#liveyourbestlife: Considering the Discursive Construction of Feminine Psychological Wellbeing within Instagram During the First COVID-19 Lockdown in Aotearoa, New Zealand

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Abstract

Informed by post-feminist theory (Gill, 2017; McRobbie, 2007), which contends that there are societal expectations around how feminine subjects live their lives, I question how feminine psychological wellbeing is discursively constructed within Instagram during the first COVID-19 lockdown in Aotearoa New Zealand. There is currently a lack of research on how feminine psychological wellbeing is constituted within digital spaces. There is also an increasing social emphasis on the importance of psychological wellbeing, which has continued since the response to COVID-19. This project was an opportunity to consider and critique dominant understandings of psychological wellbeing.

Based on a feminist post-structural epistemology, the project is qualitative, utilising a critical discourse analysis of public Instagram posts. My interest was in identifying and critiquing the discourses present in the postings and how they may contribute to expectations for feminine psychological wellbeing, at present, considering the unique experience of lockdown during COVID-19. The analysis of these public postings was informed by a reflexive consideration of my own Instagram consumption at this time, as this informed the analytical lens brought to the project.

The analysis demonstrated that a feminine audience was being addressed in a direct and instructional manner. Dominant understandings of successful femininity that were reflective of neoliberal and post-feminist ideals, were drawn on to constitute feminine psychological wellbeing and white, middle-class, heteronormative, young feminine figures were presented as normative within this content. Traditional Eurocentric norms of femininity were evident as reformulated and reinstituted within this post-feminist context. Feminine psychological wellbeing was described as constant work upon the feminine self, with specific sites for control and discipline including feelings, thoughts, the body, and behaviour. During Aotearoa's first COVID-19 lockdown, feminine subjects were encouraged to get through and stay resilient, by working on themselves, focusing on what they could control, and remaining productive.

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Chapter One: Introduction

"We are the girls with anxiety disorders, filled appointment books, five-year plans. We take ourselves very, very seriously. We are the peacemakers, the do-gooders, the givers, the savers. We are on time, overly prepared, well read, and witty, intellectually curious, always moving… We are on birth control, Prozac, and multivitamins… We are relentless, judgmental with ourselves, and forgiving to others…We are the daughters of the feminists who said, "You can be anything," and we heard, "You have to be everything.""

—Courtney Martin (2007)

Not long ago, I began to notice a familiar story in my work at a student counselling and mental health service within a New Zealand tertiary institution, a story that comes to my mind when I read the quote by Martin (2007) above. If I was to describe what I noticed about this story, I would say that the client that this story centred around, presented herself (and they often have been cis-gendered females), as highly self-reflective, intelligent, empathetic, compassionate and engaging. As a university student she has ambitions to achieve at a high standard and in the future, have a successful career that makes a positive impact in the world. She has grown up with the narrative that if she makes the right choices, lives her best life, and works very hard, she can become a success.

This client is also highly critical of herself, concerned by the opinions of others and acutely aware of her personal shortcomings. She puts pressure on herself to do something of significance but also to not take up too much space or make too much noise. She engages in a high level of self-monitoring around many aspects of her existence and has the idea that she needs to work on herself in order to be successful. The narrative of the potential success available in making the right choices, sits alongside the very real possibility of making the wrong choices which lead to personal failure. Possibly she has been engaged with therapy at different points in her life, commonly to address the presence of anxious thoughts, perfectionism, burnout, or maybe eating concerns or low mood. She is aware of the idea that it is okay to not be okay, but feels the pressure to overcome vulnerability and manage herself to meet expectations of success.

Working on her wellbeing is a significant concern for this client. Due to the therapeutic context I meet her in, she is often looking for an increased sense and experience of psychological wellbeing. She often is not solely looking for this via therapeutic support, the pursuit of psychological wellbeing seems to multi-faceted for this client, perhaps also found via reading self-help material, other forms of media, accessing fitness and nutritional expertise, consulting medical practitioners, making the right consumer choices and more.

In my counselling work, when I have questioned the definition of what psychological wellbeing would look like for the individuals I am working with, I have noticed that there are dominant ideas about what it means to be psychologically well. A concept that is commonly drawn upon is living one's best life or being the best version of themselves. I have had clients explicitly tell me that their goal for coming to therapy is to gain the tools to live their best lives. As I have unpacked what that means for clients, I have found that not just the definition of psychological wellbeing is shared, the path to reach that version of psychological wellbeing is also shared. In my therapeutic work, which is informed by narrative therapy (Morgan, 2000), I try to work with clients to co-create interventions to problems, rather than having a one size fits all approach. In taking a narrative approach, I have noticed that the dominant path to increased psychological wellbeing and living one's best life is a repeated script of increased self-monitoring, self-development, and self-management. Psychological wellbeing in this story seems to involve doing more and being more.

This story is not reflective of any one individual but rather representative of a group of clients who come to my mind. Upon reflection there is a reason that this story was noticeable to me in my practice. This is a shared story, one that I have personal familiarity with. You see, in this client's narrative, I often recognise the narrative of my peers and myself. I am her, or at least that is who I have shaped myself and have been shaped into being. I see the shared understandings and experiences I have described as familiar and interconnected with femininity. As I have recognised that this story is not the realm of individual experience but instead is shared, I have increasingly questioned the social conditions that are producing these gendered experiences and the shared understanding of what it means to be psychologically well as a feminine subject.

My counselling work is not the only context I have noticed shared understandings of psychological wellbeing and the means to develop psychological wellbeing. Personally, I have a long-standing interest in the influence of popular culture on people's experiences, sense of identity and the field of psychology itself. Considering the concept of psychological wellbeing, I question if the likes of popular Netflix TV shows, content produced by social media influencers, popular self-help books, "experts" on reality TV, music etc., are just as influential over what psychological wellbeing means as the material produced within the more traditional realms of the field of psychology such as research, psychological practice and the academy.

As part of this interest and noting references to psychological wellbeing in popular culture, I have observed a focus on wellbeing, including psychological wellbeing, in the social media content I consume. Personal social media use has increased rapidly in my lifetime, to the extent that the online/offline experience has become increasingly blurred, particularly in the

West (Locke, Lawthom, & Lyons, 2018). The client I have described above, lives both in a real and online world. She gains a significant sense of the world and herself through a variety of digital media, both consuming and producing content in those spaces. Unsurprisingly, I have seen parallels in the ideas of how psychological wellbeing is defined by clients and in the references to psychological wellbeing in social media that I consume.

I question how the popular culture I consume, such as social media, is shaping the meanings I associate with psychological wellbeing, as well as the meanings of my peers and my clients. I approached this thesis with that question, asking how is psychological wellbeing discursively constructed within the digital context? I suspect that as dominant ideologies within Western society, psy discourse (Hook, 2007; Rose, 1996), neo-liberalism (Springer, Birch, & MacLeavy, 2016) and post-feminism (Gill, 2017) are all implicated in shaping dominant understandings of what it means to be psychologically well and position subjects in relation to these normative understandings. I also suspect that dominant understandings of psychological wellbeing are gendered in particular ways (Rutherford, 2018).

My curiosity guiding the research question is based on my experiences as a mental health practitioner who recognises that social context and popular culture has a role in shaping how psychological wellbeing is understood. I believe this extends to how psychological wellbeing and psychological issues are discussed in a therapeutic context. As a practitioner working within a university counselling service, primarily my clients are in or are entering their twenties. I recognise post-feminist ideals of working on oneself and living one's "best life" in the ways my clients talk about themselves and their problems. I believe further understanding of how feminine subjects negotiate constructions of feminine psychological wellbeing is highly relevant to the therapeutic context.

Broader social conditions also influence my interest in this research project. Psychological wellbeing is a social construct that is receiving significant attention in Aotearoa at present. Multiple campaigns are being carried out, which aim to normalise and de-stigmatise the experience of mental health issues, with an emphasis on recognising mild to moderate experiences of mental health issues and caring for psychological wellbeing (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, 2019). The 2019 release of planned government spending was called the "Wellbeing Budget" and much focus was on funds allocated to increased access to services to address mental health issues (Ardern, 2019). Internationally, there are calls to recognise psychological wellbeing as a human right in the same way that physical health is recognised (Asanbe, Gaba & Yang, 2018). I believe these public events are contributing to an increasing focus on psychological wellbeing in social rhetoric.

I am looking to the digital context for this research, partly due to my own engagement in social media spaces. I consume and at times produce social media content that simultaneously conforms with and resists post-feminist ideals in complex ways. The post-feminist ideal of working on oneself is very familiar to me. I recognise the presence of this discourse in relation to psychological wellbeing increasing in my daily consumption of social media. I am curious about how these discourses are shaping my own sense of psychological wellbeing and that of my peers.

Throughout this project, when I have mentioned to others that the context of the research was Instagram, I have had varying responses which at times positioned social media as being inherently bad or good depending on the view of those I was speaking with. While I was writing up the analysis and discussion, a documentary called The Social Dilemma (Orlowski, 2020) was released on Netflix and received a great deal of attention due to the unflattering investigation made of social media. I wish to make it very clear at the outset of this project that I do not subscribe to a view that attributes social media as wholly positive or negative. My view is that the context is complicated, with enabling and constraining effects. I am more curious about the context, what happens in that context and the role it plays in shaping our subjectivities. I think that within critique we can draw attention to constraints and exclusion, while exploring the potential of the context which has the power to create space for change both online and offline.

Accounting for COVID-19

As I embarked on this thesis project, the world was taken over by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. COVID-19 is a virus that is part of the family of coronavirus and can impact the respiratory system (Ministry of Health, 2020). COVID-19 was a new illness that was believed to have originated in China and was first reported to the World Health Organisation in December 2019. COVID-19 is highly contagious and numbers of those infected spread rapidly around the world over a short period of time. A global pandemic was declared by the World Health Organisation on the 12th of March 2020 (World Health Organisation, 2020).

All over the world in early 2020, governments were making decisions about whether to take steps to lockdown their countries, closing borders and mandating citizens to stay at home. The government in Aotearoa, New Zealand closed the country's borders on the 19th of March 2020. Then on March 25th, with two days' notice, Aotearoa officially went into the first full lockdown, at what was called Alert Level 4. While at Alert Level 4, people were mandated to stay at home in their 'bubble', a term that was used to refer to only those one lived with at home. New Zealanders were unable to leave their homes unless they had need to access an essential

service, they were working in essential services or were within walking distance from their homes. Leading up to this lockdown, there was a palpable sense of fear within the community. Supermarkets were inundated with people stockpiling essential supplies and there were nationwide shortages of particular products. In the urban environment I live and work in, I observed people leaving their offices with masses of computer and office equipment in an attempt to set themselves up for working at home. People were exhorted to wash their hands, shop normally, be kind to one another and to keep a two-metre distance from those not in their 'bubble' should they need to leave their home.

As we went into the Level 4 lockdown, many businesses ground to a halt. Some businesses were able to survive by having employees work from home. School children had an extended holiday, until eventually there was an attempt for schools to operate via online methods, relying on the efforts of many parents in home-schooling. Many people tired of video calls and meetings, while some relied on them for their social contact. There was a hyper focus in the media on those who may be breaking lockdown rules (Roy, 2020a), with the implied message that these rule-breakers were possibly putting all our safety at risk. There was an eerie silence over cities, though the suburbs were full of people walking while trying to maintain an appropriate social distance, as for many of us this was one of the few ways to get out of the house. We were reminded continually that we were all in this together and there was an awareness that the situation was much worse in other countries around the world.

This Level 4 stage of lockdown was put in place for four weeks and then extended for another five days. On the 28th of April, Aotearoa moved into a Level 3 response, which involved a slight reduction in the stringent expectations of Level 4. Businesses were able to reopen and some people were able to return to work, however social distancing measures needed to be implemented. Further reduction in restrictions was made by moving to a Level 2 response on 14th May and then Level 1 on 8th of June. Aotearoa had supposedly beat the virus, an idea that was picked up and celebrated within the media (Roy, 2020b), however globally the pandemic was devastating many countries (Adams, 2020a). As it turned out Aotearoa still would face ongoing restrictions, with Auckland having to return to Alert Level 3 and the rest of the country to Alert Level 2 on the 13th of August as a result of new cases in the community.

An area that received considerable attention in the media (Adams, 2020b; Forbes, 2020) and social rhetoric at this time was how people's mental health would be impacted. There were public health messages about the need for caring for one's psychological wellbeing during the lockdown (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, 2020b). Within the context of Instagram, I had already observed discourses present around managing psychological wellbeing. However, with the COVID-19 crisis impacting on daily life, there seemed to be an emphasis on mental

health during the pandemic in the posts I was seeing at the time, or at least a tailoring of content to acknowledge the pandemic. The COVID-19 lockdowns represented a global crisis and was overtly acknowledged as psychologically difficult, though it was predominantly obscured that there were differences in how this crisis was experienced across the population, the impact of which was highly related to certain privileges. For example, essential workers such as supermarket staff, nurses and care workers, who are predominantly female and underpaid, endured additional stressors at work during this time compared to those who had the ability to work from home (Blake, 2020).

One factor that made this event interesting in Aotearoa and many other places that went into lockdown, was that many of the supposedly free choices that some people had available to them in their daily lives became severely limited. In a society where there is emphasis on neoliberal values of autonomy and free choices, including in the discursive construction of psychological wellbeing, I questioned what would happen at a time where choice became more restricted.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique moment in history, the full impact of which is still unknown at time of writing. Due to the historical specificity COVID-19 presented at the time of my project, I reformulated my research question to take this event into account. The pandemic added another layer to the analysis, with the event characterised as a crisis that was assumed to present psychological difficulty. This presented the opportunity to consider how psychological wellbeing is constituted during crisis.

Therefore, this research project questions how feminine psychological wellbeing was discursively constructed within Instagram during the first COVID-19 lockdown in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Moving into Chapter Two, I introduce the epistemological foundation for this project before considering the body of literature around how feminine psychological wellbeing is constructed, considering psy discourse, neoliberalism, and post-feminism. I then turn to a consideration of the digital context of social media and the research to date on psychological wellbeing within that context. I conclude this chapter with a turn to the context of crisis and arguments on how subjectivities are constituted within crisis. In Chapter Three I set out the methodology for the research project that was undertaken, explaining the epistemology, process of data collection and analysis. I then move into Chapter 4 sharing analysis and discussing the findings in the context of the literature, before making concluding arguments and identifying some directions for future research in Chapter 5.

There are two caveats I would like to make before concluding this introduction. The research context, my analytical lens and much of the literature I will now go on to consider, is

located within a Westernised Eurocentric context. My findings and the concepts discussed are not universal, rather they are historically, culturally and location specific.

A reader will notice that I refer throughout this thesis to feminine subjects. I take the position that femininity, while commonly associated with cis-gendered women, is not exclusively the realm of women. Femininity is one element of the performance of gender, relevant and familiar to multiple subjectivities. Some of the literature explicitly use the term women and where that is the case, I have used that terminology. My use of the term feminine subject is to recognise that femininity is a shared experience that is not exclusively determined by sex.

Chapter Two: Literature and Theoretical Review

"There is a sense of the ethical paucity of the contemporary obligation to fulfil ourselves through the mundane achievements of our everyday lives, and to evaluate all aspects of our lives in terms of the extent to which they do or do not contribute to such an inexorable trajectory of self-improvement and personal happiness through lifestyle maximisation" - *Nikolas Rose (1999)*

Psychological Wellbeing: A Post-Structural Understanding

Why do so many of us engage in the pursuit of self-improvement, happiness, and fulfillment? Why is trying to make one's life better taken for granted as a desirable goal for the contemporary subject? In the above quote, Rose (1999) draws attention to an obligatory nature to this preoccupation, a taken for granted inevitability that one will engage in these pursuits. It stands to question then, where does this obligation come from and what are the forces of power that mandate our engagement?

A post-structural theoretical epistemology concerned with discourse, meaning and subjectivity informs my conceptualisation of psychological wellbeing within this project. The post-structural approach can be difficult to pin down and attempts to do so may in fact undermine the intention behind the approach (Gavey, 1989). However, broadly, post-structural approaches work to call into question what is taken for granted, considering the processes of power that shape our self-understandings.

Discourse is a key concept for the post-structural approach. Discourse has been defined by Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017) as "institutionalised patterns of knowledge that govern the formation of subjectivity" (p. 110). Our understandings of ourselves are mediated through discourse; ideas, concepts, knowledges, identities which are not impartial, accurate reflections of truth but rather are reflections of reality mediated discursively. A variety of discourses shape meaning, however certain discourses are imbued with institutionalised power which cause them to appear as natural, taken for granted facts (Gavey, 1989). Simultaneously power is distributed, maintained and produced within discourse (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1998). Discourses enact power within our lives, by governing the ways which we understand ourselves, are understood, account for our experiences and relate to others (Weedon, 1987).

Our experiences as people, how we understand ourselves and each other, are mediated through the discourses that are available to us within any given context. The mediation of experience through discourse is referred to as subjectivity. Henriques et al. (1998) state that their use of subjectivity references "individuality and self-awareness - the condition of being a subject - but understand in this usage that subjects are dynamic and multiple, always positioned

in relation to particular discourses and practices and produced by these" (p. 3). Discourse offers multiple subject positions, and it is within these subject positions that subjectivity is formulated. From a post-structural perspective, individual identity is not fixed, independent phenomena, but rather a reflection of a multiplicity of complex and contradictory subject positions within discourse, each associated with varying levels of power (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Hollway, 1989).

Subject positions are taken up by us as subjects, to the point that they are not seen as externally formed but as an authentic representation of our own creation (Gill, 2008). Regardless, Foucault (1979) argued that subjectivity is both made and regulated through normative systems of institutionalised power, external to the individual. The key to the success of this system of power relations is that individuals internalise norms of behaviour and thought by engaging in self-monitoring and self-management. Foucault conceptualised this process through Bentham's illustration of the Panopticon. This concept centred on a watchtower that was positioned within a prison yard in such a way that the prisoners could not see if they were being watched, but they were of the knowledge that at any point they could be observed and potentially be at risk of sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. The potential observation results in prisoners managing their own behaviour as if they are being observed. Foucault used the Panopticon to argue that this is how technologies of power operate to discipline and regulate as individuals are positioned as subjects. Subjects engage in a variety of disciplinary practices to monitor and manage the self in accordance with norms of behaviour, made acceptable through power relations. Subjectivity may seem self-made and internalised, especially if the systems of power are obscured, but is nonetheless enacted through systems of disciplinary power. Sanctions are enacted on those who err against normative expectations, in the form of material effects within their lives. While Foucault's Panopticon conceptualises a Eurocentric notion of power within specific discursive formations, my project draws upon this understanding of power in the consideration of how psychological wellbeing is constructed through discourse and related to subjectivity.

Drawing on a post-structural theoretical understanding, I argue that what is accepted to be psychological wellbeing, as a term that is interchangeable with mental or emotional wellbeing, like all concepts considered meaningful (Gavey, 1989), is constituted through discourse. Therefore, psychological wellbeing has a multitude of possible meanings, constructed through the available discourses within a given context. As psychological wellbeing is constituted through discourse, certain subjectivities are addressed or excluded as the concept is utilised in language. There are a variety of subject positions to take up in relation to psychological wellbeing, such as those who are positioned as having a level of psychological

wellbeing or could potentially have a level of psychological wellbeing and those who are psychologically unwell.

The way that psychological wellbeing is ascribed to subjects is complicated by other competing meanings. The individual contends with conflicting subjectivities, which impinge on one another, shaped through the social and historical context they are within (Weedon, 1987). Subject positions that are available to some, may not be available to others. Henriques et al. (1998) point out that there is not a uniform apparatus enacting power, but rather a complicated multiplicity of different practices and subject positions.

One complicating component of subjectivity is gender, something that rather than being natural and obvious at birth, is ascribed to subjects over time through a series of regulatory acts (Butler, 2006). Levels of surveillance and expected normative behaviour differ based on gender. Bartky (1990) points out that Foucault's conceptualisation of disciplinary power, failed to consider the enactment of power upon different subjectivities. Femininity, she argues, is ascribed to female subjects in specific ways that work to mark female subjectivity as inferior to men. Bartky considers the way female bodies are disciplined by the norms of femininity, pointing to body size norms, body language and bodily ornamentation. Those who fail to fully achieve these norms, experience significant sanctions. While Bartky does not consider the discipline of other gender identities, it is important to note that sanctions associated with femininity are experienced by others, for example, men who appear feminine are positioned as inferior to men who more closely meet norms of masculinity. It is clear from Bartky's arguments however that discursive power is enacted in specific ways on the feminine body to produce an ideal, if unachievable, feminine subject.

As with the feminine body norms that Bartky describes, there are particular ways that psychological wellbeing is ascribed to feminine subjectivities. Women are disproportionately exhorted to work on their psychological selves, to a much greater extent than men (Gill, 2008; Rutherford, 2018). Men who present psychological complaints that are considered more feminine in nature, such as mood disorders, are considered to be more disturbed due to the transgression of gender norms (Ussher, 2011). The physical body is not the sole focus of disciplinary power, as the psychological is positioned as very much a site for gendered surveillance and regulation. For example, we can see gendered tensions for psychological wellbeing in the portrayal of traditional gender roles in relation to feeling happy. Ahmed (2010) argues that traditional gender roles operate as sets of instructions of what men and women should do to be happy, as happiness is positioned in society as coming from natural and moral behaviour. She points out how happiness is attributed to the housewife role, and unhappiness attributed to those who take up feminist positions drawing on terms such as 'feminist trouble-

maker' and 'feminist kill joy'. The unhappiness of feminists is attributed to their unnatural gender role, rather than the issues that feminists may be unhappy about, operating to obscure the societal issues feminists raise. The portrayal of the happiness of housewives, in turn, obscures the unequal division of labour under the guise of happiness. Appropriate adherence to gender roles appears to be interconnected with the behaviour that should lead to happiness and psychological wellbeing.

The gendering of psychological wellbeing is an important consideration for feminist psychologists. We need to question the mechanisms of power that shape the discursive construction of feminine psychological wellbeing (Rutherford, 2018), asking what discursive resources are being utilised, who is addressed by these discourses and who is excluded, to what effect? These questions inform the following discussion of the theoretical foundations and literature informing the current research, with particular attention to psy discourse, neoliberalism, and post-feminism as contemporary discursive resources. I contend that, at present, these discourses have a dominant and interconnected role in the constitution of feminine psychological wellbeing and enact disciplinary power on feminine subjectivity.

Psychological Lives

Since its inception, the discipline of psychology has perpetuated a language of psychological terms, interventions and measurements for exploring, understanding and managing the self (Hook, 2007; Rose, 1999). The discursive language of psychology has become the system drawn upon for understanding the self and consequently, to talk about the self in this language is to understand oneself. Rose (1999) writes, "When our culture provides us with life narratives couched in psychological terms, our lives really do become psychological in their form" (p. 17). Within the cultural contexts that accept and understand psychological language, human experience is formed through the use of these psychological concepts. Simultaneously, narratives told through the language of psychology has become the means for understanding human experience. For example, the concept of stress is familiar in contemporary society and the language of stress, which locates this as an interior and individualised experience, shapes how stress is experienced (Becker, 2005). It is important to note that psy-discourses are not just the realm of the psychological assessment or therapy session, but rather have become taken up as regular vernacular within Western society (Rose, 1999), identifiable in the likes of popular culture and media.

Drawing on the arguments of Foucault, (Hook, 2007) charts how the discourses of psychology have developed and become institutionalised. Hook points out that that the growth of psychology is inextricably connected with the regulation and discipline of subjects, developing

alongside a new apparatus of power. Historically, power was located within the body of a sovereign figure and disciplinary power was enacted with extreme violence. However, there have been several historical shifts which resulted in the dispersion of disciplinary power. Rather than a sovereign figure, modern power is contained within formal institutions and the dominant discursive structures of everyday life. Hook positions the development of psychology within this context, arguing that the individualised subjectivity constituted through psychology is also the disciplined, self-surveillant subjectivity constituted by disciplinary power.

The rise of the language of psychology and therapeutic intervention is related to the government of inner life, connected with particular forms of behaviour and thought (Miller & Rose, 2008). Psychology operates a 'technology of the self', a means for individuals to intervene and transform the self in order to be better in some way (Foucault, 1988). As the discipline of psychology gained dominance, languages of inner life were generated that can be referred to as psy-discourses; complex and intertwined sets of ideologies and institutions which represent what it means to think and behave appropriately. Psy-discourses enact normative disciplinary power within people's lives and continue to be represented and reinforced through a variety of social institutions including academia, professional expertise, and popular culture.

