeover needs, the Extreme Team varies from candidate to candidate, thus highlighting different professionals. The “makeover mansion” is where the candidates reside while in Los Angeles for their makeover, which is usually about eight weeks. The makeover mansion was a feature on *Extreme Makeover* that debuted at the start of season three.

Structure of *Extreme Makeover*

For those who may have never seen an episode of *Extreme Makeover*, I review how the show is structured. The hour long show typically follows two primary makeover candidates through their journey to get an “Extreme Makeover” generally consisting of several cosmetic surgery procedures and a style makeover. The candidates are people who applied for a chance to be on the show and have their surgical makeover televised in exchange for the network paying for the costs associated with the makeover.

Each primary candidate’s story on *Extreme Makeover* follows a similar plot arc. We are first introduced to the candidate during their “backstory” which is filmed in their home setting. In the backstory, the candidates describe themselves and focus on what is problematic about their bodies and how it has affected their lives. The candidate is “surprised” with the news they have been picked for the show; and is flown to Los Angeles. Then she or he meets their “The Extreme Team”—the surgeons, trainers, dentists, and stylists that are going to work with her/him during the makeover. Candidates consult with their surgeon and are shown having their cosmetic surgery, with a brief mention of their recovery. They are filmed returning to the surgeon’s office to have bandages removed and to see their transformed physical bodies for the first time.

However, all continue to wear surgical wraps so that the viewer will be surprised by their total “new look” at the end of the show.

Generally, candidates continue to receive other procedures, like dental work or LASIK eye surgery, to fit their individual needs. All candidates receive a style makeover where they shop for new clothing and are given what is called “finishing touches”—hair cuts and styling, makeup for women and shaving for men—to prepare them for the “big reveal,” where friends and family assemble. They present their “new selves” or “new look” to their audience. They have not had contact with their families during their makeover procedures, which is typically about 8 weeks. While not every primary makeover candidate is represented in exactly this way, most are. When candidates are “revealed,” viewers have learned a lot about their “problems” and how they were “corrected” through the course of the makeover experience.

Data Collection

Extreme Makeover has not been released to DVD or VHS and the ABC network which broadcasts the show will not release copies for research purposes. Thus, I recorded episodes on VHS using my own VCR. I began taping episodes of *Extreme Makeover* in October 2004 with the goal of collecting as many episodes as possible from the 2004-2005 season, which was season three of the show. Networks typically air television shows in episodic seasons, usually starting in September and lasting through the Spring (ending in April or May), so examining a season of *Extreme Makeover* seemed a useful strategy. The 2004-2005 season of *Extreme Makeover* was the last complete season to air original episodes on ABC before the series was cancelled. And yet, *Extreme Makeover* now reruns almost every day on the Style Network.³

My sample includes 18 original episodes from the 2004-2005 season. The episodes consist of 16 one-hour long episodes, which is the normal format of the show, and 1 two-hour long special, which I count as 2 episodes, for a total of 18. Table 2.1

³ A recent examination of *Extreme Makeover*'s scheduled airings on the Style Network for the week of March 26 through April 1st listed the program showing 3 times on Monday, not airing on Tuesday or Wednesday, one showing on Thursday, three showings on Friday, four showings on Saturday, and three showings on Sunday.

Table 2.1. Descriptives on *Extreme Makeover* Episodes and Primary Makeover Candidates, Season 3, 2004-2005.

Episode	Air Date	Candidate's Name	Residence	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Medical Problem?
2	9/30/2004	David	Highland, CA	36	Male	White	No
2	9/30/2004	Amy	Grain Valley, MO	29	Female	White	No
4	10/14/2004	Heather	New York, NY	33	Female	White	No
4	10/14/2004	Kristi Hughes	Fresno, CA	22	Female	White	No
5	10/28/2004	Marque Strange	North Hollywood, CA	48	Male	White	No
5	10/28/2004	Elisa	Beverly Hills, CA	38	Female	White	No
6	11/4/2004	Ethan Clivis	Clovis, CA	44	Male	White	No
6	11/4/2004	Geri Clovis	Clovis, CA	40 (est)	Female	White	No
7	11/18/2004	Jason "Bubba" Ellis	Hillsboro, NC	27	Male	White	No
8	12/2/2004	Mary Maher	Southfield, Michigan	35	Female	White	No
8	12/2/2004	Valerie Cowan	Bland, MO	40 (est)	Female	White	No
9	12/9/2004	Kimberly Furr	Austin, TX	44	Female	White	No
9	12/9/2004	Bill Furr	Bastrop, TX	42	Male	White	No
10	1/5/2005	Tess Franklin	Florida	44	Female	Asian	No
10	1/5/2005	Mike Burlidge	Los Angeles, CA	35 (est)	Male	White	No
11	1/13/2005	Steven	Clearwater, FL	22	Male	White	No
11	1/13/2005	Amiee	Las Vegas, NV	31	Female	White	No
12	1/20/2005	Kari	Fort Lauderdale, FL	41	Female	White	No
12	1/20/2005	Tricia	Fort Lauderdale, FL	40	Female	White	No
13	2/10/2005	Ray Krone	Phoenix, AZ	47	Male	White	No
14	2/10/2005	Yvonne Carter	Anahuac, Texas	46	Female	White	No
14	2/10/2005	Stephanie DeLaCerde	Houston, TX	21	Female	White	No
15	2/17/2005	Rachel Meyers	Arvada, CO	33	Female	White	Yes-alopecia
16	3/3/2005	Fritz Baringer	Le Sueuer, MN	35	Male	White	No
16	3/3/2005	Christina Pelletier	Bradenton, FL	25	Female	White	No
18	4/7/2005	Angela "Angie" Harlan	Cincinnati, OH	40 (est)	Female	White	No
18	4/7/2005	Jeffery "Jeff" Oliphant	Miami, FL	22	Male	Black	Yes-cleft palate
19	4/14/2005	Katie Cox	Not given	18	Female	White	Yes-jaw deformity
19	4/14/2005	Nathan "Nate" Chalk	Kentucky	35 (est)	Male	White	No
20	4/21/2005	Emily Adams	Los Angeles, CA	30 (est)	Female	White	No
20	4/21/2005	Amanda Carroll	Phoenix, AZ	25 (est)	Female	White	No
21	7/14/2005	Caitlyn Clarke	Philadelphia, PA	21	Female	White	No
21	7/14/2005	Ingrid Vachler	Denver, CO	35	Female	Hispanic	No

provides information on the dates of the episodes I use and the primary makeover candidates featured on each. Each episode is listed by episode number, referenced from the *Extreme Makeover* website.⁴

My analysis of *Extreme Makeover* focuses primarily on the experiences of 33 primary makeover candidates. As noted, primary makeover candidates receive cosmetic surgery and the most air time. The accounts and discussion they provide of the makeover experience are more detailed than those of mini-makeover candidates or update candidates. When I refer to makeover candidates who are not primary, I make note of it in the text.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis of *Extreme Makeover*, I watched each episode in full and took notes on makeover events (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). I also wrote memos on relevant themes or quotes that stood out. I transcribed each episode in order to have a full record of the dialogue used to discuss bodies and transformation procedures. I noted visuals, such as actions and facial expressions (Ball and Smith 1992) if they seemed relevant to convey the situation. I also recorded information that appeared in text on the screen, such as credentials for each Extreme Team member and descriptions of speakers, which were shown at the bottom of the screen to identify a makeover candidate's mother, friend, or boss.

While some might view transcribing a television program as “reducing images and situations to written word,” but my analysis is not of dialogue alone. The episodes of *Extreme Makeover* that I use as primary data were analyzed visually in the format they were produced. The transcripts I produced from the visual program were used as a reference or guide for those visuals. As a sociologist who must produce research in the form of written text, I must present my data as evidence of my claims in the same format. Written transcripts of the episodes allow me to present examples to my reader, when they are helpful.

⁴ For a list of episodes aired in the 2004-2005 season by episode number, visit: <http://abc.go.com/primetime/extrememakeover/bios/bios.html>

The *Extreme Makeover* episodes that I used as data are different from traditional qualitative data involving interviews or participant observation fieldnotes. Television shows are commercially produced media that are aired for entertainment purposes, and this point must be considered during analysis. Altheide (1996) recommends analyzing television programs as media documents through *qualitative content analysis*, an inductive method that is based on open discovery and constant comparison of the data, in search of emergent themes. Hartley (2002) reviews textual analysis as a popular method of television study, particularly within the humanities and popular culture studies. Textual analysis examines the content or text of television, investigating meaning and the representation of concepts like identity, race, and sexuality. Other scholars (Edgley 2006, Wilson 2004) view television shows where people provide stories or accounts of their experiences as a media representation of narrative. I draw from each of these approaches, primarily relying on Altheide's (1996) inductive method while investigating how emotion and gender are represented on *Extreme Makeover*.

I adopt Edgley's (2006) perspective in viewing *Extreme Makeover* as a form of *consumer narrative*. That is, *Extreme Makeover*, as a television show geared towards increasing consumerism through promoting cosmetic surgery and products for companies that sponsor commercial breaks, presents to viewers makeover candidates' narratives of cosmetic surgery makeovers. These narratives, unlike those that might be collected in an interview setting, are examined as *consumer narratives* because they are mediated by television producers and advertising dollars. Thus, I view the candidates' experiences, their surgical and style transformations, and the reactions of their friends and family as media accounts of cosmetic surgery that are produced for commercial profit. This does not mean that I consider candidates' claims as completely untruthful or an intentional misrepresentation of their experiences. Rather, I acknowledge that their experiences were created in concert with others who hold institutional authority over them and are in the business of producing a particular kind of television show for profit.

My overall approach to the *Extreme Makeover* data is inductive, in the spirit of grounded theory (Glaser 1965; Glasser and Straus 1967, Martin and Turner 1986) in that I did not test prior hypotheses. Not knowing what the focus of my analysis would be, I engaged in what Lofland and Loftland (1995) call *emergently inductive* research, similar

to Altheide's (1996) method of ethnographic content analysis. I began by coding the transcribed episodes for relevant themes. Coding is one way social scientists attempt to give concepts they see arising in their data a word or a short phrase so they can think about the data and group together like concepts. Lofland and Lofland (1995:186) suggest that coding is one way researchers ask themselves "What can we think of this being about?" Charmaz (1983:112-113) describes coding as a systematic process where researchers raise and begin to answer questions such as "What do I see going on here? What are people doing? What is happening? What kind of events are at issue here?"

I utilized the software package Atlas/ti to aid with coding the data. Atlas/ti does not impose analysis or code the data for the researcher but rather it aids in systematically filing like coded concepts together (and retrieving them) at the researcher's request. I developed over 100 codes in order to categorize and chart emerging themes throughout the data sample. I wrote memos throughout the coding process where I reflected on codes that looked promising for analysis, any problems or dilemmas I faced while coding, and my ideas for developing new codes. As some codes and themes became particularly rich (or saturated), yielding relatively large amounts of data that were relevant for sociological analysis, I began focused coding (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995, Lofland and Lofland 1995) and memoing towards those key themes.

I used memoing as an analytic strategy throughout the research process. Memos are, simply put, written reflections on the research at hand that document and clarify the researcher's thought process. They begin as simple, or *elemental* (Charmaz 1983) memos, discussing the data collection or the coding process. Further in the research process, *sorting memos* (Charmaz 1983) aided in clarifying the relationship among similar pieces or "chunks" of data to illuminate concepts the data might be getting at. The constant comparative method (Turner 1981, Martin and Turner 1986) helps one to examine the meanings conveyed in each slice of data and compare that meaning to other like pieces to discover patterns and trends and point out negative cases in the data. Reflections at the end of constant comparative memos attempted to take the analysis "one step up" from the data (Martin 2005) and develop conceptual framework for explaining patterns in the data. Memos at the final stage of analysis contemplated the structure of

each analysis chapter and the relationship between the two chapters in regards to theoretical issues.

Descriptives of Primary Makeover Candidates

Table 2.1 provides descriptive statistics for the sample. Of the 33 primary makeover candidates, two thirds were women (11 men and 22 women). The overwhelming majority of candidates (30 of 33) were white. Three candidates were ethnic minorities: a Black man whose mother emigrated from Jamaica, an Asian woman with Philippino heritage, and a Hispanic woman who originally hailed from the Dominican Republic.

My data on the makeover candidates' age are incomplete. Some candidates provided their age on camera during the episode and additional data on age were gleaned from candidates' bios on *Extreme Makeover's* website. I estimated the age for candidates with missing data, based on their appearance and stage in the lifecourse (whether or not they had kids, career trajectories, etc). The average age of makeover candidates was 34; the youngest candidate in my sample was 18 and the oldest was 47.

Table 2.1 reports candidates' place of residence and whether or not they had a physical deformity or medical problem that was addressed during their makeover. The candidates came from a variety of U.S. states, with more originating from California than any other state, perhaps because *Extreme Makeover* is produced there. Only three candidates had a medical problem that was addressed by the Extreme Team on the show. Rachel was bald due to the hair loss disease alopecia universalis and was given an advanced wig. Two reconstructive surgeries⁵ were performed. Jeff had his lip lengthened and his nose restructured to repair a cleft palate that he had had since birth, and Katie received maxillofacial surgery to correct a severe overgrowth of her lower jaw.

Sexual orientation was not mentioned by the majority of candidates, although many referred to heterosexual relationships with spouses and significant others. Only one male candidate, Bill, identified himself as homosexual and living with a life partner.

⁵ Most of the surgeries performed on *Extreme Makeover* are cosmetic surgeries, conducted with the goal of increasing one's aesthetic appearance. Here I refer to reconstructive surgeries, which "aim to improve the function and sometimes the appearance of abnormal body structures" (Sullivan 2001:13).

Table 2.2 presents descriptive data on the cosmetic procedures candidates received on *Extreme Makeover*. A total of 379 cosmetic procedures were shown in my sample. On average, each candidate had 11 (10.79) surgeries during their makeover. The most popular procedures were nose jobs, liposuction, brow lifts, eye lifts, porcelain dental veneers, teeth whitening, and LASIK eye surgery. Also, 15 of the 22 women in my sample received breast implants during their makeovers.

Table 2.2. Candidates' Makeover Procedures on *Extreme Makeover*, Season 3, 2004-2005.

Procedure Performed	Count	Procedure Performed	Count
Surgical Procedures		Dental Procedures	
Breast implants	15	Bridge	6
Breast reconstruction	1	Crowns	10
Breast lift	6	Gum repositioning	13
<i>Nose job</i>	28	Lip repositioning	3
<i>Brow lift</i>	24	Tooth extraction	7
Butt lift	1	Tooth reshaping	6
Cheek implant	3	<i>Veneers</i>	24
Cheek lift	3	<i>Whitening</i>	23
Chin implant	10	Other dental work	10
Collagen injections or lip filler	5		
Crows feet release	3	Dermatological Procedures	
Ears pinned back	5	Acne treatment	7
<i>Eye lift</i>	24	Fotofacial	8
Excess skin removal	1	Facial, facial treatments	6
Face lift	5	Laser hair removal	2
Facial muscle relaxer	4	Skin peel or chemical peel	11
Fat injections to face	5	Stretch mark removal	1
Fat pad removal (from cheek)	5	Varicose vein treatment	4
Lie filler or face filler	4	Other dermatological treatment	13
<i>Liposuction</i>	25		
Neck lift	5	Hair Procedures	
Tummy tuck	9	Hair transplants	8
		Hair restoration	2
		Other hair procedures	1
Vision Procedures			
Contact lenses	1		
<i>LASIK</i>	22	Total Overall Procedures	379

Presentation of Data

I present my data in transcript form. I use a modified version of naturalized transcription techniques, which are most often used in conversation analysis. I have adapted several shorthand symbols (Akinson and Heritage 1999; Oliver, Serovich and Mason 2005, Riessman 1993) to convey pauses and other speech patterns in the data (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. Transcription Notations, adapted from Oliver, Serovich and Mason 2005.

Symbol	Meaning
[brackets]	information on the speaker; in the text, my changes to their exact words
((sniff))	Indicates non-verbal activity
(.)	Indicates a just noticeable pause
(p)	Indicates a significant pause
<u>a</u>	shows speaker emphasis
wor-	shows a sharp cut-off

I use [brackets] often in my transcription to provide information to the reader about the speaker. Many speakers are presented on the show with visual tags underneath their image that show their relationship to the makeover candidate. I present these tags in brackets, reading [Mary’s mother] or [Bobby, Mary’s boyfriend], for example. Speakers are *italicized* for ease of identification. Additionally, *Extreme Makeover* is edited in a way that viewers see interactions happen on camera that are spliced or intertwined with clips of a particular person speaking directly to the camera alone, as if interviewing with just the camera. Interactions or images are also shown with voiceovers from speakers, where viewers will be looking at a particular image on screen and hear the voice of a speaker over the imagery. I note in [brackets] when these changes take place in the transcript. I also utilize [brackets] when it is necessary to edit the speaker’s raw response so that it will make sense to the reader, as is customary in most scholarly work. To illustrate, I provide a sample of my transcription techniques here.

Michael Thurmond [fitness trainer, to Heather]: Welcome to the makeover house.

Michael [voiceover]: Heather has lost a lot of muscle tissue from chronic dieting.

Michael [to Heather]: There's about 30 pounds [on your body] that have to come off. But I can really change your shape and I can do it very dramatically. It looks to me that you're ((makes a “ugh” sound, exhales, and frowns)) primarily vegan.

Heather: I generally do not eat dairy or chicken or other meats but I will eat seafood.

