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**Interrogating the Relationship of Postfeminism
and Neoliberalism in
*Orange is the New Black***

Thesis Submitted By
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In Fulfilment of
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Abstract

This thesis looks at how the Netflix Original Series, *Orange is the New Black (OITNB)*, depicts contemporary representations of marginalised women, and how these characters negotiate class and gender relations. *OITNB*, a modern media text that is often seen to critique both capitalist and patriarchal structures, is a useful text to consider when analysing women's subject positions in relation to the dominant hegemonic themes of gender, race, class, and sexuality. I will argue that in criticising capitalist and patriarchal systems of oppression, *OITNB* disrupts the prevailing influences of postfeminism and neoliberalism which suggest that superstructures of oppression are no longer enforced in western society - whilst simultaneously re-enforcing them. Whilst this essay is primarily concerned with representations of gender and class, this thesis will also make visible how race and sexuality are negotiated in the show in order to better understand the diversity of women's experience under neoliberal capitalism and within a postfeminist era.

Furthermore, by using *OITNB* as a vantage point, this thesis argues that in order to better understand representations of gender and class relations in modern media texts, postfeminist cultural sensibility and neoliberal ideology must be considered as two separate forces that have an impact upon western popular culture. In the past, many feminist academics who have written on these subjects have viewed postfeminism as an offshoot of neoliberalism, or implied that the two work harmoniously in producing coherent subjects. I will argue in this thesis that such an assumption can lead to an oversimplified analysis when contextualised by intersectional discussions of gender and class. Whilst postfeminism and neoliberalism share many commonalities, it is in the interest of this thesis to consider the two as separate forces that impact modern western culture in specific ways. This will allow for a more robust theoretical framework, and lead to a greater understanding of the influence neoliberalism and postfeminism have on some forms of popular media.

Introduction

Nina Power asserts that ‘if the contemporary portrayal of womankind is to be believed, contemporary female achievement would culminate in the ownership of expensive handbags, a vibrator, a job, a flat and a man – probably in that order’ (2009: 1). This accurate but miserable portrayal of modern womanhood is in line with the neoliberal and postfeminist values that are often presented in western popular culture, which glorify individual success and participating in consumer culture as a marker of women’s liberation. This narrow representation of modern womanhood is visibly subverted in *OITNB* as the show focuses on a diverse range of women, particularly those who are from marginalised groups and whose stories are not often represented in modern popular culture. In this sense, *OITNB* warrants academic attention, as more than just subverting these dominant ideologies, the show continuously criticises neoliberalism and postfeminism as they both invest in normalising the oppressive power structures of capitalism and patriarchy.

Since its release in 2013, *OITNB* has enjoyed global success and critical recognition. At the time of writing this paper, the Netflix Original Series has been nominated for four Golden Globes, eleven Primetime Emmy Awards, one BAFTA, and two Screen Actors Guild Awards. The show follows the story of Piper Chapman, a white, wealthy, middle-class woman who is sentenced to serve 15 months at Litchfield (a fictional minimum security prison) in New York. Based loosely on the memoir written by Piper Kerman, the “fish out of water” narrative depicts Piper trying to negotiate her new life as an inmate at Litchfield amongst a vast and diverse group of women. Although Piper could be considered as the show’s protagonist as it is her story we initially follow, *OITNB* delves into the lives of many different women. In representing the stories of working-class, poor, black, Hispanic, and older women, Piper’s character becomes painfully unremarkable. The show’s producer, Jenji Kohan, alludes to this herself, and states that Piper is a ‘Trojan Horse’ (Gupta, 2013). She explains by saying

you're not going to go into a network and sell a show on really fascinating tales of black women, and Latina women, and old women and criminals. But if you take this white girl, this sort of fish out of water, and you follow her in, you can then expand your world and tell all of those other stories (2013).

By using Piper as a recognisable character trope, who often embodies postfeminist and neoliberal values, we see the stories of the other inmates unfold within the overarching narrative of the show, and against Piper's privileged background. It therefore serves an important purpose for Piper to personify postfeminist and neoliberal ideals as this makes visible the detrimental impact her privilege has on other, marginalised groups of women. Furthermore, the fact that Piper is a privileged and even, blank, character, allows the viewer to project themselves on to Piper and lets the stories of the other, perhaps, more interesting women to come through.

By depicting such a vast array of women, *OITNB* stands out from the typical popular media texts that focus on womanhood. For example, *OITNB* features a range of sexual identities, providing a platform for the representation of diverse sexual orientations in popular television. Perhaps most notably has been the breakthrough of actress, Laverne Cox, who is now regarded as a 'transgender trailblazer' (Cosslett, 2015). Cox, who plays Sophia Burset in the show, has since used her platform to publicly speak about transgender issues and to campaign for the rights of trans people.

Furthermore, women like Lea Delaria who defines herself as 'butch' (Higgins, 2014), and Ruby Rose who is 'gender fluid' (Gray, 2015) are also featured in the show as main characters. By representing so many different types of women, regardless of their gender alignment, sexual orientation, race, age, and class status, *OITNB* has revolutionised the representation of women in TV (*Rolling Stone*, 2015). This is important because

the more cultural acceptance, the more cultural discourse, the more media presentation, the more proximity, that people to have gay, lesbian, bi, trans people - the more that life becomes thinkable. It becomes a cultural possibility that one can consider because it's already in the world (BigThink, 2011).

More than representing minority women who do not fit the postfeminist stereotype, *OITNB* is also politically charged, as it often criticises capitalism, neoliberalism, the American prison and legal system, institutional racism, and heteronormativity. In fact, Litchfield Penitentiary can be understood as a microcosm for the wider political, economic, and social landscape of the U.S. As Fran Buntman states, 'prisons symbolize, mirror, and shape the communities and countries in which they exist' (2009: 401).

The show does not shy away from challenging these power structures, particularly those of capitalism, racism, and patriarchy. In doing so, *OITNB* becomes a media text that disrupts the prevailing cultural influences of postfeminism and neoliberalism which often ignore these systems of oppression whilst simultaneously re-enforcing them.

This is not to suggest that *OITNB* gets everything right. On the contrary, the show has been criticised for its inaccurate representations of prison-life, such as fresh food being provided at meal times and some of the things inmates wear like earrings and hooded jackets (Bozelko, 2014). There has also been criticism as the show can be seen to play up to racial stereotypes (Tillet, 2013), and the way in which the show 'indulges in the lesbian/prison fantasy by depicting beautiful women in various states of undress' (Gittell, 2014). However, what the show does do well is it represents the complex and ambiguous characters in such a way that not only makes for entertaining viewing, but also has strong, meaningful messages about social inequalities and the inadequacy and pervasiveness of the U.S. prison complex.

Of course, prison dramas are not new to TV,

from the sleazy women-in-prison paperbacks published by Naiad Press in the 50s and 60s, to 80s and 90s dramas like *Prisoner: Cell Block H*, *Women in Prison*, and especially... the gritty British soap *Bad Girls*, prison has been a rich site of feminist pulp fusing serious messages about the lives of marginalised women with pure melodrama (Ferreday, 2015).

OITNB could be understood to carry on this trajectory as it advocates for the representation of marginalised women in an entertaining fashion. The prison setting of the show is also crucial, as it is separate from but simultaneously a part of the outside world. As such, the show presents socio-economic problems many groups of marginalised women can face, and often depict this as contributing factors to the women turning to crime and being sentenced: therefore making these women's subordination to patriarchy and capitalism inescapable. Therefore, whilst *OITNB* may have its criticisms (as noted above), the wider narrative of the show and focus on less privileged characters warrants intersectional academic scrutiny; as the problems capitalism and patriarchy impose upon these women are brought to the forefront of debate. In this sense, the show implicitly and explicitly critiques neoliberalism and postfeminism which assume these systems of oppression no

longer play a part in modern western society, and in doing so can be understood to further entrench the status quo.

Rather than analysing themes that are inherent to postfeminist culture, and suggesting how neoliberalism has a stake in this, I hope to demonstrate the importance of acknowledging postfeminism and neoliberalism as two separate entities that impact society and culture. This is especially important when considering representations of gender and class in media texts, which can be influenced by, re-enforce, or critique neoliberal and postfeminist values. Whilst I assert that *OITNB* does not attempt to be a feminist text, it engages with aspects of feminism and in doing so regularly criticises the short-comings of postfeminism in being a source of liberation for women. Similarly, the show may not necessarily be anti-capitalist, but it often exposes the problems with an uneven distribution of wealth and class-structures that are inherent to capitalist economic structures in the U.S. and criticises the negative and unfair impact this has on some women's lives. I will consider this complex relationship by focussing on the three aspects of work, motherhood, and consumerism. Not only are all of these all central to women's lives, but they are also deeply rooted in Marxist theory, in the form of production, reproduction, and consumption. Therefore whilst these three areas are integral to capitalism and class relations, they also have a gendered impact, and so the influences of both postfeminism and neoliberalism are important here. Whilst postfeminism and neoliberalism are closely aligned, they can also conflict when it comes to certain aspects of work, motherhood and consumerism. It is therefore especially important for the purposes of this thesis for the two to be considered as separate cultural influences that have an impact upon modern media.

I will begin this thesis by engaging with some of the academic and theoretical debates surrounding neoliberalism and postfeminism. In doing so, I will consider these highly contested debates and use this to form my own theoretical framework for analysis. I will then move on to my textual analysis, which will first look at how female labour is represented in the show. This will be considered in two parts; firstly, I will look specifically at representations of paid labour outside the prison setting, where I will argue that postfeminism and neoliberalism are criticised as they re-enforce the harm capitalism and postfeminism impose upon marginalised groups of women. I will then move on to consider domestic labour, where I will demonstrate that a conflict of interest between postfeminism

and neoliberalism is present, but that both are ultimately critiqued for erasing the capitalist and patriarchal exploitation domestic labour can entail.

I will then analyse the role of motherhood in *OITNB*. Although this does come under the umbrella term of domestic/unpaid labour, it is an aspect that also warrants particular attention as it is a gendered field that plays a vital role in the reproduction of the labour force, and can therefore be regarded as a complex and distinguished aspect of capitalist production. Finally, I will analyse the ways in which consumer culture is represented in the show. Despite living in a prison, many of the women in the show visibly consume a wide range of commodities whilst serving their sentence. I will therefore analyse the ways in which this relationship between commodity and consumer is depicted and debate the potential implications this could be seen to have in relation to the wider U.S. landscape.

Theory and Context

The concepts of postfeminism and neoliberalism have warranted a significant amount of academic attention in recent years. This is probably due to the fact that the terms themselves are highly contested, and definitions differ from one person to the next. This chapter intends to map out some of the debates that have taken place surrounding these phenomena within the realm of media, cultural, political, and feminist studies. By engaging with academic work from a range of disciplines, I first hope to generate a better understanding of postfeminism and neoliberalism as individual concepts. I will then explore the relationship between the two in the realm of feminist media studies in more depth. This is where I will argue that postfeminism tends to be contextualised in relation to a pre-existing idea of neoliberal ideology and not the other way around. This, I argue, can lead to a weakened understanding of the impact postfeminism and neoliberalism have on modern media studies, as postfeminism is either conflated as being a part of an overarching ideology of neoliberalism, or the two are understood to run parallel to one another and rarely conflict. What I intend to do in this thesis is demonstrate that by considering the cultural impact postfeminism and neoliberalism have on modern media in turn, this will lead to a more robust theoretical framework when analysing representations of gender and class in modern visual culture. The final part of this chapter will consider previous academic work that demonstrates my argument across a wide range of media platforms: from print media, to reality television. It is here that I will argue that these ideas can, and should, be put into practice.

Postfeminism

The term 'postfeminism' is one that many academics have grappled with since it was first coined over twenty years ago, so much so that 'it has become so unwieldy as a term that it threatens to implode under the weight of its own contradictions' (Whelehan, 2000: 77). Joel Gwynne and Nadine Muller articulate a significant difference between "post-feminism" and "postfeminism" as a central point of confusion over the terminology, 'with the former representing a historical period and the latter a cultural sensibility' (2013: 2), however this is still far from a concrete and tangible working definition and thus warrants more probing.

Some feminist academics like Imelda Whelehan and Sarah Gamble consider postfeminism

as a “backlash” to feminism. Whelehan contends that “‘new’ and ‘post’ are prefixes added to the term ‘feminism’ when the writer or speaker wants to make it clear that they have a certain antagonism to the term’ (2000: 77), whereas Gamble says ‘the term ‘postfeminism’... has always tended to be used in this context as indicative of joyous liberation from the ideological shackles of a hopelessly outdated feminist movement’ (Gamble, 2006: 36). Angela McRobbie, on the other hand, argues in her landmark text, *The Aftermath of Feminism* that rather than being a backlash to feminism, ‘post-feminism positively draws on and invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account, to suggest equality has been achieved’ (2009: 12). This suggests that postfeminism can be understood as a celebration of, or development in, second wave feminism, whereby female liberation is celebrated and widely accepted as being achieved.

Where Angela McRobbie claims postfeminism can be seen as a positive influence to women’s liberation, and Whelehan and Gamble claim the opposite, Tasker and Negra take a more nuanced approach and simply state that postfeminism represents a phase in modern times where feminism has ‘passed’.

Postfeminism broadly encompasses a set of assumptions, widely disseminated within popular media forms, having to do with the “pastness” of feminism, whether that supposed pastness is merely noted, mourned, or celebrated.... Postfeminism suggests a more complex relationship between culture, politics, and feminism than the more familiar framing concept “backlash” allows (Tasker & Negra, 2007: 1).

By engaging with the many terms postfeminism has coined over the years, Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra can be seen to step away from trying to articulate exactly what postfeminism is, and argue that the term can broadly signify an “end” to feminist politics – regardless of what feelings and emotions this may conjure.

If creating a concrete term of postfeminism is close to impossible, as it can mean many different things to many different people, perhaps a different approach to understanding how postfeminist culture works can help shed some light on the influence it has over popular culture. Rosalind Gill makes a good point in her essay, ‘Postfeminist Media Culture’ that concerns itself less with what postfeminism actually *is*, and focuses more on what it *does* by considering its inherent themes. These include

...the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference (2007: 147).

This thesis, then, rather than asserting as to whether postfeminism can be understood as a backlash to, celebration of, or ambivalence to feminism, will adopt a more holistic approach and acknowledge that our current postfeminist culture can simultaneously evoke all, several, and none of these. As Stephanie Genz states, 'the problem is not so much to choose between the various appropriations of postfeminism than it is to adopt a postfeminist framework that transcends binary divisions and allows for multiple interpretations and resignifications' (2009: 52). Therefore I will draw upon Gill's list of themes that are inherent to postfeminist popular culture as my theoretical framework, as this will allow for more freedom when analysing postfeminist values than a rigid definition would.

Neoliberalism

Just like postfeminism, neoliberalism is a term that harnesses a variety of meanings that differ between academics. However, the overarching concept of what neoliberalism entails is widely agreed upon, and it is arguably only minor intricacies that vary. Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff state their understanding of neoliberalism as

...a mode of political and economic rationality characterised by privatisation, deregulation and a rolling back and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision that rose to prominence in the 1980's under the Reagan administration in the US, and Thatcher's premiership in the UK (2011: 5).

This offers a good starting point as, again, it is conceptualised by themes and characteristics rather than an all-encompassing definition. The time frame from when neoliberalism gained currency is also useful for understanding the concept as a recent development in Western, capitalist nations.

The idea of neoliberalism aiding capitalist advancement is also widely agreed upon (McChesney 2001; Duggan, 2003; Harvey, 2007). Robert McChesney articulates this: 'understood as one of neoliberalism rather than simply globalization, the current era seems less the result of uncontrollable natural forces and more the newest stage of class struggle

under capitalism' (2001: 2). Lisa Duggan also agrees that neoliberalism works to maintain class structures and inequality in her book, *The Twilight of Equality*, 'neoliberal policy implementation have consistently included many kinds of instability, including unrest associated with dramatically increasing inequality, and political fragility' (2003: xiii). This reinforcement of social inequality is arguably only conceivable because the prevailing discourse of individualism and self-fulfilment that neoliberalism entails has been widely accepted in modern society. As Hilary Radner succinctly puts it, 'this discourse of autonomy ultimately generated, in consonance with neoliberalism, a new cultural arena that evolved around an assumption that individual fulfilment was the goal of human experience' (2011: 13). Although it can arguably be regarded as a central theme, the emphasis on individualism is not the only dominant narrative that makes up what we understand to be neoliberalism. In fact, many aspects can be understood to work together to produce an "idealised" neoliberal subject. For Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, the individual subject must also be 'the autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject [who can] self-manage [and] self-discipline' (2011: 7). Gill also states that 'neoliberal discourses...see individuals as entrepreneurial actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating' (2008: 436).