Largely a positivist epistemological approach has traditionally been drawn on in the development of the body of psychological knowledge. Positivism maintains that scientific knowledge should be neutral, generalisable and objective drawing upon observable phenomena. Psychology has been dominated by research in this scientific tradition which has been criticised for not attending to epistemological assumptions or the complexity of the human experience (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010). Regardless of these weaknesses, psy discourses formed within this tradition take on the appearance of objective, scientific knowledge that are imbued with acceptance and social value.

Among many kinds of psy-discourses, there are several key forms that bear mentioning, due to their relevance to the constitution of the psychologically well subject. As a starting point, humanism is a philosophical understanding that influenced how the self is now understood and is central to many psychological understandings. Humanism posits a shared human nature, constituting a subject who has an interior consciousness, which supposedly at its core is unified and rational. Discipline shifted to accessing and influencing psychological interiority, which is a primary focus of psychology (Hook, 2007). Rather than a complex, unstable identity, psychology focuses on a stable individual human nature, that can be known and understood.

Therapeutics, comprising of a broad development of therapeutic interventions and professionals expert in their use, is a powerful ideology which has positioned the self as a subject that can be known and referred to in discussion by oneself and others (Miller & Rose, 2008).

Therapeutic interventions work to construct subjectivities and has been shown to subtly work to incorporate vulnerability into the experience of particular subjectivities. This vulnerability can then be addressed through therapeutic intervention, by the self and expert professionals, in order to become self-disciplined, successful citizens (Brunila, 2014).

Psychology has also been highly influential in constructing the normal individual, which in turn operates as taken for granted and normative common sense. Traditionally, psychological studies have intended to identify levels of deviation from the norm and then indicate what intervention is required to return an individual to a normative state. These studies rely on assumptions of what is considered normative and in the past rarely questioned the constitution of normal (Venn, 1998). While there is perhaps more critique as the discipline has matured, much of psychology continues to be informed by this tradition, reproducing the standards of what is normal, constructing and reconstructing normal subjectivities. However, the issue is that the ideal normal subject of psychology is simultaneously a reflection of idealised normative attributes of European, middle class, able-bodied men (Venn, 1998); who in contemporary times are also urbanised, employed, educated and heterosexual. As a result, those who fall outside these attributes are almost automatically marked as other (Braidotti, 2004).

Initially psychology was dominated by the concern for those who clearly stepped outside the norm – the mad and the troublesome. However, over the time there has been a shift, where the concept of positive psychology began to become popular, expanding the concerns of psy discourse beyond those who are outside the norm. Within positive psychology, intervention with the psychological self is not solely for the restoration of the unwell, rather it has become seen as an important preventative measure against the possibility of becoming unwell and as a means to live well. The experience of living then becomes a problem that requires intervention and self-management. Positive psychology infuses psychological wellbeing with a level of precarity, by specifically focusing on the work one needs to undertake on oneself to maintain a positive affective experience, often named happiness. This work is located within the autonomous individual, whose well-made choices lead them towards happiness (Becker & Marecek, 2008). Positive psychology suggests that one can talk the self into this positive happiness, however the privilege and normatively valued moralistic life choices that are the markers of happiness are obscured (Ahmed, 2010). Furthermore by locating the locus of happiness and wellbeing within the individual, structural barriers that may prevent free choices are also obscured (Becker & Marecek, 2008).

Modern psy discourses constitute an ideal subjectivity that is normal, unified, rational and engaging in self-management; traits that are synonymous with masculine, European attributes (Venn, 1998). Psychological wellbeing becomes the characteristic of the normative

system that psychology imposes and to be psychologically well one should emulate these normative ways of being. In the current context, psy discourses position psychological wellbeing as synonymous with having the capacity to self-manage, be responsible for oneself and exercise free choices (Becker & Marecek, 2008; Blackman, 1996). Psychological wellbeing is precarious, as it needs to be continually worked on and may at times require expert intervention (Brunila, 2014).

As the psychologically well subject reflects masculine attributes, feminine psychological wellbeing has a further level of precarity, in that the female subject is already marked as failing to meet a normative standard. This is reflected in the history of psychology where women have been positioned as inherently psychologically vulnerable, by the likes of Freudian theory, which has continued to influence everyday understandings (Nicolson, 1992). Some women's identities, for example the non-white or working class, are positioned as more deficient than others (Blackman, 1996). Women significantly outnumber men in diagnoses of psychological issues (Ussher, 2011), suggesting that that the conditions of femininity complicate psychological wellbeing.

The female body has been continually used to explain the feminine psychological experience (Bayer & Malone, 1998) and is implicated in attempts to explain the prevalence of female diagnoses of psychological unwellness compared to that of men. The female body has long been positioned as unruly and problematic, particularly the female reproductive system (Weitz, 2010). Feminine hormonal processes are still utilised in explanations of feminine psychological unwellness, so that hormonal regulation is drawn upon in understandings of the management of feminine psychological wellbeing (Stoppard, 1997; Ussher, 2011).

Feminine life experiences are also implicated in explanation of the feminine psychological experience. Gendered experiences of stress, such as expectations that women should take on primary caregiving roles and manage domestic tasks, pay inequality and more prevalent experiences of abuse, are all suggested to contribute to the increased prevalence of psychological illness for women (Stoppard, 1997). In modern times, feminine psychological wellbeing has a close relationship with the construction of stress. An experience of stress is referred to in everyday life, with the constant positioning of feminine subjects as experiencing stress mediated through gender. When women talk about their psychological experiences of stress, they draw on both the biological understandings and the experiences of the feminine life (Stoppard, 1997). This is unsurprising as both understandings are reproduced and sustained within popular media, which contribute to the discursive resources available to women to describe their experiences (Ussher, 2011).

Feminine psychological wellbeing also appears to be interconnected with the behaviour associated with normative femininity. Ussher (2011) suggests that the ways that femininity has been pathologised, works to construct and maintain the boundaries of the appropriate performance of femininity. Using a genealogical approach, Ussher shows how, historically, women have been marked as requiring psychological treatment and have been institutionalised for stepping outside their traditional feminine roles. She argues that these practices continue today, critiquing how certain disorders are constructed in gendered terms. For example, Ussher points out the over-diagnosis of depression in women, as women are perceived to be more susceptible to the disorder. Men who present with depressive symptoms are less likely to be diagnosed than women, and when men are diagnosed with depression their presentation is perceived as more alarming than that of women, as depression is associated with femininity. Likewise, women who present with concerns that are considered masculine in nature, such as alcohol dependence or anti-social personality traits, are marked as being especially mad.

Taking up the argument that psychological wellbeing is constituted via a socially accepted performance of gender, Becker (2005) argues that feminine psychological wellbeing has become synonymous with feminine empowerment. She points out that traditionally feminine power resided in her maintaining her moral virtue. However today, feminine power resides in a women's ability to care for herself, in order to care for others. Becker positions feminine psychological wellbeing as being synonymous with relational care skills, which she argues is often positioned in society as female empowerment.

Feminine psychological wellbeing is not only constituted within the traditional realms of psychological practice. Ussher (2011) also argues that feminine psychological wellbeing and disorder is represented and regulated in forms of popular culture. Everyday representation encourages women to engage in constant monitoring of the self, locating complaints within the individual. In contemporary popular culture, feminine psychological wellbeing is achievable if women "could only manage their moods (or life) more effectively" (p. 99). Therefore, feminine psychological wellbeing is positioned as the result of intense self-monitoring and self-management.

In summary, psy discourses constitute feminine psychological wellbeing with more precarity as the psychologically normal subject is an image of masculine European attributes. Feminine psychological wellbeing is interconnected with normative feminine behaviour and is formed through intensive self-management. Psy discourses are entangled with everyday life and are represented in multiple forms, including popular culture.

The Neoliberal Context

As an ideology that presently holds hegemonic status, neoliberalism has a significant role in the shaping of subjectivity and what it means to be psychologically well. The neoliberal theoretical framework has been institutionalised within almost every aspect of modern life in the West, since the 1970s, to the point that the ideology is taken for granted and considered common sense (Harvey, 2005). Psy discourse and the constitution of psychological wellbeing have been influenced by the institutionalisation of neoliberalism. As Harvey (2005) states neoliberalism is "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (p. 2). When wellbeing is understood as being interconnected to the free market, what does this mean for the constitution of psychological wellbeing? I now turn to a consideration of this neoliberal context.

Neoliberalism constitutes ideal subjectivity as autonomous and individualised, subjects who are exhorted to shape themselves in specific ways to meet the needs of the market. Meeting the needs of the market is synonymous with being well. Scharff (2016a) explored how neoliberalism constitutes entrepreneurial subjects, with multiple implications for their "psychic life" under these conditions. Scharff draws on the term psychic life from Butler (1997) arguing that it "conveys the formation of subjectivities in and through power" (p. 111). Drawing on participant responses in interviews with women who are musicians, Scharff identified several different aspects of neoliberal subjectivity. The self was positioned as synonymous to a business that could be optimised and worked on. There were clear requirements for productivity and behaving competitively, as well as maintaining a positive mind-set and reframing adversity as a learning opportunity or as evidence of one's identity as a survivor. Vulnerability was disavowed but at the same time the experience of managing anxiety, self-doubt and insecurity was acknowledged. Inequality was obscured and those who did not fit into neoliberal subjectivity were excluded and blamed for not measuring up.

Under the dominance of neoliberalism, normative behaviour and psychological wellbeing are constituted within the ideal neoliberal subject. Engaging in work on the self is about producing an autonomous, individualised, productive self, maintaining the "right feelings" (Gill & Kanai, 2018, p. 321) that fit within the neoliberal economy. The means to do so is via consumption of products and services which supposedly assist in the pursuit of wellbeing, leading to a more fulfilled life. Within the neoliberal ideology, the path to psychological wellbeing is through consumerism and accruing material wealth (Esposito & Perez, 2014).

Despite the ideal neoliberal subject being constructed as exuding a positive mindset and working on the self, it has been argued that it is neo-liberalism that has had an increasingly detrimental effect on people's mental health. The rise of neoliberalism has seen an increase in economic practices which have led to multiple issues, including job losses, economic instability, and a loss of community (Esposito & Perez, 2014). Neoliberal societal context exacerbates mental distress; however the cause of any distress is firmly located within the individual, rather than being attributed to the impact of societal conditions. Those who are classed as mentally unwell are constructed as suffering due to their own individual failing. This is problematic when the social environment is distressing for the lives of many, yet the neoliberal expectation is for individual to respond with resilience and positivity (Gill & Kanai, 2018).

In terms of feminine subjects, academics have argued that women are ideal neoliberal subjects, who are disproportionately addressed by neoliberalism (Rutherford, 2018). Women especially are urged to work on themselves in order to meet expectations of autonomy, self-management and positive mindset. Rutherford (2018) terms the work women are expected to undertake as "ambitious and continuous projects of gendered self-transformation" (p. 621). She argues that neoliberalism and psy-disciplines interact in the creation of the requirements that women undertake this self-work. Feminine psychological wellbeing is constructed as being the product of these projects of self-transformation.

There are also psychological expectations for the neoliberal feminine subject in the face of adversity. Gill & Orgad (2018) argue that in the context of a psychological turn within neoliberalism, women are exhorted to be resilient subjects that can bounce back from any negative experience. Using examples from women's magazines, self-help books and smart-phone applications, they show how women are encouraged to maintain a perpetually positive mindset, treating any struggle as an opportunity for self-development and growth. These texts encourage economic and emotional investments which add up to extensive labour in the efforts to maintain positive resilience. They argue that these media make an address to middle class women who have the resources to work towards the ideal positive mindset and produce those who may not have access to these resources as 'others', outside normative discourse of resilience. The discourse of resilience appears to work to promote the neoliberal agenda of individualism, where structural issues are reframed as individual issues. Those women with the privileges to overcome struggles have the chance of maintaining a precarious positive mindset through intensive labour, while others are excluded altogether.

Neoliberalism also exhorts women to exude confidence, despite insecurity simultaneously being associated with femininity. Considering texts from women's magazines and interviews with staff working on these publications, Favaro (2017a) questioned the

promotion of female confidence, which she terms as confidence chic. She argued that neoliberal ideals from these texts encourage women to utilise approaches informed by positive psychology, to relentlessly work on themselves and exude a positive affect. Women are positioned to be ideally "autonomous, freely choosing, perpetually self-regulating, transformative and adaptive actors who are entirely self-reliant, responsible and accountable for their life, and whose value is largely measured by their capacity to self-care and self-improve" (pp. 288-289). Trespassing from this position and negative affect results in being silenced, along with impeding any collective action to address structural issues that impact on feminine subjects.

Neoliberalism constructs feminine psychological wellbeing as an individual responsibility which requires intensive management. The means to psychological wellbeing is through consumption and acquiring material wealth. These features of feminine psychological wellbeing are also very much associated with the post-feminist sensibility (Gill, 2007). We have seen in the preceding section that feminine psychological wellbeing is highly connected to the performance of ideal femininity which at this point in time, is constructed largely within the post-feminist sensibility.

The Post-feminist Subject

Feminist psychologists and other feminist researchers have argued that, in the present context of the West, a post-feminist sensibility holds dominance in the construction of ideal femininity (Gill, 2017; McRobbie, 2007). The female subject is positioned in the post-feminist context as a neoliberal individual who has the capability and aspirations to meet ideals of self-empowerment, confidence, and success (McRobbie, 2007). The scholarship of post-feminism is broad, having been taken up in the last decade by many different areas of study, including but not limited to critical media studies, education, political science and psychology (Gill, 2017)

Post-feminism is described as a sensibility by Gill (2007; 2017), something that is so normative and taken for granted to the extent that it is now difficult to recognise. Aspects of the post-feminist sensibility overlap and are related to the dominance of neo-liberal ideology (Gill, 2017). The female subject is positioned as an important subject of the neoliberal capitalist system, primed to work towards ideals of affluence, individualism, and self-management. Much like the ideal neoliberal subject, for the post-feminist subject, values of autonomy and individualism are emphasised, with women being exhorted to focus on themselves and their personal advancement. Drawing on the post-feminist sensibility Harris (2004) describes the 'can-do girl', who is determined to succeed in being exceptional by making the right choices. Rather than meeting normative expectations, women are positioned as making the right choices for their own satisfaction and fulfilment (Gill, 2008).

Initially the post-feminist sensibility rested on the assumption that the goals of feminism had been achieved and therefore feminist critique was no longer necessary. It could be argued that some women, in general those women who are cis-gendered, white, able-bodied, have access to disposable income, meet norms of heteronormativity and live in the West, have more access to opportunities than ever before. This is not to say that traditional gender norms and expectations of femininity do not persist. In more recent years there has been a shift which has seen a resurgence in feminist movement and calls to action. Critics suggest that this resurgence in feminism is mediated through post-feminism and neoliberalism, which means the post-feminist sensibility still works to maintain existing power relations. McRobbie (2015) posits a reinvigorated focus on individualism and self-control as the markers of female success, what she terms as 'the perfect,' has been a barrier to the full possibility of a resurgence of the feminist movement. Post-feminist expectations allow for a little failure in the endeavour to be excellent and some interest in feminist concerns, permissible only if this is on the path to feminine success. Ultimately feminine success is still defined by traditional gender expectations, such as marriage, children, and neoliberal values, such as financial and career success.

Traditional gender norms and neoliberalism are incorporated within the ideals of post-feminism, as women work towards achieving a perfect self, constrained by specific expectations under the guise of choice and self-fulfilment (McRobbie, 2007). These ideals extend to multiple aspects of feminine life including consumption, bodily disciplines, sexualisation, education, career success, emotional management, domesticity, etc. (Gill, 2007; Negra, 2009; McRobbie 2007). Achievement in these life domains by meeting post-feminist ideals promises the best (neo-liberal) life for feminine subjects.

Post-feminist ideals have come to inform the understandings associated with femininity and how feminine subjects should be. Post-feminist ideology holds social power and in turn has significant material effects on how women are seen, see themselves and each other. Surveillance both from the self and the other, contributes to the ongoing acceptance of post-feminist understandings as the norm (Bartky, 1997). Gill (2007) points out that self-surveillance has been long been accepted as a part of idealised femininity, however, argues that the post-feminist demand for this behaviour is distinctive. She describes a significant rise in the intensity of self-surveillance, which reflects the rise in the control of women, despite the obscurement of the forces of power that act within female lives. She points out that women's private and intimate experiences are more than ever open for surveillance.

Rather than a requirement for femininity, working towards these ideals in a post-feminist context is seen as something that women freely choose to participate in and are doing for themselves (Gill, 2008). The normative power of these ideals and the potential sanctions for

non-conformity are not acknowledged, instead participating in post-feminist self-discipline becomes something that women are doing for themselves (Gill, 2008; McRobbie, 2007). It is odd that despite the narrative of the freely chosen performance of femininity, there is limited open critique of how certain choices are normative and acceptable (Gill, 2008; Rutherford, 2018). Feminist researchers have argued this to be one of the main issues of post-feminism, as choice works to reinforce traditional gender norms, while at same time suggesting that gender barriers no longer exist, as women make free choices. Thus, the need for feminist critique of prevailing power imbalances is obscured (McRobbie, 2007).

The discipline of the feminine body is a key focus of the post-feminist sensibility. The female body is subjected to strict feminine beauty norms, while being structured as being in need of constant management, which is considered the means to empowerment and feminine identity (Gill, 2007). The ideal female body is still sexualised and beautiful under the conditions of post-feminism, but these norms are not situated in the context of a requirement for male attention. Rather women are exhorted to attain this body for themselves and their own satisfaction. This of course still works to satisfy traditional standards of feminine beauty, but instead is framed within the rhetoric of self-empowerment and choice rather than obligatory beauty standards or the pleasure of men (Gill, 2008). Self-management and consumerism are the primary means for working toward these ideals of post-feminism. Women are positioned as needing to engage in intense self-management, which requires a variety of products and services. Entire self-care industries have developed from the commodification of individual wellbeing and working on oneself, particularly one's body, ranging from day spas and nail salons (Negra, 2009), to sensory deprivation tanks and mindfulness gyms.

As embodiments of ideal neoliberal subjectivity (Scharff, 2016b), post-feminism addresses women as knowing consumers, with the acknowledgement that they are not taken in by advertisements. Rather consumption is situated as being driven by the act of being an autonomous, empowered individual (Gill, 2008). The post-feminist subject is still an integral figure in the capitalist system, but the address is more complex. For example, women are encouraged to pursue beauty and sexual ideals for themselves, not for the purpose of male objectification. However, despite the 'do it for yourself' message, in the pursuit of post-feminist beauty and sexual standards, traditional standards are reinscribed with normative status. The post-feminist sensibility addresses subjects in a way that does not enact power hierarchically but rather invites a woman to engage in the pursuit of post-feminist ideals as a way to exercise her personal freedoms (Gill, 2008).

Post-feminism and the Psychological

While not giving as much attention in the literature as the physical body, post-feminist ideals extend to the meanings associated with and the construction of feminine psychological experience. The physical and psychological are not necessarily exclusive categories, as within the post-feminist sensibility, there is a view that the physical body is closely intertwined with the feminine psychological condition. Gill (2007) points out that failure to perfect the female body is positioned in post-feminist texts as an outward reflection of how one feels, with this failure being indicative of emotional vulnerability. Simultaneously, there may be more of a priority on perfecting the body, as post-feminist culture acknowledges that one can parade the perfect body despite feeling emotionally vulnerable on the inside. Gill points to media texts where there is a celebration of the success of those who can manage the feat of appearing well on the outside, while being in distress internally.

Self-surveillance is also implicated in post-feminist expectations for the psychological. The post-feminist sensibility encourages a similar level of vigilance and work over the mind as it does the physical body. In describing how feminine self-surveillance has intensified under the conditions of post-feminism, Gill (2007) notes that there is a turn to intervening with the feminine psychological experience. Much like the physical, the psychological is framed up as unruly and requiring management. In a later review of research and theoretical discussion on post-feminism, Gill (2017) revisits how the expectations within post-feminism extend to the feminine psychological experience. Broadly she argues that the feminine subject is expected to work towards a mental and emotional state that projects "self-esteem, body positivity and confidence" (p. 621). Gratitude, positive thinking, rejecting any kind of vulnerability or insecurity and living one's best life are expectations for the post-feminist subject and she is also expected to engage in high levels of self-surveillance around her thoughts and feelings. Gill argues that these expectations construct feminine emotional experience, as well as how women present their psychological condition to others.

There seems to be specific requirements around what kind of mood post-feminist subjects are expected to maintain and specified means for doing so. Drawing on multiple texts within pop culture, including chick flicks and magazines, Negra (2009) points to an "affective tyranny" (p. 140) operating within post-feminism. The female subject is expected to work on their emotions, in order to maintain a kind of serene passivity, while being able to attend to others needs over their own. Negra suggests that the self-care industry of the likes of "candles, day spas, manicures, and massages" (p. 141) is the expected means for feminine subjects to maintain this desired affect. Negra argues that affective tyranny is a very important aspect of

the post-feminist system, both to manage the feminine subject's mood, but also to prevent the expression of dissatisfaction with wider social conditions.

Self-help literature is another industry that perpetuates a post-feminist sensibility on emotional self-management. Like Negra (2009), Riley, Evans, Anderson, & Robson (2019) argue that feminine subjects are expected to work on their emotions and mental state. They point to self-help literature as a vehicle for this understanding, which also reinforces an individual focus rather than addressing social conditions or power imbalances that have an impact on the feminine experience. Riley, Evans, & Robson suggest that there are key aspects to the post-feminist sensibility that underpin this position within media texts. They point to how the outwardly successful post-feminist woman is commonly acknowledged as privately failing in their efforts to work on themselves. Inwardly experiencing doubts, requiring expert intervention or slipping at different points in time in the effort to exude the 'can-do girl' (Harris, 2004) subjectivity are all examples of these failings. The idea that the feminine self is positioned to need constant work, is further cemented by the assumption that women have the capacity to live their best or most perfect lives. It is of course impossible for most women to achieve this level of perfection, so they are left always striving, always with room for more work on themselves. Riley, Evans, & Robson also tentatively suggest that self-help texts interact with the post-feminist sensibility to maintain a feminine experience of anxiety.

The psychological expectations for the feminine subject within post-feminism are influenced and complicated by another prevailing discourse, that women are prone to mental instability. McRobbie (2009) writes about a "gender melancholia" associated with femininity, that has reached a peak in recent years due to popular culture's emphasis on individual female psychopathology, which obscures the need for debate about prevailing feminist concerns. McRobbie, while noting the differences in experience women depending on class, points out that a number of disorders are largely positioned as linked to femininity, including eating disorders, low self-esteem, depression, and self-harm.

In developing these arguments, McRobbie draws on a report by the British Medical Association which acknowledges that working towards a feminine identity compromises female mental health. However, simultaneously, McRobbie argues that suffering from mental health struggles has become part of the collective feminine identity. When referring to mental health struggles, McRobbie writes:

Being, as Butler would have it, 'culturally intelligible' as a girl makes one ill. But by today's standards that is almost acceptable…She who suffers (along with her fellow-sufferers) is no longer passive, indeed she is expected to be highly active in her struggle

to overcome her afflictions. But these pathologies remain part of her make-up, her personal reminders about what it is to be a woman (pp. 87-88).

According to McRobbie's analysis, psychological illness has become part of the feminine experience and therefore women are expected to work on themselves to manage their potential for becoming unwell. She goes on to argue that there are standards in place as to how much psychological unwellness a girl should demonstrate, differentiating "a touch of" a disorder from full-blown unwellness.

McRobbie (2015) further reflects on this gender melancholia in her discussion of post-feminist preoccupation with the perfect, mentioned earlier in this discussion, as a reinvigorated focus on individualism and self-control marking female success. McRobbie argues that a great deal of suffering, has become a taken for granted as part of the experience of femininity. This suffering is linked to the emphasis on perfecting the self, the constant mental calculations women are performing in the process of self-surveillance and a kind of self-competition, to always be doing better than one is at this point in time.