Announcer: But Michael Thurman has an issue.

Michael: I know you don't want any red meat, but I might ask you to eat a little.

Announcer: And so does Heather.

Heather: ((frowns and eyes dart))

Michael: You need fish, chicken, turkey. You'll eat the little animals?

Heather: ((Clears her throat, hesitates, looks to be holding back tears)) I-I- ((stammers))Yes!

Michael: Thank you, thank you.

Heather: ((softly)) I'm gong to hell ((visibly upset)).

Michael: Honey! ((Mike touches Heather's shoulder)) No, no. (p) It's important, okay?

Michael [to the camera]: I think she really wants this and I want to do a real bang-up job on her.

Michael [to Heather]: We'll have a good time here.

Heather: Okay, I'm ready. I'm ready.

These transcription notations have been adapted in an attempt to represent the dialogue and imagery that happened on the program to the reader.

The final stage of analysis consisted of integration of my findings with sociological literature, following the guidance of Davis (1995, 2003), Bordo (1989, 1999, 2003), Connell (1987, 2005) and others. This step allows me to show how my results affirm and support past work and also where they differ. I use Burawoy's (1998)

extended case method to show how my results “extend” prior theorization on gender and embodiment.

CHAPTER 3

SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATION: EMOTION NARRATIVES OF CHANGE ON *EXTREME MAKEOVER*

In this chapter, I focus on what I call the *symbolic transformation* of makeover candidates. Ferris (2004) uses the term *symbolic transformation* to discuss the process of change that happens to on air callers during the popular syndicated radio call in show *Loveline*, which also aired on television for several years. Ferris suggests that because actual change cannot be addressed during brief on-air segments with callers, the hosts give directions for how to make amends and then refer to the *symbolic* change the caller has “achieved” by agreeing to follow their advice. I adopt the term *symbolic transformation* to discuss the emotional change candidates’ claim through their narratives. I view their declarations as a symbol of the emotional promise of cosmetic surgery, overstated on *Extreme Makeover*. The term *symbolic* also refers to the context of their narratives—that they are consumer narratives of the body (Edgely 2006) that are produced as a part of a reality television show. Their narratives are created in concert with producers and others who have vested interests in their literal selling of the surgical and makeover process they endorse.

This chapter explores how makeover candidates construct on-camera emotion narratives that represent how they relate to their physical bodies before, during, and after their *Extreme Makeover* experience. Candidates “before” narratives claim, due to physical bodies that fail to meet the ideal, they experienced teasing, were held back from accomplishments in their careers and could not establish healthy relationships with others. “After” emotion narratives reflected new self-confidence, suggested relationship success, and claimed identity transformation due to physical makeover changes. I characterize candidates’ emotional narratives as a symbolic transformation of the self because they are part of consumer narratives of the body produced in part to endorse consumer products and services. In the next section, I review literature on emotion, identity and the self, and discuss how consumer narratives (Edgely 2006) and the

structure of romantic narratives (Murray 1989) are useful concepts that aid in understanding the context in which *EM* is produced and presented.

Background Literature

I examine makeover candidates' narratives of emotion and how they change or evolve throughout their makeover. I use the term *emotion* to refer to two separate, although not mutually exclusive, phenomena characterized by Thoits (1989:318): "appraisals of a situational stimulus or context" or how candidates claim to experience situations, and "changes in physiological or bodily sensations" or how candidates report experiencing their physical bodies. Most sociologists who study emotions suggest that they are socioculturally constructed, or learned, performed and are given meaning through the social worlds we inhabit, although some suggest primal emotions such as anger may have biological or physiological origins (Kemper 1987, Thoits 1989). Emotions, while experienced by and through bodies, are largely conceived as connected to and created from social experiences.

Hochschild (1983) acknowledges that emotions are experiences that happen within and are displayed through the physical body. She describes the importance of the body in relaying the emotion work required of women flight attendants, who were required to smile, eliminate any signals of fatigue and frustration, and always look as if they are enjoying their work. Leaf and Schrock (forthcoming) also demonstrate how emotions are managed through the physical body. They show how self-injurers, most of whom use a technique popularly referred to as cutting, used their bodies as tool for managing the stress they felt in their lives and claimed they felt calm and relaxed after injuring themselves.

Studies of cosmetic surgery, anorexia, bulimia and other body work enacted with the goal of embodying cultural standards of beauty often discuss negative emotions about the self and body as a motivation for taking up the body project. Bordo (2003) theorizes that young women often diet or exercise to the point of obsession to change feelings of helplessness into feelings of power and control—they take up body projects that change their conception of their body or their body image. I refer to the conception of and

thoughts one has about their own body as body image, “the picture of our own body which we form in our mind” (Slade 1994:497). Davis’ (1995:74) interviews with women who elected to have cosmetic surgery revealed that negative emotions about the body were common: “they described their appearance as a negative force in their lives, influencing how they felt about themselves, their relationships, and their dealings with the world around them.” I analyze the presentation of makeover candidates’ emotional narratives about their bodies and selves, showing the kinds of emotional experiences that resulted from displaying problematic bodies, and discussing the emotional transformations they construct throughout the course of their makeover.

Identity is, simply put, “what it means to be who one is” (Burke 2006:82). As mentioned in Chapter 1, I use the term identity not to denote categories of association (as in a racial identity or sexual identity) but to discuss an individual’s subjective sense of who they are (Burke 2003). Identities are socially constructed and constituted through interaction, where the language and discourse chosen become tools of identity that aid in comprising identity performances (Howard 2000). They are not fixed or singular; most social actors hold multiple identities that are contextually defined and change over the lifecourse (Kondo 1990; Howard 2000; Burke 2006).

I use the term *identity* and the term *self* to convey how makeover candidates portray their conceptions of what it means to be the person they are. They construct new identities or new selves through claiming emotional transformations such as feeling more confident, feeling good inside their bodies, and feeling attractive. Kondo (1990) has used both terms of identity and self to discuss emotional transformations due in part to embodied experiences. Kondo describes her experiences at a Japanese ethics school that aimed to impart new, unselfish, and group oriented identities that reflected Japanese work values. Students were guided to get emotionally involved by relating their experiences and expressing emotions when others told stories. They were pushed to physical limits through exercise, hard labor, and rituals of being struck with a stick and walking on jagged stones. Kondo (1990:81) claims that:

[I]t was precisely this combination of strong emotion and rigid [disciplinary] form which provides the key to the interpretation of the ethics center program and its underlying assumptions about crafting disciplined selves.

Kondo suggests that identities and selves are in constant transformation, and that while social actors may hold identities that refer to social categorizations or status they hold, such as racial identities or work identities, they cannot be “compartmentalized” or separated from one another. Instead, they work together to comprise selves (plural) that are continually crafted.

Extreme Makeover plays a part in constructing what Holstein and Gubrium (2000) call “discourses in practice”—cultural narratives at a given point in time that individuals can draw on to construct a sense of self. Sociologists Joshua Gamson (1994), Laura Grindstaff (2002), and Kelly Ferris (2004) have studied how mass media programs, and talk shows in particular, function as models for personhood and define appropriate emotions and interactions for viewers and listeners. Howard (2000) suggests that identity construction within television programs is portrayed through visual imagery and through portrayals of interactions. Television programs, much like interactions with others, present social actors with frames and themes that they can use to construct an identity that is informed by the social worlds they inhabit (Crossley 2006). I suggest *Extreme Makeover* is just one of many media outlets within our culture that informs and shapes our discourse in practice about the deficiencies of physical bodies, the moral responsibility of actors to display a proper body, and the emotional rewards that result from displaying bodies that meet cultural ideals of beauty.

I discuss the emotion narratives of makeover candidates as they describe their problems as a “before”, including their physical body, emotional state, and life situations, and how their transition to an “after”, as represented on *Extreme Makeover*. I also draw upon two other conceptions of narrative in this chapter to illustrate the context and structure of emotion narratives on *Extreme Makeover*—consumer narratives and romantic narrative structure.

Edgley (2006:232), building on Holstein and Gubrium’s (2000) conception of discourses in practice, examines what he calls “narrative stories [that are] commonly found in the world of body consumerism” through studying health and fitness media programs, advertisements, and the “testimonials” given by those who claim to have benefited from these products. As a program that has been viewed as encouraging commercialism (Deery 2004a), *Extreme Makeover* provides an opportunity to examine

“consumer narratives” of the body and consumption through the stories and accounts given by makeover candidates. The narratives presented on *Extreme Makeover* that center on the experience of changing the body and self through surgery, are not similar to those presented by Davis (1995, 2003) and others (Gange and McGaughey 2002, Atkinson 2006, Dull and West 1991) who interviewed cosmetic surgery patients. Rather, they offer a unique opportunity to examine the narratives of plastic surgery created and produced by the media with a goal of attaining ratings and dollars from advertisers who promote their products during commercial breaks.

The program structure follows what Murray (1989) calls a romantic identity narrative. Romantic narratives are constructed in a way that shows the subject experiencing confrontation, struggle, and eventually a transcendence or identity transformation of some kind. Murray gives the example of a runner’s romantic narrative, in which the people first describe themselves as unfulfilled and characterized by problems and weakness before they discovered running. As they progress, they speak of gaining control and focus while training, and then conclude with a sense of pride and accomplishment gained through the physical identity project of running (Murray 1989:184-185). Edgley (2006:239) saw a similar story arc in the consumer narratives he examined, which “follow[ed] the traditional cycle of despair, hope, reinforcement and, ultimately, triumph.” I show how candidates’ narratives on *Extreme Makeover* model a romantic structure by examining their backstories and their progress as they receive their surgery and makeover. I also explore how their emotion narratives demonstrate a symbolic transformation of the body and identity.

In this first section, I examine “before” emotion narratives, where candidates discuss emotional damage they attribute to less than ideal physical bodies, including experiences of teasing, being held back because of their physical appearance, and problematic romantic relationships. I briefly discuss physical changes that occurred to candidates during their makeovers, and then turn to “after” emotion narratives which claim emotional change, narratives of being “a whole new person,” positive changes to romantic relationships, and grand claims of symbolic transformation. I conclude the chapter by discussing the commercial context of emotion narratives of symbolic transformation and how they misrepresent typical cosmetic surgery experiences.

“Before” Narratives: Emotional Experiences Preceding the Makeover

Constructing Emotional Damage

Most candidates gave accounts of teasing they had endured, particularly as children, because of their appearance. I describe these experiences as accounts of emotional damage that are one part candidates’ emotion narratives. The makeover candidates’ emotion narratives of teasing and ridicule served to link negative emotional experiences to the problems they perceived with their physical bodies. Their teasing stories may have originated from guiding from producers, who may have wanted these kinds of stories for continuity of the show, or from candidates who simply volunteered them. Regardless of their origin, a narrative of teasing, pain and suffering resulting from their appearance was constructed prior to surgical interventions.

Many *Extreme Makeover* candidates recall being given derogatory nicknames because of their physical appearance when they were young. Amanda’s first crush called her “Toucan Sam” because of her large nose. Someone told Caitlyn that her nose resembled a “pirates beak.” Tall and lanky Steven was called Leerch; Fritz’s unoriginal peers simply named him “Ears.” Although most candidates’ stories of teasing endured were in the past, they presented themselves as struggling daily with emotional scarring from being rejected by their peers because of their physical appearance. Alisa, who was getting a makeover in anticipation of her Beverly Hills, California high school reunion, discussed how fresh her wounds were after twenty years:

Alisa [to the camera]: Being back at my high school is so surreal. This is where I was teased in the halls, you know, they were going to nominate me for homecoming queen, with that sarcasm, you know. ((Shows pictures of Alisa as a child and teenager)) I never had that self-esteem that other kids had. My father had a pet name for me when I was a little girl—he called me “Pretty Ugly.” ((Alisa looks through HS yearbook)) Memories flood back from being a kid, uh, it was like being alienated from, like, 600 people that you saw daily.

Announcer: After graduation exactly 20 years ago, Alisa has become one of LA's premier event planners.

Alisa [to the camera]: The expectation from classmates was that I was going to be some kind of a failure, and (.) that's not what happened. I mean, I overcame a lot. And the one thing I haven't overcome is my image.

Even though Alisa has accomplished a great deal in her career, she states that she's "overcome a lot" but she hasn't overcome "her image" which, I suggest, is more than just her physical body. This image also includes her identity or self-concept that was shaped as a result of negative interactions with others. For other candidates such as Angie, a stay-at-home mother, negative comments about her physical appearance from others still shape her self-concept today:

Angie: In HS I was voted most shy in my class [she laughs]. I didn't feel good about myself, even then. You know, now, the way I look, I'm just not comfortable with myself. My children ask me a little bit, like, "Mommy, when I grow up, is my nose gonna be as big as yours?" [exhale]. And that hurts, you know? I mean, I know she's just a little girl, but—it makes me feel sad. It makes me wish that I were more normal.

Teasing narratives on *Extreme Makeover* provide an emotional context for the physical changes that candidates desire. Candidates' emotion narratives constructed the physical body as the reason for their emotional damage, therefore characterizing their "before" narratives of embodiment, or the relationship between the self and the body as difficult and in need of improvement. Their narratives also show that most candidates hope that negative emotional interactions with others will improve as a result of their cosmetic surgery and style changes.

Constructing Consequences—Bodies as "Holding Them Back"

While many candidates mentioned dissatisfaction with their physical appearance, some also discussed how feeling uncomfortable with their bodies and appearance has held them back in life or prevented them from accomplishing their goals. Several mentioned a lack of self-confidence because of their physical appearance and how it affected their job performance. Bill, who had a large forehead that he referred to as "Cro-Magnon," and who was a manager at a national home improvement retailer, said:

Well, I'm an expeditor, so I deal with a lot of people and it's hard when I have to directly face them. It's hard for me to speak. I feel like they're looking at my big lips. I feel like they're looking straight at my forehead. And I've got a lot of insecurities because of that (.) so I had to step down as a manager.

Bill's account of his problems at work constructed his anxiety as stemming from how he thought others viewed his physical appearance. Cooley's (1902) conception of the *looking glass self* states that we form some of our self-concept by taking the perspective of the other and imagining how they might judge us. Waskul and Vannini (2006), building on Cooley (1902), suggest that social actors also engage in the *looking glass body*; that is, how we come to view our physical appearance is shaped by how we imagine others view and judge our physical selves. Bill's narrative suggests he imagined that when others viewed his body they saw exaggerated lips and a large Cro-Magnon forehead, thinking that others viewed him in a negative way. He constructed this perception as impeding his career.

Other candidates suggested that their physical appearance gave others the wrong impression of them. Nate, who has a college degree, stated that his lack of dental work gave people the sense that he wasn't educated, saying "I think when people look at me, they automatically want to take IQ points away from me. It seems like people that look like me, [who] have bad teeth and stuff like that, [people] automatically want to think they're not as smart as they could be." Ingrid, who had "big hair" and a large nose, also felt that her looks made it hard to find employment because her appearance did not accurately portray her personality:

Elvin [Ingrid's husband]: I see the way other people see Ingrid, um, at first, like very, uh, defensive, like people do not open up to her right away. It's just basically (.) maybe her appearance (.) the way she looks.

Announcer: Trained as an accountant, Ingrid could not find work when she first moved to Denver.

Eva Tejada [Ingrid's boss]: I can understand how some people could just go, like, 'Oh, you don't look, you don't fit in my picture frame.' But she fit in our picture frame, perfectly.

Ingrid: I'm a friendly girl, but, if I look at you straight and serious ((shows relaxed expression as example)) I look like I'm mad. I'm not mad! I'm happy! Ingrid and her husband claimed her relaxed facial expression looked like a scowl and others interpreted her as unhappy or angry when she wasn't, making it difficult for her to find work. Other candidates mentioned that their looks kept them from engaging positive or fun life activities, such as socializing with others or, in Amanda's case, getting married. Amanda had been engaged to her boyfriend for five years and had not yet made plans for a wedding because the idea of viewing her flawed body in wedding photographs would "ruin it." Christina, who didn't like her nose and sweated excessively, claimed that her body prevented her from achieving true happiness:

I feel good on the inside, for the most part, and I'm a happy person, and, you know, I enjoy life, but feeling the way I do about the way I look is what really keeps me back more than anything. I could look gorgeous if just subtle things were done. I would feel that much more happy about myself. Inside, if that person's in there? It's just I don't see her.

Christina's statement emphasizes the emotional impact of her appearance on her self-concept. She claims that if her body were changed in small ways it would bring her happiness that she can not find within herself as she is.

Constructing Relationship Problems

Candidates' emotion narratives also included relationships with others as something that they hoped would change after receiving an *Extreme Makeover*. While some candidates discussed the frustrations of being unable to find a partner or date, others narratively constructed their poor self-concept and/or body image as the reason why sexual contact was difficult or infrequent.

More men than women makeover candidates expressed trouble with finding dates which they attributed, at least in part, to their physical appearance. Out of the 11 male candidates, six mentioned problems with getting dates as one of the reasons they were interested in getting a makeover (most of the other male candidates were in committed relationships.) Nate's comment was typical of those men:

Nate: I haven't had too many girlfriends, really. I don't really date much, I haven't been on a date in over 2 years probably, so...

Scott Shafer [Nate's cousin]: Unfortunately Nathan is kind of shy. He doesn't have that, um, self confidence that he should have because of uh, his looks.