By placing an emphasis on individuals being in control of their own lives, the state is no longer considered to be responsible for the lives of its citizens. Therefore, 'structural disadvantage is recast as poor personal choices, laziness, and incompetent family practices' (Harris, 2004: 25). This was perhaps most demonstrated in a recent newspaper article, in which David Cameron, when asked about why young people from working class backgrounds have very little presence in the private school system, responded by saying that 'part of the problem was caused by low aspirations among those from poorer backgrounds' (Dominiczak, 2013). This rhetoric wrongly assumes that everyone is "on a level playing field" and therefore elides over any suggestion that structural oppressions are in place in exchange for an ideology of "meritocracy".

Postfeminism and Neoliberalism

The seemingly happy marriage of neoliberalism and postfeminism has been researched extensively by feminist academics in the last decade or so. Many academics have argued that postfeminism is a cultural phenomenon that is almost *completely* informed by neoliberal ideology, and therefore has very little to do with feminism at all (Radner, 2011;

Genz 2006; Gill & Scharff, 2011; Taylor, 2012). In doing so, these academics tend to contextualise postfeminist culture as either: a part of neoliberalism, or a concept that works in tandem with neoliberalism.

Where Stephanie Genz argues that ‘postfeminism is part of a Third Way political economy, participating in the discourses of capitalism and neo-liberalism’ (2006: 4), Hilary Radner can be understood as taking this one step further in her book, *Neo-feminist Cinema*. Radner decrees that more than just sharing common values, the influence neoliberalism has had over, what we understand to be, postfeminist culture, is in fact so pervasive that the term postfeminism doesn’t adequately describe this impact, and instead the term “neo-feminism” is actually more suitable (2011: 2).

Although all of the above academics argue different things, the assumption that postfeminist culture is a part of a wider neoliberal ideology, and the focus on the commonalities between the two remains largely intact across the board. Whilst I agree there are certainly a number of common themes neoliberalism and postfeminism share, including but not limited to the investment in individualism, self-discipline, responsabilization, and consumerism, I argue that ‘it is crucial to remember they are two overlapping yet distinctive sensibilities’ (Thornton, 2014: 272). More often than not in the realm of feminist academia ‘there is a tendency... to take the cultural impact of neoliberalism as self-evident’ (Ouellette, 2008: 139), and instead focus on the pervasiveness of postfeminism whilst implying the impact neoliberalism has already been assumed.

Media

Many academics have stressed the vital role the media, particularly television, plays in normalising neoliberal ideology (Ouellette ,2008; Hay, 2000; Vander Schee & Kline, 2013; Grazian, 2010; Kapur & Wagne, 2011). Likewise, many feminist academics have criticised many popular visual media such as film and TV, for purporting postfeminist culture and how these “normalised” representations of women are undermining feminist gains (Radner, 2011; Gill & Scharff, 2011; McRobbie, 2009; Whelehan, 2000; Gamble 2006). Although television is noted as playing a vital role in perpetuating postfeminist and neoliberal sensibilities, postfeminist popular culture tends to have a presence over many media forms such as film, television drama, soap operas, and chick lit, whereas the influence of

neoliberalism has been most often cited in reality television and news coverage. David Grazian draws this connection by saying ‘while the production of reality television employs neoliberalism’s economic principles, the genre’s narrative conventions reflect its morals. Competitive programs celebrate the radical right-wing values championed especially by free market Republicans’ (2010: 69). This seemingly perfect companionship of neoliberal ideology being played out in the arena of reality television is arguably down to the fact that the concept of self-improvement and responsabilisation (Ouellette & Hay, 2008: 2). This is emphasised by James Hay, who states that television plays a vital part in perpetuating the ideology of neoliberalism.

Because a neoliberal form of governance assumes that social subjects are not and should not be subject to direct forms of State control, it therefore relies on mechanisms for governing at a distance, “through society,” through programming (shaping, guiding, channelling), and on self-disciplining social subjects (as distinct from the “free” individual) (2000: 54)

It is at this point where my argument comes in: as I believe the influence neoliberalism is seen to have over shaping the reality TV genre is more widespread than many academics assume, and can be applied to other television genres including drama and comedy series. Where academics have made the connection between postfeminism and neoliberalism in film and TV, the impact of neoliberalism seems to take a backseat, whilst the discourse of postfeminism dominates. In these cases, neoliberalism is rarely acknowledged in its own right as having a distinctive influence over our media. I argue that by assuming the impact of neoliberalism is already known, or by implying the two operate in parallel, is to underestimate the influence neoliberalism has over popular culture. By considering how these cultural concepts operate in the media, we can better understand how women are represented in popular culture, and how these messages are being consumed by western society. This is important as ‘the media has become a key site for defining codes of sexual conduct. It acts judgement and establishes the rules of play’ (McRobbie, 2009: 15).

Netflix

It could be argued, then, that the rise of online streaming services like Netflix have changed these “rules of play” by creating a new way in which TV is made, distributed and consumed.

The way in which *OITNB* is produced and consumed panders to ‘post-postmodern capitalism’ (Jenner, 2014: 11). Primarily, this is due to the format in which Netflix produce their television series, which caters to the recent phenomenon of “binge-watching.” This is where entire TV series is made available at once for viewers to consume as they please, rather than having to wait for individual episodes to be released over a regular amount of time. The fact that Netflix also do not put adverts in their TV series ‘serves to remove any ‘pollution’ of the text through advertising breaks’ (Jenner, 2014: 9), again, allowing the viewer to consume as much visual media as they want without being interrupted. Mareike Jenner states that ‘Netflix’s tailor-made product can only function in a system of distribution where this process is also individualised’ (2014: 13). This concept has been directly linked to ever-changing consumer habits under late capitalism. Along with many other features, most cable companies in the U.S. and Western Europe now offer new technologies in TV viewing such as recording, live pausing, rewinding, and “on demand” features. Netflix seems to have tapped in to the development of TV viewing, which revolves around the idea of putting the viewer in control of what they watch, rather than adhering to the television schedule.

As well as changing attitudes in TV viewing practices and visual consumption, the way in which Netflix distributes its content has also allowed changes in the way narratives are told in visual media. As entire series are released in one go with the intent of being watched quickly, this allows for more exploration of complex storylines or characters. *OITNB* is an obvious example where this method of TV production means that the show can delve in and out of many characters’ back stories without the viewer getting “lost.” Debra Ferreday notes this practice is useful for *OITNB* in particular.

This intensive consumption makes it possible to experiment with different forms of storytelling. Stories that are driven by relationship development, rather than the suspense that characterises traditional narrative forms can be told, and keep audiences coming back for more. This means there is a potential for different kinds of stories, ones that can perhaps challenge the normative and ideological content of more traditional media (2015).

Therefore it can be argued that the format in which *OITNB* is produced and distributed directly allows for the show to challenge contemporary cultural norms such as capitalism and patriarchy, as these kinds of shows are better able to deal with more complex storylines and have a large, more diverse cast. The development of relationships between women in

OITNB is something I will explore in the later chapters. However, Ferreday correctly draws a meaningful link between the narrative structure of the show and the way in which it is distributed, which should always be considered when analysing texts that are produced and distributed by Netflix or other online streaming services.

Work

The division of gender within the workforce is a topic that still continues to make headlines. Recently, an article was run by *The New York Times* entitled 'Fewer Women Run Big Companies Than Men Named John.' The rather self-explanatory headline written by Justin Wolfers explains that 'among chief executives of...1500 firms, for each woman, there are four men named John, Robert, William or James' and that this trend is 'a sure indicator that the glass ceiling remains firmly in place in corporate America' (2015). However, although women across the globe are still struggling to reach top positions in the world of work, a recent report by The BMO Wealth Institute found that in the U.S. workforce, 'women now hold the majority (52%) of management, professional and related positions' (2015). Other news stories draw attention to the gender pay gap in the U.S. This is now smaller than ever (Taube, 2014), but still present none the less. So whilst it is widely agreed that gender equality in the workplace is still yet to be achieved, it is also noted that the world of work is a much better place for women today than it has ever been in the United States. The multitude of news stories and academic scholarship on the ever-changing role women play in the workforce only go to show that this is still a turbulent and shifting terrain for gender relations. Therefore the implications for the wider socio-economic context must be considered. As Chandra Mohanty states,

ideologies of women's work, the meaning and value of work for women, and women workers' struggles against exploitation remain central issues for feminists around the world. After all, women's labor has always been central to the development, consolidation, and reproduction of capitalism in the U.S.A. and elsewhere (1997: 9).

Unlike second-wave feminist and Marxist-feminist scholarship concerned with the politics surrounding female labour and its impact in the wider capitalist system of the U.S. and Western Europe, postfeminist popular culture offers a very narrow, individualised depiction of what the world of work looks like for women. Employment in postfeminist popular culture, then, tends to fit this idealisation by portraying women in lines of work that

avoid occupational drudgery, in the sense that they are engaged in high-paying, high-status professions, or are compensated with jobs that grant them a high degree of cultural currency such as working as a newspaper columnist... Rarely in such representations is her work boring, tedious, or even all that labor intensive...thus...what

we now see in popular culture...are representations of working women that are generally quite inattentive to the material conditions and pressures of actual work (Leonard, 2007: 104).

It is no wonder, then, that rather than being regarded as an arena of oppression, the workplace in postfeminist culture is considered a crucial site where proof of women's advancement in the last 50 years is highly visible. As Suzanne Leonard reminds us, 'one common mantra increasingly in postfeminist culture, is that working women are reminders of the vast economic and cultural gains women have made in the past fifty years thanks mainly to their ability to ensure their own means of financial support' (2007: 100). Whilst this may be true, analysing the portrayal of the labour *itself* in modern media texts provides a much clearer understanding of the kind of work, and by extension, the kind of female *workers*, postfeminist culture idealises as its perfect 'social and political subjects' (Weeks, 2011: 8).

More than just being responsible for portraying a narrow depiction of employment, female labour in postfeminist culture is almost always juxtaposed against the home and the family. Far from suggesting women can "have it all" and find happiness and fulfilment in both work and the home, postfeminist texts often pit the two against each other – with the return to home, more often than not, winning. This creates tension and anxiety; 'at a time in which women are expected to juggle a successful family life with an equally successful professional career, the media both expose and help to construct panics about the lack of time women have to achieve these goals' (Nathanson, 2013: 5). Therefore, postfeminist popular culture not only offers a limited depiction of female labour, but actively insinuates that women will only find happiness and fulfilment in their familial role, and not in their professional one. In re-addressing the source of women's happiness back to the home, postfeminist texts therefore tend to make a conscious effort to either sidestep any alliance to the older feminist movement, or purposely undo it.

Neoliberalism

Whilst postfeminism greatly influences representations of women at work in popular culture, another dominant influence comes from neoliberalism. Stephanie Taylor (2015) says that '...neoliberal economies require a new kind of worker. This is a person who is mobile and malleable, infinitely energetic and ambitious, living in the present and ready to

adapt to the immediate demands of changing markets' (184). It can be argued that the emphasis on the "flexible" worker, then, is linked to the unstable economic climate since the economic crash in 2008. This not only means the new neoliberal worker must be flexible in terms of hours worked, but more so, that workers should seek to find work and profit in unconventional ways, and thus prioritises entrepreneurship that is carried out by 'actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating' (Gill, 2008: 436). It is therefore argued that the rise of entrepreneurship in media representation is directly connected to promoting an ethos of neoliberalism, where 'programs like *The Apprentice* emphasize the prestige of celebrity CEOs and the entrepreneurial acumen of wealthy businesspeople' (Grazian, 2010: 69).

There is, however, a more insidious influence neoliberalism can be understood to have over popular attitudes to work, and that is through the demonization of welfare claimants both in the media and political discourse in the UK and the U.S. Whilst there has been a surge in what Tracey Jensen refers to as 'poverty porn' (2013) as a new form of television entertainment in the UK, that 'seeks to individualise poverty, and to blame and shame 'the poor' for the situations they find themselves in' (Runswick-Cole & Goodley, 2015: 645), programmes in the U.S. that demonise people who do not work and rely on welfare such as *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding*, *Gypsy Brides US*, *Extreme Couponing*, and *Shameless* all perpetuate myths about the unemployed, and construct welfare claimants as irresponsible and immoral citizens for choosing to abstain from work. The demonization of welfare claimants in the media and political discourse plays an important part in perpetuating neoliberal ideology, which seeks to dismantle 'the limited U.S. welfare state, in order to enhance corporate profit rates' (Duggan, 2003: xi). In doing so, the individual is forced to accept their failures as their own poor choices, whilst the 'systemic and structural forces that create social and economic disadvantage in [people's] lives are sidelined' (Runswick-Cole & Goodley, 2015: 645). Thus, rather than focussing on socio-economic change that could alleviate some of the pressures of living under class, race, and gender oppression, the failure of individuals 'is used as proof of the need to strengthen the system, and the loser is simply urged to keep working on the project of ceaseless self-improvement so that they can better adjust to the normative ideal' (Chen, 2013: 449).

This culture of individualism and responsabilisation that is inherent to neoliberal and postfeminist culture is directly critiqued in *OITNB*, particularly when it comes to representations of work, which are visibly affected by class status. Although *OITNB* represents a diverse range of labour that the female inmates participate in, I will consider four examples to demonstrate my argument. First, I will analyse the paid work some of the women performed before being sentenced to Litchfield, and argue that the labour working-class and poor women find themselves does nothing to alleviate their financial situation. Often, their low-paid, low-skill labour is exploited under capitalism as the work they carry out does not pay them enough to support themselves or their families, which in turn becomes the catalyst that triggers these women to turn to crime.

I will then argue that the show critiques dominant neoliberal ideology that shifts socio-economic hardship away from the state and on to the individual, as dominant class and gender social structures are shown to influence the lives of marginalised women and thus limits individual choice. Furthermore, *OITNB* implicitly criticises postfeminist popular culture as offering narrow and unrealistic portrayals of work that again erase the real life conditions working-class and minority women face. With postfeminism and neoliberalism generally eliding class, race, and gender structural oppression, I argue that the two further re-enforce capitalist and patriarchal values, and that this is both exposed and critiqued in *OITNB*.

It is in the connection between female labour and class status where one general rule can be established in the show. That is, regardless of race, the working-class women are generally depicted as working in low-paid, low-skill jobs before entering the prison. The financial and social struggles these women face are exemplified under these conditions, and thus the vast majority of women turn to crime (mostly non-violent offences that incur a monetary gain) *because* the work they perform does not earn them a living wage to support themselves or their families. The correlation between labour, class, and crime that is depicted in the show is crucial, as it offers a kind of social realism that is often erased in postfeminist and neoliberal popular culture. In order to demonstrate this assertion, I will start my analysis by considering the backstories of two working-class inmates in greater detail. They are Tasha “Taystee” Jefferson and Gloria Mendoza. I will then discuss the backstories of the middle-class character, Sophia Buset, and the middle- to upper-class character, Piper. This will allow me to demonstrate what links can be drawn between class,

labour, and crime and argue that, generally speaking, the more financially secure, middle- to upper-class characters commit crimes in order to achieve a personal desire, rather than because of economic uncertainty. However, this is not to say that their reasons for turning to crime are invalid, nor do they automatically waive any sympathy from the viewer because of their class status. Instead, the show presents the backstories of different women and delves into their homes, neighbourhoods, relationships, and crimes, and in doing so, allows the viewer to play judge and jury and decide whether prison was a suitable punishment for the women to face. More often than not, due to a range of socio-economic factors, incarceration is presented as an unsuitable mode of correction that only serves to have a detrimental impact on the inmates' lives.

Taystee

There is no doubt that Taystee Jefferson is a smart, savvy and positive young woman. Her ambition to make something of herself is frequently presented in the show, both inside and outside Litchfield, a task that she knows will be impossible unless she gets a well-paying job. Evidently, things don't turn out this way, and it is through the use of flashbacks where Taystee's journey from orphan to felon becomes clear. In season 2 episode 2, Taystee has her first run-in with Yvonne "Vee" Parker at a "Black Adoption Fair." After a short conversation, Vee knows that a smart and vulnerable child like Taystee could be useful to her drug trade and asks if she'd be interested. Even at a young age, Taystee declines and says she could get in trouble and this would ruin her chances of finding her forever family, alluding to Taystee's honest work ethic. A few years later, Taystee runs into Vee again, this time as she leaves her shared accommodation to go to work at the local fast-food chain. Once again Vee propositions her to join her "family", and again Taystee declines. It is clear given Taystee's living situation and the line of work she is involved in, that Taystee is living in poverty, which could be read as a nod toward the exploitative nature of fast-food industry jobs, where although 'the restaurant industry is now America's largest private employer, it pays some of the lowest wages' (Schollosser, 2001: 6). Eventually, this lifestyle becomes unsustainable for Taystee and she is left with no other choice than to join Vee or become homeless. What is clear from Taystee's flashbacks is that she regards work and making an honest living as paramount and the key to her success and happiness. In the end, as a black woman who in her own words is "a child of the system", the opportunity to participate in a

well-paid, meaningful job never comes around, thus demonstrating how race, gender and class marginalisation often limits opportunities of socio-economic betterment.