Research into the experiences of young women suggest that stress and anxiety is a cost of striving to meet expectations of feminine success. Strömbäck, Formark, Wiklund, & Malmgren-Olsson (2014) explored the experiences of young Swedish women in relation to their experience of stress. They found that the young women interviewed had a shared understanding of what successful femininity looked like, something that involved extensive doing, while balancing relational demands and presenting the self as a nice person. They argued that their findings demonstrated how navigating requirements for successful femininity presented a tiring and detrimental impact on the young women's experience of their bodies. They suggested that experiences of anxiety and stress were incorporated into the performance of intelligible femininity, though not without some hints at possible resistance to normativity in that there was an expressed need to "disconnect and detach" (p. 286). This suggests that there is some potential reprieve from gendered expectations of managing the feminine self in the expression of anxiety and stress.

Could the gender melancholia associated with femininity offer some reprieve from post-feminist expectations of the can-do girl, who exudes constant confidence and a lack of vulnerability? Dobson & Kanai (2019) analysed several recently popular US television shows, which have portrayed women managing anger, anxiety, over-confidence, and insecurity. They suggest that these portrayals may problematise the post-feminist ideal of the can-do girl, making space for alternative positions that perhaps recognise structural inequality. They acknowledge that these portrayals could also be analysed in terms of post-feminist expectations, pointing to

what they describe as a "normative, self-deprecating youthful post-feminist masquerade (p. 783)" as an acceptable brief foray away from ideal femininity before meeting the expectations of post-feminism. They argued that both readings should be considered in the analysis of media texts.

Other research has found that psychological vulnerability is reformulated within post-feminist expectations, so vulnerability is permissible if feminine subjects are still striving to meet the unrealistic expectations of femininity. Chowdhury (2020) analysed interviews with young women professionals in New Zealand who identified that they were depressed. Chowdhury found that there was an expectation operating for these women to be their "ideal depressed self" (p. 1349). These expectations involved intervening with the self to attempt to overcome depression and always striving do their best, especially while in the workplace. Chowdhury argued that the "ideal depressed self" positioned women in an impossible situation which possibly made their moods worse, as not only do they need to struggle to overcome psychological unwellness but also confront their failure to do so while maintaining the ideal self.

The literature I have considered highlights to me some tension in how feminine psychological wellbeing is portrayed. Dominant discourses simultaneously expect women to be prone to psychological unwellness (McRobbie, 2009), while also striving for a psychological state that surpasses psychological vulnerability (Gill, 2017). It is also problematic that in the mass of self-help and positive psychological interventions, women are the primary focus of intervention. This re-entrenches ideas about the inferior female psyche (Ussher, 2011), suggesting some level of inferiority compared to those who are not addressed. The impact of the exhortation to the feminine subject to be constantly work on herself should be considered and critiqued across multiple contexts (McRobbie, 2015).

The Social Media Landscape in the Digital Context

As discussed, the dominant ideals within psy discourse, neo-liberalism and post-feminism are relevant to the meanings and experience of femininity at present, contributing to the construction of feminine psychological wellbeing. These discourses owe their ideological dominance to multiple social conditions. One area that has received ongoing attention from feminist scholars is popular culture. Gill (2008) contends that representations within media and popular culture are significant in the constitution of subjectivity and require ongoing critical attention.

Social media, in particular the currently popular Instagram platform, present opportunities to consider the complexities in the construction of the feminine psychological state, as women are both subjectified and position themselves within this particularly neoliberal,

post-feminist digital context. Within the contemporary period that neoliberalism and post-feminism have maintained dominance, personal social media use has increased rapidly to the extent that the online/offline experience has become increasingly blurred, particularly in the West (Locke et al., 2018). There are new generations growing up having always had access to the online world and cannot imagine social interactions without the presence of social media platforms (van Dijck, 2013). In 2018, the most popular of these platforms was Facebook with 2.26 billion users, followed by YouTube with 1.9 billion users, then Instagram and WeChat with 1 billion users (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Each of these platforms have different capacity for self-expression and it is important to note their unique capabilities. There are however some unifying features of popular social media platforms, which contribute to the general landscape that social media present, which I will briefly consider.

Social media can be accessed through a variety of technologies; however, smartphones are the dominant means for access. This is mainly due to most social media platforms being designed to be easily accessible in digital application form. Some of the functionality of certain social media platforms are only accessible via the digital application. For those with access to the technology, smartphones have an omnipresence in daily life, as devices that people take with them everywhere and have an intimate relationship with (Elias & Gill, 2018). Social media platforms, mediated via digital applications accessed through the smartphone, take on this every day, intimate character.

Algorithms, digital rules for organising content, are now commonly built into social media platforms. These are generally based on content that users have searched or engaged with previously. Rather than organising content chronologically, algorithms work to organise content based on the viewers preferences. While they are computer generated, these algorithms have a role in marking the content with value, as they manage how much exposure content receives (Carah, 2014). Algorithms certainly mean that people are exposed to more of what is in line with their preferences, creating a kind of bubble of more of the same content.

Commonly, participation in social media space involves posting digital content and consuming content posted by others. Content can include photos, videos, memes, links to other places within the web, articles, and short form statements of a set amount of characters. Another common feature of social media platforms is the ability for the audience to provide feedback. The audience can like, share, or comment on content, and this feedback operates as a disciplinary gaze within the social media context. Those who produce content are more likely to post content that receives a level of positive feedback. Even the presence of an audience is a kind of feedback, as most platforms offer a mechanism to see how many views a piece of content has had.

Compared to traditional media sources, social media presents a unique interaction between producer and consumer. These positions are not mutually exclusive, as many who consume the content also produce their own content. Many social media platforms have a dual function within them where popular culture is disseminated, and a space for users to creatively produce their own content is available (Banet-Weiser, 2011). It has been suggested that these platforms are taken up predominantly by women, who are called upon within Western societal expectations to narrate themselves (Banet-Weiser & Arzumanova, 2013).

Primarily the internet is a space that is purposely designed and utilised for commercial gain (Pruchniewska, 2018). Social media is not immune to the commercialism that characterises the internet and has been recognised as a powerful marketing tool. The rise of social media has seen the rise of social media influencers, people who amass a large number of followers and are believed to have some level of influence over them. Social media influencers are commonly recruited by marketing companies for a fee to tout products on their personal profiles and provide links for purchase (Archer, 2019). Often the strategy is for these influencers to mention the products while displaying how they live their ordinary everyday lives, subtly encouraging others to make similar consumption choices. While some disclaimers are presented about paid promotion, it is not always clear if a product is being mentioned in passing or because of direct marketing. Influencers are often paid and/or gifted free products in exchange for this kind of promotion and some can make a living from engaging in this work.

Simultaneously, there is an emphasis on authenticity within the social media space (Favaro, 2017b). As content becomes more highly curated, audiences hold a suspicion of promoted content. Recently in NZ, complaints have been made to regulatory bodies about how influencers have used their platforms to advertise products (Akoorie, 2020) and a move to impose more regulations on the industry has arisen (Advertising Standards Authority, 2020). These changes reflect the suspicion audiences have of advertisements and a preference for more genuine content that does not explicitly promote products (Hu, Chen, Chen, & He, 2020). There is a tension here for influencers to manage, as there is pressure for content to be genuine, a reflection of themselves, while meeting economic demands and the need to self-brand.

The Neoliberal, Post-feminist Digital Context

There have been suggestions that digital spaces, including social media, have potential for new freedoms in self-expression. For example feminist academics have suggested that social media is a key tool for advancing feminist ideas and engaging young women as feminists (Jackson, 2018). The #MeToo movement, a digital response to sexual violence which became

rapidly popular and influential in 2017, is an example of how the digital context can be useful in feminist action (Soucie, Parry, & Cousineau, 2019).

However, the online context is not impervious to the cultural discourses that are dominant in the offline world. Pruchniewska (2018) interviewed a group of freelance feminist writers who produced written digital content. Interview responses certainly reflected a resurgence in feminism online, with the writers pointing out that feminism was popular right now. The writers used a variety of strategies to bring their feminism into the content that they produced, both overtly and covertly. Pruchniewska found though that much of the content being produced was intricately connected with post-feminist sensibilities, partly because of demands on freelance writers made by the field of producing content online. These findings echo the thoughts of Gill (2017) who argued that the resurgence of feminism recently, has a particular quality which is reflective of the post-feminist sensibility.

If the online context is not impervious to the offline cultural context, while social media technologies may be new, there will be persistent discourses that are drawn on and reinforced within these spaces. While there is potential for imagining new possibilities around gender, research to date suggests that contemporary gendered ideals are perpetuated rather than challenged in this space. The ideals are perpetuated through the content itself and the feedback from those who are judging and consuming the content. Research to date suggests that despite potential for feminist resistance, neoliberal ideology and the post-feminist sensibility hold a level of ideological dominance in social media spaces. For example, Duffy & Hund (2015) analysed data from fashion blog, Instagram content and interviews with fashion bloggers themselves. Following themes of effortless pursuit of passionate work, glamourous lifestyles, and carefully curated disclosure of personal lives, they identified a prevailing notion of "having it all" in this content, consistent with the post-feminist sensibility. The emotional labour, discipline, and capital necessary to project this aesthetic was obscured. A balance between a glamourous lifestyle and the carefully curated disclosure of the personal was utilised to promote an authentic identity.

Banet-Weiser & Arzumanova (2013) describe a "post-feminist authorship" (p. 165) that is supported within the supposed liberty of the digital context. They argue that the digital context provides a platform for women to shape and perform their identities in a post-feminist environment, which becomes intertwined with their personal consumption. Drawing on an analysis of "haul" videos that are popular on YouTube, self-made videos where predominantly women display their purchases, they identify several key tropes of post-feminism. Post-feminist expectations of the female body are evident, in the display of how the body is disciplined through obligatory consumption of fashion and beauty products. These

videos are characterised by a display of what Banet-Weiser and Arzumanova term a "nice…girl next door" (p. 172) femininity, the avoidance of making any overt criticism and an emphasis on authenticity and sincerity.

The popular use of social media for women entrepreneurs is also implicated in the ideological dominance of post-feminism within this context. An ethnographic study by Naudin & Patel (2019) of women entrepreneurs' Twitter accounts suggested that the performance of successful entrepreneurship within the digital context and the performance of ideal femininity are entangled. Performing professional expertise in this space was found to be relentless relational labour, drawing on neo-liberal and post-feminist discourse around female empowerment, an attitude reminiscent of the 'can-do girl' described by Harris (2004), while also blending a negotiation of vulnerability and personal affect management.

Research also suggests that the female body is subjected to increased surveillance in the social media context and subjected to post-feminist expectations. Marshall, Chamberlain, & Hodgetts (2019) analysed Instagram posts that were produced by popular female bodybuilders, considering the gaze that was directed at these female bodies. They described how these Instagram posts enable the female body to be objectified and subjected to surveillance. This appeared to be done in ways that resisted the concept that women were weak, promoted female empowerment, but simultaneously perpetuated norms of disciplined, sexualised feminine bodies. The women producing this content, engaged with these ideas with simultaneous conformity and resistance. While not specifically situating their findings within the post-feminist sensibility, the arguments are reminiscent of the post-feminist analysis. The female body is positioned as empowered but there are strict requirements for disciplining this body based on heteronormative, sexualised expectations. Certainly, the surveillance associated with post-feminism seems to reach new heights as social media involves the overt subjection to public scrutiny.

Similarly, Camacho-Miñano, MacIsaac, & Rich (2019) conducted a study where they considered how teenage girls learn about physical health and fitness via Instagram. They identified what they termed a "postfeminist biopedagogies" (p. 653) operating within Instagram; normative ideas about female bodies which promoted restrictive body discipline in order to achieve a successful female body, under the guise of choice and empowerment. Amongst the girls who participated in the research, Instagram was found to be highly influential in how they learnt about the body.

These studies indicate maintenance of the dominant neo-liberal, post-feminist sensibility within the social media context. As with other research considering the post-feminist sensibility, research on social media to date has had an emphasis on how feminine physical

health and the feminine body is understood in this context. This includes representations of alcohol consumption on Facebook (Hutton, Griffin, Lyons, Niland, & McCreanor, 2016), messages of vulva-positivity on Tumblr (Mowat, McDonald, Fisher, Kirkman, & Dobson, 2018) and eating disorder recovery on Instagram (LaMarre & Rice, 2017). Post-feminist and neo-liberal ideals are considered throughout this research, particularly the feminine task of working on one's body and self-representation. I now turn the discussion towards the literature on how psychological wellbeing is formulated within this post-feminist digital context.

#Psychologicalwellbeing

While there has been a focus on representations of the body within social media, feminine psychology has received limited attention in the research to date. It is likely that the physical and psychological are interconnected, however, as Camacho-Miñano et al. (2019), whose study is discussed in the preceding section identified, participants saw Instagram content which depicted working on the female physical body as being connected to happiness, confidence and empowerment.

Despite the general focus on the physical within the literature, neoliberal and post-feminist expectations for emotional management have also been identified in social media content. Kanai (2019a) considers the gratifying sense of belonging that develops through young women producing and sharing social media texts on Tumblr. She analyses Tumblr texts which describe similar or shared feminine emotional experiences in humorous ways. A relatable femininity is produced through these texts, where the collective can recognise themselves within the shared participation in the post-feminist obligations for young feminine subjects and the emotional rules within this context. Kanai argued that this recognition brings up a pleasing affective response for young women. However, underlying this relatability and conformity is a system of power relations that Kanai argued further establishes the dominant norms of a post-feminist, neoliberal femininity.

While not explicitly considering psychological wellbeing, some researchers have pointed out how feminine emotional labour is popularly portrayed in the social media context. Toffoletti & Thorpe (2018) considered the representation of female athletes on social media. They point to how these representations draw on neo-liberal and post-feminist ideals. While not explicitly considering how psychological wellbeing is represented, they do however identify several representation strategies as tropes of the post-feminist sensibility. They categorise these as self-love, self-disclosure and self-empowerment, all strategies that involve mobilising the feminine self. Toffoletti and Thorpe note that these strategies inform the discourse around what is accepted femininity. Notably self-love, self-disclosure, and self-empowerment, imply inner self

work and involve a level of emotional labour. I would suggest within social media and other contexts these ideas are implicitly reference working on feminine psychological wellbeing.

When considering emotional labour, one of the fascinating aspects of social media, is how the context has been utilised in the crafting of identity and self-creation. Self-branding is a concept that has entered popular vernacular in recent years and has escalated within the context of social media. Banet-Weiser (2012) defines self-branding as an ongoing process of self-development to cultivate an authentic self-image which impacts how one is perceived by others, as well as how one sees themselves. Social media platforms lend themselves well to the process of curating content online to represent an individual's brand. Positive feedback from others determines the success of this process of self-branding. The process of self-branding is inextricably linked to neo-liberal values, with the self as a marketable product. Banet-Weiser argues that the process of branding the self within this online context draws on gendered ideas and is entangled with post-feminist sensibility, as the ideal post-feminist subject is reflected with similar ideals that underpin the self-branded subject; self-definition, consumption and visibility. Given this similarity, the ideal post-feminist subject finds recognition and affirmation online. Banet-Weiser points out that not all women are able to experience recognition and validation online, arguing that self-branding is more accessible to white, middle class women. As a result, many feminine identities that are excluded or marginalised in the online space.

Digital self-tracking is another form of emotional labour that has become popularised and is often shared on social media. There is an abundance of online applications where individuals can track their sleep patterns, diet, productivity, exercise, mood and more. Many choose to share their self-tracking on social media and the ability to easily share this data is inbuilt into many of the self-tracking applications. Lupton (2016) points out how self-tracking references "the goal of becoming" (p. 15) implying a sense of the self being unfinished and in progress. She also points to the expectations for self-monitoring and self-management within digital self-tracking. Sharing this data on social media promotes the imperative for subjects to be engaging in this kind of emotional labour.

While most of the work to date considers forms of emotional labour within social media, resistance to the discourse that women are prone to mental unwellness within social media spaces has also been researched. Dobson (2014) has looked at how young women were utilising performative shamelessness in response to the gender melancholia discussed by McRobbie (2009). Dobson argued that a shameless affect was evident across young women's Myspace profiles and was characterised by intense self-display, confidence, and sexiness. This shamelessness was utilised by young women to defend themselves against the idea that their behaviour was synonymous with a melancholic femininity.

Other research suggests that there does appear to be a gendered melancholia expressed online, though it may be packaged alongside the resilience and 'bouncing back' that is associated with the post-feminist sensibility. Berryman & Kavka (2018) analysed popular YouTube videos which portrayed the female video creator crying or sharing their experiences of anxiety. These videos are often positioned by the creators as exceptions to otherwise consistent portrayals of positivity. Berryman and Kavka found that the videos had potential for community-building, providing an opportunity for YouTube creators to develop a sense of intimacy with their following and perform assertions of their own authenticity. They argued that the exposure of emotion was positioned "to be both the disease and the cure offered by social media" (p. 96). Emotional vulnerability was structured as occurring within the context of self-exposure, but simultaneously was soothed by its expression. Berryman and Kavka go on to argue that this means that the emotion is continually reproduced with associated value, which is why these kinds of videos continue to be popular.

From the sharing of intimate, everyday experiences on social media, a plethora of apps to access therapeutic services and monitor one's mood and accessible "expert" opinions online, psychological wellbeing is being talked about in digital spaces both explicitly and implicitly. Fullagar, Rich, Francombe-Webb, & Maturo (2017) argue that there is a need for further research to examine how psychological expertise and biomedical discourses of mental wellbeing are reproduced alongside opportunities politicise the "social conditions of personal distress" (p. 10). They go on to suggest that the promotion of intense emotional work that these digital contexts encourage could reinforce the experience of psychological unwellness, particularly for young people.

From a feminist perspective, the research to date suggests that post-feminist expectations for managing the feminine psychology are evident within the social media context, though the understanding remains limited. McRobbie (2015) poses the question well, "Is it that the compulsion to post a constant flow of enhanced and self-enhancing images to websites – displaying a virtual 'good life', typically parties, holidays or weddings – induces new and as yet unclear gender dynamics of psychic fragility?" (p. 5). Are gendered expectations within social media operating to introduce new dynamics of psychological vulnerability? How are psy discourse, neoliberalism and post-feminism drawn upon in the digital context in the constitution of psychological wellbeing? More research in this area is necessary to develop the understanding of how feminine psychological wellbeing is discursively constructed within social media.

Subjectivity in Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has been characterised as a global crisis of unusual proportions and formed the social-historical context for my research. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared that the virus was an "emergency of international concern" on the 30th of January 2020, before later classifying the outbreak as a pandemic on the 11th March 2020 (World Health Organisation, 2020).

The full extent of the crisis is still unknown at the time of writing, but the early implications have been significant. In New Zealand, the lockdown measures and border closure has resulted in economic uncertainty, with higher levels of unemployment and businesses struggling to turn over profit. Other countries who have not chosen to implement stringent lockdown measures have struggled with a high number of COVID-19 cases and deaths (Duncan, 2020).

A general acknowledgement was made that the COVID-19 lockdown measures would pose some challenges for mental health. In New Zealand, for example, there were public health messages encouraging people to care for their wellbeing in the face of the disruption to daily life (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, 2020b).

Mainstream media also focused on the pandemic with a great deal of intensity (Radio New Zealand, 2020), which was echoed within social media. The constant intense focus on the pandemic, the negative impacts that were occurring and a growing uncertainty about further implications throughout the year has characterised the period as one of crisis.

There is however an argument that the contemporary period pre-COVID19 was one of crisis and uncertainty, even for those in privileged countries and positions. Gill (2017) reflects that the contemporary moment presents a:

> dangerous and frightening time, even for those who live in relative comfort in the liberal democracies of the Global North…We are living through the first draft of history…Is this a resurgence of authoritarian populism? Of far-Right nationalism and white supremacism? The collapse of globalisation? A crisis of liberal cosmopolitanism? (p. 608).

As Gill points out, there is an element of the unknown to this experience of crisis, a sense that we are at an introduction point in history.

In the preceding section, I considered how psy discourses constitute an individualised subjectivity, whose great concern is knowing and managing the self. How does this operate in the context of societal crisis? Critics have suggested that an obsession with self-development and therapy in the 1970s, operated to deflect from the heightened engagement in societal and political concerns of the previous decade (Rose, 1999). Calvente & Smicker (2019) argue that

crises of the present, often get reformulated within the media as an everyday occurrence. This framing of crisis as normal positions the conditions and consequences of personal experiences within broader political crisis to represent the failings of some individuals rather than structural, societal issues

The impact of crisis, while felt by more people, remains unevenly distributed and the effects of the crisis on subjectivity differs. Calvente & Smicker (2019) identify three key subjectivities that are formed in relation to crisis. They characterised these as the abject – the embodiment of the figure in crisis for whom with their personal failings are responsible for the situation they find themselves in; the resilient – those that are able to maximise the opportunity the crisis presents, marked by their difference from those that are in crisis; and the recuperable, those that have not been able to maximise their experiences of crisis but have the potential to overcome their conditions and transform themselves into the good, resilient figure.

The resilient figure described by Calvente and Smicker (2019) is reminiscent of the upbeat resilience that Gill and Orgad (2018) found that women are encouraged to embody under the conditions of neoliberalism. Likewise, Calvente and Smicker argue that the crisis subjectivities they identify are shaped within the dominant discourses of neoliberalism and post feminism. This suggests that these dominant discourses continue to maintain their dominance during times of crisis, via the hyper-focus on the individual and obscuring collective societal concerns. It is likely then that the Western experience of the COVID-19 pandemic would have been mediated via neoliberalism and post-feminism.

In Summary

This project is intended to trouble taken for granted ideas about feminine psychological wellbeing contained within content in the Instagram social media context. The neo-liberal, post-feminist sensibility that I recognise in my own Instagram consumption related to psychological wellbeing appears contradictory, characterised by the simultaneous expectations that women are prone to psychological unwellness (McRobbie, 2009), while also striving for a state that surpasses psychological vulnerability (Gill, 2017) through intensive self-monitoring and management.

This project asks how feminine psychological wellbeing has been discursively constructed and re-constructed within the context of Instagram during the COVID-19 crisis period? Are there particular subjectivities addressed within this content and particular subjectivities that are excluded? Is feminine psychological wellbeing within the Instagram context at a time of crisis constructed in ways that draw upon dominant psychological discourse, neoliberalism and post-feminism?

Chapter Three: Methodology

"Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleached bones of a story." - Arundhati Roy (1998)

Epistemology

A critical discourse analysis has been utilised as the approach to address the current research question. My approach in the use of this methodology is grounded in a feminist post-structural epistemological position, one that maintains that discourse, sets of complex social ideologies, shape the experience of reality (Baxter, 2003). Discourses are not neutral understandings, instead power relations operate through them and have material effects on individuals (Gavey, 1989; Gill, 2007).

Using the understandings of post-structuralism, I see psychological wellbeing as not true reflection of an objective state grounded in biological reality; rather psychological wellbeing is instead a set of socially constructed and accepted ideas (Gill, 2007). Shared understandings of what constitutes psychological wellbeing are continually being constructed and reconstructed through the discursive resources available in language and context.

My assumption in this project is that there are discursively constructed ideals for psychological wellbeing that are associated with feminine subjectivities. As a dominant set of ideals that holds contemporary influence over the construction of femininity, neo-liberalism and post-feminism have a significant impact on shaping the construction of feminine psychological wellbeing, as well as psy discourses. As has been highlighted in the literature already, this construction is contradictory, as women are expected to be prone to psychological unwellness (McRobbie, 2009) while also striving for psychological resilience that rejects any kind of psychological vulnerability (Gill, 2017). I also assume that women's wellbeing ideals are made intelligible by their continual reformulation and representation within everyday life, including popular culture. Further, these representations have material effects on subjectivity, that is they impact on our experiences, how we make sense of ourselves and others.

I acknowledge that the accepted understandings under consideration, do not operate in simplistic form or in isolation to shape accepted understandings and subjectivities. Instead understandings are continually shaped and reproduced via context and individuals' agentic positioning. Post-structural theory is attuned to the different subject positions that are produced through discourse, and the interwoven differing levels of power associated with them. From this epistemological position femininity is not a singular or universal experience of subordination. Rather there are a multiplicity of experiences and subject positions for

individuals, who are multiply positioned in subtle and more evident ways according to contradictory and competing discourses of femininity (Baxter, 2003). A weakness of this project is that I have been unable to consider how individual feminine subjects negotiate discourses of psychological wellbeing. Rather I have been limited to identifying the discourses within the content and, guided by my own reflexivity, questioning the potential relationship to subjectivity, without being able to consider how individuals agentically position themselves in relation to this content.