Nate: I don't think I'm physically attractive to most people

While five out of the 22 women candidates on *Extreme Makeover* expressed concern about attracting potential mates, more women expressed goals of achieving greater intimacy with their partners and keeping current relationships going. Jeri mentioned that she and her husband, Ethan, who was also getting a makeover, did not engage in sex as often as she would like because she was not confident about her body. Kristi also mentioned her perception of her physical body as a limiting factor in her sexual relationship and her husband mentioned it as well:

Kristi: My husband and I don't really get intimate—it doesn't happen anymore, and that's probably my own feelings, you know, because I don't feel good about myself.

[later in Kristi's backstory]

Daniel [Kristi's husband]: When Kristi comes back, I'm kind of excited because it might add a little more spark to our marriage.

Kristi's narrative reflects her hope that getting an *Extreme Makeover* would improve her self-concept and body image, which would hopefully give her more confidence in bed. Kristi's husband also constructed the idea that a makeover would lead to an emotional, and perhaps sexual, change in Kristi that would bolster their relationship.

In summary, makeover candidates' emotion narratives referred to situations of teasing or ridicule, being held back from professional and personal goals, and hindering relationships that they hoped would change when their physical bodies were altered as a result of their cosmetic surgeries and style makeover. These emotion stories do more than merely add context and personality to encourage viewers' attention to the television program; they link physical and emotional goals to the makeover process. *Extreme Makeover*, as consumerist discourse in practice about the changing body, conveys that changing the physical body has emotional and identity rewards. Candidates' emotion narratives about past problems and future goals set up viewer expectations that cosmetic

surgery and style makeovers can deliver not only improved physical selves but life-changing transformations. As noted earlier, they follow the structure of a romantic narrative, discussing the despair and frustration of candidates before they move along the story arc towards salvation.

Bodily Transformations

The physical body was altered in many ways during most candidates' makeovers. These changes included plastic surgery procedures such as rhinoplasty (nose job), eye lifts, brow lifts, face lifts, liposuction, tummy tucks, and butt lifts; physical training and eating prescribed diets for weight loss and toning, LASIK eye surgery, cosmetic dental makeovers, consultations with dermatologists for various skin problems, style advice and fashion tips, hair coloring and styling, and other grooming like shaving and makeup applications. Most candidates received many of these procedures (a mean of 10.79) during their makeovers (hence the title *Extreme Makeover*), depending on their individual circumstances. For example, Marque's cosmetic surgery included a face and neck lift, upper and lower eye lifts, and liposuction of his back, his chin, and his stomach. He also received facial and skin treatments from a dermatologist and a hair transplant to address balding. His dental work included a bridge, 12 porcelain crowns, and 13 porcelain veneers. Marque's style makeover also included advice on clothing and a new hair cut.

Most of the makeover candidates in my sample had multiple surgeries and procedures as did Marque. However, a few exceptional candidates who were getting surgery to fix physical defects such as a cleft palate and a jaw deformity only had surgical interventions for those particular problems, and they also continued transformed themselves through working-out, dieting, and stylist clothing and hair changes. The overwhelming majority of *Extreme Makeover* candidates had multiple surgical and style procedures to change their physical bodies. Since my focus in this chapter is on the symbolic transformation candidates narratively constructed, I turn now to their emotion narratives of change after surgery.

“After” Narratives: Emotional Transformations

In this section, I discuss the ways candidates’ narratives described the emotional changes that accompanied physical transformations. I outline how candidates narratively constructed themselves as having experienced emotional healing that positively shaped their self-concepts, how some represented themselves as “a new person”, how they claimed relationships with others changed as a result of their physical transformation, and how their discourse used at the reveal symbolized emotional change. As noted earlier, I refer to this process as their symbolic transformation.

Healing Emotional Damage

Almost all of the candidates on *Extreme Makeover* discussed how they experienced emotional changes over the course of their physical makeover. Most made comments throughout their narrative construction of their experience on emotional changes. Some even claimed to feel differently about themselves right after their bandages from cosmetic surgery were removed. For example, Kim said her new nose was “making [her] feel so good.” Nate said, “I already feel like I have a lot more confidence in myself” and Valerie commented, “I don't look like the same person! But that's a good thing” as she first viewed her face after a nose job, brow lift, face lift, and upper and lower eyelid lift.

While most candidates made their most dramatic claims of emotional transformation at their reveal, which I discuss later, many made statements of change after their cosmetic surgery while they were still working out (to re-shape their bodies), while searching for fashions, and receiving new hair styles and makeup to prepare to greet friends and family at their reveal. Trisha stated, “I feel good about myself for the first time in a long time,” five weeks into her eight-week-long makeover. Candace, who was featured in an update segment, commented after a session with her trainer that she no longer associated with herself with her previous derogatory nickname, “I'm no longer Beaker. I'm so much more self-confident and I just (p) feel really good in my skin.” Christina was shown reflecting on her emotional journey between shopping for new outfits and having her hair done:

I feel really good about everything, I'm ready to, like, come out of my shell more and not be so the same as I was before, where I would hide behind things and cover up. So I'm just trying to, like, be here in every moment, and to enjoy it while I have it. I don't think I can go back to a normal life, I want something different than what I had before.

Christina's narrative of her *Extreme Makeover* experience signifies both the emotional change that she's experienced thus far during her makeover and her expectation that her transformation will continue to eclipse her previous "normal life," as she returns home.

Constructing a "New Person"

Candidates' emotion narratives often referred to whether they "felt like a new person" after their surgical makeovers. While some seemed to embrace this rhetoric of change, others rejected its usefulness for encapsulating their experience. Mike said, "It's like a different person staring back at me now," as he got his first look at himself after surgery. Others used this dualistic language that separated their physical and subjective selves (Bordo 2003; Davis 1995, Vannini and Waskul 2006) when giving accounts of their surgical and makeover experiences. Nate exclaimed, "Oh, wow. I feel like a totally different person, I mean (.) God, I can't believe it!" after seeing the results of his nose job for the first time. While some candidates might have been referring to their physical appearance when commenting that they were "a new person," other candidates' narratives emphasized the emotional difference as a "new self." Bill stressed that his transformation to "a new person" was much more than a physical change:

Announcer: Bill's pre-historic look ((shows image of Bill "before")) is history!

Bill: I think the changes that have gone through me are absolutely a part of a new Bill. It's like there's a new inside Bill that's been dying to come out and I've never allowed myself to do that. It's absolutely going to be a whole new life for me.

Kim [Bill's sister, also a makeover candidate]: All I wanted was, at the end, for Bill to smile and be happy. And he, he is a different person, I can see it ((laughs)) and it is great!

Bill and Kim's comments about the "new Bill" emphasize his increased self-assurance and happiness, not his enhanced exterior.

Candidates were not the only ones on the show who utilized language that described the makeover transformation as “becoming a new person.” One surgeon remarked, “I think Kristi's going to become a new woman—she'll be very pleased with her new self” after completing surgical procedures. Sam the style coach commented, “By the time Jeri shows Ethan [her husband] her new look at her reveal she's going to be a totally different woman.” While some such remarks refer only to physical changes, Dr Griffin's comments about Bubba after his bandages were removed were explicit in referencing his personality:

Dr Griffin: Let's take a look at your brow and your chin

Dr Griffin ((removing Bubba's bandages)): ((chuckles)) You look like a different person. You actually have a chin and a neck now!

Dr Griffin [to the camera]: Bubba looks amazing. You know, I was talking to him, but it seemed like it was a different person that was, uh, speaking back to me!

Surgeons' claims also emphasized the power of cosmetic surgery to change the body, as well a candidate's emotional state. While some candidates described themselves as “a new person,” others rejected the idea that surgery had completely changed them inside and out, while still claiming emotional rewards. Heather, who remarked insistently on several occasions that she was still “absolutely me” said that “having all this stuff on the outside, it just makes the package look prettier.”

Most candidates who rejected the idea that they could change completely into a different person had emotion narratives rife with contradictions, sometimes claiming that they were the people they always had been, while stating on different occasions that the experience had been transformative. For example, Steven, who said the surgery and makeover made him “not so shy anymore” and “very confident,” stated:

Really it's not so much that the personality has changed. It's that this is the first time you can really see it. It's really a full healing process on the outside as well as the inside. I'm totally ready to get out there and take on the world!

Steven suggests that his personality did not change but also comments that he has undergone “a full healing process on the outside as well as the inside,” alluding to emotional change. Mary, a schoolteacher, claimed, “I've changed so much, as a woman,

and as a person, that exterior changes were just a little topping. Everything has come together and all of my dreams have come true!” She described herself to her class of students when she returned from *Extreme Makeover*:

Announcer: And next day, one she will never forget, as her students can't wait to see their pretty teacher. ((Mary enters and the students cheer))

Mary: Did you miss me?

Students [all together]: Yeah!

Mary: Are you sure?

Students [all together]: Yeah

Mary: Now, who thinks I look different?

Girl 1: I really didn't recognize her

Boy 1: Gigantic difference. It's like a whole new Miss Maher.

Mary: But I'm still the same on the inside.

Boy 2: It's a little bit freaky.

Girl 2: Your nose looks really different. Like, you used to have that little bump right there.

Mary: What do you think of it now?

Girl 2: Well, it looks, like, flatter.

Mary: I know, can you believe it? It's everything that I've ever wanted.

Candidates' claims, contradictory or not, that they had become a “new person” added to emotion narratives of expected change after physical transformations. Addressing whether one was a “different person” could be the result of producers guiding candidates by asking them if they felt differently and providing such a narrative to the cameras. Or it could be that the candidates were drawing on popular cultural discourse that suggests that when people change their bodies, their emotions and identities also change. In either case, candidates on *Extreme Makeover* addressed how physical changes affected their emotions and identities, thereby exposing audiences to discourses in practice about the cause-and-effect relationship between the physical body and emotional identity or the self. This discourse suggests that when bodies are improved to meet cultural standards of beauty, positive emotional changes can be expected.

“If he had teeth I’d marry him”: Constructing Relationships as Emotional Change

Candidates’ narratives claimed that they had experienced both emotional and physical changes throughout the course of their makeovers. They also suggested that emotional relationships with others could change as a result of their transformation. Kristi, who was hoping her makeover would bolster her self-concept and confidence in bed, commented at her reveal, “I saw the look in Daniel’s [her husband’s] eyes, and I think there might be a little bit of change in the bedroom!” Kristi’s account suggests that upon seeing her husband for the first time after her makeover their intimacy issues had been solved, without needing time to get re-acquainted or discuss how her makeover had changed their relationship.

The discourse and imagery on *Extreme Makeover* often indicated that relationships, or the pursuit of them, would change after a makeover. Valerie wanted a makeover because she felt unfeminine and that she did not look “like a woman,” which made her feel like she had “cheated [her husband] out of a wife”. At her reveal, Valerie said she felt much better about their relationship after her makeover:

Valerie: I'm gonna personally feel a lot better just being with him because, um, because he can be proud of his wife now, and that he'll be able to take me out and show me off.

George [Valerie’s Husband]: Well, anytime you've got a good looking woman on your side, it makes you feel good—I don't care who you are.

Other women candidates similarly remarked that they were excited to show off their new looks to their husbands. Christina, who was identified on the show as “the girl who had never been kissed,” commented at her reveal that she didn’t need the security pillow she carried everywhere for comfort any longer because “she was going to replace it with a person,” meaning she felt sure that she would now find an intimate partner. Mike similarly indicated that he thought his prospects of finding a woman had improved because of the makeover, stating, “There’s always the possibility that there’s a pretty girl out there that loves a man in uniform and I’m gonna look a little bit more handsome than I did before—so my personal life might improve somewhere down the road as a result of it.”

Extreme Makeover occasionally does updates on its makeover candidates to show the audience how they are doing some time after their makeover. One such candidate, Bubba, had been single for two years since his previous fiancée passed away but his update let viewers know that Bubba was no longer on the dating market:

Announcer: Just a few months after his makeover, and Bubba is no longer so lonesome

Bubba: I smile a lot more now, I talk to people more

Announcer: And, he's got himself a new gal

Justice Bozeman [Bubba's girlfriend]: He expressed to some mutual friends of ours that, um, he was interested in me. I had made a comment to some friends of mine that if Bubba had teeth I'd marry him.

Bubba: I never thought that I would fall in love like this again.

Bubba's update, as well as other candidates' narratives on relationship change and successes after the makeover, suggested that these positive changes within current intimate relationships and in attracting new ones can be expected to accompany physical change.

Symbolizing Change: The "Big Reveal"

The candidates' are released from *Extreme Makeover* and returned to their everyday lives at their "big reveal," where candidates descend a large staircase or otherwise make a dramatic entrance into a room filled with friends and family who are eager to see the makeover results. Couldry (2004:60-61) calls such ceremonies "media rituals" which are designed to bridge the transition from a "media person," meaning one who is the center of a television program, back to an "ordinary person." Their narrative reflection of their experience helps to create this transition. *Extreme Makeover* imagery and discourse, as well as narratives from candidates and comments from friends and family, work together to characterize their experience as an example of symbolic transformation.

At the reveal, candidates referred to their excitement about their physical transformations but their narratives also accounted for how their makeover had affected their emotions. Kristi said because of her surgery, she "wasn't uncomfortable anymore."

Nate reiterated that he'd "come home with a lot more self confidence," Caitlin said, "I am as happy as I will ever be in my entire life!" One of the most outstanding characteristics of their reveal narratives was the sensationalist claims made by candidates regarding their identity transformation. Amanda said that she's "become [the] person that [she's] always wanted to see in the mirror"; Alisa said, "My *Extreme Makeover* has given me a complete new sense of self," Bubba said he felt like "like more than a million dollars" and best friends Trisha and Kerri, who were made over together, remarked, "We're stepping out with great expectations of the next phase of our beautiful adventure, of our grand adventure." Christina called her makeover "surreal," "the best night of [her] whole entire life," and concluded by saying, "I've spent my life being ordinary. Now I know that the rest of my life is going to be extraordinary. No more ordinary Christina." Claims that their experience of cosmetic surgery and makeovers had lifted their spirits and created possibilities were common, as Katie explains:

Katie: I do feel that Extreme Makeover has changed my life, I have so much more confidence in myself, I'm outgoing, I'm talkative. [Goals] can be reached. This whole experience has just made me a better person, and it just makes me proud of myself. I feel like nothing can keep me down right now.

No candidates said they were dissatisfied with their cosmetic surgery, style makeovers, or that they had emotional feelings of despair due to teasing, poor relationships, or being held back that they mentioned earlier in their on-camera narratives. Again, of course, they were performing on a television show that had paid for their makeovers. Thus, we cannot be sure their positive comments were authentic or solely their own doing.

Some of the candidates' reveal narratives indicated that showing their changed bodies and selves off to others was the best part of their makeover. Marque was excited to see his son for the first time since his surgery, saying "When I saw the smile on [my son's] face, I thought, God, this just makes it perfect. I just love the fact that my son is proud of me." Alisa said that her makeover helped her relax and enabled her to show her true self to friends and family. "Coming out of that curtain, seeing all of my friends out there in front of me was absolutely liberating for me...I'm so comfortable with my friends, and I just got to be Alisa, it was a blast!, it was just a blast!" Tess mentioned

through the course of her makeover that re-connecting with her daughter was really important to her, and she was excited about seeing her at the reveal:

Tess: The first person that I wanted to see was my daughter. ((Shows Tess and her daughter, Lauren, embracing))

Tess: What do you think?

Lauren [to the camera]: She was so beautiful. She was so pretty. She makes me jealous now.

Tess: You like it? You approve?

Tess [to the camera]: [Lauren] said, Mom, I can't stop crying, I just, I just can't stop crying. I said, but you know honey, it's okay, those are tears of happiness

Tess [to Lauren]: Don't cry

Lauren: I'm so happy

Tess: That meant a lot to me, to see her, and her see me like that, it was just amazing, just amazing

For Tess' narrative suggests that having her daughter see her as beautiful was one of the best parts of her *Extreme Makeover*. Mike similarly claimed that "the feeling that most affected me was the look on people's faces." Many candidates commented that getting positive reactions from people they loved was something that they had never experienced before and was the best part about having a complete makeover.

Discussion

Candidates' "before" emotion narratives recalled pain from teasing, being held back from employment and other life goals, and problems with intimate relationships. They transitioned to "after" narratives of emotional triumph, relationship success, and amazing accomplishment. Through narratives of emotional change, *Extreme Makeover* constructs the idea that getting cosmetic surgery and a makeover is a symbolic transformation of the self. Candidates were first shown as people who had experienced less than satisfactory lives in many ways that could be attributed to their physical appearance. After altering their bodies to become more in line with cultural standards of beauty and attractiveness, they were shown, through emotion narratives of success, as

people who had gained more self confidence, who had become different people than they were before, and who had renewed potential to experience positive relationships with others in their lives. Accounts of their reveals utilize language such as “amazing transformations” and “extraordinary potential” that cast candidates as people along a life path that holds the promise of greatness.

Symbolic transformation is a useful concept for understanding the alteration of emotions, the body and identity depicted on *Extreme Makeover*. As a reality makeover program, the narratives presented on the show are a part of what Edgley (2006) calls “consumer narratives” of the changing body. Such narratives serve, in part, as advertisements for products and services that comprise what Bartky (1990:39) calls the *fashion-beauty complex*, defined as “a vast system of corporations—some of which manufacture products, others services and still others information, images, and ideologies—of emblematic public personages and sets of techniques and procedures.” The narratives from makeover candidates on *Extreme Makeover* can be considered consumer narratives in the fashion-beauty complex because they endorse products and services such as cosmetic surgery (Deery 2004a, 2004b). Candidates’ narratives are thus symbolic because they are produced under conditions that foster the interests of the fashion-beauty complex. Producers and others with institutional authority on the set make sure that the products and services featured on the program are shown in a flattering light to satisfy advertisers, who provide monetary support for the show. Candidates’ positive emotion and life changes serve the function of symbolizing to viewers what they can expect if they use prescribed beauty products as aids towards embodying cultural standards of beauty and attractiveness.