Even in prison, Taystee understands the importance of work and still believes that a good job will dramatically improve her life chances, as demonstrated at the jobs fair at Litchfield in the same episode. After hearing that the inmate who won last year's job fair was offered a position with a company as a prize, Taystee strives to succeed in the interview outfit contest (held by charity, Dress for Success).

A handful of inmates begin by selecting outfits that they will model at the mock job fair. Sophia opts for a small, tight cocktail dress which she relishes wearing even though it doesn't fit her. When asked what kind of job she is hoping to get wearing that outfit, Sophia replies by saying 'I'm just here playing dress up' (Kohan, 2014). What is interesting here is that whilst Sophia chooses an inappropriate outfit for a job interview, and consciously plays dress up, so are the other women who take the task more seriously and choose more formal attire. Even though the girls like Flaca and Taystee opt for more conservative and professional outfits, they are still dressing up in order to try and impress a judge and win a competition; therefore all of the women, regardless of what outfit they wear, are literally wearing a costume to cover the fact that in reality, they are inmates in prison. This is further exemplified when Flaca asks the Dress for Success representative (DFS Rep),

Flaca: if this is really about career dressing for us, shouldn't this be all like, McDonalds and maids uniforms?"

DFS Rep: No! Do not think small. We are dressing ourselves for the career that we want. You have to put it into the universe. Dress for success! (Kohan, 2014).

This exchange highlights two points; generally speaking, the inmates are aware of their diminished life chances and understand that as convicts, securing a professional job role is difficult, if at all possible. Secondly, despite this being pointed out to her, the DFS representative dismisses these concerns, and tells the women that they should still dress a certain way for the career they want; thus illuminating the naivety in her white privilege and "well-to-do" persona. Her use of the pronouns "we" suggest that she sees herself as no different to the inmates (similar to Piper) however, it is in this sentence where difference lies, as she already has the career she wants, and the inmates hardly have a chance of securing theirs. This reinforces her ignorance to systematic structures of subordination that

some women who do not enjoy the privileges she does face.

Another point that is exemplified in this and many other conversations that take place between the representative and the inmates is the emphasis on choice. The women are encouraged to choose an outfit to wear but are simultaneously expected to choose something appropriate for a job interview situation, thus limiting that choice. Furthermore, the DFS representative advises Leanne Taylor (Emma Myles) to wear a peach suit – only to criticise it on stage in front of all the other inmates.



Fig. 1. From left to right: Taystee Jefferson, Anita DeMarco, Nicky Nichols, Lorna Morello, Flaca Gonzales, Leanne Taylor, and Sophia Bursset.

Any of the outfits worn on stage that are not formal, conservative, or well-fitted are deemed as unsuitable for interview and criticised. Where Sophia is made an example of as the dress is too revealing, Leanne is humiliated for choosing an outfit that is ill-fitting, despite the fact that the suit was chosen for her. Morello's choice is also criticised as her outfit choice is childish, and Anita is criticised for choosing an animal print blouse as it is too "racey." In this scene the "Mock Job Fair" literally becomes an opportunity for the inmates to be mocked for making bad choices, and so an ethic of neoliberalism is imposed on the job fair; where 'the promise of freedom, which should mean the elimination of all prohibitions and restrictions on the individual's exercise of choice, has turned into a new form of

restriction and pressure which urges women to follow and not deviate' (Chen, 2013: 448). In other words, whilst women may be depicted as freely choosing, liberated subjects, women who deviate from the status quo and make "bad" choices are punished, thus reinforcing restrictions and limitations that often uphold patriarchal and capitalist hegemony. The jobs fair in *OTINB*, then seems to be more about moulding the inmates into better neoliberal citizens, than it is about providing them with useful skills and opportunities to succeed in the outside world once they are released.

Although Taystee doesn't win the Dress for Success contest, she does well in both workshops and wins the job's fair overall. However she soon finds out that the guaranteed job she hoped for was never a prize. This is a metaphor perhaps for the lack of rewards hard work and motivation actually incur for marginalised women, and also reinforces the point that the whole thing was a charade, a performance with no substance or material reward. But this doesn't stop Taystee from trying and seeking other ways to better herself whilst she is in prison. In season 1 episode 6, Taystee joins the Women's Advisory Council (WAC) a body of inmate representatives set up by Mr Healey in order to channel any concerns and needs of the inmates directly to him. Where inmates like Sophia and Piper see this as an opportunity to instil some real, positive change at Litchfield, Taystee is wise and knows that the council is a sham. In the end, Taystee's assumption is proven correct as Mr Healey offers fresh doughnuts and coffee to the WAC providing they stay quiet. Taystee is the first to agree to this, not because of the reward for her silence, but because she knows being a part of the WAC will look good on her application for early release, whether she actually does anything or not, is irrelevant – thus showing how bright and savvy Taystee is, whilst rendering Piper as naive and idealistic. This is not to say that Taystee is not committed to change, but rather she knows how these systems work, and that if she can at least be involved with workshops and committees where she can at least *appear* to be productive, this will strengthen her chances of being released early.

By considering Taystee's story alone, *OITNB* can be seen to subvert dominant discourses on neoliberalism. This is because Taystee is routinely constructed as an ideal neoliberal subject, in that she is motivated, willing to be productive, and takes it upon herself to invest in her intelligence and talents. However, this does not lead to Taystee's emancipation or happiness, nor does it present her with a decent job. Instead, the neoliberal system quite

literally fails Taystee before the audience's eyes. As *OITNB* exemplifies, by making visible social factors that can be detrimental to one's life chances including race, gender, class, demographic, and family background, the culture of individualism that neoliberalism glorifies becomes unstable, and can be understood to reinforce this structural oppression in U.S. As Eva Chen concisely states

any unsatisfactory or unequal situation in a woman's life is judged as nothing other than the effect of her own choices and investments, which is to be solved not through structural changes but through the individual continually seeking to improve own her competitiveness in a ceaseless project of the self, be it hairstyle, make-up, cooking skills or career capabilities (2013: 446).

The job fair in *OITNB* can therefore be understood as just one example of the culture of neoliberalism and the predominance of the individual being satirised. In Taystee's case, no matter how hard she tries or how productive she is through her labour, she always falls victim to social forces that influence her life more than the choices she makes.

The fact that postfeminism presents itself as making 'no distinctions among the various social and cultural positions and experiences of women,' and therefore, 'celebrate[s] depictions of white, middle-class, heterosexual women's success as markers of all women's supposed success' (Projansky, 2001: 73) often works in presenting marginalised women as failures. This perpetuation also translates to representations of women in the world of work, as 'postfeminist fictions frequently set aside both evident economic disparities and the fact that the majority of women approach paid labour as an economic necessity rather than a choice' (Tasker & Negra, 2007: 2). In the case of Taystee, then, *OITNB* marks itself out against the backdrop of postfeminist popular culture by highlighting the limitations a young, poor, black, working-class woman might face in the U.S. Since postfeminist popular culture often only features women who enjoy race and class privilege, it erases any indication of class and race hegemony existing – and thus rarely represents the struggles some groups of marginalised women face. Furthermore, by adhering to a culture of individualism, postfeminist popular media abandons 'the structural analysis of patriarchal power, [and] masks the larger forces that continue to oppress many women's lives and re-inscribes their marginality by undercutting the possible strategic weight of politicized feminist collectivities' (Genz, 2006: 3). In this way, postfeminist discourse can be understood to

refute the need for collective resistance against patriarchy, as well as against capitalism, as it subverts gender and class oppression in favour of individualistic blame. *OITNB* therefore subverts this emphasis on individualism and female liberation by telling the stories of (mostly) disadvantaged women and the obstacles they face that limit their life choices.

Gloria

Gloria Mendoza is the maternal, lead figure in Litchfield's Hispanic racial group. She is depicted as caring and protective as well as pragmatic and resourceful. This leads to a jarring contrast to the Gloria presented in the flashbacks in season 2 episode 1, where the audience watches this strong, maternal character struggling financially and involved in a physically abusive relationship. During this episode, it is revealed that Gloria owned a convenience store in which she shared a space with her spiritual mother, two children, and her abusive boyfriend, Arturo. Despite Gloria and her mother working in the store, it is clear that the family is struggling financially. On top of this, Gloria suffers from physical abuse and finds it difficult to leave Arturo because he always apologises and tells Gloria he loves her after he hits her. In one scene he begs on his knees for her to take him back and says he will get better and stop hurting her. In every flashback after this, Gloria has fresh bruises on her face, suggesting that his behaviour doesn't change. The question as to why Gloria didn't leave is dismissed as quickly as it is raised. First and foremost, it is implied that she can't afford to as her business is struggling and she has no wider support network from other friends and family. Her mother suggests that she report him to the police and have him deported. Gloria rejects this idea as she doesn't want police around her shop (as she is committing a crime herself) and believes that if the police were to be called, Arturo would find her and kill her. Furthermore, the way in which Gloria is visibly distressed by Arturo's apologies suggests that she believes him, at least initially, when he says he'll stop and that he loves her. By avoiding presenting Gloria as naive, the show makes clear how difficult it can be for a victim to walk away from an abuser when they elicit sympathy and fear simultaneously. On top of this, Arturo has a good relationship with Gloria's two young children, and so she may simply be putting their needs before her own. In a culture of individualism, the inability to leave an abuser can be presented as the victim's own fault or as a sign of weakness. This is because 'neoliberalism posits individuals as being solely responsible for the maintenance of their bodies (or, as the case may be, parents are solely

responsible for the maintenance of their children's bodies' (Vander Schee & Kline, 2013: 571). *OITNB* avoids this by again depicting how choices individuals can make are often restricted by many socio-economic factors. Although Gloria's poor, working-class status isn't the cause of her own, and eventually, her children's abuse, the fact that she can't afford to move away, or rely on agencies, organisations, and wider family for support makes it difficult for her to leave – thus subverting the discourse of individualism that constitutes a fundamental part of neoliberal ideology. This trapped and poor situation Gloria finds herself in leads her to commit SNAP fraud, where she would buy food stamps from customers and then charge the government for items she never sold. It is only when Gloria discovers Arturo has hit one of her children that she decides enough is enough and to run away with the money made from the fraud. It is just as she is on her way out of the door when the police arrest her for the fraud, whilst Arturo, her mother, and children all watch as she is taken away.

Similar to Taystee's and many other characters' back-stories, Gloria finds herself turning to crime because she is a poor, minority, working-class woman. Despite working long hours and taking on her own business, she still can't seem to make ends meet and her relationships, health, and children suffer because of this. However, given Gloria's self-employed status, she can still be considered to be an entrepreneurial subject through the labour she performs. As the show aired in 2013, it is understandable that one of the reasons why Gloria's business might not be doing so well is because of the economic recession, but as Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra have stated in many works, even within the recession-era, popular culture still maintained its neoliberal and postfeminist values.

Fictional forms have proven to be particularly adept at rationalising the inequalities that thrive within neoliberal economies. Indeed, the ease with which women and young people have been marginalised within, or erased from, the cinematic discourse of recession, is striking (Tasker & Negra, 2013: 347).

Although *OITNB* doesn't explicitly state this is the reason for Gloria's lack of profit, it isn't ruled out either, and more so, under no circumstances does the show portray Gloria's difficult situation as a consequence of bad individual choices. As Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra contend, 'the prevailing cultural emphasis on individualism and choice – whether expressed via self-fashioning or entrepreneurial endeavour – seems increasingly tenuous

when it is made without reference to the economic conditions in which choices are made' (2013: 349). *OITNB* therefore challenges these ideals and thus reveals structural inequalities are not only present, but violently re-enforced through neoliberal ideology.

The postfeminist influence over popular culture is also criticised but in slightly different ways. Firstly, by representing women with "actual" problems, such as economic hardship, racism, class struggles, and domestic abuse, *OITNB* subverts traditional postfeminist popular culture and arguably trivialises it. When it comes to representations of labour in postfeminist popular culture, 'the successful girl exists as proof that even during one of the worst economic crises of recent history, postfeminist thought regimes continue to emphasize and inculcate notions of equality and choice, messages that resonate particularly with those who enjoy race and class privilege' (Leonard, 2014: 32). Furthermore, 'postfeminism generally refuses to acknowledge class differences, and thus it dissipates between women who *want* to work and those who *have* to work' (Leonard, 2007: 104). What *OITNB* demonstrates well, then, is it shows that many forms of systematic inequality are still in place even as neoliberal and postfeminist rhetoric try to imply otherwise. This is exemplified in the relationship minority, working-class, and poor women have to productive labour, where these women recognise that if they didn't work, they couldn't survive, but also that even when in work, surviving is just about what these women can manage.

Moreover, the lack of well-paying and stable employment that is important to a capitalist system has been explored in relation to incarceration rates by many academics, and these factors are often seen to correlate. As Petras and Davenport state, 'crime, gangs and single-parent families are the consequence of the de-industrialization process and [are] the mirror-image of the post-industrial free market capitalism' (1991: 158). As such, 'the prison returned to the societal forefront to check the rising tide of dispossessed families, street derelicts, and jobless and alienated youth' (Wacquant, 2009a: 59). With a high reserve army of labour necessary to the survival of capitalism, prisons can now be understood as an effective and necessary tool for managing the underemployed and unemployed (Gelsthorpe, 2010: 378).

By following the stories of disadvantaged women like Taystee and Gloria, *OITNB* depicts a population of inmates whose disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds present an accurate portrayal of the wider female prison population of the U.S. Where 'research on

female offenders indicates that a high number of them experience a wide range of social problems, many of them relating to social and economic marginalisation' (Gelsthorpe, 2010: 378). *OITNB* can therefore be understood as a kind of social realism when it comes to the socio-economic status of offenders in the U.S. as in nearly all cases 'crime appears as a mechanism of socio-economic mobility, an alternative channel to low-paid, low-esteem service employment' (Petras & Davenport, 1991: 158).

Characters like Taystee and Gloria therefore support these assertions as they are depicted working full time hours, and still struggling financially. In this way, *OITNB* not only criticises the exploitative nature of some forms of labour under neoliberal capitalism, but also criticises the American prison and justice system that routinely incarcerates marginalised people, mostly for committing minor drug offences (Bloom, Lind & Owen, 1994: 1). Furthermore, these class, race, and gendered struggles are often eradicated from postfeminist discourse, and as such this discourse rarely criticises hegemonic systems of oppression as the women postfeminism celebrates often benefit from those systems, and enjoy class and racial privilege. *OITNB* therefore raises significant questions about the role postfeminist culture has in helping the advancement of women's lives. For a movement that is predicated on the 'individual woman acting on her own, in her best interests, in which her fulfilment can be understood as independent of her social milieu' (Radner, 2011: 11), this leaves no room for women who are harmed by patriarchal, capitalist structures as these groups of women are already limited as to what choices they can make.

Sophia

Whilst both Gloria and Sophia are sentenced to Litchfield for committing fraud, the reasons why the women turned to crime could not be more different. In Season 1 episode 3, the narrative begins by showing a group of fire-fighters in the changing rooms after their shift; it is only when one of the men, Marcus, goes into a private cubicle to get changed do we realise it is Sophia before she transitioned in to a woman. As Marcus takes off his uniform he reveals a hot pink bra with matching pants, clearly indicating that whilst Marcus is coming to terms with his trans identity, this must be hidden from his work colleagues who probably wouldn't be so supportive. The fact that the show's writers and producers would choose to portray Sophia, a trans woman of colour, as previously working in such a hyper-masculine job role makes this scene especially interesting; as not only does it serve for

melodramatic effect, but it also draws attention to the construction of masculinity and how it is policed in society. As Marcus gazes at his reflection in the mirror and tries to adjust his features so as to look more feminine, the dissatisfaction and disconnection Marcus has with the person he sees in the mirror makes for devastating viewing and creates an atmosphere of sympathy, whilst also critiquing the way bodies are policed into performing certain identities.

Later in her back-story it is revealed that Sophia committed credit card fraud in order to pay for her transition. It is the journey of the transition that is focussed on in the back-story, more than her work or crime. However, this works in engaging the viewer into understanding just how much Sophia needed to make this change and would do anything to become a woman – even give up her freedom. So whilst the trajectory of a lack of money facilitating the need to commit a criminal offence is present in Sophia's, Gloria's and Taystee's backstories, the reasoning behind these journeys are by no means the same. Where Taystee and Gloria committed crimes as they were living on the poverty line, Sophia led a comfortable middle-class lifestyle, as depicted by her work, nice family home, and quiet neighbourhood. However, this does not diminish any sympathy from the audience, nor does it invalidate Sophia's actions. In this case, it is made explicitly clear that without gaining access to a lot of money to cover the costs of surgical and medical procedures within a privatised health system, Sophia could never be herself. This is highlighted in a later conversation between Sophia's wife, Crystal, where she confesses that she stayed with Sophia throughout her transition because she 'could see how much pain she was in, and knew it would be better for Michael to have two mums than a dead dad' (Kohan, 2013). Therefore despite being from a more privileged background than some of the other working-class and poor characters, Sophia still subverts typical neoliberal and postfeminist representations of female labour.