Despite this limitation, the content I have analysed is relevant in shaping subjectivity. Gill (2008) points out that cultural critique has become influenced by the neoliberal emphasis on choice and autonomy, resulting in a steering away from looking at how cultural representations influence subjectivity. Despite this trend, Gill argues that "representations matter…and their relationship to subjectivity is too important for critical scholars to ignore" (p. 435). I do acknowledge that the relationship between the material analysed in this project and subjectivity is complex, this is much more than a matter that representations of ideas having a direct and uncomplicated influence in shaping subjectivity.

While acknowledging the differences in individuals' experience, a post-structural epistemology acknowledges and identifies broader established processes which marginalise femininity. The aim of the approach is to trouble taken for granted ideas, while making space for alternative positions and voices (Baxter, 2003). A post-structural discourse analysis attends to how understandings of feminine psychological wellbeing are being constructed and reproduced by the complex interaction of post-feminism within the context under consideration, Instagram, during a specific point in time, the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Instagram Context

Instagram was chosen as the digital context for this project. Instagram is a social media platform that has current popularity, reaching 1 billion users in 2018 (Ortiz-Ospina, 2018). Instagram was launched in October 2010 by Kevin Systrom, a software developer. Following its launch Instagram quickly gained popularity and in April 2012 the platform was bought by Facebook for $1 billion (Cooper, 2018).

Originally the platform was designed as a repository for curated image-based content that users produced themselves. Users could take, edit, and filter photos within the platform and then post to their personal feed. Posted photos could be liked and commented on by others. Over time some changes have been made to the functionality of the application. Like other platforms, the content that a user is presented on Instagram is now organised according to an algorithm, designed to organise content based on their patterns of content consumption and

support targeted advertising. In 2016, the story feature was added (Cooper, 2018), which allows people to share photos and videos. Images are able to be viewed in the story section for up to 24 hours before disappearing (unless they are saved to a story highlights section). The story feature perpetuates a more intimate engagement with Instagram, as it is often utilised by users to post less curated content than they would to their feed.

Instagram has been subject to criticism and concern. A UK study conducted by the Royal Society for Public Health and the Young Health Movement (2017), called #StatusofMind, found that based on participants' rankings, Instagram was considered to be the most negative social media site in terms of implications for young people's overall health and wellbeing. However, when investigating the impact of taking a break from Instagram, Hanley, Watt, & Coventry (2019) found that Instagram use was correlated with increased positive affect. The differences in these findings suggest that it is worth questioning the relationship between wellbeing and Instagram.

Ethical Considerations

Following discussion with my supervisor and review of the *Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluation Involving Human Participants, Revised* (Massey University, 2017), I prepared a written outline of my project and the ethical considerations associated with the project design. This written outline was reviewed by my supervisor and by academic staff who are members of the Massey HEARTH and EPIC Research cluster. After this review and further discussion, I submitted a notification to the Human Ethics Committee identifying the project as low risk.

There were several ethical considerations to work through as I undertook this project. There is disagreement within academic communities around the ethical use of digital data, as much is freely and publicly available. If postings on the internet are made available for public consumption, is there any need to gain the authors consent for the posting to be included in research? I do not subscribe to the notion that individual's public postings on the internet represents data that falls outside human subject research (Walther, 2002). Individuals post intimate, everyday aspects of their lives within Instagram and are not likely to be mindful of the possibility that these posts could be utilised for research purposes.

However, in terms of public content produced by businesses, media, or organisations, I assumed that the content was not representative of any one individual's experience. Rather my stance was that the public content draws on accepted societal ideals to engage an audience and often, sell products. This was the content I drew on for the purposes of my project. In terms of utilising the public Instagram content, I did not analyse those that are producing the texts, their

business interests, or purposes. The analysis focused on the public content as texts within the online context, utilised to identify discourses through which these texts constitute feminine psychological wellbeing. It was the discursive content that I was am interested in sampling in this project, not human subjects, and their experience.

I was aware at the outset of the project that businesses are often utilising a personal aesthetic in the Instagram environment to promote a sense of authenticity and engage their target market. An example of this is where business will post content drawn from the lives of their staff members or from social media influencers, that the businesses have paid to showcase their products and services within the individual's daily life. Once I collected data, I could see that this was a common practice. I also had to decide how to navigate reposted material, material that may have originated from an individual source but was reposted by business accounts. In the online world, it is often very difficult to find the original source of a post, as content is reshared continually. I decided to include this kind of content in my data collection and analysis, however I would not disclose any individual's identity in my write up research findings.

I was also aware that many individuals use their personal identity to launch a business in digital spaces. A product or service is being sold but it is marketed via the individual sharing aspects of their personal lives. I made the decision to not include these types of accounts in the group that I gathered data from, as these kinds of accounts blur the lines between the personal and commercial. I excluded a group of these posts from the published analysis, as once I took a closer look at the account, I could see that the business owner shared personal content which overlapped with the content I was collecting.

I have also considered how I utilise content from my personal consumption of Instagram. As I recognise, some of this content is produced by individuals. Therefore, while I reflexively drew on my own experience of this content for the project, I have not published the content, made direct quotes, or disclosed the source of these non-public postings.

While my intention is to trouble taken for granted ideas, I have attempted to proceed in a sensitive manner that is culturally and socially responsible, particularly at a unique time of national emergency. Critique was carried out with reflexivity, attending to the complexities of how feminine psychological wellbeing is constructed within Instagram and what is both enabled and constrained for the feminine audience and others, participating within this context.

Data collection

I set out to collect Instagram posts related to psychological wellbeing, during the period that New Zealand was in the first COVID-19 lockdown. The criteria for inclusion was posts related

to psychological wellbeing, that were posted by Instagram accounts associated with media, businesses, or other organisations.

For the purposes of data collection, I set up a new Instagram account and followed 80 Instagram accounts, ensuring these accounts were not personal Instagram accounts. Primarily, these accounts were New Zealand or Australia based, though there were several accounts where the location of the business owning the account was unclear. Most of the data was collected via this Instagram account, intended for the purpose of the research project. However, I included a few posts that I noticed in my personal Instagram consumption, which met the research project data collection criteria.

I trialled data collection for two weeks from the research account to check the feasibility of the approach and ascertain that appropriate data would be available. Comprehensive data collection began on the 27th of April 2020, however retrospectively I went back to collect posts from the 25th of March 2020, to include content from the beginning of the first New Zealand COVID-19 lockdown. I included both Instagram grid posts and stories in the data, however due to the temporary nature of stories, I could only include stories from the 27th of April onwards. IGTV videos were not included in the pool of data, as these long form videos fell out of the scope of appropriate data due to their format. I collected data until the 20th of May, this period encompassed three stages of the New Zealand COVID-19 lockdown; 33 days at Alert Level 4, 17 days at Alert Level 3 and the first 7 days of Alert Level 2.

During the data collection period, I undertook a comprehensive collection of any content posted by these accounts related to psychological wellbeing. My method of collection was to review the feed daily. Instagram has a built-in feature which tells a user when they have viewed all new content on their feed, which enabled me to ensure that I was not missing any potential data. In order to collect the data, I took screenshots of the posts, which I saved a secure digital cloud location.

From this period of data collection, I had collected 672 posts which I reviewed for eligibility. At this point, 43 posts were removed from this data as on review they were not clearly related to the research focus or were duplicates of content that had been shared multiple times. A further, 16 posts were excluded that explicitly focused on intervention for psychological illnesses. At this point I had 613 posts available for analysis.

Data Analysis

Discourse analysis is characterised as not having a prescribed methodology. However the process does have some guiding principles which have been described as a "careful reading of texts…with a view to discerning discursive patterns of meaning, contradictions, and

inconsistencies" (Gavey, 1989, p.467). Reviewing the data pool for eligibility was my first step in the analytic process. I began to develop a high level of familiarity with the data and took notes to help me discern thematic categories

During this process I was able to identify several themes that I used to manually code the data in its entirety. The considerations in the literature review and the data itself informed the development of these thematic categories. I called the first theme I identified, the right thoughts and feelings, posts which talked about particular feelings or ways of thinking. Secondly, there was a theme which I called the self-care prescription, these were posts which detailed how to care for the self, usually to change or maintain the self. I identified a theme where the physical body was the focused, either through body adornment, hormone regulation, nutrition, or exercise. Productivity was another major theme, encompassing posts from messages that it was okay to rest through to detailed lists of tasks to undertake to be productive. Due to the historical context, getting through COVID-19 was another theme. Finally, I identified the many posts referring to finding the self, which I later changed to the relationship with the self, of which finding the self was one aspect. During the coding process, I found that the posts rarely could be coded exclusively into one theme but instead were interconnected. This initial process of reviewing the data corpus and organising into themes was informed by principles of thematic analysis.

Once the entire collection of data was coded, I undertook a closer analysis of a selection of the data. My next stage involved a careful review of the posts, identifying discursive material by making detailed notes about the imagery and text. This stage of analysis involves noticing meaning, interconnections, and contradictions, considering how the data discursively constituted gendered power relations and psychological wellbeing. I was able to identify a number of taken for granted understandings and assumptions within the data set that drew on discursive constructions.

I made the decision, following consultation with my supervisor, that analysing the data in its entirety would be fatiguing and perhaps dull my analytic capacity. Instead I followed a process of a close analysis of the data, eventually reaching a point where I felt that there were no new ideas being identified and that the analysis had reached a sufficient level of saturation. In total the final analysed data set comprised of 285 posts. The analysis was thickened in the process of writing up the results, as I further reflected on and made notes about the content.

I used the functionality of the programme NVIVO to code and make notes on the posts during the data analysis process. However, the analysis of the data was completed manually. This was important to the analysis process as a high level of familiarity with the data was integral to the analysis.

Reflexivity

I am acutely aware that my analysis of the data in this project has been shaped by own subjectivity and associated ways of seeing and making sense of the world. I am a Pākehā, cis-gendered female and see myself as a feminist. My life experiences and education have taught me to question commonly accepted ideas and be open to alternatives.

I use Instagram personally and it was inevitable that I would draw on this experience in my analysis of the data. I aimed to undertake this analysis reflexively, keeping a journal on my own social media use. Perhaps unsurprisingly, during the periods that I was undertaking data collection and analysis, I felt jaded about social media, and generally chose to use my leisure time in other ways. I believe my insider status possibly contributed to the familiarity that I approached the project with and sharpened my analytic lens.

While there are shared understandings of what constitutes psychological wellbeing, my understanding of the concept informs this research project. The data that was collected was gathered based on my recognition of references to psychological wellbeing in the content. Then using my own understandings of psychological wellbeing, I furthered reviewed these posts for eligibility. My analysis and critique are informed by how I have read the data, with a multitude of readings remaining possible.

Finally, at times through my analysis, I noticed that my close analysis of the data led me to have some negative feelings about my own personal circumstances. Writing a thesis can be a challenging and at times overwhelming experience, a year that comes with many personal sacrifices. Within the dataset, I was confronted with repeated images of successful femininity, messages that laid out how one should think, feel, and behave. The messages communicated expectations that I was continually failing to meet throughout the year, as I tried to juggle the challenge of writing a thesis in amongst the other commitments I have in my life. This year I was not the 'can-do girl' (Harris, 2004) who had self-care and self-management under control, as I had to focus on other priorities. For example, the first COVID-19 lockdown in New Zealand was not an opportunity for me to engage in self-care and be productive, as it framed up in the content. Rather the situation presented a challenge for me to revise my initially intended research project, to be able to proceed under restrictions that would be in place for an indeterminate amount of time. It took me some time to develop the insight around the personal impact of spending a significant amount of time focusing on images which depicted successful femininity and this awareness has added another layer to the critical process.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion

"I believe in being strong when everything seems to be going wrong. I believe that

happy girls are the prettiest girls. I believe that tomorrow is another day, and I believe in

miracles." - Audrey Hepburn (n.d.)

As a starting point in the presentation of the analysis and discussion, I have considered who is being addressed in the content and how this address is being made, arguing that the content largely addressed a feminine audience in direct, instructional ways. As this content was collected due to its reference to psychological wellbeing, my analysis proceeded with the view of this content as drawing on understandings of psychological wellbeing that were considered relevant to feminine subjects. Traditionally feminine psychological wellbeing has been constructed, with specific expectations for feminine behaviour which marked feminine subjects as psychologically well (Ussher, 2011).

Following these arguments, I have organised my analysis into several areas. First, I consider the relationship with the self, then go on to consider more specific sites for self-control including feelings, thoughts, and behaviour, with a specific consideration of self-care, the feminine body and productivity. Finally, I consider the expectations for getting through the crisis that the COVID-19 pandemic presents, with psychological wellbeing intact.

Talking to and with Feminine Subjects

A Feminine Audience

At the outset of the research, based upon my own consumption of Instagram I had assumed that a feminine subject would be addressed in the content. However, I did not expect was it to be so overwhelmingly apparent in the analysis that this content is largely addressing a feminine audience. The use of particular colours and imagery reflected that this content drew on stereotypically feminine imagery, describing and depicting feminine subjects. Much of the content was directed towards feminine subjects in ways that ranged from a subtle to an explicit address.

The use of what would be considered a stereotypically feminine colour palette was prevalent throughout the data set. Looking at one or two posts at random, one might say the presence of certain colours was subtle or a coincidence. However, from analysis across the entire data set, it is very clear that the use of colour explicitly positions the data as feminised. There is an onslaught of pink, purple and pastel colours throughout the posts to the point that this is far from coincidental. Colour is far from neutral and the traditionally feminine colours

found in this data set is consistent with the ongoing use of traditionally gendered colours in marketing, which position certain products as being for girls and women (Kearney, 2010).

Emojis were also present throughout the data set and many had the effect of feminising the posts. Emojis are small cartoon images used in computer text language, that have been popularised through phone and online messaging systems. Some research has suggested that emojis are utilised more amongst women, particularly for emotional expression (Alshenqeeti, 2016). Emoji's were certainly used frequently throughout the data set. Within this content, an address to feminine subjects was even more emphasised by the types of emoji's that are used repetitively in the data. The emojis that appeared continually in the analysis included hearts ❤️, rainbows 🌈, hands with nail polish nail 💅 and stars ⭐; all of which could be argued to be associated with more feminine imagery. Sometimes emojis that depict women more explicitly positioned the post as addressing women, such as 💃 and 👩. For example, one post outlined a list of various self-care activities one could undertake for *"self-care Sunday"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020a). The colours used in the imagery included pinks and purples which gave the image a feminine feel. However, it was in the caption that an emoji depicting a feminine head was used more explicitly addressing a feminine audience, alongside a pink heart. Emojis that depicted masculine figures were largely absent from the data analysed.

When the content featured images of physical bodies, these were primarily feminine figures, either illustrated or photographs of real women. In the data analysed, there were three occasions that a masculine figure was depicted. In two of the images they were male experts, with the post detailing their expert advice, providing links for the audience to access more of their expert advice and purchase products (BePure Health, 2020; lululemon NZ, 2020). The third post that featured a masculine figure was illustrated and appeared to represent individuals in a heterosexual relationship (Mental Health Foundation, 2020c). At first look, the post appears to be focused on the importance of interpersonal connection during the Covid-19 lockdown period. The caption encourages the audience to connect with their whānau (family). The image depicts a female sitting in the window of a two-storey house and a masculine figure outside on the ground below looking up to the female figure. This image evokes the fairy tale image of the princess locked in her room with the male figure down below having come to rescue her. The image also evokes the public/private domains, where traditionally the private was the realm of the feminine and the public was considered the masculine. It seems that the illustration would look odd with the figures in opposite positions, as the positioning references heterosexual relationships and traditional gender norms.

An otherwise absence of masculine figures from the data, implies that this material is not addressing a masculine audience. This may be a related to Instagram being a space that is predominated by feminine subjects. The argument has been made that it is women and girls who are called to represent their lives and experiences in online spaces in ways that men and boys are not (Banet-Weiser & Arzumanova, 2013). The absence of masculine figures in content which references psychological wellbeing may have another impact; potentially suggesting that the expectations communicated are not required of masculine subjects or that they are not in need of this advice. Or it may be that there is an understanding that masculine subjects are perhaps not concerned with their psychological wellbeing in the same way that is expected of feminine subjectivity.

That content addressing psychological wellbeing is making an address to feminine subjects effectively supports the persisting construction of the feminine psyche as more vulnerable, requiring more monitoring and management. This is consistent with arguments that have been made about other media such as self-help books (Riley, Evans, Anderson, et al., 2019), which overwhelmingly address a feminine audience, who are expected to be interested in and endeavouring to intervene with their psychological selves (Rutherford, 2018).

The Address - Talking to and With Feminine Subjects

Perceptible tone, language and symbols constituted the content as a particular kind of address to feminine subjects. Predominantly the content addressed the audience directly, prolifically using the word 'you'. Examples include statements like *"you are more resilient than you know"* (Well+Good, 2020a), *"look after yourself the way you'd look after a loved one"* (The Fabulous App, 2020a) and *"spread joy in whatever way you can"* (Health, 2020a). Framing up the messaging in this way effectively gives the audience the sense that they are being spoken to directly.

As well as the address to the audience being direct, the posts were often instructional, telling the audience what they should or should not be doing. At times this was in the form of instructions for behaviour such as *"stay present and stay home"* (Altitude Pole NZ, 2020a), *"unplug from technology and give yourself a mental health break"* (Urban List NZ, 2020a) or *"grab a cup of tea, your favourite essential oil and put on a face mask"* (Arbonne Australia and New Zealand, 2020a). Instructions for what not to do were also present, such as a post which presented a *"To Don't List"* on a pink background with instructions that included "*Don't compare yourself to others*" and *"Don't lose hope"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020b). These kinds of instructions communicated expectations for the behaviour that constituted psychological wellbeing throughout the content, effectively telling the audience what to do to meet these expectations.

There was also a call for the audience's attention within the content. One of the ways this was constituted was via the repetitive use of imagery such as signs. For example, one post talked about the need to be proud of oneself, portrayed within the depiction of a sign that was reminiscent of an A-frame sandwich board such as might be seen outside a shop front (The Kindness Institute, 2020a). Another post shows a road sign on a pink background. The road sign states *"Don't overthink and drive"* (The Fabulous App, 2020b). This statement plays on the kinds of signs one might see along the road exhorting one to not drink and drive, conjuring up the idea that the post is synonymous with an important road safety message. There is an element of potential danger in not following the instruction, what is implied here is that overthinking is risky like drink-driving. Posts were also portrayed as written notes (The Yoga Travel Co, 2020a) and notices stuck to a message board (The Self-Love Club, 2020c). These constructed a need to pay attention, that important information was being communicated within the content.

Another strategy that constituted need for the audience to pay attention to the content was the acronym "PSA", meaning "public service announcement". One example was a post which stated, *"Friendly PSA: It's encouraged to take rest days (even in quarantine)"* (Well + Good, 2020b). Another post says, *"Your mid-week PSA 📕 Nurture others and yourself too"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020d). Not only does the public service announcement reference a need to pay attention and take notice of what was being said, it also implies that the content in an act of service for the audience. There was a sense that there was at least some benefit associated with consuming the content.

There was also an implied sense that the content was a conversation with the audience, not just messages for them to consume. At times this was communicated via asking questions of the audience and requests for the audience to contribute their thoughts to the conversation via the comments section. The use of slang and at times swear words were also present. These strategies contributed to an overall conversational tone to the data set, a sense that these posts were created by feminine subjects, for feminine subjects, who were talking with one another like women do. This is consistent with the work Kanai (2019a) has carried out analysing Tumblr blogs, identifying that there is a tone within these blogs that communicates a feminine relatability and the sense of girlfriends talking with one another in friendly ways that they understand.

The sense of girlfriendly talk is more present than that of an expert address. Professional experts were present within the data, however it was clear that psychological wellbeing was not exclusively the realm of the professional. Rather there was equal or greater value placed on speaking from personal experience, something which in some cases was one's claim to expertise

rather than a formal qualification per se. Experiential expertise could be seen as a refreshing shift away from the formal expertise that has dominated psychological knowledge. Whether expertise was formal or earnt through personal experience expertise was not shared equally between the audience and the poster. The power dynamic of expert/non-expert was still maintained however, as there was a level of expert address in the posts to the audience. At times, the audience were asked to contribute their ideas, in the more conversational tone mentioned above, however largely there was an underlying assumption that the audience would take benefit from the messages being communicated. Feminine subjects are positioned as the appropriate audience by both the presentation and address of the posts, so that the content (which is analysed in subsequent sections) is clearly intended to be consumed by feminine subjects.

The Relationship with the Self

There were a group of posts where feminine psychological wellbeing was synonymous with what was generally referred to as being in a good relationship with the self. This rested on the idea that we all have an internal self (Hook, 2007), that is present and available to be in relationship with and that this internal, individual self was highly influential over all aspects of our lives. In my analysis of the data-set, I found this one of the more challenging areas to unpack and analyse, largely due to the vagueness that characterised how the self was referred to, even though these references were frequent. I believe that this suggests that the relationship with the self is positioned discursively as taken for granted throughout this content. Broadly, though, these posts encompassed 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988) including getting to know or finding the self, working on the self and one's behaviour towards oneself.

It was clear within the content that there was a dominant ideology that a relationship with the self was a primary concern for the audience. One post goes so far as to say, *"The most important relationship you will ever be in is the one you are in with yourself"* (Sanity & Self, 2020a). Here the relationship with the self is explicitly positioned as a relationship of the utmost importance. The implied understanding is that relationships with others should be less important than the relationship that feminine subjects have with themselves.

It was also discursively constructed that relationships with others will fall short of the relationship with oneself, for example one post states *"Do not look for sanctuary in anyone except yourself"* (The Yoga Travel Co., 2020b). This post was accompanied by a photo a feminine subject bending down in a forward fold yoga pose. The image is close up and the effect is that one can just see half of her legs, half of her arms and some of her long hair hanging down. This

is evocative of someone closing into themselves, folding their body up so that others cannot see or talk to them.

Posts which posit a normative understanding that focusing on the self is a priority draw on neoliberal ideals of individualism. Individualism underpins the establishment of a focus on the individual self, coming before a focus on others as a taken for granted, understandable norm of behaviour (Becker & Marecek, 2008). This is in keeping with expectations of the neoliberal, modern world and perhaps offers comfort to some, who have been let down by others. The individual self is positioned as accessible and controllable, whereas other people may not be. However, the value of individualism draws on a very particular set of Western values and is at odds with different more collectivist value systems, which would suggest that the relationship with others should be prioritised.

The external world is at times positioned as a detractor in this content, something that can steer oneself away from their true selves. For example, one post shares a quote from author Shannon Alder saying, *"One of the greatest regrets in life is being what others would want you to be, rather than being yourself"* (Woman Be Kind, 2020a). This statement draws on the understanding that others may have competing expectations which do not align with being oneself, or who one truly is. Another post asks, *"Who were you, before you were told to change?"* (The Oh Nine, 2020). This post also draws on the understanding that there is a true self, one that that can be changed or influenced by outside forces. There is an implied undesirable aspect to not being one's true self in this post and in the preceding post not being oneself is explicitly positioned as one of life's greatest regrets. A stable, knowable self was implied in these posts, as the messages draw on ideas of authenticity and being true to oneself. A value on authenticity is consistent with other arguments that authenticity has a high level of cultural value, as the concept has been co-opted within a neoliberal framework as a branding strategy both for marketable products and individuals (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

In contradiction, a changing self was also referred to as desirable in the content. For example, a post quotes author Jack Kornfield stating, *"We as human beings have this amazing capacity to be reborn at breakfast every day and say, "This is a new day, who will I be?""* The accompanying caption states:

> *There is always grass that pushes itself through the cracks in the sidewalk. You are this life force constantly being reborn every morning at breakfast. We are consciousness itself, loving awareness, born into this body and having a wild human ride. What will you do with this human dance?* (East West Yoga, 2020).

This statement suggest that the self is not static, but rather constantly evolving and changing. There is some freedom implied here, in that there is room to move and ongoing possibility for new ways of being. Simultaneously the self that is always changing is compatible with the concept of continual effort on the self.