The dramatic symbolic transformations depicted on *Extreme Makeover* may falsely represent the kinds of change that are possible through cosmetic surgery and style makeovers. Frost (2005:70) suggests that “knowledge and images of various kinds, with which people reflexively reconstruct their identities—the advice columns and self-help books, the television and film representations of perfect family life and perfect good health—may in fact be distorting what it is possible to be.” While most media texts, such as magazines or television shows, provide idealized images of models’ or actors’ bodies that many media consumers aspire to achieve, *Extreme Makeover* may be a unique

example of a media program that displays candidates who have emotional and physical deficiencies who are successful at changing their embodied experience. While *Extreme Makeover's* candidates move quickly across the screen achieving their “new selves” in under 60 minutes, making changes appear to occur quickly and easily, viewers may find that pricey cosmetic surgery and fashion makeovers are not available to them in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the message that if one does not live up to the physical ideal, one can and should change his or her body may lead to guilt or shame on the viewers' part. I further discuss symbolic transformation and emotional claims of new embodied identities in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

CREATING FEMININITY AND ASSUMING MASCULINITY ON *EXTREME MAKEOVER*

In Chapter 4, I show how women and men present their body problems and reasons for wanting a cosmetic surgery makeover and the techniques that are used to shape their physical bodies, interactional presentation, and stylistic displays. I focus on how masculinity and femininity pursuits and characteristics are framed by makeover candidates and members of the Extreme Team and production staff. Many women makeover candidates give accounts of feeling less than feminine and express desires of looking and feeling “more like a woman,” while men give reasons for wanting a makeover that are in line with cultural definitions of masculinity without explicitly saying they hope to be “more like a man.”

Thus, I am able to show that women makeover candidates, surgeons and stylists all use a discourse of feminine deficiencies to describe women who fail to embody cultural standards of beauty whereas they do not use a complementary discourse about masculine deficiencies. Instead, for men, they use a discourse that preserves or enhances masculinity to discuss bodily and stylistic displays of men makeover candidates. I show how femininity and masculinity are created and preserved through cosmetic surgery procedures, training sessions, and style makeovers, and, in the discussion, I reflect upon the differential discourses used to discuss men and women’s femininity and men’s masculinity, including how this reflects inequality in the gender institution, and how men’s increased use of cosmetic surgery affect theories of cosmetic surgery, gender and embodiment. In the next section, I review literature on femininity and masculinity and offer an overview of the analytic sections that follow.

Background Literature

Norms of appearance and body displays that demand more from women, who are often viewed as physical objects instead of as subjective persons (Bordo 1999, 2003; Davis 1995, 2003; Gange and McCaughey 2002) can be attributed to inequality in the gender institution (Martin 2004) and/or to patterns of inequality produced and reproduced within interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987) that privilege men and subordinate women. This kind of inequality is reflected in what Bartky (1990) calls the fashion beauty complex, defined as the system of corporations and businesses that produce advertising and media that project and define beauty standards and also produce products that women can consume to aid them in reaching unattainable goals of feminine beauty. While men are expected to do some body work to maintain their appearance, they are generally valued for other traits—being successful at work, commanding power and authority, being good athletes, establishing families. Women, by comparison, are taught that they will be valued based on their ability to reflect and embody cultural beauty ideals. “The body beautiful is women’s responsibility and authority. She will be valued and rewarded on the basis of how close she comes to embodying the ideal” (Chapkis 1986:14). While men have historically been expected to do little body work to be considered masculine, women are expected to participate in cultural practices and regulations that enable them to construct and display a body that can be considered “feminine” (Bordo 2003). As Chapkis (1986:66) reflects, “As long as beauty remains such an important aspect of womanhood, some women will just fail to be women.”

There is scholarly disagreement about femininity, including what constitutes it. MacKinnon (1987) states that femininity is oppression, or the result of male dominance and male sexualization of and access to the female body. Thus, femininity is equated with subordination, othering, and male privilege. MacKinnon asserts that we cannot truly know what femininity (or, what a woman) is because she has been defined by men who have the ability to enforce what women are and what women should be and “do,” thus the practices that constitute femininity. MacKinnon states that men’s power to define women results in the sexualization of women as objects for men’s pleasure. Chapkis (1986:130) suggests that femininity is defined as the opposite of what is masculine: “Men

may well be less aware that gender is created since man, and hence masculinity, has always been the norm, the generic—and woman/femininity is defined by how it differs from that standard.” Bordo (2003:174) agrees, stating that “‘Masculinity’ and ‘femininity,’ at least since the nineteenth century and arguably before, have been constructed through a process of mutual exclusion.”

Connell (1987:113), while agreeing that gender and sexuality are largely constructed as dichotomies with opposing characteristics, points out that accepted feminine interactions are not mirror images of masculine ones, “[A] heterosexual woman is sexualized as an object in a way that a heterosexual man is not.” Connell (1987) suggests that emphasized femininities, or femininities that are most culturally valued, are those that provide services to men, including sexual availability and mothering, as a result of women’s subordinate status in the gender order. He suggests that organizations and businesses run by men provide a host of information telling women in western culture how to properly perform femininity through and media outlets that display images, how-to guides, and advice.

Most scholars agree with Connell (1987) that there is considerable emphasis in western culture that instructs women on how to perform femininity and what rules govern the performance of it. Williams’ (1989) study of women in the U.S. Marine Corps documents the requirements on women to wear skirts, heels, and lipstick and to undertake required instruction courses on appearance and etiquette, in order to increase their femininity. Such practices “police” the gender boundary between men and women in the military. Demands for feminine practices are also common at work (Martin 2003) reflecting the larger gender institution that privileges men. Feminine body work can be conceptualized as one such practice performed by embodied agents (Martin 2004).

Many scholars (Bordo 2003, Bartky 1990, Butler 1999, Chapkis 1986) suggest that femininity is an embodied characteristic, not something that all women “possess” due to their sex category. That is, femininity is actively displayed, accomplished, and acted out through the physical body. Chapkis (1986) points out that the symbols of femininity—wearing high heels, feminine clothing, makeup—are a large part of how women accomplish and are attributed to have (or show) femininity. Similarly, Bordo (1992:17) says that:

With the advent of movies and television, the rules for femininity have come to be culturally transmitted more and more through the deployment of standardized visual images. As a result, femininity itself has come to be largely a matter of constructing, in the manner described by Erving Goffman, the appropriate surface presentation of the self. We no longer are told what “a lady” is or of what femininity consists. Rather, we learn the rules directly through bodily discourse: through images which tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expressions, movements, and behavior are required.

Extreme Makeover features particular performances, bodily displays and reactions from show participants, who in concert declare, “this is what feminine *is* and what feminine *does*.” Through this analysis, I examine the practices shown to shaping the bodies to adhere to cultural standards of beauty for women, that is, feminine beauty. Women, along with surgeons, trainers, and stylists, construct some female features as deficient and lacking in femininity, and women makeover candidates are shown having cosmetic surgery, working out, shopping for clothing, and receiving hair and makeup treatments to “correct” particular feminine deficiencies and then reconstruct and display themselves as “real women.” The program can be seen as a guide to the bodily rules of femininity in showing the bodies and practices that are problematic and the standards of femininity that must be met to turn feminine “don’ts” into feminine “dos.”

Masculinity constructions on *Extreme Makeover* are also explored. Like femininity, masculinity is not a characteristic that all men have due to their sex. Masculinities are configurations of practice (Connell 2005) that include the ways men’s bodies move, interact and display gender. Connell (1987) contends that there is one dominant, culturally ideal, *hegemonic* masculinity for men within western society, although there is not a dominant femininity for women. While Connell (2005) conceptualizes masculinities, including hegemonic masculinity, as embodied, and mentions that men’s bodily participation and displays in sport are “the leading definition of masculinity in mass culture,” he fails to specify the particular practices that men engage in that make their bodies masculine, or constitute embodied hegemonic masculinity. I return to this point in Chapter 5.

There is little sociological work on men who undertake cosmetic surgery, with the exception of Atkinson (2006) who conducted interviews with Canadian men who had undergone elective cosmetic surgery. His respondents stated that they wanted to rid themselves of aging and unfit appearances through surgical procedures in order to project displays of being an “in control” man who would not be “threatened” on the job by younger and more attractive co-workers, including women. While men’s use of cosmetic surgery has not received much attention, many scholars have claimed that pressures on men to conform to physical standards of masculinity have increased as reflected in advertising campaigns and other cultural sites (Bordo 1999, Blum 2003, Connell and Wood 2005, Grogan and Richards 2002). Thus, there may be increasing pressure in western culture for men to engage in body projects that have previously been used primarily by women, including cosmetic surgery. Men may pursue cosmetic surgery as a body project to increase their attractiveness; however, the result may or may not be framed as increasing their masculinity in the same way that such pursuits generally are framed for women’s femininity.

Davis (2003:59) theorizes that cosmetic surgery for men cannot bolster men’s masculinity in the same way that it bolsters women’s femininity:

Given the meanings associated with hegemonic masculinity in western culture, I would argue cosmetic surgery cannot ‘enhance’ masculinity for men in the same way it ‘enhances’ femininity for women for the simple reason that the very act of having surgery signifies a symbolic transgression of the dominant forms of masculinity.

Davis gives the following supporting statements for her argument. Masculinity has typically been viewed as disembodied—a man is defined by his mind and not his body. Interest in appearance has been coded feminine, not masculine in western culture. Women, not men, are viewed as cultural objects to be gazed at. Men may be viewed as giving up their symbolic power if they turn themselves over to a cosmetic surgeon for intervention.

I examine men’s accounts about wanting cosmetic surgery and the discourse used by surgeons and other style professionals on *Extreme Makeover* to see how masculinity is framed in men’s cosmetic surgery pursuits. Men discuss wanting to change their

appearance in order to be more successful in business, to attract women, and to look younger. These are attributes of men that do not specifically refer to looking or feeling “more masculine.” A discourse of preserving or enhancing men’s already present masculinity is created on *Extreme Makeover*. Men are shown as becoming “more masculine” when altering their physical features and clothing in ways that comply with cultural standards of appearance for men.

Chapter 4 is organized as follows. In the first section, I address how makeover candidates and others on the show discussed women as lacking in femininity and represented women’s physical feminine deficiencies. In the next section, I show how women’s feminine deficiencies are remedied on the show through surgical procedures, training sessions, and style makeovers. The third section addresses men’s problematic physical features and style and the fourth addresses how men’s masculinity is enhanced through surgery, training, and stylistic makeovers on *EM*.

Feminine Deficiencies

Women makeover candidates on *EM* were characterized as having two major categories of deficiencies relative to femininity: (a) physical and (b) style and practice. I review each in turn.

Women’s Physical Deficiencies

Many women candidates on the show said they hoped to feel more feminine or more “like a woman” in their backstories, when telling viewers how they hoped to change their bodies. The discourse on feminine problems on *Extreme Makeover* points out the kinds of femininity that are accepted and expected in our culture primarily by pointing out what is *not* feminine, or what is offensive or unattractive in women, which I call “feminine deficiencies.”

Valerie’s account is quite detailed in discussing her own feminine deficiencies:

Announcer: Our second candidate tonight lives on a remote Missouri farm. It’s a place where Valerie Cowan can hide.

Valerie: Here I am, back in the sticks, nobody really has to look at me. And the animals don't care what I look like.

George [Valerie's husband, to the camera]: I do believe that she probably did come out here to kind of hide from the world

George [to Valerie]: So what's for dinner?

Announcer: Valerie has worn a dress maybe twice in the past 20 years.

Valerie: There's something un-feminine about me, but it's all exterior. I'm a woman, and I just don't think I look like, enough like, one. ((Shots of Valerie peering at herself in the mirror as she shows us what's "wrong" with her body)) I got big shoulders, I'm big boned, and this strong nose. You know, my nose probably wouldn't be bad for a man.

Announcer: Valerie's masculine look has plagued her since childhood. ((Shots of Valerie walking down the street, followed by pictures of her as a young woman))

Valerie [to the camera]: In a crowded, uh, high school classroom the teacher came up to me and slammed his ruler on my desk and said, "Pay attention young man!" And I said, ((sighs, rolls her eyes)) (p) you know, for a teenage girl, that was, that was pretty crushing.

George [to the camera]: She's a wonderful mother, she's a great wife.

Valerie [voice over]: You know, I'm married to this wonderful man. ((Shots of them roasting marshmallows over the campfire, the two cuddling on the couch)) And I almost feel like I, in a way, I've cheated him out of a wife, you know. I, I've never become the person he can put on his arm and take out.

Valerie's account constructs her as un-feminine in several ways. She doesn't wear dresses often, her nose and shoulders are too large for a woman, and she doesn't make proper gender bodily displays for a feminine woman that give others clues about her sex categorization. Her account is also one of shame. She says that she feels that she's not "the kind of person he can put on his arm and take out." In other words, she hasn't been an object deserving of the male gaze, even from her husband, in her view of herself.

Other women's accounts of their relationship with their bodies add to this kind of discourse on feminine deficiencies. For example, Angie, a housewife and mother who

thinks her nose is too large and that her teeth and chin protrude too much from her face, is generally dissatisfied with her appearance as a woman.

Angie: I want to look like a woman. I don't want to look childish anymore. I want to look—I want to look sexy! Maybe I could be a blonde bombshell. I've got the blonde—and to that effect, I wouldn't mind having bigger breasts, to help me feel more like a woman.

To Angie, part of what it means to be a woman is to be 'sexy' and she thinks that having bigger breasts might enhance her feminine appearance. Her comment is not just about her appearance, but also about her emotions, or her subjectivity, as she says one of her aims is to “feel more like a woman,” not just look more feminine. Her expectation is that surgery will change her physical appearance as well as her subjectivity.

Rachel, who is bald because of an auto immune deficiency disease called alopecia universalis, remarked, “I don't feel like a true feminine woman” when discussing her problem body in front of the mirror during her backstory. Rachel says that one the main reasons she wants the makeover is to enhance her femininity:

Rachel: I'm hoping to feel like a woman after this. I'm just incredibly excited at the potential of looking a little more feminine [and] having my features softened. Ingrid commented that part of the reason she wanted a makeover was that she didn't feel that her inner sense of self was reflected by her outer appearance:

Ingrid: “I think I'm beautiful [on the inside], and I know I don't reflect that outside, you know. And I want it! I want it reflected outside.”

Ingrid felt that her outward appearance did not reflect her inner femininity, and mentioned that she wanted to be a beautiful woman so that her husband would have a wife with a great heart and a beautiful body. Stephanie, who was referred to as “[a] daughter who wants to look like a woman” by the announcer on the program said she wanted a makeover to enhance her womanly appearance:

Stephanie: I'd like to have a breast augmentation. I'm a small A [cup] now but I'd like to be at least a small C [cup]. I still do feel really self-conscious about my looks because I look like I'm 15. I don't have, you know, the body of a 21 year old like I am. And so that's really bothered me my whole life.

The discourse on *Extreme Makeover*, from candidates themselves and also from others on the program, such as the announcer, casts women as lacking physical femininity when their noses, shoulders, or hands are too large, or when they lack normative physical characteristics like hair. Angie and Stephanie felt they looked young for their age, in part, because their breasts were not large enough. Ingrid's comment on not feeling physically beautiful points to another theme on *Extreme Makeover*. Women who did not meet cultural standards of attractiveness or fashion are often characterized as unfeminine and given tips to change their bodies, dress, and stylistic displays in order to properly embody womanhood.

Women's Style Deficiencies

A second feminine deficiency identified by *Extreme Makeover* is a lack of proper or correct clothing, hair, and makeup practices that are considered appropriate for feminine women. This critique of femininity was more subtle than were the critiques of the physical body. Women makeover candidates who did not display properly styled hair, fashion, and groomed appearances were considered as not properly performing femininity. Through these critiques of women's style, *Extreme Makeover* implies that norms of femininity require a woman to look her best and be well versed in beauty techniques.

Makeover candidates were often teased or taunted for their stylistic mistakes. For example, the *EM* style team called Ingrid's big hair "loco," or crazy, and exaggerated the reconstruction it required by saying they had to have a team of about 40 to dry it straight. As the stylists began giving her a new hair cut, a nervous Ingrid exclaimed:

Ingrid: Oh my god, you're cutting too much! I'm gonna have an Afro!

Stylist: Newsflash, Ingrid—you already have one.

This might have been a racial "othering" of Ingrid, who is a Hispanic woman. Whether or not the comment held negative racial connotations, Ingrid's "Afro" was constructed as unflattering, unappealing, and not a proper look for a fashionable woman. Stephanie, who felt she looked young for her age, also had her hair style critiqued by the style team:

Kim [stylist]: Simplest way to really age someone appropriately and make them look gorgeous is to get rid of their baby hair, which means the color that they

were born with. And you still have it, like your baby teeth, you still have your baby hair, and we're going to get you into adult hair color.

Sam: Bye bye baby!

Guy [stylist]: Stephanie's hair is just long and formless. This would look great on a girl who is 17 years old and who is just completely carefree. But right now we want something that's going to make a statement when she walks into a room. So I'm going to give her some pieces around her face and give her some long yummy layers that are gonna give her hair some more body and fullness.