Eva Chen states that

neoliberalism is not simply another form of direct disciplinary power exercised by the dominant discourse over passive female subjects. As a new form of self-governance, where the only guiding principle is marketisation and self-interest, neoliberalism encourages individuals to willingly and freely choose to follow the path most conducive to their self-interest (2013: 443).

In this case, Sophia comes to exemplify this neoliberal value of exercising agency in the interest of individual fulfilment. However, neoliberalism also instructs subjects which path they *should* follow, which ‘often turns out to be the normative one, the one for which the state has provided the best conditions’ (Chen, 2013: 443). A trans woman, particularly a trans woman of colour, obviously subverts these neoliberal “norms” and thus deviate from societal and cultural hegemony. As Judith Butler states, ‘we might suggest that bodies only appear, only endure, only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas’ (1993: xi). In a society that is predicated on superstructures that seek to privilege certain groups of people based on their classed, gendered, and racial identities, Sophia no longer becomes counted under neoliberal discourse, as the choice she made to become a woman was subversive, and so the “wrong” one. Although her employment isn’t what is subversive here, her trans identity is. This suggests that Sophia still retains some class privilege under neoliberal capitalism, and that this was cemented through her well-paying job, but this alone is not enough for her to be privileged under a system of neoliberal capitalism and other structures of oppression that seek to “regulate” citizens.

When it comes to postfeminist representations of work, however, Sophia’s job as a fire-fighter is explicitly subversive. Her line of work is strenuous, dangerous, and masculine - something rarely presented in postfeminist media where women are shown as working in desks jobs. Given that ‘under the auspices of a postfeminist cultural regime...gender norms [are] vigorously re-essentialized’ (Tasker & Negra, 2014: 25), both Sophia’s identity as a trans woman and her employment as a fire-fighter subverts these gender norms that postfeminism perpetuates, whilst also calling into question the construction of masculinity and male identity.

Piper

Despite being regarded as the main character of the show, and having more time dedicated to her in flashback episodes than any other character, Piper is never seen to work in any kind of job. With the exception of one scene in Season 1 episode 3, where she is handing out CV’s at a bar, and briefly in Season 1 episode 2, where she tries to convince Polly to sell her homemade soaps and to start a business together (although it is not clear what Piper would actually *do*), there is nothing to suggest that Piper has actually worked a

day in her life. Furthermore, Piper's family, background, and lifestyle is explored in great detail during these flashbacks, thus revealing her to come from a wealthy, middle-class, affluent background. By understanding more about Piper's background, the viewer begins to understand how she avoided work for most of her adult life – she could afford to.

Piper's wealthy background detaches her crime from her socio-economic background. Rather than committing a criminal offence because of financial hardship, like many of the other characters do, Piper carried drug money on a flight once when she was in her early twenties so she could travel the world with her girlfriend, Alex. Whilst Piper protests that she only did so because she loved Alex and wanted to be with her, Alex believes she was more interested in the lavish lifestyle Alex's work brought her. Her crime, therefore, is presented as being an unnecessary and careless mistake, thus making it difficult for the viewer to sympathise with Piper – particularly next to some of the other women who have lived much more troubling lives.

Piper can be understood to embody both neoliberal ideals in that she is entrepreneurial (comes up with idea for soap business) and risk-taking (exemplified in her breaking the law). Her maintained feminine appearance, class status, whiteness, and individualistic demeanour also make Piper a model postfeminist character, as well as a neoliberal one, and so in this example, postfeminism and neoliberalism can be seen as investing in the same values. Although her lack of employment contrasts with some typical depictions of postfeminist characters, this is not to say Piper challenges the postfeminist stereotype. Given that postfeminism often conflates women who want to work and who have to work (Leonard, 2007: 104), all that has happened is Piper has simply made a different *choice* with regards to working or not. The point still stands that it is only wealthy, privileged women that are able to exercise this choice in the first place.

Her class status also allows Piper to also side-step the neoliberal backlash against the unemployed, as we can assume that she does not rely on state assistance, but on her wealthy parents and well-off boyfriend. Therefore, even though she may not necessarily be productive, the important thing is that she can afford to bear this burden herself, and doesn't require the state to intervene. It can be said then that Piper is still a model neoliberal subject and fits the 'image of the "good citizen."' As Eva Cheng states, 'neoliberal governmentality is both subjection and subject-making, for the neoliberal subject is not a

pre-given essence external to and repressed by power, but is actually immanent to power and enabled by it' (2013: 444).

Nowhere in the show is Piper's allegiance to herself rather than other women better exemplified than in the final episodes of the third season. After working in the new lingerie factory at Litchfield for some time, Piper figures out she can make an extra pair of pants out of the left over material provided for the inmates to work with. It is here where Piper's neoliberal characteristics kick in. After a conversation with her brother, Piper learns that there is a market that caters to men who buy women's worn underwear off the internet. Moreover, she is told that some men will pay a lot more for underwear criminals have worn, and it is here where Piper sees an opportunity for her own underground business venture. Her plan is to get as many women as possible to wear the extra pants she makes without the guards noticing. By preying on one of the new guards who also want to make a quick profit, Piper collects the worn underwear back from the women and gives them to the guard to distribute to the public through a website run by her brother. The profits made are mostly Piper's (of course), who gives the guard a handsome cut. Although a few of the inmates are willing to wear the underwear because she asks, this isn't enough, and Piper sees yet another opportunity arise that will mean she can convince even more women to participate. As the privatisation of the prison grows, the new, mass-produced meals brought in as a cost-cutting measure leave the inmates disgusted and unable to eat their food. Almost immediately, Piper invests her already-made profits to buy out all of the chicken and beef food flavouring at the commissary before anybody else can. Now, if any of the women want their food to taste nice again, they have to sell their labour to Piper – who, at the end of Season three, is making around \$70 per item sold.

Here, Piper has created her own interstitial economy (an economy within a wider economy). The profits that are generated in this venture could have made all of the inmates' lives better, as she could have distributed the money into the other women's commissary funds. But instead Piper feels entitled to the most profit as it was her idea. Once the "business" takes off, she doesn't even have to wear the bright pink pants herself any more, meaning she won't get caught by the guards. This provides Piper with a low-risk, high-yield venture, and the fact that the other inmates who are essentially working for her, aren't getting paid as much as they could considering the risk involved and profit made is, in

Piper's view, just the way it works. It can be said, then, that Piper has created an economic structure based on capitalist principles, even after spending months in a prison with poor, working-class women who have been hurt by this exact system. Of course, Piper doesn't see it this way and instead declares in a conversation with her mother that everyone in Litchfield is there because of bad choices, including herself.

Mother: You'd be home trying on wedding dresses, running your business, giving me grandchildren if it weren't for her. She stole all that from you.

Piper: Mom. I need you to hear what I'm gonna say. I need you to really hear it. I am in here because I am no different from anybody else in here. I made bad choices. I committed a crime. And being in here is no one's fault but my own (Kohan, 2013).

This exchange between Piper and her mother shows that Piper is ignorant to any power structures that systematically hurt women who aren't as privileged as she is. Whilst Piper may try and establish solidarity with the other inmates, the reality is she 'discounts the racial and economic forces that led to her fellow inmates having a greater probability of serving time' (Carveth, 2015: 42). This individualistic approach to life makes Piper a good neoliberal and postfeminist subject as she is driven by self-interest and shows no solidarity with any of the other women. The fact that she is willing to make money for herself off the backs of some of her fellow inmates goes some way to showing that Piper's main priority is herself, and has no interest in bettering the lives of all women. Where at first the viewer may have felt sympathy for Piper, this is gradually diminished as she exercises her privilege in prison just like she probably did on the outside. In this sense, it is arguable that over three seasons, Piper's character hasn't developed at all – but rather gains the confidence to show her true colours and utilise her privileged status to get what she wants, regardless of the other women she harms along the way; thus encouraging the viewer to criticise her.

Domestic Labour

This chapter will begin by engaging with feminist and postfeminist debates around domestic labour. I will then analyse how this work is represented outside the prison in the show by using the characters Miss Claudette and Lorna Morello as specific examples. I will then discuss the different ways *OITNB* engages with postfeminist and neoliberal ideas around the subject of domesticity, and argue that when it comes to representations of the domestic worker and the housewife, neoliberal and postfeminist values conflict, thereby disrupting the notion that the two work coherently. I will then move on to considering the role of motherhood specifically, again engaging with the theoretical debates around the subject before moving in to an analysis of Aleida and Daya and how their mother-daughter relationship is presented in the show. I will also analyse the relationship Daya has to her own pregnancy in the show, and how this is presented as a source of anxiety that contradicts dominant postfeminist assumptions about motherhood as a source of happiness and fulfilment for women. Although the upbringing of children certainly constitutes as domestic labour, the way *OITNB* depicts this labour is complex, and thus warrants specific critical attention.

The role of women within familial and domestic spheres has been a primary concern for feminists from as far back as the 18th century. Mary Wollstonecraft, writing in 1792, channelled her concerns about women being confined to the private sphere and the detrimental impact this was having on their lives (Poovey, 1984: vii). Since then feminists have regularly challenged the gendered division of housework, arguably because this is where women's labour was, and arguably, is, most visibly appropriated by men.

Writing much later in the 1940s, Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* brought women's domestic labour to the forefront of popular debate once again, and became a landmark text for Second Wave feminism. By 'using the figure of the housewife to encapsulate everything she saw wrong with women's lives' (Johnson & Lloyd, 2007: 7), De Beauvoir once again criticised the confinement women faced in the domestic sphere as negatively affecting women's lives and driving gender inequality. It is unsurprising then, that in many of the texts written by second wave feminists, 'the housewife emerged...as an instantly identifiable figure that epitomizes everything that is wrong with patriarchy' (Genz, 2009: 52).

From a Marxist-feminist perspective, it is the *labour* of domestic work itself that warrants critical attention. The idea being that

If women's traditional domestic labors were seen as having productive value, and if women gained control over their labor power, the material grounds for patriarchy within the home would diminish. To this end, many feminists have argued that women's activities within the family must be conceptualized in terms of their productive value (Mann, 1994: 42).

Although it was Friedrich Engels who first applied Marx's theory of the means of production to the relationship between men and women, and asserted that 'men oppressed women within the family in the same way that capitalists oppressed workers in a factory' (Mann, 1994: 42), many feminist scholars were quick to point out that women's domestic labour had been appropriated by men long before any system of private property (42). Therefore it is crucial to acknowledge that whilst Marx's model is a good starting point when conceptualising the ways in which women's domestic labour is appropriated by men, we also need to draw upon feminist theory in order to truly understand the historical and socio-cultural relationship between men and women within the family unit, and why this kind of labour still predominately falls on women's shoulders (McCabe & Akass, 2006: 56), and why, after so many years of feminist scholarship and criticism, has the domestic recently become a site of aspiration for some young women. Angela McRobbie offers an interesting insight into this as she says

it would be interesting to speculate as to why there is at present, despite various other feminist actions, no organisation or campaign which addresses the oppressive, repetitive, exhausting nature of daily housework and childcare and the extent to which women are still disproportionately responsible for these daily responsibilities. Perhaps this can be attributed to the legacy of a post-feminist culture which emphasises responsibility and choice (2013: 128).

Here, McRobbie raises a crucial point, if postfeminism is all about women exercising choice and agency, what role can feminism play if women choose to return to a tradition that entails oppressive work?

Postfeminism

Since the emergence of postfeminist culture in the 1990s female desire is often presented as wanting to go back to a domestic, feminine lifestyle, where women are now presented as 'keen to re-embrace the title of housewife and re-experience the joys of a "new femininity"' (Genz & Brabon, 2009: 57). The rebranding of domestic labour as a site of pleasure and freedom articulated through means of popular culture, in film and TV programs such as *Footballer's Wives*, *The Real Housewives* franchise, and *Desperate Housewives*, rejects feminist concerns about housework being tedious, repetitive, and exploitative. As Stephanie Genz argues, 'new traditionalism centralises women's apparently full knowledgeable choice to abstain from paid work in favour of family values. The domestic sphere is rebranded as a domain of female autonomy and independence, far removed from its previous connotations of drudgery and confinement' (Genz, 2009: 54). Therefore by addressing women as freely choosing subjects, domestic labour is presented as a fulfilling and enjoyable role.

More than presenting a new perspective on domestic labour, postfeminism also redefines the role of the housewife as a viable aspiration for modern women to achieve. One of the ways the perspective of the housewife has shifted in recent years is by presenting the housewife as an identity, not a job. By 'drawing on poststructuralist understandings of the performativity of identity... the housewife has come to be seen as an inflexibly gendered "identity" rather than a form of gendered *labour*' (Gillis & Hollows, 2009: 7). Therefore, popular media that is oriented around the housewife figure tends to focus more on the lavish lifestyles, feisty characters, and consumer tendencies these women can afford, rather than the cooking, cleaning and child-rearing labour they (supposedly) perform.

A further investment postfeminism has with domestic labour is that it ties in very neatly with the emergence of the 'consumer society' (Baudrillard, 1998). This also complicates the relationship domestic labour has to the Marxist model of production, as it can be understood as both productive labour and a form of 'ordinary consumption' (Martens & Scott, 2005: 380). In an analysis of the development of *Good Housekeeping*, Martens and Scott note that the magazine, along with other forms of lifestyle media,

have opted for what commerce has been very good at, and that is to offer the consumer homemaker a product which "helps" in making

sense of the manifold dangers and complexities of late modern living [however] by being a conduit for the discussion and representation of late modern complexities and contradictions, [*Good Housekeeping*] has at the same time been very active in bringing these complexities into the world (2005: 394).

With cultural texts such as lifestyle magazines and TV shows offering women the latest technologies that are designed to alleviate any arduous domestic labour in new and more efficient ways, the pervasive nature of consumer culture works because it often presents the remedy to a problem before the problem even exists.

With all this being said, it would be wrong to assert that postfeminism offers a universal definition of housework and idealises the domestic all the time. Instead, postfeminist popular culture depicts a wide range of possibilities and consequences the private sphere can offer women. Often these narratives are ambivalent or even contradict the concept of domestic labour being empowering to women. Elizabeth Nathanson articulates this in saying:

They are surgeons, lawyers, teachers, politicians and television writers. They are journalists, fashion designers, photographers and hotel owners, oncologists and gynaecologists, police detectives and even president of the United States. Women on television seem to be able to do anything and be anything. And yet, there is one thing that a prominent handful of women in media culture just cannot do: they cannot cook (2013: 1).

Rather than just representing women who only concern themselves with the domestic sphere, many women in postfeminist texts contradict this and reject domestic labour outright. Postfeminist characters who lack of cooking and cleaning skills all disrupt the tradition of domestic work being women's work – and pride themselves for doing so. What is interesting about postfeminist popular culture, then, is that it often 'produces two extreme character traits: there are narratives about women who cannot cook as well as narratives about women who only cook' (Nathanson, 2013: 2). According to postfeminist popular culture, then, women can choose to be housewives or choose to reject domestic work completely. But by selling the domestic lifestyle choice to young women as precisely that – a choice – means that any political/feminist opposition to these aspirations appear dated and becomes redundant.

In the few representations there are of women participating in domestic labour outside the prison, the show does often subvert typical postfeminist stereotypes, by portraying the domestic as both a site of unattainable happiness for some, and a realm of struggle, anxiety, and violence for others. The latter is especially prevalent with Miss Claudette, a character who subverts the postfeminist stereotype of the domestic worker. Miss Claudette is an elderly Haitian woman who has very strict rules when it comes to the cleanliness of her space, which Piper has to share. Miss Claudette's strict attitude and attachment to cleanliness is explained in her flashback scenes in season 1 episode 4. It is here we see Claudette as a young girl who has just arrived in the U.S. to work as a maid in order to pay off her parents' debts. Evidently there against her will, *OITNB* highlights forced labour as just one of the many forms of human trafficking crime, and also draws attention to the global nature of female labour, where migrant women can be forced to work for low pay for (often) wealthy, white women. The close-up of Claudette's distressed face makes it evident that she is anxious about her new surroundings and job role. This elicits sympathy from the viewer but not from the manager, who makes no secret about the strict rules, professionalism, and zero-tolerance environment Claudette will live and work in for the rest of her life.



Fig. 1. Miss Claudette arrives at the live-in maid service

In contrast, postfeminist popular culture has glorified the figure of the maid in recent years. As Suzanne Leonard states, 'American mass culture has recently witnessed an unprecedented rise in popular representations of maids and nannies, figures who remain paradoxically visible and invisible at the same time' (2009: 107). By centralising Miss Claudette's induction to domestic-worker life as a harsh and terrifying experience, *OITNB* subverts this postfeminist representation and displays Claudette as a victim of human trafficking and forced labour. Popular films such as *Maid in Manhattan* and *Love Actually* often represent the domestic worker as a love interest, and it is often through romance that emancipation of the domestic worker is fulfilled. In the case of *OITNB*, no such "happily ever after" comes around for Claudette, thus subverting the stereotypical, modern maid trope.