An assumed deficit was also referred to at times in the content that referenced the relationship with the self. For example, a post says *"That gaping hole you felt inside that you once thought could only be filled by a partner can only be filled by you. It's a cry for you to return back to yourself"* (Sanity & Self, 2020b). The reference here to a *"gaping hole"* inside of oneself, assumes a deficit, until such time as they have returned to themselves and invested in the relationship with the self. Another post frames up a relationship with an inner child with an assumed painful deficit stating, *"Your inner child doesn't need you to tell her it's going to be okay because it doesn't feel okay for her. She needs to know that you see her and the pain she's experiencing"* (mindbodygreen, 2020a). The inner child draws on psychotherapeutic understandings that have entered into common rhetoric, that the experiences of childhood remain through to adulthood and in many cases require healing (Hook, 2007).

Assumed deficit was further emphasised as consistently the relationship with the self was one that was framed up as requiring regular effort and intervention. The first demand for effort was in finding the self. The self was positioned at times as not easily available for this relationship, but rather something that one had to go looking for or dig deep to find. One post suggests that the audience should *"Dive in, deep in your mind and focus on what is underneath"* (aim'n Australia & NZ, 2020a). These kinds of messages evoke the idea that looking for the authentic, true self is part of the effort required for a good relationship with the self. When unpacking the neoliberal emphasis on confidence, Gill & Orgad (2015) argued that there is model of implied deficit at work within media descriptions of the internal self of women. This deficit is blamed for any difficulties that women may experience in the world, which obscures experiences of injustice, and mandates women to work on their psychological selves.

There was also the understanding that there may be aspects of the self that the audience is not aware of, which the content was pointing out to them. For example, one post states *"You are more resilient than you know"* (Well+Good, 2020a) . Anther post has a similar message stating, *"Believe in yourself. You are braver than you think, more talented than you know, and capable of more than you imagine"* (RHIND, 2020). This draws upon the idea that there are aspects of self that are not always apparent to the individual. Implied is a constant possibility to get to know the self and carry out internal work.

Knowing the self was presented as synonymous with intervening with the self, though the details of what the intervention entailed at times were somewhat vague. There were

repeated assumed benefits in knowing and intervening with the self. One post draws on the idea of healing by quoting the poet Xan Oku who stated, *"Water the root and the whole tree grows strong. Heal your soul and your whole life will blossom"* (Ara Studios, 2020a). This statement draws on the idea of the self as the root of identity, something in the depths of the person that is fundamental and equivalent to a soul, something that can be looked after or healed. The self that is being cared for or healed is positioned as below the surface, and the carer is much like a gardener that takes care of the plant's needs below the ground so the plant can bloom. This post also draws on the idea that intervening with the depths of the self is directly related to attaining success in one's whole life.

Likewise, another post draws on the concept of gardening. The picture in the post shows simplistic black line drawings of flowers on a pastel pink background. The text accompanying the picture states:

> *Put in the time, effort and attention and you will REAP the benefits. Just like the seed we plant and nourish that grows into a beautiful flower, so too can you. Treat yourself with love, learn about your body, what feels good, what nourishes you, what makes you bloom - then do more of it* (Women Be Kind, 2020b).

Here again, intervening with the self is implied to be akin to growing a plant, something that requires *"time, effort and attention"* with resulting external benefits. There is a requirement for consistent self-management implied here, the *"do more of it"* exhorts the audience to engage in repeated behaviour to reap the benefits of their effort. The underlying message is that if one is not reaping the benefits, this is an individual responsibility, as they are likely not putting in the required consistent effort.

As well of interventions of consistent effort and delving deep, implied interventions were behaviours that would result in success and realising one's full potential. One post states simply and directly, *"Your potential is endless"* (Good Magazine, 2020a). Within content that focuses heavily on the right relationship with the self, these kinds of messages draw on the idea that feminine success is always there, an essence or potential, that the individual is required to tap into within the self. This assumed potential is reminiscent of the post-feminist 'can-do girl' (Harris, 2004) who holds inherent capacity for success.

Along with finding the self and tapping into one's potential, there were repeated suggestions for how one should treat the self. Kindness was especially emphasised in this content, there were repeated exhortations to be kind to the self. Kindness is a socially valued behaviour, particularly for feminine subjects. The reoccurrence of kindness also reflects the

COVID-19 public health messaging at the time which directly encouraged people to be kind (Martin-Anatias, 2020). Other instructions for treating the self, comprised behaviours such as being patient with the self (The Self-Love Club, 2020e), loving the self (Sanity & Self, 2020c), being proud of the self (The Kindness Institute, 2020a) and not engaging in self-criticism (The Self-Love Club, 2020b).

Rules for treating the self are reflective of socially accepted and moral behaviour for treating others (Ahmed, 2010). At times how one treats the self was explicitly positioned as being interconnected with how one treats others. For example, the post that suggests that one should be patient with themselves, mentioned above, goes on to advise the audience to *"be mindful of this (patience) in your dealings with others"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020e). Another example states *"Be kind to yourself, then let your kindness fill the world. Kindness to yourself and others always"* (Ara Studio NZ, 2020b). The implied understanding here is that the rules for treating the self, are also appropriate rules for treating others. Even though the self was positioned as a fundamental relationship of concern, these posts still reference the relational responsibilities feminine subjects are typically expected to fulfil. This is reflective of other arguments that women's relationship with self is positioned as a foundation for relationships with others (Becker, 2005).

There is also an idea that the quality of the self is directly related to the quality of those one is surrounded with or attracts into their lives. For example, a post states *"Be the energy you want to attract"* (Tuesday Label, 2020a). This draws an assumption that people attract others into their lives due to the energy they exude from their internal self. There is an implied responsibility in that those who are attracted into one's lives reflect the quality of the self. This encourages self-development, being better to attract those that are also striving to be better. However, this idea is potentially harmful as well, due to the implied responsibility. What if the relationships one has in their lives are or become harmful, abusive, or challenging? By positioning the quality of the self as related to the quality of those in one's life, assumes that there is some failing on the part of the individual if their relationships are not healthy, safe, or fulfilling.

Posts also replicate traditional gender expectations for feminine subjects to take on a caring role. However, this has been reformulated within the neoliberal ideology of individualism. The expectations of care are first directed to the self, the feminine subject should care for the self as a fundamental relationship, in a similar way that traditionally feminine subjects have had to take on caring for others. Emotional labour is taken on for the self rather than out of responsibility to others. Gill & Kanai (2018) pointed out that positioning caring for others as an act that willingly is taken on for the benefit of the self, re-entrenches gendered expectations of

emotional labour. In this content, this seems to be reflected in the positioning of the relationship with self as foundational in being able to respond to others in a caring and kind manner.

A positive relationship with self is variously positioned as being beneficial to others. One post states *"Knowing your worth is contagious."* In the caption the post goes on to say, *"And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear our presence automatically liberates others"* (Worthwild, 2020). This post is suggesting that the relationship with self has powerful potential, where purely one's presence and confidence in themselves can be an act of service to others. This is somewhat confusing and contradictory as the individualism that is celebrated in this content, is also positioned as being part of the responsibility of relationships with others. The implication is also that if one has a negative relationship with the self, their interactions with others will also be negative.

It seemed that the good relationship with the self was implied as synonymous with psychological wellbeing. A good relationship with self was continually positioned as holding the key to a good life partly as I have already mentioned through assumed benefits such as *"your whole life will blossom"* (Ara Studios, 2020a). By positioning the relationship with the self as fundamental, in messages such as *"the most important relationship you will ever be in is the one you are in with yourself"* (Sanity & Self, 2020a) other relationships are secondary. This suggests that if a positive relationship with the self is not in place then an individual will not be able to be fully satisfied no matter how good other relationships in their lives may be.

Largely the relationship with self was drawn on in ways that suggested that a good relationship with the self was crucial to the psychological wellbeing of feminine subjects and having a good life. Engaging in the relationship with the self-required constant effort, whether that involved searching for the self or intervening in some way. The quality of relationship with self was constituted as being interconnected with relational responsibilities to others.

In the content that drew on the relationship with the self, at times there seemed to be an implication that there is more at stake here than one's own wellbeing. The emphasis of the self may be a reflection of the self-branding that is encouraged in the digital context, which is interconnected with the ideal post-feminist self, one that is empowered, independent and making free choices. Both neoliberalism and post-feminism have been implicated in the emphasis on finding, cultivating and displaying a self-brand which is communicable to others (Banet-Weiser, 2011). It is possible that developing a self-brand has been reformulated in this content as related to a well-lived life and feminine psychological wellbeing.

This content assumed that looking inward was a desirable and enjoyable experience. This may be enabling in times of uncertainty and fear when the external world does not offer

much comfort. Considering the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the self and not on others could be a protective mechanism if the individual is someone who has the privilege of being minimally affected by the crisis. The emphasis on individualism does however obscure and minimise the importance of being mindful of others, the value of relationships with others and the potential shared benefits of social responsibility.

Further, the good relationship with the self, described in this content drew on accepted ideas of feminine success and individualism which are unlikely to be consistent with all value systems. The positive relationship with the self was also positioned as one of individual responsibility, which effectively put the blame on the individual if they did not meet the vague expectations of continued effort, knowing and having a good relationship with the self. It was assumed that feminine subjects had the resources, time, and desire to invest in a relationship with the self.

This is how to think and feel

I now turn to considering how thoughts and feelings were constituted in the content. Broadly thoughts and feelings were framed up as areas for monitoring, intervention, and control. Statements about thoughts and feelings abounded in the content, to the extent that this was the thematic category with the greatest number of posts in the early stages of the data analysis.

Thoughts and feelings were generally referred to in ways that positioned them as distinct, with some similarities and a relationship to one another. Both thoughts and feelings were positioned as internal experiences that the individual had some level of control over. There was a relationship between the two, how one thinks was referred to as being influential over how one feels. For example, one post states *"You are only as happy as you make your mind up to be"* (aim'n Australia & NZ, 2020b). There is an understanding drawn on in this post that emotional experiences are distinct from what happens in the mind, as the emotion is a result of thinking in a particular way. The understanding is that one can make their mind up to be happy, they can make a decision via a cognitive process that impacts on their emotions. This understanding draws upon the therapeutic psy-discourse that inform therapies such as Cognitive Behaviour Theory, which maintains the theory that changing thoughts and behaviour has a direct influence over emotional experience.

How to feel

First, I will outline the analysis of content that referenced emotional experiences or feelings. Feelings were positioned as acceptable and acknowledged in the content. There was a group of posts in the content that made references to normalising experiences of emotion.

Examples included posts which stated, *"It's okay to feel however you are feeling"* (NZ Mental Health Foundation, 2020e) and *"Your feelings are valid"* (Lorna Jane Activewear, 2020). These posts referenced ideas that there is something wrong with emotionality and reframed these ideas by saying that all feelings are acceptable. These messages potentially align with broader health promotion goals which aim to destigmatise the experience of mental health issues and open the conversation about psychological wellbeing.

However, alongside exhortations that it was okay to feel in whatever way one might be feeling there was more subtle messages which could be critiqued for perpetuating the idea perhaps not all feelings are understandable and acceptable. Words to describe feelings were prevalent throughout the data set. Certain emotional experiences were continually referred to in the data, in particular stress, guilt, anxiety, overwhelm, happiness, gratitude, and mindfulness. The effect of this repetition of certain emotional experiences is that they are positioned as understandable, shared, and acceptable. This is further emphasised by the curious absence of other emotional experience such as excitement, anger, jealousy, or shame. In the analysis, it was clear that the acknowledged emotions were positioned as desirable and undesirable.

A taken for granted understanding was operating here that feminine psychological wellbeing was characterised by the presence of the desirable feelings and a lack of the undesirable feelings. There is also the assumption that these emotions as desirable or undesirable is a shared understanding, something that is unquestioned and taken for granted throughout the content.

Desirable feelings were positioned as desirable in that they were referred to in ways that implied they were worth working towards or maintaining. There were many emotions that were positioned as desirable in the data set, but a few were repeated throughout the content and warrant a specific mention.

There is much emphasis in society on the search for happiness (Ahmed, 2010), so it was unsurprising that happiness was referred to in the content as a desirable emotion. Happiness was referred to several times as a decision, something that one could make their mind up to have in the present moment. The post that stated *"you are only as happy as you make your mind up to be"* (aimn Australia & NZ, 2020b) was not the only example of happiness as a decision. For example one post encourages the audience to *"find happy now"* through listening to a podcast presented by a therapist which teaches *"how to find the good in the now, how to stop negative self-talk from limiting your happiness and how a change in perspective can lead to an abundance of happiness"* (Sanity & Self, 2020d). Happiness is assumed here to be desirable, there is no question that the audience wants to find an *"abundance of happiness."* Happiness is also very much located as the result of thinking in the right way, whether that is how one understands

their situation by finding *"the good in the now"* and *"change in perspective"* or their internal dialogue by *"stopping negative self-talk".* These kinds of statements are explicitly positioning happiness as a personal commitment, under the control of the individual by controlling how they think. The implied message is that unhappiness is a personal responsibility as it is the result of the individual not having made up their mind to be happy or not exercising control over their thinking.

The feeling of calm, relaxation or presence was positioned as highly desirable throughout this content. For example, one post explicitly states *"Calm is a superpower"* (AWWA, 2020). This clearly positions feeling calm as desirable, almost to the point which could suggest that feeling calm has far-reaching effects. The use of the word superpower also implies some rarity to feeling calm, which suggests that calm is possibly a hard feeling to maintain or that not many can feel calm.

There was an understanding that there were certain behaviours that could result in a feeling of calm. A post shows the crossed legs of a feminine figure sitting on a bed and their arms holding a mug of tea. The rest of their body is cut off in the frame of the picture and on the bed is a magazine, a tube of cream which looks like a beauty product and a small bottle which looks like an essential oil. The accompanying caption states, *"Let's take a moment this week to relax and create a sense of calm. Grab a cup of tea, your favourite essential oil and pop on a face mask"* (Arbonne Australia New Zealand, 2020a). The message here is that calm can be created by engaging in certain practices. However as with happiness, if calm is controllable, then it becomes the individual's responsibility if they are not able to maintain the feeling.

Gratitude was another feeling that was repeatedly mentioned and positioned as desirable. Within the content gratitude was positioned as both a feeling and a practice. This explicitly positions deliberate behaviour or thinking processes as resulting in feelings, the audience is in control of whether they feel grateful as to their engagement in the practice of gratitude. For example, one post states, *"Take a minute to be grateful for everything that isn't completely shit right now"* (The Kindness Institute, 2020b). The message here is that gratitude can be deliberate, something that one decides to do. This may position gratitude ambiguously as a feeling, a behaviour or a way of thinking.

One post explicitly positions gratitude as a cure for undesirable emotions, further drawing on the understanding this emotion is a consequence of deliberate practice. The post pictures a prescription pill bottle with the words *"Gratitude Rx."* Rx is a term used for medical prescription. The remainder of the text on the bottle reads as instructions for use as well as possible side-effects, *"Take a dose every morning. May cause shifts in perspective. May cause feelings of abundance. Decreased feelings of fear and anxiety"* (mindbodygreen, 2020b). This

post suggests that the audience can choose to take gratitude in much the same way that one would take anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medication. The implication is that unlike these medications, gratitude only has desirable side-effects. Taking a dose every morning implies an individual decision to feel gratitude. A gratitude prescription is certainly accessible – one does not necessarily need to buy anything in order to engage in a practice of gratitude (though it is possible to buy things like gratitude journals). While one may not necessarily feel genuine gratitude by deciding to do so, anyone could make a list of things that they feel they should or could feel gratitude for. However, positioning gratitude as akin to a medical prescription is perhaps overinflating the practice.

There is an acknowledged possibility that the emotions positioned as desirable and positive might not always be available to the feminine subject. For example, one post shows an illustration of a laptop, in amongst multiple objects, including coffee, fruit, motivational quotes, candle, self-help books and flowers. The objects and the pink background are suggestive of a feminine home office space. At the centre of the image is the laptop screen which has the words, *"It's not realistic to be happy all the time, no matter what all the motivational quotes on the Internet say"* (Vitals, 2020). This post suggests that other content on the Internet wrongly promotes the idea that permanently maintaining desirable emotions at all times is possible. This was not necessarily what the analysis in this project found, rather the shared understanding in much of the content seemed to be that continuing to work on having the desirable emotions was realistic. Within this post, the objects also imply understanding that at times desirable emotions may not be readily available. For example, the quote pinned to the wall in the image says, *"It is okay to not be okay",* there is another picture of the word NO and finally the label on the candle has the words *"BURNT OUT CLUB".* This kind of imagery expresses the need for respite, potentially consistent with the gendered expression of unwellness as a break from the expectations of successful femininity.

This post, like others that represent the emotions that are positioned as undesirable, does present a lack of desirable emotions as time limited. Happiness is presented as an implied default that is not realistic to always maintain. There is an implicit message that it is realistic to be happy some of the time. Posts like this allow some space for the expression of negative affect for periods of time. From analysis of Tumblr blogs, another digital context, Kanai (2019a) contended that while a some undesirable feelings are permissible, women are expected to remain in proximity to an ideal and likeable self, which is consistently mediated through the norms of post-feminism and neoliberalism. A happy, serene femininity is still positioned as the norm (Negra, 2009), something that is not realistic to maintain all the time, yet the desired affect to be maintained most of the time.

As with the desirable emotions, there were several undesirable emotions that were repeatedly referred to throughout the data set. The experience and expression of some negative emotions such anxiety, stress, guilt and overwhelm are regularly acknowledged throughout the data. Stress was often referred to throughout, constructed as a common, understandable experience. One post pictured the back of a feminine figure, sitting on a beach looking out at the ocean. The caption states *"It is totally understandable if you're feeling a bit stressed out"* (Urban List NZ, 2020a). Stress was continually positioned as an emotion that required management via self-care strategies. For example, one post starts off with the words *"when you feel stress…"* and goes on to list self-care activities such as self-reflection, rest, social connection, cleaning and simple behaviours such as having a bath or making a cup of tea (Health, 2020b). Stress for the feminine subject being addressed was an inevitable experience, an emotion that was a part of everyday life, not a matter of if they would experience it, but when. Readers could keep this inevitable emotion at bay via self-care and self-management. This is consistent with other arguments that the experience of stress is constructed in Western society as being mediated by gender and has been incorporated into the feminine experience (Becker, 2005; Ussher, 2011).

Anxiety was another feeling that was repeatedly referred to in the content and was assumed to be undesirable. Anxiety was positioned alongside stress as a normalised negative emotional experience. For example, a post states that *"our bodies feel the brunt of our mental health long before the symptoms of stress and anxiety reach our minds"* (The Urban List NZ, 2020b). This statement draws on an idea that stress and anxiety are experienced in the body prior to cognitive awareness of the feelings. Both are positioned as understandable, normal experiences that the audience may not be aware of having. They are also positioned as undesirable by the use of the words *"brunt"* which implies a negative effect and *"symptoms"* which is suggestive of an illness.

Another post advises the audience, *"When you wake up: Take 5 seconds to breathe and not let anxiety overwhelm you"* (The Women's Collective, 2020). There is an assumption here that the feminine subject knows and is familiar with the experience of overwhelming anxiety. The post does not frame the experience up as a potential, rather it is given an almost everyday quality with the positioning of the effort to manage anxiety *"when you wake up"*.

Anxiety was also positioned as characterising the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example a post refers to *"times of anxiety and uncertainty"* (The Fabulous App, 2020c). While not explicitly referenced in the post, COVID-19 was omnipresent in this content. The understanding that is drawn upon is that the time period is anxiety provoking and uncertain. On the flipside, a calm presence was drawn on as particularly aspirational for the times. For

example, the caption accompanying the post stating *"Calm is a superpower"* goes on to ask, *"How are you staying calm during lockdown?"* (AWWA, 2020). Lockdown is positioned as a threat to calmness here, however there is an assumption that the feminine subject would work to manage their emotional response.

The positioning of negative feelings as understandable and familiar is consistent with McRobbie (2009b) arguments that a gendered melancholia has become attached to expectations for femininity. When experiences of stress and anxiety are positioned as every-day, expected and understandable experiences associated with femininity, there is cause for alarm. We need to question why it is considered normal for feminine subjects to have these experiences (Rutherford, 2018).

Positioning emotions as being under one's control could have the enabling effect that subjects are positioned as being able to influence their affective experience and are not enslaved to their emotional experience. It is possible that this offers comfort to those that are experiencing negative emotions in that there is an understanding that they can take a level of control and change their experience. However, those that lack the skills, ability, or energy to manage their emotions are positioned as not meeting expected norms and are likely to experience sanctions around expressing undesirable emotions and their behaviour. There are also potential repercussions for expressing emotions that are outside the realm of those that are positioned as understandable and acceptable as well as reiteration of individual responsibility for meeting normative expectations.

Acceptable emotions in this context reflect the feeling rules for successful femininity and psychological wellbeing. Feminine psychological wellbeing is continually positioned in this context as expressing a positive affect. Even though some negative affect is permissible at times, it requires management. The repetitive referencing of certain feelings also positions these experiences as relatable. There is a sense that these are emotions that are shared and positioned as a collective experience.

How to think

As I have pointed out thoughts were positioned as being related to feelings, particularly in that thinking in particular ways influences the feelings experienced by the feminine subject. Thoughts present another site for the feminine subject to exert control over. Much like feelings, particular thoughts were positioned as being desirable or undesirable. More so than feelings, one's thoughts are explicitly positioned as being within the individual's control.

Thoughts were presented as an important aspect of the feminine subject's experience of life. One post shows the words *"Mindset is everything"* on a pale pink background. The caption

goes on to talk about a *"positive mindset"* and *"conscious thinking"* and how they can tell you *"how to reinvent yourself for success"* (Tuesday Label, 2020b). This draws on the idea that thinking is a fundamental to how one approaches and experiences life. The post positions thought processes as an element for success, to change the self which draws on an implied deficit since here is a need for the audience to *"reinvent yourself for success".* The audience is positioned as needing to change their thinking so as to be successful, which is their individual responsibility.

The same post (Tuesday Label, 2020b) also draws on positivity with the mention of a *"positive mindset"*, a way of thinking that was continually encouraged throughout the content. Generally, the audience were exhorted to be positive in ways that suggested there was a shared understanding of what positivity meant. Beyond multiple exhortations to *"Stay positive"* (aim'n Australia & NZ, 2020c) and maintain a *"positive mindset"* (Tuesday Label 2020b) there is an assumption that the audience knew what was required of them to fulfill these imperatives. Implied within these instructions is an unshakeable focus on the good in everything. Emphasis on positivity in these posts is consistent with other research (Favaro, 2017a) which argued that positivity is inextricably bound with the post-feminist sensibility and the demands of successful femininity. Positivity has also had a moment as a result of the popularity of positive psychology, which ignores structural barriers to wellbeing (Becker & Marecek, 2008), such as racism or socioeconomic status.

Being instructed to work on a positive mindset, implies that there are challenges facing the feminine subject who needs to do the work on themselves. Deficit thought processes were drawn on explicitly as the barrier to positivity. One post stated, *"Your thoughts are being mean to you…you are so much more than your thoughts"* (The Kindness Institute, 2020c). Another post said, *"Don't treat your thoughts as facts"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020b). Unless thoughts reflected the celebrated positive mindset, the feminine subject was instructed to not take their thoughts too seriously, which implied they were likely to be negative or unhelpful. Constructing thoughts as negative is consistent with deficit constructions of the feminine self (Gill & Orgad, 2015).

Seeing as feelings of serenity, calm and presence were valued, it was perhaps unsurprising that feminine subjects were encouraged to manage their thoughts in order to maintain a state of calm presence. Statements like *"All we have is now"* (Good Magazine, 2020b) encouraged subjects to focus their thoughts on the present. They were advised to not focus on uncertainty or think too much. For example, a post explicitly exhorts the audience *"Don't overthink"* (The Fabulous App, 2020b). This implied that there was some level of risk for the feminine subject if they were to engage in excessive thinking.

Negative thoughts were positioned as being less permissible than emotions, which may be reflective of the discourse that thoughts are controllable or can be ignored. While encouragement to maintain a positive mindset and not engage in negative thought patterns may be helpful at times, an implied deficit was present as feminine subjects were encouraged to not take their thoughts too seriously or engage in the risky behaviour of too much thinking.