These stylists contrasted proper hair fashions for girls and women. “Girls” can wear their natural hair color and sport long, carefree hair styles, but “women” should engage in the beauty practices of dyeing their hair and displaying more professional hair cuts to ensure they “make a statement when they walk into a room.” Sam, the host of the show, similarly critiqued Kim for not fully engaging in expected beauty practices when styling her hair. He was appalled at her use of hair scrunchies, or decorative pony tail holders. When she told him she liked to wear her hair in scrunchies because it was easy, he exclaimed, “They're EASY?!? [emphasis his] Beauty has nothing to do with being easy or convenient. Beauty is pain and torture!” Feminine women must take responsibility for managing their beauty practices and understand that creating such an image comes with a price, according to Sam.

Women makeover candidates were critiqued on their clothing in regard to feminine fashions. For example, part of Valerie’s account of being unfeminine included not wearing dresses. Emily was chastised for not wearing proper feminine attire by Sam, the show’s host and fashion expert:

Sam: Emily, when was the last time you wore a dress and you felt like a girl when you looked in the mirror?

Emily: Never! I didn't even wear a dress at my wedding!

Sam: What did you wear at your wedding?

Emily: A supergirl costume ((picture of Emily in the supergirl costume on screen))

Sam: No you didn't.

Emily: For real!

Sam: Well, nothing that you try on today is going to be anything like a supergirl costume. It's gonna be very beautiful and very different and maybe something that you should get remarried in, okay?

Emily's wedding attire was so inappropriate that Sam suggested that she ought to get remarried (to the same man) in a more feminine outfit. Deirdre, a 21-year-old nurse, was also critiqued for her lack of proper dress and "teenage clothes." Her grandmother went through her closet with disapproval, hoping *Extreme Makeover's* fashion consultants would show her the light, commenting, "The truth is, I just don't like any of [these clothes]. I'd like to see some suits, dresses, skirts. We're going to teach this girl how to be a young, gorgeous woman." Sam described Mary as "hiding behind all those pleated, baggy dresses" or "moo-moos". Valerie's practice of "go[ing] into a store and buy[ing] jeans off the rack and T-shirts already folded up," Kari's style, described by a friend as "a bit stuck in the 70s and 80s," and Ingrid's love of wearing black and brown were all framed as displays to be made over. Women who styled their hair in average ways or wore "average" clothing, such as jeans and simple shirts, were depicted as in need of intervention from *Extreme Makeover's* stylists.

In summary, women on *Extreme Makeover* were constructed as deficient in femininity for lacking appropriate physical characteristics as well as failing to display proper femininity through their choice of dress and hair style. Having features that were too large, like big hands or a big nose, as well as features that were too small, such as breasts, led women and surgeons to use the label "unfeminine" to describe their physical bodies. Additionally, women who failed to conform to style and fashion norms risked being teased for their lack of femininity or being referred to condescendingly as "girls" who had not yet become "women." I now turn to the ways *Extreme Makeover* experts aided these women on their quest towards embodying style and femininity with a discussion of solutions for feminine deficiencies.

Fixing Women: Strategies for Increasing Femininity

The feminine deficiencies just reviewed were not allowed to stand. That is, *EM* no doubt focused on the problems the show intended to "fix" or correct. This section

reviews three categories of corrective strategies for deficient femininity: (a) medical interventions, (b) training sessions, and (c) style and dress.

Increasing Femininity: Medical Interventions

This section reviews how physical characteristics were shown as improved through cosmetic surgery and medical interventions on *Extreme Makeover*. Several surgeries were discussed as creating a more “feminine” appearance for women. Most frequently, these consisted of nose jobs that reduced the size and shape of the nose, eye lifts and face lifts that imparted a youthful appearance, and breast implants that created feminine curves. The discourse of surgeons while operating on women emphasized how each surgical procedure would benefit the patient. Valerie’s cosmetic surgery was constructed as “feminizing” her in the following ways:

Announcer: And here's how [the doctor] creates a living work of art. His first stroke—lipo of [Valerie's] hips and inner and outer thighs.

Doctor. [to surgical assistant]: Are you taking out about 20 cc's?

Assistant: Yes.

Doctor: She already does seem a lot thinner now, that's good.

Announcer: He molds back tissue as if it were clay, sculpting her lips and cheeks.

Doctor: I think this will contribute to softening her appearance, making her face look more balanced.

Announcer: Valerie's brow is raised.

Doctor: Nice, high arched brows, just wonderful for a woman.

Announcer: And her upper and lower eyelids lifted.

Doctor: I want her to look good, look rested, look healthy.

Announcer: Valerie's nose—a test of symmetry and composition.

Doctor: We can't turn it into a tiny nose, but improving the proportion and the balance is going to make it look more feminine, and make it look like it really fits in with the remainder of her face.

Announcer: Next, a face [and] neck lift.

Doctor: You do this very gently and delicately, and it's going to give her a sharper neck line.

Announcer: In a separate surgery, a breast lift and tummy tuck.

Doctor: And I think the results are going to be spectacular. I can't wait to see her reveal.

Making Valerie thinner, her facial features softer, her brows higher, reducing the size of her nose, and giving her a tummy tuck and breast lift, as the doctor comments, will make her “look more feminine” and “just wonderful for a woman.” Surgeons performed similar procedures on other women candidates whose goal was to look more feminine. For example, Kristi’s “sad looking eyes” were improved with a brow lift, that her surgeon said would “make [her] look so much more alert and rested, just like a young woman should look.” Rachel was similarly told that a brow lift will give her eyebrows a nice “feminine arch [that would] really enhance the appearance and femininity of her face.” Amanda’s surgeon commented before performing her nose job that “Your nose angle is roughly 90 degrees, and for most women they want a little bit [less of an] open angle here as well as taking down the hump.”

This discourse used to discuss women’s bodies points out the kinds of features considered ideal for women through offering concrete examples of what is *not* appropriate or desirable as an example. Caitlyn’s surgeon remarks, “She complains that her nipples are too large, so, they're about twice the size they should be and we're gonna make them half that size.” Through this comment, the surgeon confirms Caitlyn’s assessment that her nipples are too large by cultural standards. Studies of cosmetic surgery (Dull and West 1991) have shown that the standards of appearance most used by surgeons are the typical ideals of western culture. Thus, the surgeon defines them for nipple size and demonstrates surgical techniques that can accomplish the embodiment of this standard for those whose physical bodies fail to meet it. Other surgeons demonstrate cultural standards for women by removing moles, which are referred to as “a distraction” on a woman’s face, reducing noses that are too large or “boxy,” and performing eye and face lifts that veil the appearance of aging. No women (or men) on *Extreme Makeover* were shown asking for or receiving cosmetic surgical procedures that strayed far from constructing cultural standards of beauty.

Women were shown getting breast implants, tummy tucks, liposuction, nose jobs, fat injections, eye lifts, brow lifts, and face lifts to enhance their feminine appearance.

Most women received multiple surgical procedures, with some requiring multiple surgical events in order to safely receive all of the procedures they desired. Patients could not safely be put under anesthesia for the length of time it would take to do all of their cosmetic surgeries all at once, a fact that was downplayed by *Extreme Makeover* by only mentioning the need for multiple surgeries in an off-hand way, as shown in Valerie's surgical segment (above).

Dermatologists also performed procedures to remove feminine deficiencies and enhance womanly appearance. While the dermatological procedures highlighted on *Extreme Makeover* were not as dramatic, involved, or as risky as other cosmetic surgeries, they were characterized as another avenue for women (and men) to improve their appearance. After treating Katie for her acne, the dermatologist remarked, "Katie has really gone from looking like a gawky adolescent to [looking like] a young woman."

Trisha and Kari received treatments for stretch marks due to childbirth, and also participated in a "makeover in a minute"⁶ segment offering advice to women on skincare:

Doctor: As women we have so many job responsibilities, it leaves so little time for ourselves. So what's a woman to do?

Announcer: And what [the] doctor does is a makeover in a minute.

Doctor: The first thing to do is just start with protecting your hands. Cover your hands with moisturizer and you're gonna put some kind of a warm glove on like this ((puts on glove)). It will really increase the absorption into the skin. Now we're gonna move on to that puffiness under your eyes. Take a minute, lie down, put some tea bags on your eyes, with caffeine. It's the caffeine that's gonna reduce the swelling. Now, notice these are cooled tea bags, not boiling hot.

Trisha: Such a great idea!

Doctor: We want the coolness to help shrink those blood vessels and take that puffiness away. For women on the run, put a moisturizing mask on. It's gonna get rid of the dry, wrinkly, skin, [and] some of the lines. You can even put it on

⁶ During "makeover in a minute" segments, a member of the "Extreme Team" of experts gives tips in their area of expertise on how to improve the self in a sixty-second segment. When the segment begins, a digital clock appears in the lower right corner of the screen and "counts down" the makeover minute. For example, in another makeover in a minute segment, a dentist gives tips on brushing and flossing technique.

while you're doing your housework. Another quick tip: aromatherapy. Lavender spray [is] very relaxing.

Trisha and Kari: Mmmm! ((as they smell the spray))

Doctor: And finally, light a candle

Trisha and Kari: Ooooh (.) We love candles! We can do this at home!

Doctor: Although you may feel like a Desperate Housewife, you don't have to look like one!

The above segment reveals the beauty expectation for women to display eyes that are not puffy and skin that is not dry. They also refer to domestic expectations for women, drawing on traditional notions of housework as “women’s work.” I suggest that “makeover in a minute” segments that give “quick tips” to makeover candidates, as the above does on skin care, are also meant to educate viewers on small things they can do to improve their appearance. While cosmetic surgery is perhaps too drastic or costly for most viewers, they can follow simple beauty tips that will reduce eye swelling or guide their selection of beauty products.

Increasing Femininity: “Training” Sessions for Women

In addition to surgery, *Extreme Makeover* attempted to increase women’s femininity and help them “feel more like women” through what I call “feminine training sessions.” Occasionally *Extreme Makeover* airs special interest scenes where candidates meet celebrities, are coached on their interests, display a talent, or re-connect with a family member they have been separated from during the makeover. For example, Mary’s boyfriend Chris came to Los Angeles to propose to her at the makeover mansion; Stephanie was given clothing and style advice by celebrity and boutique owner Lisa Renna; and motorcycle enthusiast Ray was introduced to Jesse James, who builds custom motorcycles on the television show *Monster Garage*. In several of these special interest scenes, women makeover candidates were given “feminine training sessions” on how to be a better or more feminine woman. Emily, who was formerly in the army and enjoyed extreme sports such as skydiving, was trained by Didiayer, a former model and beauty pageant contestant about how to walk and how to flirt with men:

Didiayer [to Emily]: Have you ever worn high heels before?

Emily: I can't think of a single time.

Emily [voiceover]: When I walk into a room I sort of just clunk

Didiayer: We're going to change that. So when you're coming down and you strike your pose, it's almost like, Mmm-hmm, I know something (.) that you don't know.

Emily: Oooo, that's sneaky!

Didiayer: It's sneaky! And it comes across really STRONG. It's almost like a little hidden secret. When you put your hand on your hip, the not like this (both hands on two hips, elbows out) this is a no no. This ((hand on butt)) is a no no, okay? We want to take our hand and we wanna place it on our hip, take our elbow and drop it, so it touches and pushes out. There you go, ((in response to Emily's pose)) see how your arm is dropped back? That is perfect!

Didiayer ((walking, to demonstrate)): So it's heel toe, heel toe, and ((turning, hand on hip)) I know something (.) that you don't know. Got it?

Emily: Okay.

Didiayer: Alright, girl. Walk for me. ((Emily walks)) Nice. Very nice, very nice. And swing, to the side, and smile. BEAUTIFUL! That is gorgeous!

Emily to camera: Emily the solider has been replaced by Emily the lady. I have discovered how to walk like one, glide like one, think like one, and look like one.

Didiayer [to the camera]: It definitely is a mind and body connection, for anybody, not just for Emily, but to really connect with your self.

Didiayer [to Emily]: Very nice. Oh, yeah! That's great!

Didiayer [to the camera]: She's gonna be a knockout.

Emily's admission that she used to "just clunk" into a room identifies the unfeminine behavior they aimed to change during this training session. She is taught how to walk in high heels, how to properly place her hands on her hips, and how to create a flirtatious facial expression of "knowing something we don't know," apparently viewed as essential feminine skills by *Extreme Makeover*. Emily says that her training session and her makeover in general have been transformative, stating that "Emily the solider has been replaced by Emily the lady. I have discovered how to walk like one, glide like one, think like one, and act like one." The cosmetic surgery procedures on *Extreme Makeover*

changed Emily's physical body, but the training she received went further, imparting guidance on how to display femininity within interactions through her bodily displays. These were aimed at helping Emily walk, glide and act like a woman. Emily suggests that these physical and interactional changes affected her subjectivity and thought processes, as she claims to "think like a woman" due to her makeover experience.

Other feminine training sessions included Stephanie, who was coached by "Willie Ninja" (who claims to have molded Paris Hilton and Madonna) about how to walk in high heels and how to turn and pose. Christina, who had never been kissed, was given lessons by an expert relationship coach and actually practiced kissing with a male partner. These segments showed that femininity is not achieved only through physical body changes. That is, makeover candidates were not magically "feminine women" as soon as their bodies were altered to embody cultural ideals of beauty. Achieving femininity through interactions was acknowledged as an important part of the performance. Thus, femininity is shown on *Extreme Makeover* as not only physical features to be *displayed*, but as *practices* that women perform within interactions (Martin 2003, 2006).

While *Extreme Makeover* trained women to carry themselves in feminine ways, walk in high heels, flirt with men, and kiss, they did not socialize men in complementary ways, as I will outline in the next section on masculinity and men on *EM*. Men's training sessions more often focused on getting them ahead in their work and careers and less on performing masculinity. Some women featured on *Extreme Makeover* were given career opportunities at their reveals—for example, Emily the former solider was given an internship at *Extreme Makeover* to further her career in broadcasting; Heather, an aspiring actress, was given a scholarship to an acting school; Kristy, a violin player, was given the opportunity to play with county singer Le Ann Rimes. These kinds of gifts were also given to men at their reveals—for example, Steven was given entrance into an animation school. But the framing of the stories for men and women throughout the episodes focused on shaping women's learned femininities, with no corresponding learned masculinities. As shown above, Emily received femininity training in addition to her internship, perhaps suggesting that showing women to perform femininity was as important as helping them succeed in their careers. In short, women were shown how to *act like women* and *embody womanhood* through femininity training sessions, illustrating

their subordinate position in the gender institution. Men were helped to “act like men” by increasing their professionalism. *Extreme Makeover* follows the pattern of other reality shows by showing candidates performing activities that reinforce traditional notions of gender (Edwards 2004). I return to this point in the section on men’s training and in the discussion.

Increasing Femininity: Style and Dress

Extreme Makeover stylists also prescribed femininity through style and dress. Sam, the host and clothing stylist on the show, took Amy, who was formerly very thin, shopping for some new clothes for her new look:

Sam: This is [outfit] two, it's a really casual outfit, but girly at the same time.

This is a great cashmere sweater that adds a little bulk to your frame. It actually fills you out and makes you look more curvy and not so skinny and lean.

Amy: This is awesome. I love this.

Sam: Now, if you're going to wear jeans, make sure they have a feminine spin on them. These Capri cuffed jeans are tight, they have a little bit of stretch so you're comfortable, any time you have a drop pocket on the back of the pant, it creates more of a curve in the butt.

Sam suggests outfits that “fill out” Amy’s thin build, referring to cultural fashion norms that dictate women displaying soft curves, not stick figure frames. He recommends jeans with a “feminine spin” on them—they are cuffed, are tight but have stretch, and the drop pocket accentuates her backside.

Stephanie, who said she wanted to wear sexy lingerie but didn’t feel comfortable doing so with small breasts, was shown shopping for undergarments after getting breast implants:

Announcer: Stephanie's fantasy to become a fantasy, in sexy silk and lace

Stephanie [to lingerie store employee]: I need a little help. I've got a whole new body, and a whole new attitude, and I'm ready to look more like a woman.

Store employee: Absolutely. Maybe something like this, something that's a little corset, very sexy but you could actually also wear it out.

Stephanie: Cool ((goes to try it on)).

Store employee [as Stephanie comes out in the lingerie]: wow

Stephanie: I like this

Store employee: You like that one? Isn't that gorgeous?

Stephanie: Wow, if my husband saw me wearing this, he'd, I think he'd be speechless, I don't think he'd have words...

Store employee: The thing [that] I love about lingerie is, feel beautiful for yourself.

Stephanie: I felt more like a woman. And that's what I've been looking for my whole life.

Stephanie's account suggests that due to her new breasts and the lingerie to show them off, she identifies more with being a woman than she did in the past. Many of the feminizing style makeover segments of the show are presented in a way that the makeover candidate as well as at home viewers gain insight on the "rules" or guidelines of dress for women. Sam gives advice to Kari (and viewers) on the proper way to enhance and display a female body:

Sam: Now, because your upper body is a little bit fuller than your lower body, I need to fill out your lower body with a wider leg pant, so that you have a little bit of balance going on between the bottom and the top. We kept it in a dark color to keep you sophisticated, and we contrasted that with a very soft, feminine top. What's really cool about this top is that if you're going to expose your arms, you want to make sure the sleeve cuts a little bit higher, and that's gonna make your arms actually look a little bit leaner. And then, of course, a little peak at cleavage for some femininity, and you're good to go.