The domestic being the source of women's happiness and emancipation is further subverted in the later flashback scenes. It is here we see Claudette years later in the managerial position for the maid service. This complicates the plot somewhat as Claudette has become a key part in an industry that once put her under a lot of distress, separated her from her family, and is completely illegal. Claudette instils the same zero-tolerance rules in one of the new, young girls – who acts as a representation of how far, perhaps even institutionalised, Claudette has become. However, once Claudette learns that the man this young girl has been cleaning for has beaten her and severely bruised the entire side of her torso, Claudette seeks vengeance. After introducing herself to the man who abused the girl, Claudette calmly entering the house with her cleaning products, the next thing we see is Claudette cleaning a knife in the sink in an immaculate kitchen, before collecting her cleaning supplies and stepping over the man's bleeding body on her way out. Although we can not say for certain yet, there is a good chance, given the fact Miss Claudette resides in a minimum security prison and is not serving a life sentence, that the cleaning skills she had developed over the years as a maid, actually helped her literally get away with murder.

The rise of the domestic worker in modern popular culture has proven problematic to the 'ideological history of feminism, which has largely failed to grapple with the question of how the preponderance of domestic labourers has ensured economic gains for America's elite, while fixing others, mostly women of colour, in positions which ensure little economic

mobility' (Leonard, 2009: 107). In the predominately white and middle-class terrain of postfeminism, *OITNB* brings a fresh, if disturbing, perspective to the figure of the maid. Not only through the forced labour the women living at the maid service have to endure, but also the violence and clear subordination they can be subjected to. The fact that it was a young, black girl who was physically abused by a white, middle-class, man can be understood as a metaphor for the micro-aggressions, attacks, and violence women of colour can be subjected to on the grounds of their race, class and gender identities.

Whilst Miss Claudette is visibly forced into her domestic role, fellow Litchfield inmate, Lorna Morello, engages with the domestic in an entirely way. Although she is never depicted in engaging in any form of domestic labour, Lorna Morello still upholds the values of a traditional, feminine, 1950s lifestyle, and emphatically wants to live a domesticated lifestyle. As someone whose 'entire worldview is based on *Westside Story*' (Kohan, 2013). Morello is presented as an anachronistic character who fantasises about her future wedding with Christopher and becoming a housewife. Her relationship with Christopher is so important, in fact, often it is all she talks about. From planning her wedding, looking at bridal magazines, and imagining how many children she and Christopher will have, Morello's attachment to the home is one that is undoubtedly traditional. Even at the mock job interview at the prison's job fair Morello tells the interviewer:

Morello: Well, I just wanna get married to Christopher and have his babies and make the house look nice... Maybe I'll Pinterest, I hear that's a thing (Kohan, 2014).

It is shown throughout the first two seasons how important Christopher is to Morello, and how much she wants to finish her sentence at Litchfield so they can be together. As the series develops, Morello's enthusiasm to return to the domestic never wavers, thus hinting to the audience that Morello may not be as authentic as she sounds. Despite this, it is still a surprise when we discover how perverse this relationship is, as it is revealed her relationship with Christopher is completely fabricated. In Season 2 Episode 10, it is finally revealed that Morello and Christopher went on one date years ago, and since then she harassed and stalked him relentlessly. Even after he changed his number, address, and filed a restraining order against her, Morello's delusions of their marriage, family, and home still continued, right up until the present day.

Once again the role of the domestic subverts the dominant postfeminist trope – but in a completely different way to that of Miss Claudette’s character, as Morello’s dreams of becoming a housewife are based upon a fictitious relationship. From Morello’s flashbacks in season 2 episode 4, it becomes clear that she is from a large, working-class family, but has always had an attachment to a highly consumerist lifestyle as she is obsessed with designer clothes – something she can only attain through fraud. Perhaps more than just becoming a housewife, Morello desperately wants the life housewives possess – that is middle-class affluence and all the material goods that can come with it. Stephanie Genz notes that ‘whereas work outside the home is now an inevitable economic requirement for most women, ‘homework’ has become the sanctuary of a few privileged, financially secure housewives’ (Genz, 2009: 54). By representing Morello as a working-class woman (and a convict), the show implies to the viewer that, realistically, Morello will never attain the lifestyle she dreams of because of the structural socio-economic barriers that are in place. Moreover, Morello’s fantasies tend to suggest that such a postfeminist retro dream of domestic fulfilment is just that – a fantasy. Whilst Morello’s socio-economic disadvantaged status will probably prevent her from achieving this goal, even women who do enjoy race and class privilege still won’t necessarily attain this lifestyle. By once again bringing class status to the forefront of discussion, *OITNB* disrupts postfeminist and neoliberal discourse of individuals being in complete control of their own lives.

Although postfeminism often glorifies the figure of the housewife, neoliberalism generally doesn’t, especially if it is working-class women who abstain from the productive workforce in order to take on domestic duties. In this sense, neoliberalism regards the housewife and the domestic worker in two different ways. Mainly, this comes down to what work constitutes productive labour. As discussed previously in this chapter, many Marxist-feminists have advocated for a change in the way we think about housework to be considered productive work; however, it is contested by other academics that for productive work to have value, it must be exchanged in one way or another. Therefore, some academics believe that housework never goes through an exchange process, and so value can not be attached to it. As Rakhi Sehgal summarises ‘...value can only be assessed via exchange relations, and since domestic work does not enter the circuit of exchange, it can not be said to produce value... the same domestic work, however, is categorized as

employment and paid productive labour when it is commodified and purchased on the market' (2007: 62). What Sehgal asserts here is precisely the difference in domestic labour representations present in *OITNB*. Where Miss Claudette carries out domestic work as part of her "employment" this is considered productive labour as her services have been bought and sold. Of course, the illegality of this exchange and whether she actually earns any money never really becomes an issue from a neoliberal perspective. Morello, on the other hand, would be treated very differently under neoliberalism's discourse, as the approach to the housewife, or anybody who carries out housework in lieu of participating in "productive" work, is very different to that of the domestic worker.

Where postfeminist popular culture invests heavily in the figure of the housewife and the importance of the return to home trope, housework is not generally seen to benefit a neoliberal capitalist economy at all. Moreover 'domesticity has traditionally been associated with immobility and stasis, and against the adventurous spirit of modernity' (Hollows, 2006: 110). However, the relationship of neoliberal values and the housewife is not quite this black and white.

A study conducted by Shani Orgad and Sara De Benedictis (2015) found that when analysing stories of the stay-at-home mother in UK news coverage, their 'findings confirm existing research... [which] shows that criticism and derision of mothers who are not in paid employment are predominantly directed towards working-class mothers' (15). However middle-class women who abstain from paid, productive labour to raise children and carry out other domestic duties generally 'emerge as a largely positive figure, whose 'choice' is valued, recognized and endorsed, including by government' (17). Therefore the real issue at hand seems to be whether the woman can afford to choose the domestic lifestyle or not. It would appear that as far as this study is concerned, working-class women who choose to stay at home with their families tend to be demonised because they will generally require state assistance to do so. Conversely, middle-class women who opt for this lifestyle tend to be applauded for exercising their 'choice agency, individualization, and female liberation' (Orgad & De Benedictis, 2015: 17). Although this study is specific to British press coverage, neoliberal capitalism is a dominant force in both UK and U.S. politics, economics, and society. This creates conflicting messages around the domestic and further complicates the apparently coherent relationship neoliberalism and postfeminism are understood to have. Perhaps what *OITNB* can tell us about domestic work is that '...the meanings of the

domestic, and domestic femininities, are contextual and historical and what operates as a site of subordination for some women may operate as an object of fantasy for others' (Hollows, 2006: 114). That is, the domestic is a complex and conflicting site for women and feminism. However we must be critical of the wider socio-economic structures that are in place, that have a vested interest in retaining domestic labour as low-paid work generally carried out by minority/migrant women, as well as the way in which abstaining from productive labour in favour of taking on domestic responsibilities is presented in popular discourse as a lifestyle choice that can, and should, only be afforded by the middle- and upper-classes.

Motherhood

The trope of the working woman who is forced to choose her career or her family, as though the two are mutually exclusive, has formed an integral part of postfeminist popular culture in recent years – particularly in western TV and film. More often than not, the woman finds her happiness and fulfilment within the home, rather than the workplace. The role of motherhood has also been an important part of the feminist movement and scholarship, but often for different reasons. Whilst the feminist debates on the domestic as discussed above often encapsulate the upbringing of children within their discourse, some second wave feminists did dedicate work around the oppressive nature of motherhood specifically. As Joanne Baker (2009) notes, ‘it was early second-wave feminist analysis that brought into focus the role of male dominated ideology in shaping the social institution of motherhood and its potentially oppressive conditions’ (275).

Furthermore, with more legal access to abortion and contraception in the U.S. and Western Europe, becoming a mother is now often taken for granted as a conscious choice women should make responsibly. As Angela McRobbie notes, ‘contemporary neoliberal discourse as it is addressed to young women... emphasises the importance of planning well for marriage and motherhood’ (2013: 130). This taken-for-granted choice when it comes to motherhood is frequently depicted in postfeminist popular culture. Although it is not as simple as to say that postfeminist representations of motherhood can always be read as a backlash against the second wave feminist movement, the “return to the domestic” or “return to home” story arcs can be understood in this way.

When it comes to motherhood, postfeminism engages with previous feminist politics in complicated ways. Primarily, it portrays motherhood as an arena in which women can exercise choice. As such, within ‘these narratives of the choosing mommy, regardless of a mother’s particular struggles, her challenges are understood as effects of her individual choices rather than consequences of structural, rhetorical, and cultural formations’ (Thornton, 2014: 275). Furthermore, this ideology of choice and individualism ‘works to mask the large power differential that exists between mothers and fathers, as well as that between white women and women of color, and between professional-executive women and poor or working-class women’ (Thornton, 2014: 275). In other words, what postfeminist media offers women is a very narrow, highly idealised standard of motherhood that involves

an aspirational, high-consuming, choosing agent (Baker, 2009; McRobbie, 2013), thus combining an ethos of consumerism as part of the important decisions women can now make as liberated subjects. By acknowledging the commodification of motherhood it can be argued

If the US is the site of consumer triumph over gender and racial inequalities in postfeminist discourse [analysing motherhood in media texts] could bring into focus the dominant US discourse of choice and the free market ideology of neoliberal capitalism as the source of reproductive freedom and authentic modern feminine subjectivity (Thoma, 2009: 419).

It can be argued therefore that in the case of motherhood, postfeminism and neoliberalism are very closely related.

Finally, postfeminism often promotes “intensive mothering” and has been criticised by many academics as an ideal that is unattainable and unhealthy. Douglas and Michaels have termed this “the new momism”, and it is defined as

the insistence that no woman is truly complete or fulfilled unless she has kids, that women remain the best primary caretakers of children, and that to be a remotely decent mother, a woman has to devote her entire physical, psychological, emotional, and intellectual being, 24/7, to her children’ (2004: 4).

Needless to say, this set of ideals often visible in the media ‘seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but... in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach’ (Douglas & Michaels, 2004: 4). It is therefore important to interrogate what representations of modern motherhood are being consumed in popular texts like *OITNB*, and the impact this has on the wider postfeminist culture and neoliberal discourse that dominate western popular media.

OITNB explores the concept of motherhood as a complicated and ambiguous terrain. By focussing the attention on minority, non-white, and working-class women, the show also offers a wide range of depictions of motherhood, something that many postfeminist texts have failed to do. More than just a site of constant happiness and fulfilment, motherhood in *OITNB* is presented as uneasy ground to negotiate and the show perhaps aims to represent a more true-to-life representation of motherhood in the twenty-first century. At a panel discussion for *OITNB* earlier this year, Jenji Kohan said that the third season of the show

would focus on faith and motherhood (Gordon, 2015). Therefore it is in the third season where my analysis will start, with the aptly named first episode, 'Mother's Day.' This episode is primarily concerned with the preparation and running of the Mother's Day fair held at Litchfield. Here the children of the inmates are invited to spend the afternoon with their mothers on the greenery within the prison. It is an event that all of the inmates help with: from making games, to staffing the toilets, to putting on entertainment – even the inmates without children are still part of the day.

The day is seen to be going well, and both the inmates and their children are happy that they get to spend time with one another without being separated with rules and regulations that are common to visiting hours. Instead, for this one day the inmates are able to interact, play, and hold their children in ways not seen in the previous episodes. Obviously, there are small quirks that act as reminders for the children that this isn't a "normal" situation. For example, the motor that propels the makeshift windmill on the crazy golf course runs so fast no balls can get through it, prison guards are stood around monitoring everyone, and the scenes of children trying to break into a piñata with their fists because no one is allowed wooden sticks in a prison, serves as both a comedic device and reminder for the viewer that freedom is restricted here. All of these small reminders disrupt the event, and in doing so sever the audience from becoming too invested in the affectionate and happy depictions of the mothers at Litchfield interacting with their children in a "normal" way. By frequently presenting hiccups to the day that could only happen because of the limitations instilled in a prison environment, the audience becomes hyper-aware of the setting in which the event is set. As James Poniewozik neatly summarises in his article on the episode, 'the day is a little escape for the prisoners, and is a little imprisonment for their kids' (2015). After the first two seasons of the show, the prison landscape becomes so visible it is often forgotten about. However in this particular episode, the juxtaposition of the inmates interacting with their children and spending all day outdoors and the problems that present themselves throughout the day forces the viewer to recognise that whilst these women may appear to be "good" mothers in the way they treat their children, they must never be regarded as such because they are in prison. The presumption of bad mothering, however, is not necessarily related to the nature of the crimes the inmates committed, but actually is more to do with the fact that they are absent in the raising and development of their children's lives as future citizens. The intensive and overbearing parenting often portrayed in

postfeminist popular culture is therefore subverted, as these women have very little contact with their families and children. Furthermore, the position of the family under neoliberalism is also brought into question.

With the evisceration of the public sector and the slimming down to the point of extinction of a range of family services, the expectation is that the family steps forward to look after itself and to inculcate the right kinds of self-responsibility in its children while at the same time financially mopping up those costs which in the past would have been at least partially covered by the state (McRobbie, 2013: 131).

Therefore, under neoliberalism, it is the parents who do not raise their children “properly” who are at fault should they face any hardship or suffer in the long-term, and not for the state to intervene.

Rather than adhering to this stereotype of intensive mothering equating to good mothering, the show instead makes visible some of the obstacles that disadvantaged women can face that disallow them from participating in ‘what is perceived to be the ‘correct’ and ‘appropriate’ path to motherhood’ (Feasey, 2012: 2). This usually results in the negative judgement of ‘mothers who do not fit the idealised image of the white, heterosexual, self-sacrificing, middle-class, ‘good’ mother or perform in line with the ideology of intensive mothering’ (Feasey, 2012: 2). Therefore, the relationships mothers have with their children are complicated in the fact that no matter how positive, affectionate, and protective these mothers may be, they are literally overshadowed by their criminal history. These women are therefore not only surveilled by the guards and cameras at the prison, but also by the viewer, who is aware of what it means to be a “good” mother in modern times. In this sense, then, this episode of *OITNB* can be read a metaphor for the way that society polices mothers in modern times, and strives to depict how motherhood can be a source of conflict that is very much determined by economic, class and racial factors.

One example of motherhood being presented as an ambiguous and complex terrain is also in this episode that we see Maria and Maritza with their infant children. The two women are shown holding their two young girls and talking about which one is cuter.

Maritza: I mean, what's more beautiful than having a baby? Making a life? The smell of their heads, the way they put their whole weight on you when they fall asleep.

Maria: Ay, chica, you got a little something on your shirt there,

Maritza: What is that? Piss or shit?

Maria: Oh, it smells like shit.

Maritza: Oh my God! This is so disgusting! – Here, take it! Take it! (Kohan, 2015).

This scene works to remind the audience how young and therefore how immature these two women are. Maritza's (over)reaction to her own child having an accident on her clothes – which are still only prison overalls – implies that she wasn't ready to have a child in the first place. This is also reinforced as she refers to her daughter as "it". Her choice of language here calls into question the bond Maritza has with her child, as she uses pronouns that dehumanise her daughter. From this, not only is the "bad mother" stereotype reinforced, but Maritza is also depicted as being irresponsible for becoming a mother if she wasn't ready to deal with the bad aspects that come with it. In this scene, motherhood is about more than just the unpleasant side to parenting that is often erased in postfeminist media culture, it's about being a good neoliberal subject too. As Natasha Du Rose summarises

...neoliberal discourses construct women who do not work, especially single mothers, as idle, immoral, irresponsible, welfare dependents. Poor drug-using women, and especially those with children dependent on welfare, are seen as the epitome of immorality and irresponsibility (Du Rose, 2015: 56).