Managing for others

The exhortation to work towards and maintain desirable feelings and thoughts not just impacted the feminine subject being addressed, but also was linked to her relationships with others. For example, one post states, *"Spread joy in whatever way you can! What's keeping you positive right now?"* (Health, 2020a). Here the encouragement is not just to find what makes one positive but also to spread positive affect to others by whatever way one can. This encourages the feminine subject entering relationships with others in ways that are positive and likely feel good for both parties. However, the effect is also that undesirable emotions are less acceptable in relationships with others. This could invite the feminine subject to attempt to mask less desirable emotions, in attempts to remain appealing to others and fulfill relational responsibilities (Becker, 2005).

The other possible effect of this understanding is that those able to maintain desirable thoughts and feelings were positioned as being desirable for relationships as well. An example suggests that one should surround themselves with *"the inspired, the passionate, the motivated, the grateful, the open-minded"* (Natural Things NZ, 2020). These certainly sound like uplifting people to be surrounded by. But how does this work when it is also acknowledged that maintaining the desirable thoughts and feelings is sometimes difficult or entirely unrealistic? The advice to surround the self with people who think and feel in particular ways, also suggests that this is how one should be for others to want to relate with you. The implication is that not being surrounded by the 'right kind' of others is related to a personal failing of not maintaining the right thoughts and feelings to attract them.

Overall, the psychologically well feminine subject was managing their thoughts and feelings. This management enabled them to ward off thoughts and feelings that were positioned as undesirable. This is consistent with Gill & Kanai's (2018) arguments that self-management and personal development under the conditions of neoliberalism is about maintaining the "right feelings" (p. 321). Psychological wellbeing meant exuding happiness, a serene calmness, a deep sense of gratitude and a positive outlook. Stress, anxiety, and negative thoughts were inevitable and permissible for finite periods, though the feminine subject was expected to engage in the required self-management in order to return to a state of the right thoughts and feelings. The

presence of undesirable thoughts and feelings reinforced the precarity of psychological wellbeing for the feminine subject and a potential vulnerability to unwellness. It has been argued previously that psychological vulnerability is incorporated into the experience of femininity. This adds to the emotional burden for feminine subjects as they are still expected to manage this vulnerability in order to not appear too unwell (McRobbie 2009). The assumption evident in this content was that it was the feminine subject's responsibility to manage their thoughts and feelings, as they were culpable for any failure to do so in a way that met the prescribed expectations.

Relatable, understandable thoughts and feelings drawn on in this content and positioned as shared experiences, are reminiscent of the research Kanai (2019a) has undertaken analysing Tumblr blogs. Kanai argues that the positioning of some emotional experiences as relatable, while creating normative affect, operates to create a sense of belonging for audience which invites them to manage their experiences rather than be overwhelmed by struggles. The mention and repetition of some thoughts and feelings, constructed them as understandable, acceptable, and expected. Therefore, feminine subjects are encouraged in this content to manage their thoughts and feelings proactively, which could position them as better able to care for themselves and not alone in their experiences. However, there does appear to be an absence of encouragement to connect with others and engage in action to address the social conditions that maintain the proportion feminine experiences of negative emotions such as stress and anxiety.

There is also the question of the impact for those that are not able to meet these expectations of the right thoughts and feelings. Feminine subjects who are unable to maintain a mostly positive, happy, and serene outlook were positioned as deficit in this content. Likewise, some feelings and thoughts were explicitly positioned as deficit or implicitly positioned as deficit since they were missing in the content. I believe that feminine subjects are unable to meet these expectations at all times, and some subjectivities, such as those who are managing a depressed self (Chowdhury, 2020), would find this even more difficult.

The Self-Care Prescription

Self-care was also frequently explicitly referenced in the content, generally in ways that encouraged the audience to engage in self-care behaviours and providing suggestions for the types of behaviour that constituted the act of self-care. Self-care was referred to in ways that assumed that the audience were personally familiar with the meaning of the term. Self-care behaviours were often referred to within the content as interconnected with the right thoughts

and feelings. In this content self-care was continually positioned as the behaviours required to maintain the appropriate thoughts and feelings for feminine subjects.

One common type of post found within the content was a list of self-care behaviours. For example, one post lists multiple options for self-care as follows; *"bubble bath, body brushing, pancakes, champagne…green smoothie, yoga mat, cups of tea, books…massage oil, silk robe, candles, face mask…rose quartz, meditation, distance reiki, journal…home dance parties, coffee, podcasts, kettlebell"* (Eve Wellness by BePure, 2020a). The audience is invited to choose their preferred self-care options and share in the comments section. Consumption of some kind is heavily drawn upon in this content. Many of the options here are actual products such as champagne, yoga mats, silk robes, candles, and the presentation of the list format is reminiscent of a shopping list. Meditation could be a possible exception, in that one does not necessarily require a product to engage in the activity of meditation. However, the critique has been made that meditation and other mindfulness based activities have been commodified as they have entered into popular culture (Hyland, 2016). There are a plethora of meditation programmes and classes that are available for a fee. Even the wording in the post which refers to *"self-care bundles"* references the popular e-commerce term bundle, which is used to describe a purchase of multiple products. An emphasis on consumption is consistent with Negra's (2009) arguments that the post-feminist sensibility encourages hyper-consumption as a way to direct focus to individualised concerns, while simultaneously deflecting from national crisis, such as poverty and environmental concerns. Gill & Kanai (2018) also note a pattern where women are encouraged to manage their affect while simultaneously being produced as "consumer-citizens" (p. 324).

Another post which contains a list of self-care behaviours, portrayed the list of behaviours in a grid like bingo sheet with the words *"Wellbeing Bingo".* The accompanying list was varied and extensive including:

Balance your hormones, foam roll daily, go plant based, home yoga practice, try an elimination diet, feng shui your home, try breathwork, meditate before bed, do a gut reset, spark your erotic intelligence, try a guided visualisation, become your best self, beat inflammation, create more happiness, try reiki healing, try thyroid yoga, go gluten free, do a 20 minute workout challenge, try acupressure, learn how to interpret your dreams, get glowing skin (naturally), learn tai chi, learn how to attract your soulmate, discover astrology 101, do a 14-day detox. (mindbodygreen, 2020b)

Many of the items on this list require intervention with the body, sometimes in quite intensive ways such as an *"elimination diet"* and *"a 14-day detox".* The expectations of the feminine subject to engage in dieting to meet body norms are reformulated within a rhetoric of care for the self and wellbeing. It is apparent from the broad scope of this list that many areas of one's life require intervention from the gut, to the erotic, to one's dreams. There is also evidence of assumed deficit, with the audience positioned as needing to learn the behaviours or become 'more'. There is a range of behaviour advised here from specific, such as *"foam roll daily"*, to very vague, *"become your best self"* and *"create more happiness"*. This self-care list, as something that feminine subjects would check off when a task is completed, is also reminiscent of the trend of tracking and displaying wellbeing behaviour in the digital context (Lupton, 2016). The continuous nature of self-management associated with how self-care behaviours are presented implies the task of improving and managing the feminine self is never complete. As with the previous post, this post is also connecting self-care to consumption since there is a direction to a link for a class subscription which the audience can pay to access and learn many of the behaviours listed.

One effect of these kinds of self-care lists is that there are a range of options provided for how to self-care, emphasising the rhetoric of choice that is prioritised within the neoliberal and postfeminist sensibilities. This acknowledges that there may be differences in how individuals pursue self-care. The range of options for self-care are still limited though, as certain options are repeated continually throughout the content. Repeating certain options position these behaviours as recognisable self-care, to the point that these are taken for granted as self-care behaviours.

One of the common characteristics of the self-care behaviours described was that they were often simplistic solutions to complex issues. If the simplistic nature of many of the prescribed behaviours for self-care was to be summed up in one behaviour it was the repeated recommendation or placement of cups of tea. One post does this very explicitly by stating, *"But first tea…Making tea can be very therapeutic. Next time you need to take a breather…try stopping and having a cup of tea!"* (Altitude Pole NZ, 2020b). Simplistic self-care behaviours may have the effect of being accessible to a larger group of people, which means that they are more relevant to a mass audience and easier for that audience to put into practice. There is a flippancy here however, as if to say are you feeling anxious or overwhelmed about the global pandemic? Make a cup of tea, take a break and you will feel better.

There is an underlying assumption that a behaviour positioned as self-care is a justified, explainable behaviour. It seems there is an expectation that the feminine subject should account for the use of their time. This is potentially an enduring discourse of the traditional expectations

of feminine emotional labour, that feminine subjects should show qualities of care and support towards others, prioritising the needs of others over their own. There is underlying concern about feminine subjects who do not display the right affect, self-care is meant to redress any possible stress or neurosis that may move a feminine subject too far 'off-script' as Negra (2009) has discussed. Self-care discourse reformulates these expectations where meeting one's own needs or doing activities for enjoyment are permissible as self-care.

Self-Care and Others

In the preceding sections, the content analysed constructed the relationship with the self and having the right thoughts and feelings as being connected with relationships with others. Lists of prescribed behaviours of self-care was another area where relationships with others were drawn into the conversation. For example, a post contained a list of behaviours for self-care when one is *"feeling blue"* including *"Skype your gran/family/friends (most important)"* (BarreOne Studio, 2020). Other posts also suggest connecting with others as a way to care for the self, such as *"Call two people you love and talk to them"* (The Women's Collective, 2020) and *"Reach out to a friend"* (The Urban List NZ, 2020b). Mention of social connection in this space, suggests a potential departure from normative individualism and a focus on the relationship with the self. However, social connection is reformulated within neoliberal individualism in that it is constituted as an act to care for the self and manage emotions, relatively disconnected from relational responsibilities.

Moral behaviour which is traditionally connected to how feminine subjects are expected to behave toward others is also related to self-care. One post has a caption which states, *"SELF-CARE SUNDAY…Do your skincare, drink your water & be kind"* (Ruby, 2020). Being kind is positioned as a self-care behaviour here, alongside skincare and drinking water. Another post puts this explicitly in large type, *"Practicing kindness is an act of self-care"* (Shine, 2020a). Normative, moral behaviour towards others is also reformulated within neoliberalism, since being kind to self is an act of self-care, meeting the demands of individualism rather than social cohesion.

While social connection and treating people well were mentioned in the content, social connection was generally positioned as secondary to solitary, individualistic self-care activities. The audience were encouraged to *"take some time just for you"* (Eve Wellness By BePure, 2020b) and *"take some time to disconnect and focus in on your needs this weekend #selfcarefirst"* (Health, 2020c). Caring for the individual self is positioned as a primary concern for the feminine subject in this content, which is also consistent with prioritising the relationship with the self, and managing thoughts and feelings to be a successful feminine subject.

Self-care during COVID-19

Self-care was positioned as having the power to mitigate the impact of difficult circumstances and was drawn on in the content which focused on getting through COVID-19. Lists of self-care behaviours were tailored to be COVID-19 specific, such as *"How to lift your mood during the pandemic"* (Health, 2020d) and *"Ways to keep your body and mind balanced during lockdown"* (Oh Natural NZ, 2020). These posts drew on the understanding that the pandemic posed a challenge to wellbeing and that lockdown measures may prevent feminine subjects from engaging in their usual self-care behaviours. These posts adapted lists referenced behaviours for self-care that were common in non-COVID specific content, but also had some behaviours that could be argued to be COVID-19 specific such as activities that could be done at home, as well as COVID-19 prevention strategies such as hand-washing and sanitising.

COVID-19 was also positioned as an opportunity for increased self-care behaviours. A caption on a post explicitly stated, *"You have plenty of time for self-care during iso"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020f). This statement assumes that the feminine subject has more time because of the lockdown and encourages increased self-care. However, this assumption specifically addresses those that have the privilege of being at home. This is consistent Blake (2020) arguments that public messaging about the COVI-19 lockdown did not reflect structural inequality and differences in experience. The possibility that there may be increased demands on time, for example parents who had children home from school or working multiple shifts as an essential worker, is not acknowledged.

Housework as Self-Care

One of the curious aspects of the content is how traditional domestic tasks make an appearance as forms of self-care. The results of domestic chores were positioned as a way to feel good. For example, one post shows an organised spice rack as an "after" shot with the words *"OH. HOW. SATISFYING!"* (Simplify My Home, 2020a). The emphasis on the satisfaction coming from this task is perhaps somewhat inflated, however it effectively positions the task of home tidying and organisation satisfying. The "before" shot which was not captured for analysis could be imagined to be unorganised and messy and by implication unsatisfactory. Another post explicitly states that *"cleaning out our spaces can do wonders for our overall wellbeing"* (Mind Body Green, 2020d). These posts position cleaning as a way to feel good, similar to how other self-care behaviours influence thoughts and emotions.

Domestic tasks were also positioned as a way to feel good during the isolation period specifically. A series of posts encouraged the audience to undertake a daily challenge to clean different areas of the house with a reminder about how good this task would make them feel. For example, one post which talked about cleaning out the bathroom cupboard said *"you'll be*

surprised at how decluttered your mind will feel after you've tackled this one" (Simplify My Home, 2020b). A direct link is made in this post between the clutter in the feminine subjects home and the state of their mind.

It could be that positioning chores as self-care behaviours is a useful way of making necessary domestic tasks more appealing and enjoyable. Remaining occupied during lockdown was a concern for some of those who were not working or caring for others, and completing domestic tasks was probably an accessible way to occupy one's time. What needs to be considered however is that this is being done in a way that specifically addresses feminine subjects, as argued in the preceding section. This reproduces an expectation that women engage in traditional domestic tasks, fulfilling their responsibilities to maintain the home environment. Post-feminism has been argued to encourage domesticity as a display of luxury and personal achievement (Negra, 2009). Instead of this being explicitly positioned as part of the feminine subject's gender role, under the conditions of post-feminism the encouragement is to engage in these tasks because it makes one feel good.

I also question what the experience of consuming the content for feminine subjects that are working class and may be so burdened by the task of trying to make a living. There seems to be some middle-class privilege in having the time and/or the inclination to order their spice rack perfectly. What is the experience of those who are struggling with anxiety about their home environments or experiencing obsessional thinking or compulsions related to domestic chores, as can be the case with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)? Initial studies on the impact of OCD and lockdown have had contradictory results, with an indication that those experiencing OCD did not experience a deterioration in symptoms as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns (Littman, Naftalovich, Huppert & Kalanthroff, 2020), and another study indicating a significant deterioration in symptoms for a group experiencing OCD (Davide et al., 2020)

Positioning domestic tasks as self-care is indicative of what many of the proposed self-care tasks are related to, which is increased self-management and control. Even when tasks are suggested purely to feel good, the intention that has been constructed that the behaviour is not just for the enjoyment, rather it is with the intent of meeting the expectations of normative femininity.

In summary, self-care behaviours were positioned to manage thoughts and feelings and get through the COVID-19 lockdown period. Self-care behaviours were justified behaviours for the feminine subject to engage in and often were positioned as a break from relational responsibilities. Relational responsibilities were reformulated as self-care through discourses of neoliberal individualism. The behaviours ranged from simplistic thought patterns to elaborate consumption behaviours. Traditional domesticity was reformulated as a kind of self-care.

The Feminine Body

The feminine body was drawn upon as a site for self-care and interconnected with how the feminine subject thinks and feels. I now turn to a consideration of the feminine body and have split this section of analysis into two broad areas of consideration. First, I will discuss how the feminine body is portrayed in the content, a portrayal which communicated norms for feminine bodies and due to the focus of the content, norms for feminine bodies that are psychologically well. Then I will go on to consider how the body was positioned as a site of discipline requiring intervention and control in the content. The posts that referenced discipline of the physical body tended to fall into three key themes, which I consider in detail – fitness and exercise, physical health and a focus on beauty regimes and clothing, a body discipline that (Bartky, 1990) refers to as ornamentation.

Portraying feminine bodies

As stated in the preceding section which argued that the content was making an address to feminine subjects, feminine bodies were depicted throughout this content both in photographed and illustrated form. There were clear and consistent patterns in how the feminine body was presented in this content. Primarily the bodies depicted were white, thin, feminine figures, representative of contemporary heteronormative feminine body norms.

A lack of diversity in the portrayal of the feminine body is consistent with the norms represented in other forms of media. de Freitas, Jordan, & Hughes (2018) conducted research which analysed how female bodies were portrayed within Australian fashion magazines. They found that largely the bodies portrayed were white, thin, and young. Other research considering fashion brand posts specifically within Instagram, found a lack of body shape diversity, with stereotypical thin feminine bodies depicted throughout the content (Pristach & Drenten, 2018).

In a significant number of the images of feminine subjects, they were not gazing directly at the audience but often in another direction, with head tilted. This seemed to create the effect of some passivity, as the feminine subject was not positioned to make direct eye contact with the audience. Bartky (1990) noted that there are norms associated with femininity around how one should position their body to appear passive. Researchers who studied the way feminine bodies are portrayed visually have noted a practice of showing the feminine figure averting the eyes (Kang, 1997). This practice is argued to be consistent with gender stereotyping in the presentation of the feminine form for some time (Goffman, 1979; Kang, 1997).

Many of the images only depicted certain parts of the female form, perhaps just a hand, a torso or part of the face, with other parts of the body cut out of the image. For example, one post depicts an illustrated close up of an eye with a small amount of the face showing. Under

the eye is an under-eye mask, a beauty product that is used to reduce the appearance of puffiness or dark circles under the eyes. There is type on the under-eye mask which reads *"Self-care shouldn't be rare"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020f). The rest of the face and body is out of the frame of the picture. This kind of imagery seems to objectify parts of the feminine body where one part of the body is zoned in on and depicted as separate from the rest of the body. The feminine body here also serves as a means to display the message that is being communicated, as the type is placed on the mask under the eye.

There is a taken for granted sense here that portraying cut off aspects of the feminine body is acceptable, even though this constructs the body as dominated to the point that it is acceptable to visually cut it up. This practice been described in research on advertising as dismemberment, a term which perhaps accurately reflects how cutting up the body constructs the feminine body as devalued. Rudman & Hagiwara (1992) identified that this was surprisingly common in advertising for health and wellbeing products and argued that dismemberment was related to the sexualisation of the feminine body in advertising.

Overall, feminine bodies are visually portrayed in this content in ways that exclude many feminine subjects. The normative image presented is white, thin, heteronormatively feminine, and youthful. The visual strategies utilised relate to traditional practices of objectifying and devaluing feminine bodies. These practices sit in contradiction with some of the general themes of the content, which have been argued to communicate feminine empowerment, that of feminine wellbeing, success and living one's best life (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018).

Disciplining the Physical Body

Disciplining the physical body through a variety of interventions was referred to in ways that constructed bodily discipline as normal and desirable. Psychological wellbeing was positioned, both explicitly and implicitly, as related to the physical body. The effort to intervene with the physical body to meet traditional body and beauty norms was reformulated within post-feminist ideology, as the effort to feel good, keeping the body and mind healthy. The physical body was positioned as an external reflection of the feminine subject's psychological wellbeing.

Physical Exercise and Diet

Physical exercise was frequently referred to in the posts with the clear message that exercise was intended to influence how one feels. For example, one post features a photograph of a slim, white, fit feminine figure in activewear sitting cross legged smiling at the camera. The caption reads, *"Nothing feels as good as healthy. Take this as your cue to get moving today"* (Arbonne Australia & New Zealand, 2020b). This caption could be read as a move away from

traditional rhetoric around the behaviours associated with health such as physical activity and nutrition. Instead the emphasis is on how fit feminine subjects feel. There is also a taken for granted understanding drawn on that even if all other areas of their lives are good , there will be some dissatisfaction or deficit, if one was not healthy and moving as *"nothing feels as good."* Rather than engaging in these behaviours to look good and meet feminine body norms, the encouragement is to do this because being healthy feels good. A healthy, fit body is still positioned as the norm in this material though, so body norms for feminine subjects to present as healthy, fit and toned are still satisfied by the exhortation to focus on physical activity, even if conforming to body norms is not positioned as the primary purpose of the behaviour.

Yoga was a physical exercise that was repeated throughout this content, often in the depiction of feminine figures in yoga poses. Yoga practice was positioned as a way to discipline the mind as much as the body. A post depicting a very fit feminine figure in a forward fold has the caption, *"Finding ways to reduce stress is a wellness priority. Practice with daily downward dogs and happy babies"* (Denizen, 2020). The post then directs the audience to follow a link for the best online yoga classes. Reducing stress is positioned as the primary goal of yoga and the possibility that a daily yoga practice produces a fit, toned body that conforms to normative feminine body standards is obscured. While it has been argued that yoga holds great potential for social activism and liberation, these images are consistent with arguments that yoga has been reformulated within neoliberalism to generate profit, relying the proliferation of ideal bodies which are also "gendered, classed, raced and sized" (Kauer, 2016, p. 103). The images are also consistent with the argument that mainstream representations of yoga encourage a heteronormative feminine body that is disciplined to meet patriarchal standards for the sexual pleasure of men (Blaine, 2016).

Physical activity was referred to as being of important in the response to the global situation with COVID-19. For example, one post featured a photograph of a very fit feminine figure in activewear pictured from behind, in a handstand pose. The caption states *"#STAYACTIVE to keep our bodies and mind healthy!... We can't control what's happening across the world but we can band together and spread positivity and good, healthy vibes"* (aim'n Australia & NZ, 2020c). Here staying active is referred to as the means to intervene with both the body, for health, and the mind. The lack of control over what is happening around the world refers to the situation with COVID-19. The encouragement here is to focus on what can be controlled, the individual's physical activity and health, rather than the global situation.

When food intake was referred to in the content, a healthy diet was also constructed as being related to how one feels rather than physical appearance. There was an implied understanding that food could result in negative emotions. One post refers to a very fit,

attractive feminine figure dressed in active wear holding a plate of what is referred to in the caption as *"Chocolate clean treats"*. The caption describes these treats as *"plant-based, gluten free, sugar free, dairy free, guilt free"* (aim'n Australia & NZ, 2020d). The use of the word clean is laden with implications about food. The positioning of these treats as guilt-free after naming they are *"plant-based, gluten-free, sugar-free, dairy-free"* implies that eating in a less controlled manner is socially unacceptable to the extent it induces guilt.

While the traditional feminine body size norms that Bartky (1990) points toward, are not explicitly identified in the content at any point, they are upheld constantly via the plethora of fit, slender feminine figures that are depicted throughout this content. Other research on Instagram content has identified restrictive body norms are prevalent, under the guise of tropes of choice and empowerment (Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019).

The emphasis on disciplining the body to induce good feelings, is resonant with Gill's (2007) observations that the feminine body is positioned as being reflective of how the feminine subject feels. Gill also argues that the feminine body is simultaneously presented as "women's source of power and as always already unruly and requiring constant monitoring, surveillance, discipline and remodelling (and consumer spending)" (p. 150). Feminine subjects are required to continually work on their bodies, to overtly manage their affect, while still negotiating unattainable and narrow body norms.

Hormones and Menstrual Cycles

Along with the understanding that women's bodies are interconnected with their psychological condition (Bayer & Malone, 1998) there is a prevailing discourse that female hormones are connected to experiences of psychological unwellness (Ussher, 2011). Feminine hormonal regulation was drawn upon in this content, where reference to the biological functions of the body significantly attended to hormones and menstrual cycles.

Posts positioned biological processes as interconnected with psychological wellbeing. One post showed bold black type on a pink background stating *"Hormones, Healthy, Happy AF"* (Your Monthly Club, 2020). The caption goes on to suggest that one can learn how their hormones and menstrual cycle are connected to their overall wellbeing. The discursive construction is that being happy and psychologically well as a feminine subject is connected to intervening with hormones and physical health.

Functional reproductive processes were explicitly connected with one's psychological state. For example, a post informs the audience that the experience of stress can stop ovulation from taking place (Eve Wellness by Bepure, 2020c). This immediately positions the post as addressing an audience of cis-gendered females of a particular age, who continue to ovulate. The post goes on to suggest that there is a collective experience of stress in the world at this

point in time, which will likely *"mess with your period"* though this, they say, is nothing to worry about. Here the post is referencing a shared experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the understanding that the experience is universally stressful. The post also minimises any possibility that the lack of ovulation could be something to be concerned about or may require medical intervention. The post provides a link to an article which provides more information on how stress can impact ovulation and what an individual can do about this. The understanding drawn on here is that an intervention for can restore balance to one's hormones and reproductive cycle.