Sam's advice gives specific instructions for women to follow in order to embody femininity given her other bodily characteristics, such as wearing wide pant legs, showing off a certain amount of skin, and how to show just the right amount of breast.

Extreme Makeover also addressed hair and makeup displays that increased women's feminine look. As previously mentioned, Ingrid's "loco" Afro was tamed and straightened and women with long straight hair were persuaded to transition into more complex hairstyles. Most women received new hair cuts and had their hair dyed by the

Extreme Makeover team. Kristi was among just a few makeover candidates that resisted her hair makeover:

Sam: Kristi, how's it going, you're halfway home.

Kristi: ((tearfully, in a shaky voice)): Okay

Sam: Are you freaking out? ((Sam puts his hand on Kristi's shoulder))

Kristi: ((tearfully)) Yeah.

Sam: Tell me why ((Sam takes Kristi's hand to comfort her, and pats it with his other hand)).

Kristi: The length

Sam: What about the length?

Kristi: I don't know—I just got so attached to the length

Sam: It's going to be even better than you imagined, I promise. Don't be upset, be thrilled, because when you look in that mirror, when we're done with your makeup, you're going to be crying tears of joy, I promise, okay?

Kristi: ((starts to smile again)) 'Kay.

Kristi was nervous about getting her hair cut, but the style team assured her that as experts on hair they knew what was best for her, regardless of her preferences or feelings. Through these style makeovers, women's unacceptable, drab clothing and ordinary hair styles and colors were replaced with the latest fashions, often described as feminine and more "lady like" than candidates' previous styles.

In summary, this analysis of femininity shows that women makeover candidates, along with surgeons and other experts on *Extreme Makeover*, considered themselves as lacking femininity when they failed to embody ideal cultural standards of beauty. Cosmetic surgery was shown as one method for placing women in line with feminine standards. Women were shown reducing their noses, receiving liposuction, breast implants, eye lifts and face lifts, among other procedures to improve their womanly appearance. Training sessions showed women how to perform femininity within interactions. Hair makeovers encouraged women to move away from looks that were easy to maintain to more complex and labor intensive styles. Clothing makeovers focused on teaching women about the kinds of clothing that emphasize their feminine

features and enhance their feminine subjectivity. In the next section, I focus on how masculinity was discussed and constructed on *Extreme Makeover*.

Making Masculine Men? Men's "Deficiencies"

In this section, I review men's experiences on *Extreme Makeover* to show how masculinity was viewed as lacking and the strategies EM used to bolster masculinity in men. I review two categories of deficiencies relative to masculinity: (a) physical and (b) style. I review each in turn.

Men's Physical "Deficiencies"

Men's accounts of why they wanted to have surgery differed from women's, who blatantly discussed wanting to embody femininity. No men makeover candidate directly discussed feeling less than masculine or wanting to achieve a more masculine look. They did, however, mention that they hoped their *Extreme Makeover* experience would improve their physical appearance in ways that would enhance their career opportunities and repair bodily damage they had received in previous masculine endeavors such as bull riding. They expressed a desire to attain the kinds of masculinity that are valorized in society for men—"success" at work, with women, and a youthful appearance. While men did not frame themselves as wanting to change their physical bodies in order to enhance masculinity, I nevertheless view their makeover desires as masculinity pursuits. In this section, I discuss the goals men had for their makeovers, including career and occupational goals, attracting women, and looking more youthful and attractive.

Many men expressed the belief that their physical appearance prevented them from accomplishing all they could in their careers. Marque hoped that his makeover would help him break into the music industry:

I've been beating my head against the wall of this music business for a long time. It's all about looking the best you can possibly look and selling that. And (.) I noticed the last 6 or 7 years, I can't even get a head turn, uh, from anybody in the business. So, I'm thinking, maybe the hair's gotta go, maybe I'm too '70s. What can I do?

Mike, a police officer, hoped his makeover would enhance his confidence on the job while performing his duties. Bill, an expeditor at a large home improvement retailer who relinquished a managerial position because of appearance anxieties, also hoped that an enhanced appearance would give him more confidence on his job. Nate, who described himself as having bad teeth and a nose that was too big for his face, hoped that changing his physical appearance would improve his employment prospects:

Nate: I scored [on an IQ test] at, it wasn't quite genius level, genius level is considered a 170, but I scored in the high 150s low 160s on 'em.

Announcer: As bright as he is, his appearance and life? (p) Dull.

Peggy Chalk [Nate's mother]: He has a degree in psychology but his appearance, I'm sure, would turn some employers away.

Kim [Nate's friend]: He has been turned away from jobs because of his appearance. And they have flat out told him, "Because of your looks, we will not hire you."

Thus, these quotes show several men stating that getting a makeover would, they hoped, improve their employment prospects or give them more confidence to perform in the jobs. Work experiences were mentioned in two different ways by men on *Extreme Makeover*. Some suggested that altering the body to meet standards of masculinity would help them gain employment or perform better on the job. Others claimed that enduring harsh experiences while doing particularly demanding labor like bull riding or farm work created the need for physical changes, such as having dental work to correct for broken teeth or getting facial treatments to treat skin worn by the sun. Bubba, a former bull rider at a rodeo, claimed that his profession had left his body tattered and in need of repair:

Bubba: The repercussions of ridin' bulls? Gets your teeth knocked out, bones broke, stomped on, catch a few horns in your sides and stuff, [you] start losing your memory a little bit. I decided it was time to cut out on that, and just work for a livin'.

Bubba thought getting a nose job and dental work to correct for previous damages would rejuvenate his appearance. Other men also claimed that their lifestyles had been hard on their physical bodies. Ray, who was dubbed the "snaggletooth killer" by the media and had been wrongfully convicted of murder (a conviction which was eventually

overturned), wanted a makeover to get rid of his condemning dental problems and the harsh conditions he endured while imprisoned. Ray claimed that prison life had atrophied his once athletic body and that the stress of being wrongfully convicted increased his hair loss and aged his skin. He hoped an *Extreme Makeover* that included liposuction, a hair transplant, skin treatments, and dental work to eliminate his snaggletoothed grin would erase the appearance of a convict. Fritz, who stepped in to help his mother on their family farm after his father passed, mentioned how working 15 hour days had taken its toll on his body.

Attracting women was another common motive given by men for a makeover. While some men said they had never been good at getting dates, others gave accounts of past relationships they had not yet gotten over. All discussed heterosexual relationship pursuits, although one male makeover candidate, Bill, identified himself as homosexual and in a serious monogamous relationship.

Nate and Steven revealed that they had never had much success with women and hoped a makeover would enhance their prospects. Steven, who was 22, said:

I haven't actually been on a date with a woman since I was 16 years old. I've tried approaching, you know, girls before. But anytime that I do, and [I] start talking to them, they're not listening to [me]. They're just like, looking at your teeth, and looking at your nose, and [the girls are] like, [Steven uses a high pitched voice] "Ew! God! Oh my god! What are those? Scrub!"

Some men gave accounts of lost love and the desire to find someone new. Marque said he hadn't really been with anyone since his son's mother passed away several years ago. Mike's fiancée had recently called off their wedding and found someone new for reasons undisclosed to the viewing audience. Bubba's fiancée unexpectedly passed away two years ago and he hadn't yet been able to get past her death. Almost all of the men who were not in committed relationships voiced their hope that their makeover would make them more attractive to potential mates, that is, women.

Another bodily concern voiced by men on *Extreme Makeover* was the appearance of aging. Marque jokingly gave himself the nickname "Saggin' Dragon" in reference to his aging skin and appearance. Problems associated with aging were the main motivation for a makeover for Ethan:

Announcer: Ethan looks less like a Dad and more like “father time.”

Ethan: I'm 44 going on 50 and I just feel old.

It's just I feel like (.) it looks like I'm tired. My eyelids droop down and I do have these blotches that show up on my face from time to time that are red. I used to take my wife's makeup and [use it] to cover that up.

Geri: Yeah, I just found this out the other day. [I said,] “really?”

Ethan: I tried to hide [the blotches]. I've got crooked yellow teeth, (p) I feel like an old fogie. And the first birthday cake she got me, it was actually like, it had a tombstone on it.

Geri: ((laughing)) It said “Rest in Peace!”

Ethan: Yeah, I was like, man!

Droopy eyelids, worn teeth and sagging skin were signs of aging Ethan hoped his makeover would be able to correct. Other men also expressed similar concerns for aging that they hoped could be corrected through face lifts, eye lifts and skin treatments.

Men on *Extreme Makeover* claimed they wanted to change their appearance due to job experiences both past and present, in order to better attract women, and to counter the experience of aging. Their goals were expressed in their backstory segments where men's problems achieving success in their careers and in relationships with women were attributed to their physical appearance. As discussed in Chapter 3, linking physical problems to emotional goals is one way that *Extreme Makeover* creates the illusion of a symbolic transformation in makeover candidates. Unlike women, who vocalized their desires to look more feminine and meet standards of beauty, men's goals were framed as enabling them to accomplish more in their work-related lives and not simply to improve their body and appearance for vanity. While they did not specify their makeover desires as wanting to look “more masculine” or “manly,” I view their aims to embody career success, attract women, and look more youthful or attractive as masculinity pursuits that place them in line with hegemonic cultural definitions of what a “real man” is like.

Men's Style Deficiencies

When it came to clothing, men were typically depicted as having no style at all rather than a style deficiency. In other words, men claimed they had not put much

thought or energy into their wardrobes. Sam, the style coach, often referred to the need to “give men some style,” portraying men as blank fashion slates. Sam made a typical comment to Ethan:

Sam: Ethan is a family man who doesn't have a lot of time to spend on his fashion. He wears a uniform everyday to work and has a wife to please and some kids who don't think his wardrobe is so cool. We're here at [store name] in Beverly Hills...we're going to [give Ethan a fashion makeover] today.

Men's style, when critiqued, was done with subtlety. Sam softly jabs at Bill, who is wearing a pair of khaki shorts and a polo shirt with sneakers, as they shop for new clothing together:

Bill [to Sam in a clothing store]: I am nervous just kind of being in here because everything here, on the racks here, is far from what I'm wearing and what I'm used to. So I'm a little bit intimidated by just even, just looking at the clothes. I want to see what they look like on me.

Sam: There's no polo shirts, there's no shorts, and there's definitely no sneakers here—unless they're really cool designer sneakers.

Sam teased Bill that they would not find outfits like his while they shopped and used a similar technique on Bubba to distract him from his current style:

Sam: Bubba, tell me a little bit about your sense of style

Bubba: Basically, my sense of style is straight from the rodeo, um, we wear a cowboy hat, rodeo buckle and a nice pair of cowboy boots.

Sam: Well, today we're gonna take away the three elements that every cowboy must have. We're gonna put you in something comfortable and cool, things that are really different and feel different. 'Cause you can't learn anything unless you change a little bit.

While men were not teased or challenged on their choice of dress, they were not shown such deference when it came to their hairstyles. Marque was told, “If you're running for office you can have gray hair, but if not, no one else can wear gray hair. Well, maybe Richard Gere.” Mike, a police officer, was given “a ticket for bad helmet hair” and chastised for using hair gel that would make his hair sticky to the touch. Nate was teased about his lack of eyebrow grooming:

Sam: Well, Nate, we've fitted something to your sense of style, today it's time to tackle your hair and this huge Grizzly Adams beard. And speaking of which, how many fingers am I holding up?

Nate: Two

Sam: That's how many eyebrows you should have.

A couple of other men also received lessons on the importance of eye brow grooming. Not all of the men were teased or cajoled. Bubba, who said he wanted a simple, easy hair style was granted his wish, unlike women makeover candidates who were chastised for taking short cuts with their hair styles and makeup. Men makeover candidates were given more latitude for fashion mistakes and were not chastised as harshly for lacking knowledge of fashion and hair trends.

Fixing Men: Strategies for Enhancing Masculinity

Comparable to the women makeover candidates, men on *Extreme Makeover* were “enhanced” via these three strategies: (a) medical interventions, (b) training, and (c) style and dress.

Enhancing Masculinity: Medical Interventions

While men on *Extreme Makeover* failed to mention masculinity specifically as a goal for surgery, cosmetic surgeons did point out how their procedures might increase their “masculine look”. Unlike the discourse surgeons created in concert with women that addressed lacking femininity, surgeons never characterized men as “lacking” masculinity. Instead, they used language to signify how they might *enhance* a man’s masculine look:

Surgeon to Nate: Your nose is just a little bit long. If we shorten it just a hair, and thin this out, I think, uh, you'll still look very masculine and this would blend in and look very natural

Nate’s surgeon does not suggest that his current appearance or body is deficient in masculinity, only that surgery will preserve the masculinity he already possesses. Bill is similarly told by his surgeon that he will maintain his masculine appearance when

reducing the size of his forehead. Surgeons on *Extreme Makeover* also noted that there was a difference between men and women to consider during surgery:

Surgeon [to the camera]: Someone like Marque, who has relatively thick skin as males do, you're not going to see the fine chiseled definition that you would get in a woman with thin skin. But that's what you want for a male. They don't want to look as if they just walked out of the plastic surgeon's office.

Other surgeons mentioned the need to be especially conservative when performing cosmetic surgery on men, as Ethan's surgeon did when doing an eye lift, implying that going too far with the surgery might risk him becoming feminine in appearance:

Surgeon [voiceover surgical imagery]: The goal for him as a man is not to clean it out. I just want to make a subtle improvement to freshen up his eyes and still look masculine.

Procedures like brow lifts and eye lifts were used to make men appear younger and more alert. Many men were shown having liposuction to reduce their weight and some had nose jobs to correct for past broken noses. Several had chin implants to get a stronger, more chiseled look, and a few men received hair reconstruction procedures to counter balding. Cosmetic surgery was thus constructed as a tool for enhancing and preserving masculinity, not as a solution for increasing or creating a previously absent or deficient masculine look. Davis (2002) suggests that one of the reasons cosmetic surgery cannot be conceived as a vehicle for reaching cultural standards of embodied masculinity is that men who choose to engage in surgery defy norms of masculine power and control by turning their bodies over to (mostly male) cosmetic surgeons. I suggest that the surgeons, as illustrated in the quotes above, showed deference to male surgery candidates on *Extreme Makeover*. Unlike surgical consultations with women, where surgeons commented on how women's features lacked femininity, surgeons avoided the use of language that questioned men's masculine adequacies and instead characterized them as responsive to men's needs. I return to this point in the discussion at the end of Chapter 4.

Enhancing Masculinity: “Training” Session for Men

While *Extreme Makeover* trained women to carry themselves in feminine ways, walk in high heels, flirt with men, and kiss, they did not socialize men in complementary ways. That is, men were not instructed on how to carry themselves in a masculine fashion, how to attract women or appear pleasing to a woman’s eye, how to flirt with women or kiss their dates. Fritz was shown how to throw punches and provide a self-defense, and Sean was shown proper dinner etiquette, as I describe below. *Extreme Makeover* highlighted men’s career choices and hobbies within training sessions, segments that served to anchor them professionally, proving they were men through their “work.”

For example, David, an aspiring musician, was introduced to the front man and guitar player from his favorite rock band, Cinderella, and given the opportunity to do some collaborative song writing. Steven, an aspiring animator, was invited to an animation studio where he shadowed computer graphic animators for the day and was given a laptop and a software package he could use to further his career. Even single men who made clear they had struggled with getting dates and were interested in finding a woman partner were not given explicit guidance on this issue. Bubba, a former bull rider who stated, “I’d like to meet me a nice girl, maybe settle down and get married, start a family” received no coaching about dating.

While men were not trained to be masculine in overt ways as women were in regard to femininity, two segments of the show did focus on enhancing or training men. Fritz, a man with low self-confidence from Minnesota, was trained in martial arts by an Ultimate Fighting Champion, with the goals of increasing his physique and self confidence:

Announcer: Guest fitness expert Vas Ruten shows Fritz the moves. He's the Ultimate Fighting Champion of the World ((clips of him fighting)).

Vas: First of all, we're going to work on our straight punches, very important, okay? You're going to stand shoulder wide, on the balls of your feet, so you can move fast forward and fast backwards. It's very import-

Announcer: His extreme martial arts will build both Fritz's body and his self assurance.

Vas: The power with the straight punch is going to come from your back leg. Push away with your back leg, you see? Put your hands up (.) let me see how that looks. Alright, there we go, Rocky! [referencing the film *Rocky*] You want to keep the elbow low, and you're going to go straight to the defense.

Vas [voiceover scene of them training]: He's got a great feeling for martial arts. I mean, what I tell him, he understands. That's something that you normally don't see.

((The two of them stand by the pool, side by side. Vas throws a punch out of nowhere and Fritz promptly blocks it))

Vas [to Fritz]: Yeah!

Vas [to camera]: You know what? He's going to be a handsome, fighting machine. That's what he's going to be.

Another training session for a man was a short 60-second “makeover in a minute” segment where Sam, the style coach, gave instructions to Sean, on dinner etiquette, that included information about how to pick a restaurant and proper utensil used with each course. Sean was a mini-makeover candidate who hoped to get a date with his crush after his makeover.

Whereas women were taught to wear high heels and pose and turn during femininity training sessions, men on *Extreme Makeover* were not given similar kinds of training. No men were taught how to “walk like a man” or how to flirt with women. Instead, training for men focused on enhancing their career opportunities, physical strength, and ability to romance women through mastering etiquette. By not training men on how to embody manhood as women were trained to embody femininity, *Extreme Makeover* assumed that men on the program had mastered basic masculinity practices, like how to walk like a man and how to get dates. They instead focused on training men about the implicit rules for preferred masculinity, how to fight and embody “tough” masculinity, and how to impress women at dinner with knowing which fork to use with each course of a formal meal.