Although we are yet to see Maritza's back story and upbringing, we can provide an educated assumption that she is from a working-class background, and as a young mother whose life chances will probably be severely diminished from serving a prison sentence, will probably struggle financially and could rely on state assistance, thus making her a bad neoliberal subject. Given that we do not have any context of Maritza's background yet, the show depicts her as a bad mother by reinforcing the neoliberal view.

By the time the third season of *OITNB* was released, we have already watched how some of the many different women at Lichfield had experienced motherhood. The most obvious character to consider is Dayanara Diaz (or Daya) – who is not only pregnant herself, but also in the same prison as her mother, Aleida Diaz. Daya's experience with pregnancy and her relationship with her mother are explored throughout the first two seasons, where we begin

to understand the turbulent relationship the two have both inside the prison and outside before they were sentenced. I will therefore argue that in the series, motherhood is presented as a fraught and complicated experience that is often worsened under financial strain, and thus subverts typical postfeminist values of motherhood being equated with full femininity and womanhood.

Daya and Aleida's mother-daughter relationship is turbulent to say the least. From the flashbacks we can see that tensions were high between these two characters before they were sentenced to Litchfield. The most insightful moments in Aleida's and Daya's relationship are shown in season 1 episode 5. The flashback begins with Daya looking after all of her younger siblings in a small house, when one of the girls comes in to the room to tell Daya that she just flushed her Barbie down the toilet because she wanted to go "scuba-diving," Daya becomes annoyed at her younger sister for ruining an expensive toy. When Aleida enters the scene dressed up for a night out, she smacks the child on the back of her legs, and tells her that dolls and toilets don't grow on trees. In these scenes, Daya is presented as the primary caregiver in the family, but this is only because her mother has no interest in looking after her other five children. Aleida's ambivalent, at times resentful, attitude towards her children is clearly the source of tension in Aleida's and Daya's relationship.

On the surface, Aleida fulfils the role of "bad mother" perfectly. She has multiple children to different partners, she isn't married, she shows very little interest in any of her children, she puts her own wants before their needs, and she isn't financially stable. In a society where 'women today are given increased choices about whether, when and how to mother, and as such, they are mothering in a broad and diverse range of social, sexual, financial and political circumstances' (Feasey, 2012: 2), what becomes clear is that whilst motherhood may be a concept in which choice is freely exercised, it is also highly regulated. Against this backdrop of neoliberal ideology, Aleida is understood to have made bad choices when it comes to parenting and is therefore presented as a bad mother. This is particularly solidified when she smacks her child for ruining the Barbie. With Daya being the eldest child, she reluctantly looks after the children in their mother's absence (which is implied as a being a regular occurrence); although she has a much stronger relationship with her siblings, it is still clear that this is not the life Daya signed up for.

Despite this stereotypical bad mother representation, Aleida's negative relationship to motherhood is questioned during the Mother's Day episode. Daya is becoming increasingly scared and frustrated about her pregnancy and what will happen to her baby after it is born.

Aleida: I mean, you could work it back a little, but it's never the same after you've torn that shit up. And you'll always pee yourself a little when you sneeze. And you never really sleep again.

Daya: You got anything good to say about it?

Aleida: I just want you to be prepared. I mean it's not all bad – you end up with a baby. It just ruins your life is all.

Daya: You sayin' I ruined your life?

Aleida: Of course. The day you was born was the end (Kohan, 2015).

This scene is then quickly juxtaposed to another flashback – this time of a much younger Aleida and her partner at the time in hospital with Daya on the day she was born. Aleida says whilst holding Daya, 'she's just so perfect. How could anything be bad if we made something like this?' (Kohan, 2015). This nurturing and sensitive side of Aleida has never been shown in the series before and therefore suggests that either Aleida puts on a strong, uncaring facade around everyone, or something happened to her that made her view the role of motherhood in a negative way. With Daya's dad literally by her side, it is clear that at that moment Aleida was happy with what was the start of a nuclear family. Whilst this isn't explored further in the series, it puts a twist on how the audience perceive Aleida as a mother, and also how motherhood is never straight-forward.

Another example of this is in another flashback to when Daya was a child in season 3 episode 12. Here Aleida is debating whether to take Daya to a summer camp so she can have a better life, even if it means Aleida isn't there. At the camp, Daya starts to cry and wants to go home with Aleida. This torments Aleida as she visibly wants to give in to Daya, but knows it is best for her development and happiness if she goes to camp. It isn't long before Aleida snaps at Daya and shouts in her face.

Aleida: Ayeme, you little brat. You think I got nothing better to do than take of you? This is my one-month vacation, and I got things planned starting tonight. Mommy's going out! (Kohan, 2015).

Although Aleida says these harsh words, they do not feel authentic, implying that she is reiterating this to herself more than Daya. The camp rep, visibly disturbed by the way Aleida treats her daughter, tells her to leave. Despite having just been shouted at, Daya still cries and calls after her. When Aleida finally arrives back at her car, she cries; further portraying that Aleida is not the heartless, bad mother she is often presented as. This ambiguity in presentation shows that motherhood is not always successful or simple and therefore counteracts the plethora of self-sacrificing mothers we are offered in popular culture.

Just as Daya's relationship with her mother is a site of tension and complexity, so is Daya's relationship with her own pregnancy. From the outset of season 1, Daya and Officer Bennett begin a romantic relationship together. It soon unfolds that Daya is pregnant with Bennett's baby and this creates a whole wealth of problems for the couple. Not only are inmate/officer relationships banned, but they are also illegal, which means Daya and Bennett have to keep their relationship secret. Furthermore, pregnant inmates in the U.S. prison system often face many difficulties during their pregnancies, during labour, and after the child is born. Female inmates are often not informed of their due-date, nor are they allowed any friends or family around them when they go into labour, and although shackling has been banned in some US states, handcuffing female inmates to hospital beds whilst they give birth is still practiced today (Kaiser, 2015). This bleak and controversial depiction of pregnancy is rarely shown in modern popular culture, where instead, our visual media 'frequently equates motherhood with full womanhood' (Negra, 2009: 63), and in doing so, 'pregnancy becomes "exemplary time" when women look, feel, and are their best (63). Therefore just like the commodification of motherhood, the pressure to look good whilst pregnant means that 'in fundamental ways pregnant women are no longer released, however briefly, from either the relentless pursuit of beauty or the pressure to perform sexual availability' (Tyler, 2011: 27), and this shift 'signals the deeper commodification of maternity under neoliberalism, a process which is reshaping maternal experience and contributing to lived gender inequalities' (Tyler, 2011:23).

Contrary to many representations in popular culture, Daya's relationship with her pregnancy is uncomfortable, stressful, and painful. Furthermore, the show also doesn't shy away from the realities of pregnancy, especially the bodily experience of it. One example of this is presented in season 2 episode, where Daya is irritable because she is constipated – a

common side-effect of any pregnancy. However what is different about Daya's experience is she receives no medical attention whatsoever throughout her pregnancy, which again is a true reflection of what happens to many incarcerated pregnant women (Law, 2015). Here, the choices that are so often depicted as being an integral part of motherhood in postfeminist culture are disrupted. Far from choosing nursery colours or trendy maternity clothes, Daya is left in a situation where she is powerless and has her choices made for her: from her clothes, to her nutrition, to when she admitted to hospital, and even access to basic medicine that would relieve her constipation is denied. Furthermore, Daya also can't fulfil the role of the "yummy mummy" and consume material goods to maintain a feminine appearance whilst pregnant, although of course, this is the least of her worries. However this omission of consumer culture and the commodification of maternity subverts postfeminist values as she is presented as visibly distressed, big, and tired, but this does not stop the relationship she has with Bennett developing, nor does he stop being attracted to her. In season 3 episode 1, "bed bugs" are found in some of inmates' mattresses, resulting in all of the mattresses, linen, and overalls being destroyed and new ones brought in. Although Daya is uncomfortable with her visibly bigger body being on display, and is aware the underwear provided by the prison is unflattering, Bennett strives to reassure her how good she looks and how he's still attracted to her.



Fig. 3. Officer Bennett and Daya talk whilst the linen is destroyed.

In this scene, the use of the male gaze subverts typical postfeminist stereotypes of femininity. Whilst Daya may not fulfil the typical “yummy mummy” look, she still attracts male attention, and thus disrupts the notion that women must strive to achieve full femininity by consuming clothes, products, and treatments in order to maintain a sexualised appearance. This not only portrays Bennett as a decent person, and cements their relationship as being serious, rather than superficial, but it also trivialises the classed and raced modern ideals of motherhood being linked to consumer culture (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; McRobbie, 2013; Thoma, 2009).

This is further exemplified in season 3 episode 12, when Daya starts having her contractions. In these scenes Daya is visibly in a lot of pain, sweaty, and distressed. Despite this, no guards check on her or admit her to hospital. It is only when Daya gets up from her bed that Aleida notices a blood stain where she was sat and calls for a guard to get help. As Daya is helped out of the prison into the ambulance, the camera centralises the blood stain on the back of Daya’s overalls which makes for jarring viewing. This is not necessarily because it is gruesome, but because blood stains around women’s crotches, whether pregnant or otherwise, are rarely shown in visual media. In this scene, the show again doesn’t shy away from the experiences women have with their bodies, no matter how uncomfortable it may make the viewer, but the blood stain is also used to show that Daya’s unborn child could be in a lot of trouble and therefore elicits sympathy and shock, more than disgust. Given that the media often celebrates women who are able to shed any evidence of their pregnancy and labour in a short space of time, the pressure for women to make their labour invisible is also an important part of postfeminist popular culture. Kate Gentile has linked this ideal to the Marxism, and claims that

...this setup is the ultimate experience of alienation and commodification; however, women are not being disconnected from the product of their labor, their babies, so much as being disconnected from their bodies as the producers of these babies. They are being separated from their labor itself. As babies take center stage in the culture, the media celebrates women who erase the proof that they produced these valued commodities. This is a powerful pedagogical trick, for if we render invisible women’s reproductive labor, then women’s bodies are left as merely objects in a patriarchal world with no unique biological function (2011: 54).

This interesting, if disturbing, reading of the media's representation of post-natal bodies signals to the commodification of women's bodies under neoliberal capitalism. Similar to the ways in which workers are alienated from their labour, it would appear that now women too are called upon to "make invisible" any evidence of their pregnancy and labour. In doing so, this could be understood to further entrench patriarchal ideals, as women's bodies no longer have to be considered as sites of reproduction but simply as bodies in and of themselves. *OITNB* therefore uses Daya as a way to make the pregnant body and the labour it goes through visible. By centralising bodily functions such as vomiting, bowel movements, and bleeding that are often hidden from view in media representations of pregnant women, Daya's pregnancy is depicted as being tough, but real. The lack of control Daya has over her own body is distressing, especially given the prison environment she is trapped in which seeks to eradicate any freedom from the inmates. Although her experience of pregnancy is not idealised, it does challenge the postfeminist idealisation of maternity as a beautiful and commodified experience by portraying the labour of pregnancy from start to finish.

Although we do not see the labour, Daya's pregnancy is a success, as she holds her baby girl in the hospital room. Aside from a guard watching her, Daya is completely alone, which again accurately reflects the experience of labour for incarcerated women. After spending a day or so with her newborn child, Daya is sent back to Litchfield, and the child goes to live with Cesar. Again, the viewer doesn't get to see the separation of mother and baby, but we know the routine from Maria's experience, as she gave birth in season 1 episode 8. This works as a sad but accurate reflection of pregnant women who are part of the U.S. prison system.

Because of Daya's position of being an inmate whilst pregnant, she is unable to exercise the choices postfeminist culture and neoliberalism would encourage subjects to make. Instead, her right to choice has been revoked, and so it is up to the state to intervene. In this sense, Daya's experience as a young, working-class mother 'carries a whole range of vilified meanings associated with failed femininity' (Tyler, 2011: 22). Although the show works in order to portray the disturbing realities some pregnant women in U.S. prison system have to deal with, Daya still subverts the postfeminist ideal of maternity as she offers a much more realist depiction of the bodily experience of pregnancy and of the unwilling mother.

Although she is not necessarily idealised in any way, she is a representative of the vilified single mother. However, the series makes clear the complex set of forces that have placed her in this situation (economic deprivation, an imprisoned mother, the U.S. justice system) and so our sympathy still lies with her. She is therefore a challenge to both postfeminist idealisation of pregnancy and motherhood and the neoliberal critique of the poor single mother.

In this chapter I have analysed some of the characters' relationships to motherhood and questioned how this fits in with the wider postfeminist and neoliberal culture. Whilst *OITNB* depicts women who fit the "bad mother" stereotype, the show also offers complicated interpretations of motherhood which differ from one inmate to another. Maritza is depicted as irresponsible and immature when it comes to her role as a mother, and because of this, it is insinuated she made the wrong choice in having a child. Aleida's relationship to motherhood is ambiguous, and although she is often presented as a hostile, bad mother, there are small references that disrupt this portrayal, thus complicating the role of the mother further. Daya's visibly uncomfortable relationship with her pregnancy also depicts the role of the pregnant mother in a subversive way to what postfeminist popular culture presents. Instead, for Daya, pregnancy is hard, tiring, and a source of anxiety – as she does not know what will happen to the baby once it is born.

Furthermore, by analysing the impact neoliberalism and postfeminism have in shaping the role of the mother in popular culture separately, it becomes apparent that in the case of motherhood and the domestic, the two ideologies conflict. Whilst postfeminist popular culture glorifies the figure of the white, middle-class housewife, the working-class woman who turns away from the world of work to take on a familial role is hardly ever presented. Although neoliberal media culture endorses middle-class women who return to the domestic (Orgad & De Benedictis, 2015: 15), working class mothers who do not participate in the labour force in order to raise their children are often regarded as irresponsible.

In neoliberal politics discourse, the immorality of women on welfare was central to arguments for eradicating the dependency cultures that were believed to have developed in the UK, US and Canada. Women with children entitled to welfare benefits were constructed as idle and unwilling to work. Single mothers in particular, in political rhetoric and tabloid media discourse, were constructed as the scourge of society (Du Rose, 2015: 56).

Since *OITNB* presents complex relationships between characters and motherhood, both of these cultural concepts are subverted. In portraying motherhood as a site of happiness as well as anxiety, and by foregrounding class, race, and gendered forms of structural oppression that many of these characters face, postfeminism's narrow view on motherhood in late modernity is exposed and critiqued, whereas neoliberalism's investment in individualism and self-regulating subjects is shown to be ineffective.

Representations of domestic labour disrupt the coherent relationship of postfeminism and neoliberalism further. Where postfeminism has played a central role in the rise of the representation of the maid and other domestic workers in popular culture, neoliberalism remains ambivalent to the low-paid, female worker who carries out this work. In doing so, the investment capitalism has in low-paid female labourers remains unchallenged, as does the class-structure that sees the middle- and upper-classes exploit this kind of labour.

Furthermore, postfeminist story-arcs in popular culture tend to depict work and the home as two conflicting and overbearing responsibilities for women, insinuating that only one can take precedent. Most of the time, the "right" choice offered to women is to return to the home, or at least acknowledge that a career is not as important as marriage and family. On the other hand neoliberal discourse is understood to invest in the opposite, as Angela McRobbie articulates,

female labour power is far too important to the post-industrial economy for anyone to be an advocate of long-term stay-at-home wives and mothers. Moreover... having a career does not just provide women with an income and independence, it also reduces the cost of welfare to government. It thus makes sense for government to champion women who will enter the labour market and stay in it (McRobbie, 2013: 121).

It can be said, then, that *OITNB* is a text that offers more, ambiguous representations of contemporary motherhood and domesticity, and in doing so, exposes the friction between postfeminist values and neoliberal ideology. This is important to acknowledge as some academic writings invest so much into the similarities the two concepts have, that often the differences remain unexplored.

Consumerism

The emphasis placed on consumption as a site of pleasure and liberation for women is an inherent feature of postfeminist popular culture. From films, TV shows, music, and print media, this incessant portrayal of female liberation being achieved through spending money – particularly on beauty products and clothing – has showed no sign of slowing down, even after the 2008 economic crash, as ‘popular culture’s commitment to consumption remains (unsurprisingly) largely intact’ (Tasker & Negra, 2014: 14). The problem is, as already discussed in this thesis, that postfeminism only tends to offer women such a narrow and idealised depiction of womanhood, that it actually adheres to pre-existing patriarchal norms, rather than challenges them.

Many feminist scholars have therefore taken issue with this excessive portrayal of consumer spending postfeminist media constantly reiterates, as it carries ‘a kind of faux feminist legitimacy’ (McRobbie, 2010: 67), and is ‘coded as a new kind of women’s right or entitlement on the basis of having become a wage earner and thus of having gained certain freedoms (2010: 67). However, supporters of this new “liberated” female consumer citizen could argue that ‘personalised choices afforded by consumer feminism allow women the freedom to create their own unique beauty’ (Lazar, 2011: 46). Whilst in theory this may be true, generally speaking

despite a much-touted emphasis on women’s freedom to do whatever they desire, popular women’s genres feature ‘free’ women who invariably end up making the same choice prescribed by normative culture, willingly desiring the same normative heterosexual relationships and the same sexy, eroticised and fashionably adorned female bodily charm that always has been promoted by patriarchy and capitalism (Chen, 2013: 443).