The Beautiful

A further area for intervention to the body was body adornment, primarily dominated by beauty routines and clothing. There were also assumptions that one's internal thoughts and feelings were the key to being physically beautiful. One post says, *"Beauty starts in your head, not in the mirror."* (Good Magazine, 2020c). Another displays a quote from famous make-up artist Bobbi Brown, *"What I find beautiful is someone who is kind, happy and authentic"* (Bobbi Brown, 2020). In yet another post readers are told that *"Beauty is not in the face, beauty is light in the heart"* (Good Magazine, 2020d). The words *"light in the heart"* evokes the present, calm image of femininity that is emphasised through the messages about desirable and undesirable feelings. Here managing affect is not just about maintaining the right feelings, but is also relevant to beauty and how one looks.

Positioning beauty as an internal process could be intended to displace traditional beauty standards, in that beauty centers around how someone thinks, feels, and behaves, rather than physical characteristics. Drawing on neoliberal ideas, one might say that there is some equality here, beauty being defined by how one thinks, feels and behaves as there is an understanding that this is within an individual's realm of control rather than the looks they were born with. When posts like this sit within a context that abounds with instructions around how to think and feel, the message is that to be beautiful, one needs to have the right thoughts and feelings. Analysis of beauty advertisements by Lazar (2011) identified that beauty advertising draws on the need to transform the internal self and embrace the right attitude in order to be considered beautiful. Monitoring and managing one's affect have become intrinsically tied to meeting normative feminine beauty requirements such as those identified by Bartky (1990).

While the feminine subject's beauty may reside in the head and the heart, there was still a significant amount of skincare, make-up and fashion advice in the content. These posts drew on the idea that engaging in practices of beautifying the body had the intended purpose and effect of positively influencing how one feels. One post showed a picture of eight skincare and beauty products scattered across the frame, alongside a few flowers. The caption reads

"Good skin, good mood" (Skin Food NZ, 2020). Caring for the skin is positioned as being about caring for mood, not about meeting beauty standards. The discourse that feminine bodies are unruly (Gill, 2007) and should be disciplined via a variety of interventions is maintained, under the guise of doing what makes one feel good, a well-worn trope of post-feminism.

Productivity

From the preceding analysis, the need for the feminine subject's behaviour and use of time to be justified has been noted. This connects to the overall expectation of productivity for feminine subjects. Productivity was another frequent reference point in these posts, to the point that it was clear that the psychologically well feminine subject is productive. Productivity was inter-related with the self-care prescription both explicitly as productive behaviour was described as self-care and implicitly as encouragement to self-care or lists of self-care behaviours were fundamentally about prescribed productivity, giving the feminine subject more tasks to carry out.

However, productivity was also presented as a practice that could become detrimental to psychological wellbeing, if done in excess. At times, the audience was encouraged to rest to support their wellbeing and be prepared to engage in otherwise productive behaviour.

How to be productive

Productivity was positioned as a normal and desirable behaviour for the feminine subject, with instructions for developing and maintaining productivity acting as a point of interest in the content. Value was placed on routine as the way to enable further productivity. For example, a post set out a list of behaviours for a morning routine including, *"Morning meditation…journal affirmations…wash face + apply sunblock…morning walk…coffee…read one chapter".* The caption goes on to say:

> *Our morning sets the tone for our whole day ahead. This is where we have the opportunity to choose how we are going to feel for the day. When we are conscious that we actually have that choice, we can choose to make the most out of our day while feeling in control* (Me Today, 2020).

A morning routine is positioned here as desirable and imperative for the day ahead, the success of the rest of the day is determined by this routine. These behaviours are also reminiscent of the kinds of behaviour that is listed and described as self-care. It is very likely that engaging in these behaviours at the start of a day does leave a person feeling good and in control. Further in this instance, all the behaviours listed are relatively simple and do not require access to many

resources other than available time. However, the assumed resource of time stands for critique as there is an assumption drawn upon here that the feminine subject has access to the time to carry out these activities. This assumption does not consider potential barriers or other demands on the feminine subject's time such as getting kids ready for school, sleeping off a long night shift, feeling so low they cannot face getting out of bed, being sick, embarking on a long commute, etc.

The assumption that the feminine subject has the time and ability to engage in a morning routine is made more problematic as the neoliberal discourse of individual choice is explicitly drawn on in this caption. This constructs the morning routine as something the individual freely makes a choice around and acts to invisibilise other barriers. Because the morning routine is positioned as being the *"opportunity to choose how we are going to feel for the day"*, the feminine subject not making the choice to engage in the behaviour (or being unable to) positions them as responsible if they are unable to *"make the most out of (the) day while feeling in control"*. Many feminine subjects would be positioned as making wrong choice by this statement, even though there may be a variety of structural barriers which prevent their access to the choice in the first place.

An accepted understanding seemed to be present that productive behaviour was a precursor for further productivity. As with the post detailing the morning routine, posts which exhorted the feminine subject to be productive at times contained lists of specific behaviours to carry out which were deemed productive and then would generate more productivity. One post gave explicit instructions for a *"great Sunday morning"*. In bold blue text on a pink background the post had the following instructions, *"Drink some water, stretch your body out, work out for 7 mins, take a shower, gussy up, take your vitamins, eat breakfast (real breakfast), read something for 10mins. Good morning, let's do this"* (The Fabulous App, 2020d). This eight-step list is positioned as the tasks before *"let's do this"*, suggesting that the audience would complete these tasks as the precursor to further productivity. The ability to maintain this level of productivity is assumed in this post, positioning productivity both as desirable and normative behaviour.

Productivity rest productivity

Even exhortations to rest served to normalise a productive state for the feminine subject. For example, amongst suggestions for how to rest, there are similarities to the discursive resources that are drawn on in the encouragement for productivity. One post listed the tasks one could undertake to have the *"ultimate lazy day"* which included changing the sheets on one's bed, putting on fresh pyjamas, eating a nice breakfast, watching a tv show,

taking a nap, reading something new and listening to music (The Fabulous App, 2020e). The caption explicitly positions a list of tasks as the right way to have a lazy day, to create a good mood and get the most out of the day. The implicit messaging is that a lazy day is purposeful and is meant to be restorative in order to return to one's productive life in a positive mood. This post is interesting in that it takes the form of posts that encourage productivity – it is a list of tasks to undertake and there is text at the end of the imagery that states *"lazy day, let's do this"*. The statement *"let's do this"* is at odds the concept of laziness. Contradictions like this undermine the permissibility of rest, even though the post is stating that it is okay to have a lazy day.

Rest was also positioned as being within the context of otherwise continuous productivity. Some posts gave the feminine subject permission to rest, making statements such as, *"Take time to just be"* (Health Magazine, 2020e) and *"Give yourself permission to slow down"* (Health Magazine, 2020f). These statements draw on an implied understanding that the feminine subject is productive and needs to be reminded or given permission to rest.

Being told to rest, also constructed an implied understanding that continual productivity was potentially detrimental over time. One post formulated this by stating *"You have exactly enough energy for one day at a time. Remember that"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020g). By stating in this post that the energy to be productive is exhaustible, there is an implied understanding that doing more could be damaging for the feminine subject. Productivity is desirable, yet too much productivity could be detrimental.

The signal to rest was located in the signals from both mental processes and the body. A post stated, *"Self-care can be simply recognising that you need to stop and just do nothing. Listen to your brain and your body"* (The Kite Program, 2020). The first point to mention here is that, as with the other posts I have mentioned, rest is positioned here within otherwise assumed continued productivity. Feminine subjects who are responsible for managing their psychological wellbeing by engaging in self-care practices are exhorted to recognise their need for rest. The cues for rest are delivered by the brain and the body, though are not described in detail which suggests that they are recognisable and familiar to the feminine subject.

There are competing concerns here for the feminine subject, not only do they need to focus on ways to maintain productivity, they also need to be aware of and pay attention to the cues of when to rest. This tenuous balance is the feminine subject's responsibility to maintain. Ultimately, though rest is positioned as necessary as the means to support ongoing productivity.

Productivity during the pandemic

It was possible that productivity was more present in the posts due to an emphasis that started quite early during the COVID-19 period. There were reoccurring examples of instructions on how to be productive specifically during the lockdown periods. For example, one post gave a 12-step list of strategies to be *"highly effective"* while working from home during lockdown (Eve By BePure Wellness, 2020d).

A post about productivity during the lockdown happened to go viral during the period of data collection. The post talked about using the isolation period productively and coming out the other side having learnt something new or achieved something. I know from my personal use of Instagram, this post was posted and reposted in various forms throughout the data collection period to the point that it was unclear as to where the content had originated. There were two distinct ways the post was formulated, firstly that failure to use COVID-19 productively was directly related to a failure on the part of the individual and their lack of discipline. The other way this post was formulated was to propose that failure to be productive during the lockdown was fine, that we were all going through a difficult experience and that it was okay to not be productive at this time.

One of the versions of this post which was collected as part of the data-set put forward one side of this debate with the following statement:

> *If you don't come out of this quarantine with: A new skill. Your side hustle started. More knowledge. ~~You never lacked time, you lacked discipline.~~ You are doing just fine. We are going through a collective traumatic experience. Not everyone has the privilege of turning a pandemic into something fun or productive. Stay healthy"* (The Indigo Project, 2020).

This post positions the pandemic as a trauma, a psychologically difficult experience that could impact on one's ability to be productive. The post refutes the understanding that there is some lack of discipline or failure on the part of the individual who had been unable to be productive during the lockdown period.

This post presents one of the few times where attention has been drawn to the differences in experiencing the pandemic and the ability to make the most of the experience is positioned as a privilege. Most of the content addresses the audience as if there is a universality to the experience of the pandemic and disparity is not acknowledged. However, the limitation here is that a lack of productivity is positioned as acceptable during the pandemic and the *"collective trauma"* of the time. Productivity is therefore still positioned as desirable and

preferred, though it is acceptable to not be productive while going through a difficult time. I was unable to identify a post in the content that put forward an understanding that a lack of productivity was acceptable at any time and that it was okay to just exist for an indeterminate amount of time, without working on some kind of self-improvement or goal.

Another post used a play on a song lyric by the singer Lizzo by stating, *"I just took a DNA test. Turns out I'm 100% tired of people telling me how I should spend my time while (in) quarantine"* (The Kindness Institute, 2020d). The caption goes on to say, *"It's time to do what makes you feel good."* This post resists the instructions for the use of time during lockdown and the encroachment of control within the private sphere. However, at the same time there is still an encouragement to be purposeful with one's behaviour, by doing "*what makes you feel good."* Bearing in mind that the dominant understanding is that the right amount of productivity is desirable, leaving one in a position to *"make the most out of (the) day while feeling in control"* (Me Today, 2020). Ironically because of the value placed on productivity, engaging in productive activities very likely feel good, the purpose is just reformulated. Instead of being productive to satisfy external pressures, such as neoliberal, Western values, instead for the feminine subject the behaviour can be positioned as doing what feels good.

The conversation about productivity during lockdown, was an example of the potential of social media. During this time instructions about productivity were negotiated, reformulated and in some ways resisted. While assumed productivity remained desirable and preferred, the reformulation of these instructions perhaps created some more possibilities for feminine subjects beyond maintaining the usual expected levels of productivity.

An emphasis on productivity within this content is reflective of the level of control over and accountability within the private sphere. Miller & Rose (2008) have noted that there was a historical turning point where economic activity and public goals were linked inseparably with the decisions made in the private sphere. Analysis has drawn attention to the pressure for women to be productive in both public and private spheres, while accounting for idleness (Kanai, 2019a). Because much of the content I have analysed prescribed productivity during lockdown, at a time when people were confined to their home environments, the instructions were often explicitly focused on how feminine subjects spent their time in their private home environments.

For the most part, productivity was taken for granted as a desirable, normative state for feminine subjects. Where does this leave those that are unable to maintain productivity? Within this content rest was an acknowledged need and offered a possible reprieve from the expectations of productivity. Even when rest was referred to, and implied state of productivity outside the permitted time for rest was assumed. Continually there was a positioning that the feminine subject would need to be reminded to rest or given permission to rest. This implied

otherwise constant productivity and potential failure for those that were unable to meet the demands of enough productivity.

Getting Through a Pandemic

As discussed in the preceding sections, much of the data set referenced the COVID-19 pandemic in both explicit and implicit ways, which indicates how major an event the pandemic has been in people's lives. Very few global events have captured attention in such a significant way in recent times. As a result, COVID-19 had an omnipresence in the data set, even if the pandemic was not specifically mentioned. In the analysis, there was a group of posts identified that specifically referenced getting through the experience of the pandemic. I consider these posts in more detail in the context of how they construct the psychological difficulty of the situation and what is required of feminine subjects to get through the experience while maintaining their psychological wellbeing.

This is temporary

The use of the term 'getting through' is deliberate here. The COVID-19 pandemic was constructed in this content as an experience to be endured for a finite period of time. The finite nature of the experience was communicated in the way the pandemic was continually referred to in the material as temporary. For example, one post draws on the idea that the COVID-19 situation was temporary, where the phrases *"This is Temporary"* and *"This will pass"* are repeated within the image multiple times (Like Minds Like Mine, 2020). This repetition evokes the idea of a mantra, something that is said over and over to give one comfort. One post shows a photo of a sunset, accompanied with the words *"This is only temporary – stay strong"* (The Sleepover NZ, 2020). While the post does not explicitly state that it is referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an implied understanding that this is the situation that requires one to stay strong. The caption explicitly frames the situation as temporary and the image of a sunset further emphasises this message in that it is suggestive of a day ending. Another talks about *"six months from now"…"things are getting back to normal"* (Altitude Pole NZ, 2020a). This post explicitly timeframes the COVID-19 pandemic as being over in six months.

The construction of the COVID-19 pandemic as temporary is curious, as during the data collection period there was a great deal of uncertainty about the immediate and more distant future. It is possible that in the face of uncertainty, there is potential comfort in looking ahead and telling the self and others that the situation will pass. The potential issue here is that it could also be unsettling to see messages that the situation is temporary, only to be faced with ongoing uncertainty. As it turns out this uncertainty persists in New Zealand during the time of writing. While New Zealand was initially celebrated as having stamped out COVID-19 within the

community, there has been another outbreak with the Auckland region going back into a level 3 lockdown on the 12th August 2020 for two and a half weeks as a result of new COVID-19 cases in the community. Internationally many countries have continued to face high numbers of virus cases, having never reached a point where the virus seemed to be stamped out.

In contradiction to the content which positioned the pandemic as temporary, some posts did acknowledge the uncertainty of the situation. These posts suggest that strategies should be used to manage the personal impact of that uncertainty. One of the proposed interventions was direct attention to the present moment as a way of managing the uncertainty. One post says *"All we have is now"* in large letters with a caption that states *"We don't know what tomorrow is going to bring but at least we have right now"* (Good Magazine, 2020b). This messaging does not suggest any certainty about the future and instead encourages the audience to focus on the present as this is something they have. These messages are evocative of the material around remaining present and mindful, implying the there is a responsibility to manage the self in the face of uncertainty, in order to get through. In my personal use of Instagram, I noticed that as the year progressed, there was more acknowledgement of the uncertainty and the inability to make plans, particularly once Auckland returned a Level 3 lockdown. During the data collection period, however, the temporary nature of the situation was emphasised in posts that suggested that normal life would resume soon.

It is important to note that this reference to a temporary situation may be referring to the lockdown measures rather than the pandemic itself. I make this comment as while the COVID-19 pandemic was referred to frequently, very little of the content refers to the broader impacts of COVID-19 pandemic beyond the lockdown measures, something I will further discuss in the next session.

This is hard and we will be okay

Getting through the pandemic was for the most part assumed and acknowledged as psychologically difficult for the audience. One post refers to the current climate as *"cloudy days"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020h), another says *"It's okay if you don't want to leap out of bed…we're in the middle of a pandemic"* (Good Magazine, 2020e). The fact that impact to mental health is acknowledged upfront demonstrates how health promotion normalises mental health as important to be acknowledged and addressed. The construction of psychological difficulty opens up the topic for discussion, possibly alleviating some of the stigma associated with certain psychological struggles. These messages also normalise doing things to intervene with how one is feeling in the face of difficult circumstances. However, the understandings drawn on in these posts also encourage increased self-monitoring and self-management. When it is acknowledged

that something is psychologically difficult for the audience, this sets up the expectation that one would be doing something to mitigate that difficulty to get through the experience.

The audience were also reminded that they would come out the other side of the experience relatively unscathed. Posts had messages like *"everything will be okay"* (Sweet Talk NZ, 2020) and *"it's going to be okay. Not perfect, but okay"* (Voices of Hope, 2020). These kinds of posts positioned the feminine subject as being unharmed throughout the experience of the pandemic. There was some acknowledged difficulty, but this was constituted as not significant enough for the feminine subject to be concerned about.

The severity and significance of the pandemic was generally not acknowledged in this content. It was rare that the content acknowledged that there may be disparity in the experience of the pandemic. Differences in experiences such as worry about family overseas, homelessness, financial pressures, or violence in relationships were not specifically addressed. There was only one occasion (discussed in more detail in the analysis on Productivity) where it was acknowledged that there was a level of privilege in being able to focus on ways to make the lockdowns fun or productive (The Indigo Project, 2020).

There was also one post in the data set which addressed those who were unemployed because of the pandemic. Unemployment was positioned as an impact of *"tough times"* in the COVID-19 situation. Those who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic were encouraged to care for themselves with a list of self-care strategies (The Fabulous App, 2020a). This post was an exception in that there was acknowledgement of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic beyond lockdown measures, with unemployment an experience specifically related to the context of the pandemic.

However, in amongst the constant reference to the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the project, these posts act as exceptions. Ultimately beyond the inconvenience and difficulty of the lockdown measures, differences in the experience of the pandemic were not acknowledged. It was assumed that the audience remained in good health as despite the reality of the pandemic, there was an absence of acknowledgement of those who may be sick or dying. At time of writing, the reported number of COVID-19 related deaths worldwide had passed 1 million people, though it was acknowledged that this number was likely to be more due to different levels of reporting (John Hopkins University & Medicine, 2020). There were no posts in the data set which addressed those who were sick or who were struggling with the loss of a loved one. I would argue that both of these realities of the pandemic would have an impact on psychological wellbeing, yet curiously the address of this content is made to an audience that is assumed to be healthy and protected from the impact of the disease.

The assumption that the audience belonged to a group of professionals who were working from home was also present, as there were posts that advised the feminine subject on their work from home routine (Eve by BePure Wellness , 2020d; The Fabulous App, 2020f). A good work from home routine was positioned as desirable in these posts, as it was assumed to be productive and to feel good. Assuming that the audience is working from home, positions the middle class, professional as the norm. Absent from the content was mention of the essential supermarket workers before work routine, or how they could take care of their wellbeing while enduring working long hours for low pay and enduring abuse from customers that were upset about queues or products being out of stock.

A variety of privileges impacted the experience of the pandemic and Blake (2020) drew attention to how in New Zealand the national emergency messaging did not account for the structural inequity in the ability to prepare for and adhere to the lockdown requirements. She points out many vulnerable groups who would have experienced the lockdown with increased difficulty including those who can't work from home, don't have equitable access to technology, are homeless or living in poor quality housing, are struggling to make ends meet, sex-workers and those with addiction issues. Blake argues that the discourses drawn on to be prepared acted as a form of violence towards those that faced structural barriers. Blake also argues that the after-effects of the lockdown would be experienced with inequity, likely impacting Māori and Pasifika more so than Pākehā, showing that we would not necessarily be okay as the content analysed here proposes.

The Pandemic Mindset

As mentioned in the preceding section, feminine subjects were encouraged to cultivate a positive mindset. This was consistent in the content that talked about getting through the pandemic as feminine subjects were encouraged to maintain a positive mindset in the face of COVID-19. A post refers the *"Some of the things you can control"* and amongst this list is *"your outlook"* and the closing statement *"It's all about that positive perspective"*. The hashtag *"#isoinspo"*, an abbreviation of isolation inspiration, position the post as being specific to the COVID-19 pandemic situation (Altitude Pole, 2020c). This post draws on the idea that one could think positively about the lockdown measures, in the face of a global pandemic, when millions of people are becoming sick and dying. There seems to be some misplacement around the exhortation to think positively. Controlling the individual self, is positioned as an encouraged and desirable action for feminine subjects to be taking in the context of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

At times, the messages that the situation was temporary, and one would get through unscathed were alongside exhortations to take the accepted steps to manage one's mental health as a way of getting through. One post formulated this in the following way

Picture it. It's six months from now. They have lifted all travel bans and lockdowns. You're just getting done with your morning workout and getting ready to meet your friends for lunch. It's spring and it's warm. You're healthy. Things are getting back to normal. You're thankful. Stay present, stay mindful and be empathetic, we're gonna get through this (Altitude Pole NZ, 2020a).

Posts like this draw on messages of hope for the future and encouragement which could potentially be comforting in the face of uncertainty. It also redirects attention away from the situation at hand, to individual perspective and mindset, something that may seem to be more available to one's control. It does remain contradictory and confusing, though, to exhort the audience to focus on the future while also staying present.

However, as I have discussed in the previous section, the management of one's thoughts and behaviour were consistently positioned as an individual's responsibility. The messages that everything will be okay and to continue self-care and managing mental health implicitly suggests that the two are somehow connected and that successfully getting through the experience of COVID-19 unscathed may be down to one's success in self-management. As self-management is continually positioned as individual responsibility, getting through the experience of COVID-19 also becomes linked with individual responsibility and control. The implication is that if an individual does not come out the other side of the experience successfully, it may be the result of some failing on their part.

Individual psychological resilience is also celebrated in this content as the posts drew on the audience ability to get through the pandemic, using words like resilience, capable and strength. These posts often were positioned as reminders as if one may have forgot their level of resilience or were unaware of their own capabilities. One post states, *"You are strong & resilient & powerful & you can do hard things"* (The Kindness Institute, 2020e). Another post states, *"You are more resilient than you know"* (Well + Good, 2020a). The resilience drawn on here is reflective of other arguments that feminine subjects are exhorted to develop a resilient cheerfulness, unperturbed by difficulties (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Kanai, 2019b).

The content exhorted feminine subjects to develop a positive and resilient mind-set in the face of COVID-19. The quality of a feminine subject's life and their level of psychological wellbeing during the pandemic has been constituted within the post-feminist sensibility and

neoliberalism as being a result of the choices one makes as an individual. This is reflective of Calvente & Smicker (2019) arguments that during times of crisis, post-feminism and neoliberalism hold a firm grip on the constitution of subjectivity. As I wrote in the introduction, I was curious at the outset of the research project about the impact of lockdown restrictions on the neoliberal rhetoric of choice. After all, at this time, many people had their freedom severely limited. However, the discourse of choice continues to be drawn upon, in that the audience are positioned as needing to make the right choices as to how they think to get through the COVID-19 lockdown.

Getting through and getting better

A discourse of psychological resilience growing as ones demonstrates resilience or strength was drawn upon. One post states, *"Strength grows in the moments when you think you can't go on but you keep going anyway"* (The Self-Love Club, 2020i). This post draws on the understanding that strength grows from difficult circumstances and could be an opportunity. The audience is addressed as possessing the resources to get through what they are experiencing and are not positioned as deficit for experiencing struggles. These kinds of posts drew on neoliberal discursive constructs of being a survivor in which the individual is responsible for their own survival (Brunila, 2014). However, the difficulty here is for those that do not share the experience of their individual strength and resilience growing as they face difficult circumstances. Those who are left drained and depleted from these experiences are not represented here. There is some implied deficit if the experience does not make you stronger.

Positive psychological change was referred to as an outcome of getting through the pandemic. One post says, *"A mind stretched by new experiences can never go back to old dimensions"* (The One Up Project, 2020). This draws upon an understanding that experiencing a challenge will result in psychological change. Another post states *"Never to suffer would never to have been blessed"* (I Am Company, 2020), framing up the challenges posed by COVID-19 as leading to good things in the future for the individual who has the potential to be psychologically changed for the better by a negative experience.

The individual was not alone in being transformed; the world would also be impacted for the better due to the pandemic. A post suggesting that the lockdown experience would lead to a positive change went viral during the data collection period and was reproduced in different forms. One version that was collected in the data framed up the period after the lockdown in this way:

Picture this. It's late 2020. Our homes are clean and organised. We're more connected in our relationships than ever before because all we have been able to do is communicate. We've been forced to focus on self-care and so we're thriving. We come out of our houses, the world reopens and we are kinder, more loving, more grateful, more understanding and more appreciative of the beauty of life and human connection than ever before, and together we rebuild the world intentionally and sustainably (The Women's Collective, 2020b).