Enhancing Masculinity: Style and Dress

Extreme Makeover pushed men to embody current fashion trends and masculinity during clothing segments. Generally, Sam the host and stylist, would place men in a few different outfits, ranging from casual slacks and T-shirts with a blazer, to more formal attire, such as a suit, while discussing color and other tips for men to keep in mind while shopping. Sam and Kim, a tailor, helped Mike pick out a new suit:

Sam: We're here at Austin Tailor in Anaheim, California with Kim Welch who's gonna help us design a custom tailored suit for you. That means we're gonna select the collar, the jacket style, the buttons, everything you can think of.

Kim: For your reveal, I really want to put you in a power suit. Typically, that's something more in a navy or a charcoal.

Masculinity was enhanced through clothing that conveyed power or made a man look more bulked-up or muscular. Dark colors were also described as “masculine.” Sam discussed following fashion trends to look “hip” and fashionable as a strategy for making men more handsome. The following quote shows how men’s clothing was not always discussed in traditional, hegemonic ways, as Sam suggests men dressing up for special occasions instead of women:

Sam: Alright, let's go on to the next look, something a little more earthy and masculine. What do you think your kids would think of you in this outfit?

Ethan: Normally, the way I dress, they're more embarrassed of being with us in public, so this would probably something they would be more comfortable with.

Sam: Alright, guys, it's time to do something a little more romantic for your wife. One night a week, cut her some slack, and YOU get dressed up to be her arm candy. A dark shirt, a dark pair of pants, automatically dresses you up. What do you think Jerry would think if you walked into a room in this outfit?

Ethan: Oh, she would be excited, she'd love it.

Sam: And you look young, you look good, I hope you feel good.

Ethan: It's taking me out of my old realm that I'm used to and into something that I'm looking forward to.

Sam suggests that men can also be seen as sexual objects by saying to Ethan that he should “be his wife’s arm candy” every now and then.

And yet, while men were pushed to try new fashions that were different from what they wore before the makeover, men were shown more latitude than women in picking their own style, as the following segment shows:

Bubba: The third outfit [is] the straight up gentlemen's suit. ((Bubba stiffly walks into view from the dressing room))

Sam: I don't even recognize you right now Bubba. What do you think of this?

Bubba: I feel like Charlie Chaplin

Sam: We have classic Italian tailoring mixed with very traditional English styling. Let me—((Bubba squirms and itches))—Is it uncomfortable?

Bubba: The materials were nice, the patterns, the colors and everything but it just wasn't my style. I feel a little over done. This turkey's over cooked.

Sam: All right, well, the most important thing about this look is that you experience something different. For your *reveal* [sic] we're going to find something that feels comfortable to you but that adds a little bit of these elements that we've been playing with today.

Bubba: Yeah, for the reveal, I'd rather be toned down a little bit more.

Most men were given a new hair cut and color and were made to be clean shaven, to top off their new made-over look. Many of the men who had received hair reconstruction or hair transplant procedures were outfitted with hair extension systems that were weaved on to give the look of a full head of hair while the transplant grew in. Ray's experience was a typical for men:

Sam: How are you going to accomplish some great looking, natural hair today?

Penny [stylist]: Well, his hair is growing up from his transplant. I designed a hair replacement that is made out of human hair, with laced fronts, so it would look like he has a natural hair growth, and then we'll cut it very short to make it look like a real natural look for Ray

Kim [stylist]: Hey Ray, have you ever had your hair tinted before?

Ray: Uh, no, I sure haven't.

Kim: This is called dusting, and what it is is a highlight crème, that we literally just tap on the tips to really make it mimic the sun, and just really a very natural look. Now we've got the beard to be concerned with.

Ray: It sounds like it's time for it to go then

Kim: ((laughs)) here we go ((cuts the beard and shaves Ray))

Ray: My top lip hadn't seen sunlight in about 30 years! ((They finish and turn Ray to face the mirror))

Ray: Holy Cow! Aw, no way! That, ha! There is no way I could prepare myself for that, uh, change!

Most men seemed happy to accept the prescribed clothing, hair, and “final touches” from the show’s experts. Men were given input on the kinds of clothing they would prefer during their style makeover and were described as masculine when engaging in traditional forms of dress for men such as suits and also when they conformed to new fashion trends for men.

In this section on men’s makeovers and masculinity, I demonstrated that men did not give accounts of feeling less than masculine or not feeling like “real men” in the same way that women discussed lacking femininity. However, men’s goals for surgery for enhancing their careers or fixing body problems that came from engaging in masculine lifestyles, attracting women, and reducing the appearance of aging can be viewed as masculinity pursuits because they bring men’s bodies and self-presentation displays into line with preferred embodied hegemonic masculinity. Surgical discourse centered on enhancing the masculinity men already possessed, not creating masculinity that was absent, missing, or grossly deficient. Fashion and hair makeovers, while teasing men a bit for not following trends, viewed men as lacking style altogether instead of having a masculine deficiency. Makeovers showed deference to men’s preferences while increasing masculinity through implementing fashion and hair style trends.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have explored how women whose physical bodies failed to embody ideal cultural standards of beauty considered themselves lacking in femininity. A discourse used by surgeons, who saw cosmetic surgery as one solution to feminine deficiencies, was predominant throughout. Additionally, women who did not follow fashion and style norms were critiqued and guided towards contemporary feminine attire

and hair and makeup standards to display a more proper version of womanhood. The discourse of taking one from a “girl” to a “woman” was used to symbolize the change to proper embodied femininity. On *Extreme Makeover*, femininity was viewed as traits that women with beautiful physical features *displayed*. Femininity was also cast as *practice*, in that women were taught how to act feminine including how to walk in high heels. Femininity was additionally viewed as a *subjective experience*, in that many candidates claimed to feel more feminine through, and/or after, the course of their makeover.

Masculinity for men was presented and discussed differently, in more subtle ways. Men did not discuss themselves as lacking in masculinity, although many of the reasons they gave for wanting an *Extreme Makeover* were in line with concerns about embodying preferred masculinity. Surgeons discussed enhancing and preserving masculinity by employing cosmetic surgery. Men’s training sessions focused on career interests. Men were not coached explicitly on how to be proper men but yet they did receive training in physical strength and etiquette, implying that proper men did these things. Men were sometimes teased for their lack of fashion sense and were given guidance on style and hair changes. They were framed as more masculine when they were fit and embodied current style trends. And, yet, differently from women, men did not claim to feel a subjective change in their masculinity or to “feel more masculine” over the course of their makeovers, at least not in what TV audiences were shown.

The contrast between women’s and men’s experiences on *Extreme Makeover* demonstrates that women are viewed and valued more for their appearance, or as objects, than men are. Women’s lack of femininity was viewed as an acceptable topic for discussion among and/or in regards to women but men’s lacking masculinity was not. Many feminist theorists of the body have noted that women’s participation in femininity pursuits and beautification of the physical body have been and are currently sites of gender domination (Bordo 1989). That is, cultural norms that dictate that women present physical bodies that are properly groomed, plucked, shaved, exercised and made up to perfection is a form of gender subordination (Barkty 1990)—a way that patriarchy as a system of social control preoccupies women with beautification and distracts them from striving for equality in the workforce, the family, and other sites (Wolf 1991).

However, Bordo (1999) claims that the consumer worlds of fashion and beauty have begun to pay more attention to men as potential markets and that advertising images and campaigns now display men's bodies prominently, offering new styles and forms of masculinity that encourage body maintenance and heightened fashion sense. This suggests that standards of embodied masculinity are more prevalent and that men are feeling increasing cultural pressure from advertisements and the media to conform to particular masculinities (Bordo 1999). Women are, nevertheless, subjected to greater scrutiny and pressure to display proper femininity through their physical body structure and adherence to fashion trends. Women are not only subjected to increased scrutiny: they are subjected to scrutiny of a different kind. Women, as subordinates within the gender institution, have long been valued mainly for their appearance, and men's increasing interest (and pressure) to become engaged in beauty practices does not represent the equivalent of women's historical struggle with beauty myths (Wolf 1991) among other cultural standards for femininity.

The contrast between men's and women's experiences on *Extreme Makeover* supports a significant premise of the gender institution: The myth that men and women oppose each other. Connell (2005) suggests that "'masculinity' does not exist except in contrast to 'femininity.'" *Extreme Makeover* shows the creation of "new" men by emphasizing differences—women's facial features were softened while men's were strengthened. Women were taught how to walk carefully in high heels and flirt while men were assumed to be masculine. The discourse used to discuss men and women's problematic bodies shows how producers and stylists took different approaches to critiquing flaws—deference was shown to men by not questioning their masculinity or discussing it as "deficient." Yet, women's problem features were labeled as deficiencies. The characterization of women's bodies as problematic, lacking and deficient reveals their status as subordinate in the gender hierarchy. Language and practices that degraded women and their bodies were common while a comparable discussion of men was absent. These differences in the ways men and women's experiences are produced and structured on *Extreme Makeover* thus play a part in re-creating the gender institution (Martin 2004) that privileges men over, and subordinates, women.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

Chapter 5 address findings reported in Chapters 3 and 4. I am guided by Burawoy's (1998) extended case method by reflecting on how my results "extend" prior theorizations of embodiment, the cosmetic surgery debate on free choice (Davis 1995, 2003) versus false consciousness (Bordo 2003, Morgan 1991), the male gaze (Gange and McGaughey 2002), and conceptions of hegemonic masculine and feminine embodiment (Connell 1987, 2005; Schippers 2004).

On Cosmetic Surgery and Embodiment

Makeover candidates' emotional narratives, discussed in Chapter 3, as well as their femininity and masculinity deficiencies and improvements, discussed in Chapter 4, seem to be largely about their experiences of embodiment and how those experiences changed after surgical interventions. Embodiment "refers quite precisely to the process by which the object-body is actively experienced, produced, sustained, and/or transformed as a subject-body" (Waskul and Vannini 2006). Davis (1995) has characterized respondents who were dissatisfied with their bodies as "disembodied," or as illustrating an objectified sense of self or a disconnect between their inner selves and outer bodies. She claimed that most of them felt "embodied" after surgery, when many reported no longer feeling like a cultural object to be seen and admired by others, but an independent person now connected to their emotions and physical bodies. Through their narrative claims of enhanced confidence, improved relationships with others, heightened sense of femininity and masculinity, *Extreme Makeover* candidates certainly seem to have gone from relating to their bodies as foreign objects that were connected to feelings of shame and dissatisfaction to a more integrated and satisfactory embodied experience. Taking the show's representations at face value, one can certainly argue that the audience is encouraged to accept the premise that changing the body changes the person.

However, Davis (2003) claims that negotiating a new embodied identity after the experience of cosmetic surgery is a process that takes considerable time, personal reflection, and is accomplished, at least in part, through interaction with others. Davis (2003:80-82) relays the experience of Diana, one of the women she interviewed who had undergone cosmetic surgery. Diana's account of "biographical work" performed after her surgery included problems relating to her face as her own, dealing with coworkers who didn't recognize her, and hurt family members who were upset that she had changed physical characteristics shared by members of the family, or "the family face." The process of embodying a new identity was lengthy and difficult, not unlike that of transsexuals who perform bodywork in order to embody a new gender (Schrock et al 2005). The sometimes problematic negotiation of a new embodiment through self reflection and interactions with others including family and spouses was not acknowledged on *Extreme Makeover*, suggesting (as noted earlier) that viewers are shown a particular version of cosmetic surgery and subsequent transformation that is perhaps incomplete or distorted.

All are not convinced by their narratives of post-surgical embodiment. Deery (2004a:215) views candidates gazing at themselves after surgery as "look[ing] in the mirror and see[ing] herself as a product, an Other." I have considered that the intense process that candidates go through on the show may lead to a disembodied sense of self, at least temporarily, since they have little time to negotiate and make sense of their physical changes relative to their subjective selves.

Instead of considering whether surgical candidates on *Extreme Makeover* displayed objectified or embodied senses of self or identity after their makeover, we can view their transformation through the lens of the concept of "passing," as mentioned in Chapter 4. Renfrow (2004:4) suggests that "masking discreditable identities with more socially acceptable ones through passing offers individuals the potential to escape the expectations others impose on them because of their group membership and related stigma." Thus, engaging in cosmetic surgery can be seen as using body technology as a tool with the goal of physically passing or presenting an alternative embodiment of self. Atkinson (2006:249) suggests his male respondents "use cosmetic surgery as a mask of masculinity." Davis (2003:91) suggests that "face lifts make it possible for the middle-

aged to ‘pass’ as youthful, and breast augmentations help flat-chested women to ‘pass’ as sexy.”

I suggest that passing is a useful conceptual tool for understanding the surgical experiences portrayed on *Extreme Makeover* because it acknowledges the element of performance in the narrative claims produced for television with commercial interests. This is not to say that makeover candidates do not go on in time to negotiate new embodied identities that merge their new physical and subjective selves. However, it is difficult to imagine them doing so in eight weeks when isolated from their usual social worlds. Episodes of the show concluded with the “reveal” and the makeover candidates being thrust back into their “normal” lives, without cameras and watching, leaving that part of the story untold to viewers. As noted in Chapter 3, this is one way that *Extreme Makeover* may misrepresent to viewers the power of cosmetic surgery to alter embodied identity.

Extreme Makeover, as a reality makeover program that displays men and women receiving multiple cosmetic surgeries and claiming rapid embodied changes—what I call symbolic transformations—may be viewed as problematic representations of what a ‘real’ cosmetic surgery experience is like. While most viewers likely see the show as entertainment and not a source of information on cosmetic surgery or surgical experiences, some viewers may derive ideas about cosmetic surgery procedures, and smaller body projects such as style, hair and makeup changes from the program. Makeover candidates Bill and Kim, who were brother and sister, told their surgeon they got their ideas for what surgical procedures they wanted by watching episodes of *Extreme Makeover*. In a recent *Entertainment Weekly* article (Rottenberg 2007:20), actress Christina Ricci admits that watching the program made her consider altering her physical body, because she has struggled with body image issues.

‘I could make little changes to my appearance,’ says Ricci, who has acknowledged suffering from anorexia as a teenager. ‘If my hair wasn’t quite so dark or if I had bangs, stupid things like that, I’d be more commercial, because my forehead is so goddamn big. There’s not really a lot of value in foreheads. I mean, giant lips are sexy, but a giant forehead — there’s not really much you can do with it.’ Recently, Ricci was watching an episode of *Extreme Makeover* in

which a woman had her hairline surgically lowered and wondered aloud to her boyfriend, actor Adam Goldberg (*Zodiac*), if she should consider such a thing: 'He was like, 'Stop. You're not allowed to discuss that.''

If beautiful actresses use *Extreme Makeover* as a starting point for ideas about how to change the physical body, it is likely that other people do as well. Future research should investigate the impact of makeover reality programs on viewers to examine the impact of cosmetic surgery narratives featured on television.

A major concern about cosmetic surgery voiced by theorists of the body (Bordo 2003, Davis 2003, Bartky 1990, Atkinson 2006) is that increased use of body technologies to mold the physical to be more in line with cultural standards of ideal beauty will contribute to a 'ratcheting up' of what it takes to be considered a beautiful feminine woman or an attractive masculine man. Such a phenomenon would be good for consumer interests. The more pressure there is from the culture at large to embody an ideal that is rarely naturally attainable brings an increase in beauty products consumption. However, many critics worry that increased pressure may lead to increased body esteem issues and eating disorders like bulimia and anorexia. A related concern is that increased pressure in the culture to embody a physical ideal will lead to increased consumption of body technologies that aim to eliminate embodied differences, like corrective eye surgery performed on Asian Americans (Kaw 1993), or even plastic surgery to eliminate the distinctive facial features of those with Down's syndrome (Davis 2003). While *Extreme Makeover* may offer its participants, who have suffered through poor interactions with others like teasing because of their physical appearance, a chance at embodying preferred masculinity and femininity, in doing so they may be further limiting the social acceptance of unique and different embodiments.

On Free Choice or False Consciousness

Theorists of the body debate empowerment in regard to shaping the body to meet cultural standards of beauty, and some have focused on women who use cosmetic surgery for this purpose. Davis (1993, 1995, 2003) discusses power and women's agency in relation to women's cosmetic surgery pursuits and illustrates the *free choice* perspective.

She disagrees with other feminist theorists of the body who suggest that women who shape their bodies according to cultural standards of beauty do so in service of hegemonic ideals alone. She asks, is a woman who engages in these beauty practices truly “cultural dope” as others have assumed, simply following hegemonic beauty prescriptions from the popular culture without consideration? Or could she be a woman who changes her body to feel better about herself, knowing the situational constraints, yet making the best choice for her as a person who must live with social inequality? Yet both Morgan (1991) and Bordo (1997, 2003) disagree with Davis. Morgan (1991) labels an alternative perspective on women’s use of cosmetic surgery as *false consciousness*, stating that although the end result of using body technologies like cosmetic surgery may feel empowering to individual women, they are oppressive to women as a gender because they reinforce patriarchal standards of beauty. Bordo (1989:24) agrees: “To *feel* autonomous and free while harnessing body and soul to an obsessive body-practice is to serve, not transform, a social order that limits female possibilities.” These competing perspectives raise hard questions about the relationship between gender, power and (women’s) bodies.