It is no wonder, then, that many feminist academics have challenged these problematic representations of “choice” within postfeminist popular culture. It is argued these portrayals of choice are framed in such a way that they are hardly choices at all, and instead offer what Baudrillard terms, a ‘simulation of freedom’ (Lazar, 2011: 46). Even in markets where some degree of choice is offered to women to choose between commodities, ‘the option not offered to women is the one *not* to consume and, in turn, the freedom not to comply with the commercialised beauty rituals and ideals entailed by the consumption of those

products' (Lazar, 2011: 45). This further locks women into 'new-old dependencies and anxieties' (McRobbie, 2009: 10).

More than just affecting the lives of women, the dominance of consumerism that permeates western society has now become an integral part of modern capitalism and neoliberalism. 'Neoliberal culture as a structure of feeling impels us to extend the market, its technologies, approaches and mindsets into all spheres of human life, to move the ideology of consumer choice to the centre of individual existence...' (Ventura, 2012: 2). Therefore, the realm of consumer culture where postfeminism and neoliberalism can be understood to work coherently, and the media's incessant portrayal of commodified, feminine beauty helps legitimise capitalist goals as more and more profits are generated. Visual media plays a key role in maintaining this hegemony, as

we are bombarded every day with countless thousands of messages informing us that we do not look young enough, white enough and willing enough, messages that come to us subtly and not so subtly, through film, television, advertising, print media and casual acquaintance, messages from which there is no reprieve (Penny, 2011: 1).

It therefore stands to reason that capitalism has a crucial investment in women who are not happy with their bodies, and the pervasiveness of the beauty industry in particular should not be underestimated.

In *The Consumer Society*, Baudrillard claims that 'objects merely simulate the social essence-- status--that grace of predestination which is only ever bestowed by birth to a few and which the majority, having opposite destinies, can never attain' (Baudrillard, 1998: 60). In other words, it is important that for a consumer society to exist, it must be unattainable for the masses; as is the trend in female standards of beauty. The only way a consumer society can keep interpolating people to participate is by being a never-ending journey, rather than a *destination*. It would seem, then, that Baudrillard's theory of the consumer society fits very neatly with the narrow and often unattainable beauty standards propagated across modern media. Not only does consumer culture instruct women to adhere to a hegemonic image of femininity, but it is also consciously understood that this image can never be achieved, thus leaving the desire of the female consumer, generally,

unfulfilled. Regardless of one's financial circumstances, the media presents 'a woman's identity as not only inextricably linked, but inseparable from, the goods, services, and experience of consumption...' (Schreiber, 2014: 177). Furthermore, these conflicting discourses of desire and feminine perfectibility present

a continual problem in consumer capitalism... as we realize that certain forms of overindulgence are socially condemned. Yet, on the other hand, we also recognize that the satisfaction (and indeed the overindulgence) of certain desires and temptations is encouraged and required for our current socio-political system to exist (Carolan, 2005: 93).

Therefore the discourse of postfeminism that promotes an over-indulgence in consumerism as what it means to *be* a liberated, modern woman is sometimes disrupted by neoliberal ideology that requires citizens to be self-regulating and self-disciplined (Gill, 2008: 436). That is not to say, however, that neoliberal capitalism is against consumer spending, quite the opposite, but rather citizens are expected to exercise control and responsibility in an era of individualism.

Baudrillard continues to discuss women as a group who warrant particular interest as consumers. Not only in that women's consumer habits are different, but also how women's bodies are a form of consumption (and therefore sometimes capital) within themselves. He explains that, in advertising, 'women are only called on to gratify themselves in order the better to be able to enter as objects into the masculine competition (enjoying themselves in order to be the more enjoyable). They never enter into direct competition (except with other women over men)' (Baudrillard, 1998: 97). This assertion directly challenges the foundation of postfeminist values: those which uphold consuming, shopping, and spending as acts of liberation and freedom for women. However, Baudrillard's assertion is that it is through participating in feminine beauty practices and consumer culture where the female body becomes a commodity itself, and that 'beauty is such an absolute imperative only because it is a form of capital' (Baudrillard, 1998: 132). This further complicates the relationship between women, consumption, and beauty practices, as women can be 'seen as both the subject and object of consumerism, both agents and a commodified currency in capitalist exchange' (Cronin, 2000: 273). In this sense, the female body is objectified and commodified under neoliberal capitalism, and thus can be understood to make 'women buy

into the old patriarchal stereotypes that tie them to their feminine/sexual appearance' (Genz, 2006:5). In this case, it would appear that postfeminism empowers capitalism more than it empowers women.

Whilst it can be said that the prison society in *OITNB* operates as a metaphor of the wider capitalist society, what is particularly interesting about the show is the way in which it presents consumerism as the driving force behind the prison politics and inmate dynamics, as well as the narrative of the show. The first part of this analysis will consider each of the three main types of economy present in the show, and evaluate how these representations critique and subvert dominant neoliberal capitalist ideology and postfeminist culture.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the consumption of beauty products in the prison setting. This warrants particular interest as where drugs, cigarettes, weapons, and mobile phones are understood as valuable commodities to have inside a prison, beauty products aren't – and yet the vast majority of products that are consumed by the inmates in *OITNB* are cosmetics. I contend that these representations depict beauty practices as a useful tool of manipulation, resistance to authority, and evidence of the beauty myth having a detrimental impact on some women's lives, thus subverting the supposedly liberating aspect of consumerism that is integral to postfeminism and neoliberalism.

Whatever the relationship the inmates may have to consumerism in the show, even if they don't consume at all, the emphasis on the constant presence of consumer culture is important to the prison dynamics and distributions of power. This is not to suggest that the option not to consume is not present, but rather, the women who do not participate in consumer culture have the little opportunity to take some power for themselves, thus demonstrating consumerism is not only gendered, but also heavily politicised.

One of the overarching concepts of the show is, generally speaking, whoever controls the biggest import of goods coming in (in the form of contraband), becomes the dominant racial group in the prison. Therefore there is a market in prison, and power comes from the control of the market which not only echoes the wider U.S. landscape on the outside, but also alludes to Baudrillard's assertion that consumerism, rather than production, is now being the driving force behind capitalist exchange. This is particularly exemplified in the character Red, the maternal and therefore lead figure of the white girls. Not only does she run the kitchen (an important and influential position to be in regardless), but she also uses

the kitchen as her way of importing contraband. This micro-economy of exchange means that Red controls the supply of products that come in to the prison, and therefore she can choose which markets to cater to (Red's zero-tolerance approach to drugs means that she mainly deals with beauty products and cosmetics). These products then generate capital, as they can be exchanged for other goods, services, and favours. The narrative implicitly and explicitly shows that whichever lead figure of the three racial groups can source the most contraband, life in prison for that racial group will be a little bit easier.

Not only does the ability to source and circulate contraband provide personal profit, but it also impacts the wider hierarchal structure of the inmates' lives. This is particularly visible in season two when Red loses her job in the kitchen. In doing so, not only is her passion for cooking taken away from her, but so is her channel for smuggling goods in to the prison. This leaves Red for the first time in a vulnerable position. By this point the relationships between her and "her girls" has deteriorated, and without being able to use contraband to exchange for forgiveness she suddenly finds herself alone and powerless. This all comes at a time when Vee, the maternal figure of the black girls, finds her way of sourcing and storing contraband in boxes in the storage room. What is interesting is that Red takes a no-tolerance approach to drugs, and refuses to provide any inmate with narcotics of any kind, whereas Vee only deals with hard drugs and cigarettes – an effective product to have when many of the inmates at Litchfield are drug abusers. It therefore becomes clear that there are two target markets within Litchfield; those who want commodities and those who need them. As Red has witnessed first-hand the impact drugs can have on a person's body (as she is the one who support Nicky through her heroin withdrawal), she flatly refuses to smuggle drugs into the system; Whereas Vee is presented as cold and calculating, and understands that many of the women in the prison will already be addicted to drugs, or tempted to take them.

Although the Hispanic/Latina group don't deal with contraband on a massive scale like Vee and Red, the girls are still resourceful in getting small luxuries into the prison for personal use. By this point in the narrative, Daya's relationship with Officer Bennett is common knowledge amongst the group. A number of girls use this to blackmail Bennett into smuggling luxury items such as an iPod in his prosthetic leg. This is perhaps one of the few times in the show where a guard is exploited by the inmates, and not the other way around.

Whilst contraband may grant some degree of power to the inmates distributing it, the show makes a point of reminding us that actually, it is the guards who really have the power. This is shown when Healey takes Red's kitchen away from her and puts Gloria and the Hispanic girls in charge. In season 1 episode 9, Officer Mendez threatens Red to smuggle in drugs for him so he can blackmail the addicted inmates with sexual favours. Although Red may be seen to enjoy some power that is afforded to her in this micro-economy, it is the officers who *really* have power and decide what routes to control and which to ignore, making clear the overarching power of authoritative policing as a repressive state apparatus that is vital to a neoliberal capitalist system.

Commissary

Although contraband makes up a big part of the consumer culture at Litchfield, the inmates can consume still by using legal methods. An on-site shop or "Commissary" is typical of most U.S. jails and prisons. This is where inmates can go and buy products that are small luxuries like snacks, shower shoes, hygiene products. What is sold at commissary varies between prisons, but rules as to what can and can't be sold are self-explanatory (nothing that could be made into a weapon, no narcotics, and so on). Whilst the commissary may not provide commodity exchanges between inmates, it is representative of the way in which corporate interests have permeated their way into a sector that should revolve around people, not profit. In an article written for *The New York Times Magazine*, Adam Davidson writes that:

In roughly half of prisons, the commissary is operated by a private contractor. This means that while the prisoner may be the end-user who hands her money over for shower shoes or a radio, it's the prison staff (the warden or the purchasing department, perhaps) that decides which commissary company will be on premises and what products prisoners can choose from (Davidson, 2013).

Furthermore, as it is the prison authority who have vested interests in turning a profit, commissary can also function as its own "behaviour modification tool" and therefore can be 'used as leverage to discourage inmate infractions' (Davidson, 2013). This suggests that by controlling the method of consumption, the people who own and run the prisons in the U.S. can punish inmates for their behaviour by taking away their access to commissary, just as they may reward them for being good citizens.

“Home-made”

The final way in which inmates at Litchfield can gain access to commodities they want is to make them themselves. These products are then either exchanged (thus creating an interstitial economy) or consumed by the person who made them (bricolage). Therefore rather than subverting consumption, making products within the prison tends to only extend capitalism into more pervasive channels.

The products made by inmates can take on many forms: Poussey makes hooch which she hides outside the library, Sophia makes her own “couture” shower flip flops out of duct tape as commissary don’t stock her size, and Piper tries to make hers out of maxi pads. Whilst all of these commodities are useful to the inmates who made them, “home-made” products can also enter the economy of exchange too. One example of this is from the second episode where Piper creates an artisanal cream for Red. After insulting her food in the cafeteria, Red starves Piper out. As she becomes more and more desperate, Piper has to offer something to Red that will be enough to exchange for forgiveness. By drawing upon skills she picked up from Polly when she made her own soap, Piper decides to make Red a cream that will alleviate her back problems. Despite sourcing jalapeño peppers which she crushes in her mouth and spits out, rather than eating, Red is not impressed with the cream and tells Piper it didn’t work. However, Red acknowledges that Piper tried and allows her to eat again.

What is interesting here is the product failed. And whilst this could be read as a critique of “home-made” products or even the wider economies of exchange that sometimes offer products that don’t necessarily do what they claim to, what is more likely is Piper’s product failed because she didn’t have the necessary labour skills to make it work. As discussed in the first chapter, Piper only ever runs the business side of the soap company with Polly and doesn’t exert herself in carrying out any physical labour. Perhaps if Piper had more skills she could have made this prison system work for her, but instead her privileged background and middle-class consumerism has rendered her unable to produce anything useful. In a system that depends on exchange, this could be understood to leave Piper in a very vulnerable position as her labour is insufficient to make the system work for her. However, Piper is successful when she starts her pants business, as previously discussed. Therefore what this shows, perhaps, is that management and control of labour is more important than labour

itself in a capitalist economy. Piper can't 'labour' successfully, but she can control the labour of others to make money, again alluding to her privileged socio-economic status. In this show it is the women who control the market and the labour who do well, whereas those who labour themselves, both inside and outside the prison, do less well and often work in exploitative situations.

All of these micro-economies that exist at Litchfield have a great degree of influence over the inmates' lives. From granting a certain amount of status and power, to only having access to one brand's crisps, the inmates' relationship with consumerism is in some ways alien and limited, and in others a direct extension of the wider capitalist market. This representation of consumer culture could be read as a metaphor for the outside world, where women may be resourceful and work with the dominant economic system to better their lot, but generally speaking, it is higher-status, male authoritative figures who really exercise the power. In Litchfield, although the women may battle to own and protect their economic channels, it is the male prison officers who can close or capitalise on these channels as they please. Furthermore, by understanding what commodities the inmates desire, both the guards and other inmates can capitalise on exchanging goods the women need, rather than want – items such as drugs, cigarettes and alcohol therefore become a part of the economy just as much as eyeliner and tights do, thus exemplifying the pervasiveness of capitalism and the consumer society.

Consumer Culture and Cosmetics

Despite cosmetics being banned at Litchfield, some of the inmates on *OITNB* visibly use makeup and beauty products on a regular basis. So much so, in fact, that makeup is arguably the most consumed commodity in the prison – above drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, and mobile phones. This part of the chapter will therefore analyse the importance of cosmetics in the prison system, and that the consumption of these products can help us draw many conclusions about the relationship between women, consumerism, and beauty products. I will then argue that these representations of consumer culture subvert postfeminism and neoliberalism as some of the women manipulate cosmetics in order to appear intimidating, and therefore subvert their use, whereas others are shown to have an unhealthy attachment to consumption and the beauty myth. I will therefore argue that in the case of

consumption, neoliberalism and postfeminism can be seen to be closely related.

It is these products that warrant particular attention, as not only are they obviously gendered, but continuing with Baudrillard's line of thinking, they have no use-value in and of themselves. Instead, the value is attached on to the commodity by the consumer. Furthermore, if we accept Baudrillard's observation of women consuming products to beautify themselves for the benefit of men to consume— this doesn't necessarily work within a female-prison setting. Whilst indeed sexual relationships between inmates and guards do happen, this is on a very small scale, and does not correlate with the amount of women who are seen consuming beauty products in the prison.

Throughout the first three seasons of the show, makeup products including eyeliner, lipstick, eye shadow, nail varnish, lip gloss, razors, tights, and hair dye all make their way into the prison system at Litchfield. More often than not, it is Red who gets the products in via her kitchen, and she exchanges them for favours and leverage. Otherwise, the inmates make new products themselves out of the resources they have. What isn't quite so clearly understood, is why so many inmates consume these products in a prison, especially given the risk involved in being caught possessing them. In this chapter I offer a number of conclusions as to why this is. Firstly, wearing makeup in the prison means that some of the inmates get to retain, or even create, an identity. This could further be understood as a rejection of authority in a setting which is made to dismantle the inmates' sense of self. Secondly, this form of consumption operates as a symbol of how inescapable consumerism and the beauty myth really are. So much so that more than just being a nicety in a harsh, mundane setting, some women can't function – indeed, they can't be themselves – if they don't consume cosmetics that express their identity, and therefore don't look a certain way.

Angela McRobbie says that 'femininity exists as a seemingly fundamental and universal dividing practice, one which within the time and space of western modernity has been constantly produced and reproduced by the various offices of the state and by the giant media corporations' (2013: 132). What McRobbie is saying here is that femininity is not a defined, coherent pre-existing concept, but rather it exists within a wider matrix of gender performativity (Butler, 1993: 8). Moreover, femininity is just one small part of what can make up a person's identity, but is continually linked to only being achievable through using commodities like makeup and beauty products. It is also well documented that taking away

prisoners' identity by enforcing prison dress and restricting make-up and beauty practices acts as its own form of punishment, as the inmates' right to express themselves and individualism is taken away. Enforcing prison dress and banning cosmetics means that it becomes harder for prisoners to maintain their identities, and for female inmates to maintain their femininity. Therefore,

Prison dress is defined by the power of political systems that dominate networks of criminal justice and stigmatise in order to reduce inmates to interchangeable identities'. They are 'othered' in their culpability and excluded from society by clothing that regulates and incarnates the punishment of the wearer (Ash, 2009: 3).