My data from *Extreme Makeover* can be framed as supporting either side of the gender and power debate over cosmetic surgery that Davis frames. As I reviewed in Chapter 3, the emotional narratives given by makeover candidates followed a romantic arc, with “before” accounts of suffering, changed through surgical intervention, lead to “after” stories of triumph. The symbolic transformation within these narratives lends support to a free choice perspective by suggesting that women who use their agency to change their bodies may accomplish a victory in self-fulfillment, even if the gendered beauty structure which made them feel inadequate in the first place has not been examined. However, the data reviewed in Chapter 4 on femininity show that women’s bodies that were characterized as deficient in femininity are remedied by strict adherence to cultural norms of feminine beauty through surgical and style intervention. This can be viewed as an example of normalization towards ideals of bodily femininity and homogenization towards the elimination of difference, considered by Bordo (2003) as two of the main ways that images in popular culture dictate norms and expectations for proper body displays. Makeovers for women that depict compliance to social and

cultural beauty prescriptions, with little questioning or resistance on the makeover candidate's part, perhaps illustrate the position the false consciousness outlined by Morgan (1991).

My analysis shows some support for both perspectives. Davis (2003:11-13) suggests that one of the reasons Bordo and others who endorse the *false consciousness* perspective on women's use of cosmetic surgery is a difference of methodological practice. Davis, a sociologist, sees the value in "treating what [women] have to say as consequential for a critical feminist perspective on cosmetic surgery." Bordo, as a philosopher, "sees it as her task to become a 'diagnostician' of culture." In other words, Davis frames her *free choice* perspective as grounded in the accounts of women respondents who received cosmetic surgery, which is different from theoretical work that is not based on data and that takes a more macro or theoretical approach.

My data on women's experiences on *Extreme Makeover* are different from Davis' in that they are produced as part of a television show and can be considered as consumer narratives of the body (Edgely 2006). Part of the intended function of producing and distributing television programs like *Extreme Makeover* is to increase commercial interest in cosmetic surgery and other beauty products featured on the show. For this reason, I feel their accounts of symbolic transformation, reported in Chapter 3, and enhanced femininity, reported in Chapter 4, should be subject to more critical analysis than accounts given by individual women outside of a media setting. Although my data can be read as an example of the benefits women receive when choosing to exercise their agency and engage in cosmetic surgery, I tend to view them as evidence of how the beauty industry promotes body projects and consumption as an avenue to increased self-actualization.

On Men and Beauty

Results in Chapter 4 showed that men on *Extreme Makeover* do not perceive their bodies as lacking in masculinity in the same way that women perceive theirs as exhibiting feminine deficiencies. Women on *Extreme Makeover* often discussed wanting to be *more feminine* or *more womanly* in their body displays whereas men did not use similarly

specific language of “wanting to be more masculine.” However, men’s goals of hoping to attract more attention from women and to have more successful career opportunities are masculinity pursuits, even if less explicitly framed.

What are we to make of men’s increasing investment in body projects? Many feminist theorists of the body have noted that women’s participation in femininity pursuits and beautification of the physical body—wearing high heels, girdles, make-up, and more harmful cultural practices, such as anorexia, bulimia, Chinese foot binding, and even cosmetic surgery—have been and are currently sites of gender domination (Bordo 1989). That is, cultural norms that dictate that women present physical bodies that are carefully, and at times, elaborately groomed, plucked, shaved, exercised and made up to perfection is a form of gender subordination (Barkty 1990)—a way that patriarchy as a system of social control preoccupies women with the “third shift” of beautification⁷ and distracts them from striving for equality in the workforce, the family, and other sites (Wolf 1991). And yet, the consumer worlds of fashion and beauty have begun to pay more attention to men as potential markets. Advertising images and campaigns now display men’s bodies prominently, offering new styles and forms of masculinity that encourage body maintenance and a heightened fashion sense for men (Bordo 1999). If men are engaging in beauty practices at a growing rate—practices that had been previously conceived as limiting, stifling, and dominating when performed by women, does this provide evidence of change between men’s bodies and the relationship of gender and power? That is, will men’s greater embeddedness in the appearance/body display drama lead to greater equality, or at least less inequality, between the genders?

R.W. Connell (1987, 1995, 2005 with Messerschmidt) has been at the forefront of gender theory that reflects on masculinity and its relationship to gender as a social structure or institution. He has suggested that there is one revered form of masculinity, a *hegemonic masculinity*, within the culture at the given time that demands more power and authority than others. In a recent reformation of his concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:833) suggest that it can be:

⁷ Wolf builds on Hochschild (1989), who suggests that working women are expected to engaged in a “second shift” of housework and childcare after completing their first shift of work outside the home. Wolf suggests that the third shift consists the beauty regimen that is expected of women who are assumed to want to look their best and embody femininity.

...understood as the pattern of practice (i.e, things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue. [Additionally it] is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting.

My data on men's makeover on *Extreme Makeover* show men being made into slightly different variations of masculine men—some were “rockers,” another was country-western, another embodied a hip-hop persona, while others were more generically handsome. Their different styles of embodied masculinity made me question Connell's suggestion that there is one form of masculinity that is dominant within the culture. The notion of hegemonic masculinity is problematic in light of men's increased participation in beauty and regulation of the body in part because of the difficulty of recognizing which masculinity is hegemonic in western culture at the moment. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) claim that hegemonic masculinity is embodied. Yet, I question what that embodiment looks like and what makes one version more dominant than others that also command power and authority. The authors (2005:852) offer one study of ruling class men (Donaldson and Poynting 2004) as an example, claiming that “sports, leisure, and eating practices deploy their wealth and establish relations of distance and dominance over other men's bodies.” Connell and Wood (2005) suggest that managing a proper body has become important for male executives, who must project an image of power and control with fit bodies clothed in designer suits. These authors suggest that an embodiment of corporate masculinity is hegemonic because it shows control over one's physical self and dominance over others and because it is attractive, handsome and stylish.

While the embodiment of important businessmen might display more hegemony than most of the men in my sample post-*Extreme Makeover*, what about other revered or admired masculine forms of embodiment? Are the bodies of businessmen truly “more dominant” than other preferred masculinities—of bodybuilders, athletes, or fashion models? As the social world shifts to demand more of men in terms of their bodily display practices—more working out, more consumption of beauty products, more

scrutiny from others within interactions—perhaps the possibility of *one* hegemonic masculine embodiment, an embodiment of the pinnacle of power and privilege, becomes less accurate and thus less useful for scholars. Embodiment of hegemonic masculinity has been mentioned by Connell but has not been his focus. Perhaps future theoretical or empirical work will provide an understanding of how the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity is achieved will address why a particular embodiment of masculinity conveys more power than others.

On the Male Gaze

The increased attention to bodily displays, practices, and what they signify to others by contemporary men led me to consider the term *the male gaze*. Gange and McGaughey (2002:817) explain the phrase and its significance as follows:

These [men] are both actual men and abstract, symbolic male figures who may even exercise power over women through women's interactions with one another. Women perceive these hypothetical men as judging them and encouraging them to meet men's standards of beauty. The notion that men exercise power over women through socially constructed standards is known as the "male gaze," a concept developed by Mulvey (1989) to explain how feminine subjectivity is constructed as women judge and create themselves on the basis of their perceptions of men's desires.

The concept of the male gaze has been criticized for characterizing all women as passive objects to be gazed at and framing men as active persons with the power to gaze and for not considering how the gaze may vary across lines of race, class, and sexual orientation (Gange and McGaughey 2002, Chandler 2000). Gange and McGaughey's (2002:816, 818) critique of the male gaze is not the suggestion that bodies are monitored and assessed but the assumption that men are "the sole agents and beneficiaries of the gaze" and that the notion of the male gaze limits critical analysis of other ways bodies are viewed—including how women view and evaluate other women's bodies, how bodies are viewed by medical professionals, how women view themselves, and how race and sexuality impact conceptions of the gaze.

I agree with their problemization of the male gaze and I suggest that the concept of the male gaze as it has been defined and used leaves out men as objects of the gaze. My data show that men on *Extreme Makeover* wanted plastic surgery to attract potential dates and significant others and to be more confident and command more authority at work, among other reasons. In other words, their desires acknowledged the realization that others were viewing and assessing their bodies as objects. Atkinson's (2006:248) interviews with male cosmetic surgery patients in Canada similarly reveal that many men are concerned about the gaze of women and co-workers. Interestingly, almost 75 percent of his respondents "talked about feeling threatened at work by younger, smarter, and healthier looking women—especially in image-oriented business environments that equate outward appeal with intellectual competency and moral worth." Not only do Atkinson's respondents describe feeling assessed at work as objects but they also feel anxious about being compared to women's bodily displays—equating the evaluation of their bodies to the way women's bodies are gazed at or assessed by others. Connell and Wood (2005) make a similar point in their article on high-level men executives and the pressure they feel to maintain fit bodies that project power and authority.

I do not suggest that the concept of the male gaze has lost its usefulness altogether. Certainly there are situations and interactions where the term is appropriate for describing the way men view and assess women's bodies. Perhaps other variations of the term are more useful for describing the generic process; for example, Bordo (1999) uses the terms *cultural gaze* and *gaze of the Other* to discuss men's perceptions of being monitored by cultural standards at large and by women. Gange and McGaughey (2002), while not considering men's experience of the gaze specifically, offer the term *hegemonic gaze* to encapsulate the experience of being assessed:

The hegemonic gaze is an accepted standard of beauty—a sense that individual women have that everyone is looking at them—and the discomfort women feel if they fail to meet this standard of beauty.

Perhaps this definition can be expanded to include men who have the sense that "everyone is looking at them" or that they are being monitored and assessed by cultural standards of embodying masculinity. In short, my findings suggest that an evaluative gaze is affecting men's lives as well as women's and that this gaze, whatever we call it,

encourages social actors to meet standards of attractiveness in bodily shape, size and displays.

On Emphasized or Hegemonic Femininity

R.W. Connell (1987, 2005) has argued that there cannot be a hegemonic femininity that complements hegemonic masculinity because women have been defined as subordinate in the gender institution and therefore feminine practices are organized around “compliance to patriarchy” (2005:848) and “accommodating the interests and desires of men” (1987:183). Connell favors the term *emphasized femininity* to refer to *femininities* (plural) preferred over other marginalized femininities. Emphasized femininity (Connell 1987:187) is characterized by “the display of sociability rather than technical competence, fragility in mating scenes, compliance with men’s desire for titillation and ego-stroking in office relationships, acceptance of marriage and childcare as a response to labor-market discrimination against women.”

My data on constructing preferred feminine embodiment and adopting cultural standards of beauty through surgical intervention and style makeovers on *Extreme Makeover* seem to agree with what Connell had in mind when discussing beauty and emphasized femininity. He notes that this kind of femininity is often displayed in advertisements and that “there is a great deal of folklore about how to sustain the performance” in women’s magazines and film. Connell connects men’s interests to women’s embodiment of emphasized femininity through stating “most of this promotion, it might be noted, is organized, financed, and supervised by men” (1987:188).

Schippers (2004) disagrees with Connell’s (1987:188) assertion that “femininity [is] organized as an adaptation to men’s power, and emphasizing compliance, nurturance and empathy as womanly virtues is not in much of a state to establish hegemony over other kinds of femininity.” She suggests that *hegemonic femininity* may be a better way to refer to preferred practices and embodiments of gendered expectations by women, while acknowledging that hegemonic femininity supports an unequal gender institution and men’s interests. Schippers’ (2004:13) advocates adapting the term *pariah femininities* to describe other configurations of femininity that are deviant as they

“...constitute a refusal to complement hegemonic masculinity in a relation of subordination and therefore are threatening to male dominance” such as lesbian femininities.

I view my data on femininity prescriptions (reviewed in Chapter 4) on *Extreme Makeover* as an example of how some forms of feminine embodiment are privileged over others, consistent with Schippers’ conceptualization of hegemonic femininity. Specifically, I view my data as addressing the one aspect of how femininity is structured, through the regulation of embodiment. “Before” women (who fit Schippers’ description of pariah femininities) are constructed as deficient, even called “masculine,” and are corrected through surgery and style intervention to embody ideal beauty norms. Women makeover candidates’ narratives of symbolic transformation, discussed in Chapter 3, are a testament to the power they levy by undergoing the makeover; they claim to feel better about themselves and have better relationships with others. Many studies have shown that those who embody cultural standards of beauty are privileged over others. They are thought to be more intelligent (Dion 1972), are better liked by their peers (Dion 1973), are perceived as better candidates for jobs (Larkin and Pines 1979), and have higher earnings over the lifecourse (Averett and Korenman 1996). Adapting the term hegemonic femininity would convey the power that women who do embody feminine beauty ideals convey and hold relative to other pariah women who fail to meet this standard.

On the Political Economy of *Extreme Makeover*

Deery (2004b) refers to reality television as “advertainment” due to the merging of advertising and entertainment within the genre. She reports that in today’s media culture, technological advances like digital video recorders (DVRs)⁸ allow viewers to skip commercial breaks, increasing the need for producers and advertisers to find ways to integrate advertising into programming. Economic factors such as the increased cost of producing traditionally scripted television programs, combined with workforce strikes,

⁸ Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) like the brand name product, TiVo, allow viewers to “fast forward” through commercials they wish to skip and view only the program content.

have made reality television's fast production schedules and relatively low budgets attractive to television producers (Raphael 2004; Deery 2004b). While product placements have become commonplace in television and film, reality shows offer advertisers interactive advertisements by showing people on the show as using and enjoying particular products. Deery (2004b) gives the example of *American Idol*'s relationship with Coca-Cola, one of the program sponsors. Judges on the show are filmed sipping out of Coca-Cola cups, their logo appears on posters and upholstery on the set, and short clips called "Coca-Cola Moments" highlight backstage interviews with contestants. Reality television has become fertile ground for advertisers seeking to profit from captive audiences.

Extreme Makeover's programmatic structure integrates advertisements with programming content by mentioning the show's website, which contains links to plastic surgeons and other professionals featured on the show, and through name-dropping of certain products or designers that are featured in candidates' makeovers. The host, along with text on the screen, refers viewers at the end of the program to a website, which viewers can use to locate and make appointments with surgeons featured on the program. VH1 News (2006) reports that surgeons featured on *Extreme Makeover* have waiting lists up to three years long due to the television promotion they received on the show, reflecting some of the impact cosmetic surgery reality programs have on motivating viewers to invest in cosmetic surgery themselves. Name dropping of products featured on *Extreme Makeover* included salons frequented by many makeover candidates as well as designers who furnished fashions for makeover candidates' style makeovers.

Extreme Makeover also features advertisements during commercial breaks that are not typically shown during television programs. ABC, the network that airs *Extreme Makeover*, reached an agreement with Mentor-brand breast implants to air one 30-second commercial for their implants during every episode of the show during the 2004-2005 season (Business Wire 2004). Joshua H. Levine, the President of Mentor Corporation commented:

'Extreme Makeover' has had a tremendous positive impact on the growth of breast augmentation and other cosmetic procedures, and we are pleased to be in this innovative relationship with them. The program strives to incorporate the ethical

standards set by the surgical societies and provides an ideal forum for us to educate prospective patients.

My data show that Mentor's breast implant ads often aired twice during episodes of *Extreme Makeover*. My data also show frequent advertisements (in 10 out of 18 episodes) for dentists associated with the websites LVIdocs.com and LVIsmiles.com, who offer cosmetic dentistry services. Other commercials featured during *Extreme Makeover* episodes included Botox cosmetic injections and an advertisement for the psoriasis drug Enbrel during an episode featuring a makeover candidate who struggled with psoriasis.

Thus, *Extreme Makeover*, a reality television show featuring cosmetic surgery makeovers, creates a "healthy environment" for advertisements related to cosmetic surgical procedures like breast implants and cosmetic dentistry (Kilbourne 1999). That is, the program content complements the advertisements found during commercial breaks. Both the advertisements and *Extreme Makeover* itself promoted medical technologies that are framed as improving appearance. Kilborne (1999) suggests advertisers particularly favor such environments because they set up or prepare viewers to become interested in the advertisements that follow—in essence, the entire program becomes an ad for makeover products and surgical procedures.

Conclusions

I have discussed *Extreme Makeover* as a reality makeover program that presents makeover candidates' emotion narratives as evidence of cosmetic surgery's transformative power. *Extreme Makeover* constructed women who did not meet cultural standards of beauty as deficient in femininity, requiring surgical and style interventions along with training sessions to mold female persons into proper women. Men on *Extreme Makeover*, although claiming to want surgery in order to achieve valorized masculinity attributes for men, were not framed as lacking in masculinity. Rather, their "already there" masculinity was enhanced by surgical procedures and style makeovers that refined embodied masculinities.

I view *Extreme Makeover* as misrepresenting the identity transformations that are possible with cosmetic surgery. Through showing makeover candidates who eclipsed a lifetime of emotional trauma and who found new or reinvigorated current relationships at the end of their makeover journey, the program suggests that cosmetic surgery is a quick fix for emotional as well as relationship problems. *Extreme Makeover* reflects and reproduces gender inequality through framing women as deficient in femininity while allowing men's masculinity to be present and intact, that is, to remain unquestioned. The commercialist interests of surgeons, stylists and other professionals who appear on the show, as well as producers and the network in general, are thinly (if at all) veiled, as tie-ins and product placements indicate that the motivation behind *Extreme Makeover* is less to tell the surgical stories of real people than to make a profit from viewers, who are perhaps prompted to feel anxious about their own bodies and practices.

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