It should be noted that this is a fairly recent development within the prison system, and that actually, up until the 1990s inmates in some American prisons were allowed to wear their own clothes. The orange jumpsuit that features in *OITNB* only became compulsory from 2001 to 2008 (Ash, 2009: 3), and thus is regarded as a reinstatement of authoritarian power by labelling prisoners as different to everyone else. Juliet Ash makes the wider connection between prison dress and the socio-economic climate and states that 'the history of dress parallels the history of prisons in that they are both integral to capitalist development' (2009: 6). In this way, 'a prison sentence constitutes a "massive assault" on the identity of those imprisoned' (Schmid & Jones, 1991: 147). It therefore makes sense that one of the reasons why so many female inmates in *OITNB* risk using and wearing beauty products is because it means they can retain some of their pre-existing identity in a system that is designed to destroy it.

Piper

As previously stated, Piper is the centralised character although she is not necessarily the protagonist. She also represents society's hegemonic 'norms' from which most of the other inmates are considered to deviate.

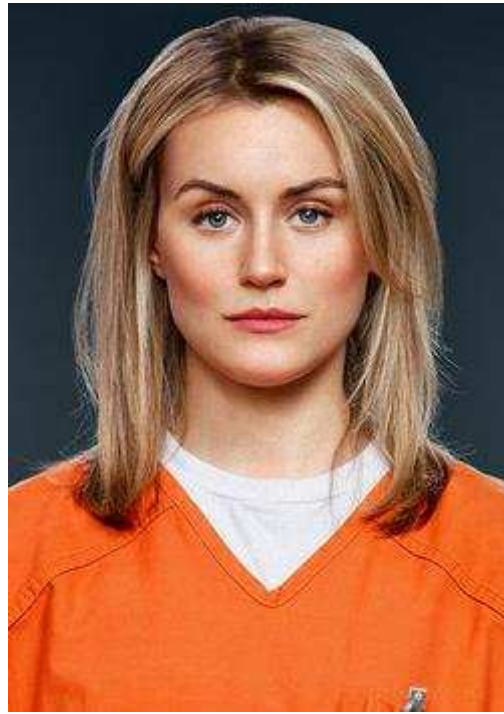


Fig. 4. Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling).

As Piper is a white, upper-/middle-class woman, she is a privileged subject. Although she is never seen to indulge in beauty practices inside Litchfield, Piper is always presented as “naturally” beautiful. Whilst we know the actress who plays Piper (Taylor Schilling) will have had make-up applied before filming, she is styled so as to appear she doesn’t wear make-up at all, thus creating this depiction of natural beauty. On top of this, she has blonde hair, blue eyes, is white, and thin – and so she fulfils the stereotypical, American ‘girl next door’ character trope that also coincides with a dominant Western idealised beauty. Piper can be seen to adopt Beverley Skeggs’ observation that natural beauty is considered as elite, as opposed to excessive beauty practices which signify working class femininity: ‘It is the appearance of natural, rather than artifice, that marks a higher cultural value. The binary between nature/artifice is mapped through hidden/apparent labour, read on the body through appearance’ (Skeggs, 2004: 101). Piper’s appearance always looks maintained, yet understated, with her natural feminine beauty acting as a signifier not only for her gender, but also for her class status. This distances the other characters further, signifying that Piper is not the same as them, and she is also a minority in this prison setting. Not only, then, does Piper embody neoliberal values as previously discussed, but she also visibly embodies the values of postfeminist popular culture too. By simply being a privileged subject through her race and class identity, Piper is able to fully enjoy the benefits of neoliberal and postfeminist

culture as she is an idealised subject. Even though Piper does not consume beauty products, this is likely because she already embodies the “traditional femininity” that postfeminist culture often represents, which is a ‘particularly specious form of feminine desirability’ (Gwynne, 2013: 60). However, Piper does not actively reject consumer culture, and understands its importance within the prison economy, even if she can’t make it work for herself. In its representation of Piper, *OITNB* can be understood to reinforce these standards of class-specific “natural” beauty. However, it does so in the name of satire, as many of the other women at Litchfield bring this to the forefront of discussion, and occasionally use it against her. For example, in episode 2 Taystee exchanges Piper some cocoa butter for a lock of her blonde hair so she can have extensions, and in episode 4 Watson calls her a ‘Taylor Swift-ass motherfucker’ (Kohan, 2014), alluding to her whiteness, blonde hair, and affluence.

Morello

Lorna Morello, on the other hand, is a character who has a complex and turbulent relationship to the consumption of beauty products.



Fig. 5. Lorna Morello (Yael Stone)

Morello presents herself in such a way that is reminiscent of a 1950s Hollywood actress. Her bold red lipstick and short, curled hair are statements that separate her from all the other inmates. Moreover, Morello invests time, effort and resources in being able to access these commodities so that she can look this certain way. In season 2 episode 7, Morello reveals

that she maintains her hair's curls by tying it up in tissue every night, and she makes brown eye shadow using coffee grounds. These examples of bricolage portray how resourceful these women can be in the show, but also further emphasises the importance of consumption, especially of cosmetics. It is not until season 3 where we see Morello without any makeup and straight hair. Not only does she look obviously different, but she looks unwell. In a scene at Sophia's salon in season 3 episode 1, it becomes clear she is having a hard time and not feeling herself as she begs Sophia to do her hair.

Sophia: Get the fuck out of my chair.

Morello: No, I need this. I lost my van. I've been scrubbin' toilets. Let me feel like a person. (Kohan, 2015).

Morello's desperation for a haircut alludes to the perhaps unhealthy attachment Morello has to her appearance. In losing her job as the prison's van driver, she is now relegated to prison maintenance, and no longer wears the makeup or styles her hair like she used to. Her loss of self is indicated through the loss of her job role and her traditional appearance, and is understood to have an obvious yet detrimental impact on her health and mental wellbeing. She equates not being able to consume beauty products to losing her sense of self and what it means to be a person. This is discussed by Anne Cronin, who says that 'contemporary popular discourses of individuality and identity in consumerism take as their centre ideals of an authentic inner self which can be expressed through consumption practices as technologies of the self' (2000: 275). Here, the connection between consumption, beauty, and identity is complicated, as it would seem that rather than Morello consuming cosmetics to express her identity, the importance of cosmetics have instead consumed her – and she attaches her identity and self-worth on to her appearance. Furthermore, her relationship to beauty practices, as she perpetuates an anachronistic depiction of traditional femininity, is closely related to her fantasy of wifhood and domesticity, thereby connecting the way she performs her identity to her disturbed nature. In this sense, Morello could be understood as an exception to the beauty myth or an excessive example of it.

The chicken and egg depiction of Morello's mood affecting her appearance, or vice-versa, but could also be representative of how dangerous consumerism and the beauty myth is; so much so that it locks some women into feeling like they have to look a certain way as it is an important part of who they are. In this way, Morello is complicit to consumer culture, and so the neoliberal capitalist economy of which the consumer society is an integral part, and the

beauty myth which postfemininity perpetuates. Furthermore, the fact that Morello clearly feels compelled to consume or risk not feeling good about herself highlights the investment capitalism has in women who hate their bodies as profitable subjects.

Red

If Morello can be regarded as a character who has fallen victim to the beauty myth, one character who visibly subverts it is Red. Not only does Red specialise in acquiring cosmetics for the women in Litchfield, but she also participates in using the products herself.



Fig. 6. Galina “Red” Reznikov (Kate Mulgrew)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Red regularly maintains the upkeep of her fiery red hair, and also wears harsh red lipstick that contrasts with her pale face. Upon learning her old rival, Vee, has returned to the prison in season 2 episode 3, Red makes sure her appearance is more striking than ever. Red goes to Sophia’s salon and explains that she wants to look “fierce”.

Sophia: Oh so you wanna impress her?

Red: More like intimidate her...

Sophia: I got just the colour for that (Kohan, 2014).

Of course, the colour is bright red. Furthermore, Red explicitly states that she wears the red lipstick to appear harsh. However, when she wants to seduce Healey into giving her

something, she turns to Piper and asks how she can soften her look. What is interesting here is Red manipulates cosmetics in order to produce a certain effect. This effect may or may not be linked to her identity, or the way she perceives herself as a person – but she realises the way she looks counts for a lot in a prison setting. She purposefully subverts makeup's intention of enhancing a woman's appearance and instead uses it as a display of intimidation; this is almost animalistic as its intent is to channel to other "predators" to stay away. However, she also knows that this image will not work in gaining a man's attention, and she purposefully manipulates her appearance in order to become more pleasing to Healey which surprisingly works.

Although she may subvert beauty practices and femininity, Red nevertheless extends a culture of capitalism into the prison by using contraband as an exchange tool. In doing so, she creates her own market away from the larger and legal economy of the U.S. landscape, but in a way still extends its logic into the prison as the profits she gains grant her a certain amount of power and status. In this way, Red subverts postfeminist values of performing a traditional femininity, but still capitalises on this concept by extending capitalist market logic into the prison system. Given that she exploits the value of her body and beauty practices, and she exploits capitalist market systems, Red is presented as having power within a system of gender practices, and a system of neoliberal economics.

In *OITNB*, consumer culture is depicted in many different and complicated ways. Firstly, the prison setting once again becomes a microcosm that is representative of the wider social, political, and economic landscape of the U.S. Just like the outside world, Litchfield has multiple economies that rely on exchange. The commissary represents the pervasiveness of private interference within a prison system, whereas contraband and other forms of interstitial economy provide what inmates actually desire. The resourcefulness of women can not be underestimated here, and shows the deep attachment these women have to certain commodities. It therefore stands to reason that for the inmates who do consume, contraband and interstitial economies offer some women a certain degree of power over a consumerist system; however, this power is only available to inmates who can, and do, control the markets. In this way, contraband is seen as the most effective method of consumption at Litchfield; however it can also become the most destructive to the consumer, as presented by Vee's distribution of drugs.

By analysing the importance of cosmetics in the show, *OITNB* depicts just some of the complex relationships women can have with consumerism and femininity. The show can be read as criticising the beauty complex, and postfeminist culture for perpetuating the idea that femininity must be bought if it is to be performed. This can be further understood as a critique on the way femininity has been commodified by capitalism and works to deconstruct the detrimental impact this can have on women's self-worth and confidence. As Laurie Penny states, 'Femininity itself has become a brand, a narrow and shrinking formula of commoditised identity which can be sold back to women who have become alienated from their own power as living, loving, labouring beings' (2011: 4). Conversely, cosmetics can also be manipulated and be used to empower, whether this means wearing them as a kind of war paint, or consciously using them to seduce men. Finally, in an environment that systematically dismantles a person's sense of self, wearing makeup, and participating in beauty practices – whatever the intent – can be understood as its own form of protest, a backlash even, to the oppressive conditions these women find themselves in. Finally, whilst consumerism is presented as a site where some of the inmates can extract power, the authority of the prison guards and private bodies is always looming over the prison environment, thus demonstrating that the power women like Vee and Red may get from distributing products is always limited under patriarchal authoritative control.

Conclusion

This thesis has worked to show how representations of gender and class are depicted in *OITNB*, and that this text often criticises capitalist and patriarchal structures. In doing so, the show tends to subvert the prevailing influence of postfeminism and neoliberalism – although not necessarily at the same time, nor to the same degree. By using *OITNB* as the site of analysis, I have shown where the show can be seen to subvert, adhere to, and criticise dominant hegemonic themes. In the case of labour, the show can be understood as making visible the struggles of “the working poor” in the U.S. by depicting many of the inmates in full time work and still living on the poverty line. This, in turn, leads some of the working-class inmates to turn to crime to alleviate their financial situation. In this sense, *OITNB* can be understood to criticise the massive disparity of wealth in the U.S. that is a consequence of capitalism’s never ending hunger for economic growth and profit. This critique highlights the ways in which neoliberalism fails to recognise class, gender, and race struggles in a cultural, societal, and political shift that is predicated on individualism. By simply representing many minority women, *OITNB* subverts typical postfeminist stereotypes from the beginning, and focuses on the poor socio-economic situations that lead these women to prison, despite the vast majority of them working in menial jobs before being sentenced.

Piper’s character, as a good neoliberal and postfeminist subject, is crucial here, as time and time again she is seen to harm and exploit many of the other inmates. Despite being surrounded by less privileged women than herself, Piper still maintains that everyone in Litchfield is there because they made bad choices, thus exemplifying how little Piper understands about systems of oppression, and how little she is willing to learn from the women around her.

Domestic labour was also considered as part of the wider representations of labour in this thesis, where I argued that the show critiques a global system of domestic labour, whilst it also interrogates the idealisation of the housewife in postfeminist culture. This is depicted in the examples of Miss Claudette and Lorna Morello, respectively, and thus subverts mainstream postfeminist popular culture. Neoliberalism, however, is much more complex when it comes to the domestic which conflicts with postfeminist values. Where domestic labourers in postfeminist popular culture are usually depicted as Cinderella-esque

characters who are freed from domestic work upon being saved by a man, neoliberal media often remains ambivalent to the low-paid conditions domestic workers, as this bolsters a capitalist system. Whereas the figure of the housewife has made a come-back in recent popular television and is glorified by postfeminism; however neoliberalism recognises that women who become housewives are a loss to the labour force, particularly if they are young and working-class. Therefore Miss Claudette's relationship to domestic labour is forced and unsatisfying, Morello's fantasy of the domestic life is nothing more than a dream. The show therefore shows the different relationships women can have to domestic labour, and how this labour is often exploited by capitalism and patriarchy.

The portrayal of motherhood also feeds into the domestic, but is represented on a much larger scale in the series. Given that 'In popular culture, especially in more prestigious forms of film and primetime television, women have rarely existed as interesting characters once they are mothers, especially mothers of daughters' (Rowe Karlyn, 2011: 12), *OITNB* heavily subverts this trope by depicting many women who are daughters and mothers to daughters, and still being incredibly interesting characters. The relationship of motherhood is explored in every episode of *OITNB*, and thus shows the ways in which motherhood can be a site of happiness and fulfilment just as much as it can be sadness, loss, and tension. By focussing on Daya and Aleida's relationship in particular, motherhood is shown as an ambiguous and complicated experience that socio-economic disadvantage makes worse, and thus subverts postfeminist values of motherhood being equated with full femininity and womanhood; and neoliberal ideology, which views the family 'as a compensation for an impoverished notion of society and as a de facto safety net' (Ventura, 2012: 13).

Finally, I discussed the ways in which Baudrillard's theory of the consumer society is presented in the show. By highlighting the different economies that are present within the prison system, I made clear how consumerism is central to life in the prison, echoing life beyond its gates, and that private interests often shape the lives and consumer habits of inmates and citizens alike. As consumer habits are limited in the prison, the inmates at Litchfield turn to contraband and bricolage in order to manipulate, and even extend a capitalist system of exchange, and thus gain power. I also argued that the consumption of beauty products within a women's prison system warranted particular attention, and that

the importance of cosmetics to some inmates can be understood as indicative of the pervasiveness of the beauty myth, as a rejection of prison authority, and as a way to manipulate one's appearance to as to create a desired effect (intimidate, seduce); thus once again subverting postfeminist culture and neoliberal capitalist systems of exchange.

By analysing how labour (production), motherhood (reproduction), and consumer culture (consumerism) are all represented in the series, I have shown how postfeminism can not simply be regarded as an offshoot or part of neoliberal ideology, just as the influence neoliberalism has can not be assumed when analysing postfeminism. Instead, what I have demonstrated in this thesis is that both concepts must be considered separately in relation to popular culture and media texts.

On the whole, *OITNB* can be understood to criticise the impact capitalism and patriarchy have on women's lives. In doing so, the show implicitly and explicitly critiques and subverts neoliberal and postfeminist values. By considering both of these cultural influences as separate entities, it becomes clear that whilst neoliberalism and postfeminism do share many similar values, they can also conflict with or be ambivalent to one another. What I hope this thesis has done, then, is exemplified the needs for future academic writing to acknowledge the differences, as well as the similarities, postfeminism and neoliberalism have. Furthermore, I believe it is important for *OITNB*, as well as other Netflix series, to be considered in academic scholarship. Whilst this new and emerging media platform maybe considered trivial, the unique production and distribution of TV shows marks a wider development in television viewing. Therefore, 'Netflix has moved into territory that sets it apart from familiar structures of production, broadcasting or branding of television. Netflix does signal a change within the digital television landscape, although 'how permanent and significant this change actually is, only time will tell' (Jenner, 2014: 2). When it comes to representations of women, I believe Netflix and other online television platforms will lead the way in portraying women who are not complicit to dominant postfeminist popular culture. Not only has this so far been exemplified in *OITNB*, but also other shows like *House of Cards* and *The Good Wife* can be seen to present fresh depictions of contemporary womanhood, leading to a proliferation of interesting female characters on our screens. Furthermore, as the 2016 U.S. presidential election draws closer, I also believe that smaller, independent platforms like Netflix will be critical of the right-wing discourse that saturates

Western media at present, as it is often marginalised people who are subject to political scrutiny, *OITNB* can be understood as the first of hopefully many media texts that criticise, rather than perpetuate, the damaging influence hegemonic systems of oppression have on minority women.

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