This post ends with the caption *"positive thinking"* so is drawing on the positive resilient mindset that was encouraged throughout the content. Perhaps this post sums up well, why feminine subjects and others are drawn to the idea of living the best life by engaging continual self-management and mandated self-improvement. Post-feminism and neoliberalism make the promise that this life is a legitimate path to making our lives and our world better.

Looking for exceptions and Missing Stories

Throughout the data analysis process, I noticed very little resistance to the dominant discourses that were drawn on in the constitution of feminine psychological wellbeing in the data set. Primarily the content reflected norms of successful femininity defined by neoliberal and post-feminist expectations as being synonymous with having and managing psychological wellbeing.

One of the limitations of this research project is that the content analysed was purely drawn from public Instagram accounts which were run by businesses and organisations. These accounts generally represent the interests of the business, marketing their services and products for increased profit. It is possible that within personal Instagram accounts, aspects of the resistance and missing stories that I will now go on to discuss could be identified. While that may be the case, I do know from my own personal Instagram use, that my findings are consistent with much of the personal content, as many individuals utilise similar discursive resources in their postings. Along with the quantity of commercial posting and the way these posts draw on ideas as being accepted understandings, these discursive constructions take on the position of being normative assumptions, with the effect of excluding many groups from the content advising on psychological wellbeing.

Resistance

Some literature has suggested that an expression of psychological unwellness and the need for respite from the requirements of the successful femininity, may act as some level of resistance to gendered expectations (Dobson & Kanai, 2019; Strömbäck et al., 2014). There is an

expressed need for rest within the content analysed in the current project. The impact of COVID-19 and daily life is acknowledged in the exhortation to rest, which creates space in the context of life challenges to acknowledge impact and the need for respite. Despite the explicit expression of the need to rest, this need was continually positioned as being in the context of an otherwise busy, productive schedule. Effectively, the acknowledged impact of daily life and the need for rest were positioned as acceptable only for a finite period. The feminine subject is otherwise expected to be well enough to maintain otherwise constant levels of resilience and productivity, meeting postfeminist and neoliberal expectations for success. This is consistent with arguments that while there can be resistance to the demands of successful femininity in the expression of gender melancholia, such resistance is acceptable only in the context of a brief foray away from gendered expectations (Dobson & Kanai, 2019; Kanai, 2019a).

Throughout the content there was a consistent direction to focus on the individual self and the internal state of body and mind. At times social relationships were drawn on and could have represented some level of resistance to the discourse of individualism. For example, some of the content talked about solidarity or checking in on social relationships in the face of COVID-19. However, connection and relational responsibilities appeared to be reformulated within neoliberal ideology. Caring for others was important yet feminine subjects were expected to first manage and intervene with themselves as the foundation to then be able to support others. One post is a good example how this was often constructed by clearly stating *"Tend to your own feelings first"* (Shine Text, 2020b). This post explicitly positions relational responsibilities as secondary to focusing on the individual self. The complexity of social relationships was missing from the content as well, with others vaguely referred to as family, friends, and partners. There was often encouragement to reach out or call family members in ways that assumed families were not all living together but rather were residing in isolated units.

There is some tension here with the enduring traditional discourse that feminine subjects are responsible for taking on the care of others. Even if feminine subjects were able to fulfill the traditional responsibility of caring for others, there was potential failure in not meeting the expectations of caring for the self. Some feminine subjects do not have the capacity to prioritise their needs over others. Different kinds of feminine subjectivities come to mind here, for instance a working-class mother whose focus is ensuring her children's needs are meet, the manager who works long hours to make sure the team she manages is functioning well, the daughter caring for elderly parents and essential workers who are responsible for caring for those who are hospitalised, the elderly or disabled people during the pandemic.

After working through my analysis of the data set, I went looking through the remaining data to see if I could find any obvious resistance to the consistent accepted meanings that were

repeated. I was able to identify one post from an Instagram account dedicated to cartoons from the New Yorker magazine. This post depicted a cartoon of a woman in active wear, lying on a yoga mat in her home, doing stomach crunches. The caption below says, *"If you don't have weights at home, try using canned food or the psychological burden of simply existing in this world"* (New Yorker Cartoons, 2020).

This imagery evokes and pokes fun at the taken for granted understandings in some of the content I have considered throughout this project. The image of a woman working out and the tip to use canned food draws on the content that was popular during the Covid-19 pandemic period, encouraging people to continue working out from home and offering tips as to how one could do so without access to their usual routines. As I have shown in the preceding section, physical exercise was positioned as connected to psychological wellbeing, with the intended impact of improving how one feels and supporting one to get through the psychological difficulty of the time. Often this kind of content obscured a broader view of what was happening in the world, instead focusing on the individual and their role in intervening with themselves.

The posted cartoon, however, pokes fun at the idea that the solutions to life are as simple as lifting weights, or cans, in one's living room to get fit and feel better. The audience are told that instead of cans they could lift *"the psychological burden of existing in the world"*. The implied joke is that the human burden of existence is not a simple fix, despite the messages throughout the rest of the data pool that one can feel better from exercise, the right skin care routine, resting properly and so on. Rather despite lifting weights and exercising in the living room, the psychological burden of existing in the world persists and has a heavy toll on individuals, as if it were a weight. The COVID-19 pandemic persists despite the means that some are choosing or are being encouraged to choose to cope with the circumstances.

There is another form of resistance in this post. The cause of the psychological burden is also not located internally, such as one's perspective, hormones, or ability to self-care. Instead there is an understanding communicated that the experience of being in the world can be a burden. This goes against neoliberal and post-feminist understandings that maintain that the individual holds the responsibility for how they think and feel, recognising instead that there is a world around us that can influence our experience of wellbeing. What this post does not trouble is that the experience of existing and any resulting psychological burden is disparate. This is one of the few posts I had included in the data set from my personal Instagram consumption, which is significant in that it was so different in how most of the data had been collected. Yet, even when I went looking for a post that could be interpreted as resisting the neoliberal, post-feminist discourse dominant in the public posts, I could only find one.

Some Feminine Subjects

As has been shown throughout the analysis, the content largely portrays a particular kind of feminine subject in ways that continually position this as a normative identity. Exclusion is always a concern, and it is of significant concern that exclusions are evident within content that constitutes feminine psychological wellbeing during a global pandemic. Effectively the exclusions do not provide support or advice for some groups and presents psychological wellbeing as if it is fitting only for members of narrow identity categories.

As I have argued above, the analysis established that it was feminine subjects who were addressed in the posts. While there may be an assumption that all feminine subjects are addressed by the material, the analysis further showed that it was a particular feminine subjectivity that was positioned as normative in the content. This feminine subjectivity can be characterised as white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, youthful and having access to a disposable income. Where women of colour were pictured, they were the exception or positioned in relation to white women. For example, one post pictured three women in active wear. The woman on the left is white, the woman on the centre is white and the woman on the right is a woman of colour. The white woman at the centre of the image is positioned with her hands on her hips, taking up space and looking at the woman of colour on her right. The other women are positioned as flanking this central figure and both are looking at her (aim'n Australia & NZ, 2020b). This kind of positioning puts woman of colour secondary to the position of white women. The absence of women of colour from the written message further emphasises that the content is primarily addressing white woman.

As I argued in the preceding section, along with being predominantly white the bodies depicted in the content were heteronormatively feminine and reflective of feminine body size norms. There are other curious absences from the posts in terms of representation. Mother's Day fell during the data collection period, however there were relatively few posts that referenced mothering as important to the audience. The few posts that did reference mothering talked about taking time out from caring for children to look after oneself. There was one post that referenced a Mother's Day collection of clothing available for purchase, with text that reminded the audience of the importance of *"maintaining your style"* (Feather and Noise, 2020). This implied that motherhood had an impact on the feminine subjects ability to meet the norms of body ornamentation.

It is possible that the content was designed to appeal to a feminine subject who was pre-motherhood. This is curious though as there is a large group of 'mummy bloggers' operating within Instagram. As the posts often involved an attempt to sell a product or expertise related to self-care, perhaps there is an assumption that mothers do not have the time or resources to

be an ideal target market. However, repeatedly it is youthful adult women who are pictured in the data, rarely is there a woman pictured who could be over mid-30s in this content.

The feminine subject also had access to a surplus income since it was often assumed that she could invest in self-care or luxury products. Products were displayed in ways that referenced luxury and excess as being a part of everyday life. For example, one post displayed a feminine subject holding multiple large bunches of flowers, so large that her torso and head were mostly obscured. The caption reads *"grateful for the little things"* (Flo and Frankie, 2020). The implication here is that the means to buy flowers is possibly so insignificant that it is a 'little thing' one needs to be reminded to appreciate. The casual display of luxury was frequently positioned within the content in such a way that constructed psychological wellbeing with a disposable income. The display of a luxurious life has been identified in other analyses of social media and has been argued to be a reflection of the value placed on 'having it all' within the post-feminist sensibility (Duffy & Hund, 2015).

There are of course some exceptions where women of colour, women with varying body shapes, mothers and older women feature in the content. However, the way this is done as a rare occurrence, positions these groups as exceptions. Primarily showing youthful adult women, who are white, fit, and attractive, and are not mothers, has multiple potential effects. The primary effect is that it normalises a feminine subjectivity that is youthful, white, fit, attractive, has access to disposable income and is not yet a mother. As a normalised feminine subjectivity repeatedly drawn on in representations of psychological wellbeing, this suggests a femininity that is not just normative but also representative of the feminine subject who is actively engaged in being psychologically well.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

My project questioned how feminine psychological wellbeing was discursively constructed within Instagram during the first COVID-19 lockdown in Aotearoa. Analysis of Instagram posts demonstrated that a feminine audience was addressed in a direct and instructional manner by this content. Dominant understandings of successful femininity that were reflective of neoliberal and post-feminist ideals were drawn on in the constitution of feminine psychological wellbeing and white, middle-class, young feminine figures were presented as normative within this content. Other identities, such as feminine subjects of colour, LGBTQI, lower socio-economic status, mothers, older women and so on, were positioned as exceptions or missing from the content.

Traditional norms of femininity were evident and reformulated within post-feminist ideals. Having a fit, healthy beautiful body feels good. Displaying a serene passivity is desirable as this is evidence that one is present and mindful. Cleaning the house feels good because it is productive and is a form of self-care. Justification for these behaviours rested on the idea that the feminine subject was acting for herself and making choices that resulted in an acceptable affect.

Feminine psychological wellbeing was described as constant work upon the feminine self, with specific sites for discipline and control including feelings, thoughts, the body, and behaviour. Psychological wellbeing was not presented as something a feminine subject could hold on to with a firm grasp, but rather was a precarious state that needed to be maintained via engaging in a relationship with the self and continued efforts in self-monitoring and control. During Aotearoa's first COVID-19 lockdown feminine subjects were encouraged to get through and stay resilient by working on themselves, focusing on what they could control and remaining productive.

Critical analysis of the tropes of post-feminism drawn on in this content suggest that the constitution of feminine psychological wellbeing in this context is interconnected with what Dobson and Kanai (2019) have described as an unachievable femininity. Throughout the analysis process, I pondered the question of why feminine subjects, myself included, choose to engage with or even enjoy this content. Other researchers have argued that post-feminist digital content can be affirming for those who feel recognised and relate to the experiences that are drawn upon (Kanai, 2019a).

Many of the posts I collected and critically analysed are contributing to an important and necessary conversation about mental health. In recent history, public posts which openly discuss psychological wellbeing would have been exceptional and potentially shocking. Stigma

around mental health issues and taking steps to care for psychological wellbeing does persist today (Devendorf, Bender & Rottenberg, 2020). With the persisting stigma in mind, it is heartening to see that, at least within the context of Instagram, stigma does not act as a barrier to psychological wellbeing being openly discussed.

At a time when there is growing concern and focus on mental health within society and there is a demand for more mental health funding and better services, undertaking a project which considers and critiques the discursive construction of psychological wellbeing is perhaps not a popular decision. The concept of psychological wellbeing is so taken for granted to be good, why would we want to call it into question?

I think it stands that psychological wellbeing is important and that we should all have access to what we need to feel good in our lives. For some, the version of psychological wellbeing that was constituted in the analysed Instagram content may represent the meaning of psychological wellbeing. However, there is cause for critical consideration when psychological wellbeing is constituted in ways that reflect and reinstitute taken for granted norms, at the exclusion of those subjectivities who do not meet narrow, unrealistic normative expectations. Psychological wellbeing, in this context, reformulated within neoliberal and post-feminist ideals, becomes a means to encourage some individuals to discipline themselves to have the right thoughts and feelings (Gill & Kanai, 2018), whilst making psychology wellbeing appear unachievable for those who do not fit predominant norms.

Throughout this project, I have confronted my own assumptions of what constitutes psychological wellbeing, something which as a counsellor and psychology student is very much on my mind. I think there is some learning here for everyone participating in the conversation on psychological wellbeing, whether or not they are producers of popular culture, participating in health promotion activities. The Instagram content analysed reflects the taken for granted discursive resources drawn on within a Western, mainstream context. I believe that in other contexts there are likely a multiplicity of alternative discursive resources that can be drawn upon in the constitution of psychological wellbeing. In troubling the taken for granted, it is possible that space can be created within a mainstream context for a more varied understanding that is not so closely tied to the hegemonic ideal systems of neoliberalism and post-feminism.

Social media does represent a space that holds a great deal of potential for reformulating existing norms. There are examples of social movements gaining traction within the social media context and gaining traction to have impact in the structures of the offline world, such as the #MeToo movement, drawing attention to sexual violence, and more recently the #BlackLivesMatter movement, calling for an end to racist acts of police violence and racism generally. After the process of analysing Instagram content related to psychological wellbeing, I

am left wondering if a movement questioning how we understand what it means to be psychologically well may have social relevance at some point in the future. Could there be more space for alternative stories of wellbeing in this content? Could there be a loosening of the grip of neoliberalism and post-feminism on what it means to live one's best life? Do the widespread concerns about the psychological impact of a global pandemic present an urgency for such a movement?

Creators of content, from popular culture, health promotion material, therapy resources and more, who draw on contemporary understandings of psychological wellbeing, would do well to consider the issue of representation. And not just representation that positions particular subjectivities as exceptions, or encourages them to take on elements of a normative subjectivity (Kanai, 2019a), but is genuinely more inclusive. An opportunity remains to create mainstream content which takes into account the significant structural barriers and an ever-increasing emotional burden for many as they go about living their day to day lives.

I also see some possibilities for further research in this context. During the COVID-19 period there were practical and ethical limitations in carrying out human participant research. At the time, it was uncertain as to when social distancing measures would end, which meant that it was uncertain as to when participant research that involved face to face conversations could take place. It was also of ethical concern as to how research could continue to proceed during a time of crisis, without being a potential additional burden to participants as they negotiated the challenges that COVID-19 presented in their lives. As a result of these limitations, I developed a research project that did not require participants. However, I think there is great potential for discussing the understandings I have considered in this project with interview participants and querying how feminine psychological wellbeing is agentically negotiated within the digital context. My personal engagement of Instagram affirms to me that Instagram users do not passively consume the content posted within the context. Research to date suggests there is some level of agentic positioning, where participants in the digital context negotiate the discursive content which reproduce, resist, and reformulate the taken for granted (Jackson, 2018; Pruchniewska, 2018).

Following on from conversations with people in my life about the discursive constitution of wellbeing, the suggestion has been made that masculine psychological wellbeing may be discussed within the Instagram context despite the absence of masculine subjects from the data collected for this project. I was shown a series of posts which focused on the right mindset for running, which appeared to address a masculine audience, using phrases and imagery which drew upon discourses of traditional masculinity. I found that much of the content I have analysed has drawn upon discourses of traditional femininity, reformulated within neoliberalism

and post-feminism. There is opportunity to consider how masculine psychological wellbeing is being constituted within the digital context.

Finally, this project is very much located within the New Zealand experience of a pandemic. COVID-19 presented a particularly significant point in history, that dominated everyday experience while I undertook this project. While uncertainty remains for the future, there are questions about whether the hegemony of neoliberal ideology and post-feminist sensibility in constituting psychological wellbeing can be sustained if our world is faced with ongoing crises? There remains many questions to address as social media and subjectivity is influenced by global change.

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
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and know that you are worth something. If you need help with the little things, try
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The Fabulous App [thefabstory] (2020c, March 31) Hands up if you've still not found time to
clean your home properly (despite all this time at home!) 🏠 Don't worry, it's hard to
find motivation in times of anxiety and uncertainty. But at a time when things feel.
[Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-
XMeWwltjD/

The Fabulous App [thefabstory] (2020d, April 2020) Have a #GreatMorning this Sunday! 💫.
[Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_KdFNfAroA/

The Fabulous App [thefabstory] (2020e, April 25) The lazy day... done right! ☁️We all need to
take a day out and be lazy sometimes. But did you know there are things you can do
make those unproductive days feel more relaxing? Even if you're doing nothing today.
[Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_XVFHxA4ig/

The Fabulous App [thefabstory] (2020f, April 9) For those of you who want to be productive at
home... this ones for you! ☁️ Afternoon Edition! ☁️ thefab.co/thefabapp
[Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-uIjSgncW9/

The Indigo Project [theindigoproject] (2020, April 13) A little permission to step away from the
productivity porn for a sec, and be okay with wherever you're finding yourself. Let's
not forget that this is a period of great loss for many. People have let go of. [Instagram
photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-5SdWqBHNy/

The Kindness Institute [thekindnessinstitute] (2020a, April 17) Take the time to be proud of
yourself for the tiny wins 💙. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B_D2x6Epl4r/

The Kindness Institute [thekindnessinstitute] (2020b, April 12) Loving the teddy bears and
drawings in our neighbours windows today 💙 ❤️ 💜 [Instagram photograph].
Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-3I86HpRRd/

The Kindness Institute [thekindnessinstitute] (2020c, April 8) 💛 ❤️ 💜. [Instagram
photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-tImd9JH2G/

The Kindness Institute [thekindnessinstitute] (2020d, April 27) It's time to do what makes you
feel good 💫Kia ora @femalecollective ❤️ [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B_dstXVJIS-/

The Kindness Institute [thekindnessinstitute] (2020e, May 4) Just remember. Thanks to
@thesafebubble for the reminder. #mondaymotivation. [Instagram photograph].
Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_vXSELpLf3/

The Kite Programme [thekiteprogramme] (2020, May 9) It's not all about day spas and treats.
Self care can be simply recognising that you need to stop and just do nothing. Listen to

your brain and your body x. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B_9SE8rpZms/

The New Yorker Cartoons [newyorkercartoons] (2020, April 20] A cartoon by @lila__ash.
#NewYorkerCartoons [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B_K4NsGFqyy/

The Oh Nine [theohnine] (2020, April 29) NEW ARTICLE ◯ Who Were You, Before You Were
Told To Change? It's taken five weeks for me to put words to the unfamiliar territory
I've been exploring in the silence. Sourdough, Enneagram, false narratives and Henri
Nouwen, this baby. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B_jNSQQprfn/

The One Up Project [theoneupproject] (2020, April 7) We have said it many times on this
podcast & I'll say it again! Stay curious.. 💬 🎇 🤓A new experience doesn't
nessecarily have to mean a huge career change, leaving uni or moving countries
either! Some of the most challenging. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B-rGcv5JLzh/

The Self-Love Club [selfloveclubpodcast] (2020a, April 26) SOME IDEAS FOR SELF-CARE
SUNDAY 🧖‍♀️ 💖 🎨 [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B_amoVJJkNe/

The Self-Love Club [selfloveclubpodcast] (2020b, April 11) While a lot of people are caught up
in having a productivity competition right now we want you to know that you are
enough and are doing enough already! Don't let people make you feel otherwise. IT'S
MORE THAN OK. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B-0SOfSpgfO/

The Self-Love Club [selfloveclubpodcast] (2020c, April 2) WE REALLY WILL 💖 Tag a pal 👇 you
want to share this message with 💌 . [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/BdoRNxp-pD/

The Self-Love Club [selfloveclubpodcast] (2020d, April 22) YOUR MID WEEK PSA 🚨Nurture
others and yourself too 🤗. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B_QTa6EJVMS/

The Self-Love Club [selfloveclubpodcast] (2020e, April 9) Be patient with yourself and be
mindful of this in your dealings with others WE ARE ALL TRYING 💙 . [Instagram
photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-vQlEbJ1Zw/

The Self-Love Club. [selfloveclubpodcast} (2020f, March 28) AND YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME
FOR SELF CARE DURING ISO 🧖‍♀️ 🛁EVEN IF IT'S JUST WASHING YOUR HAIR, READING,
HAVING A SNOOZE 💖. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B QQD_FJvVA/

The Self-Love Club. [selfloveclubpodcast] (2020g, April 29) Your mid-week PSA. 🚨 🎨.
[Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B_iWcoVp77R/

The Self-Love Club. [selfloveclubpodcast] (2020h, April 8) PLEASE KNOW YOU ARE NOT ALONE
🌈And my goodness you are so going to get through this time, promise. We'll get
throughthis together, with all the reassuring pep talks you need 💖. [Instagram
photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-snPZdp0y4/

The Self-Love Club [selfloveclubpodcast] (2020i, May 1) BIG MOOD CURRENTLY 💖 [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_nm4jcJBtO/

The Sleepover NZ [thesleepovernz] (2020, March 24) This is only temporary - Stay strong ♡. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-F7CmKJyW0/

The Women's Collective [the_womens_collective] (2020a, May 7) Five to survive Isolation edition When you wake up take 5 seconds to breathe and not let anxiety overwhelm you. [Instagram highlight]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/the_womens_collective/

The Women's Collective [the_womens_collective] (2020b, March 26) I know that things feel really scary right now, but the best thing we can do is #stayhome to keep ourselves and our family   safe, and have hope for all the beautiful things that will come out of the pain. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-MZ5ghBfvS/

The Yoga Travel Co. [theyogatravelco] (2020a, April 26) Experience life in all possible ways — good bad, bitter-sweet, dark-light, summer-winter. Experience all the dualities. Don't be afraid of experience, because the more experience you have, the more whole, resilient and strong you become. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_bqEajptAE/

The Yoga Travel Co. [theyogatravelco] (2020b, March 31) Do not look for a sanctuary in anyone except yourself. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B YpRnOo3Es/

Toffoletti, K., & Thorpe, H. (2018). Female athletes' self-representation on social media: A feminist analysis of neoliberal marketing strategies in "economies of visibility". *Feminism and Psychology, 28*(1), 11-31. doi:10.1177/0959353517726705

Tuesday Label [tuesdaylabel] (2020a, April 3) 🌸 Weekend words: 'calm' is my current focus. What's yours? X. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B gey8zJJbI/

Tuesday Label [tuesdaylabel] (2020b, April 13) 🌸 This week I discovered Kirsty Perrin from "The   Winning Edge Mindset". She talks about a positive mindset and how it's actually 'conscious thinking' that gets us there. It's not necessarily anything we don't already know, but it feels like [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-6a5a9JMqP/

Urban List NZ [urbanlistnz] (2020a, April 27) Life is pretty unpredictable right now, and it's totally   understandable if you're feeling a bit stressed out. Unplug from technology and give yourself a mental health boost 🤞We've got all the tips you'll need over in our link in bio. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_etmTnpnIJ/

Urban List NZ [urbanlistnz] (2020b, April 16) Cabin fever anyone? It might be time to chill out on that internet usage 😅 [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_CG7Mxpttf/

Ussher, J. M. (2011). *The madness of women : myth and experience.* New York, USA: Routledge.

van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity : a critical history of social media*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Venn, C. (1998). The subject of psychology. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn, & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the subject : psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*. New York, USA: Routledge.

Voices of Hope [voicesofhope] (2020, April 2) 🌱 🌿 #mentalhealth [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-d0XQeJKXw/

Vitals [hervitals] (2020, April 3) IT'S NOT REALISTIC TO BE HAPPY ALL THE TIME, NO MATTER WHAT   ALL THE MOTIVATIONAL QUOTES ON THE INTERNET SAY. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-gvLnipLgv/

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Weitz, R. (2010). A history of women's bodies. In R. Weitz (Ed.), *The politics of women's bodies : sexuality, appearance, and behavior* (3rd ed ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Well+Good [iamwellandgood] (2020a, May 2) We know May might not be exactly how you pictured it, but here's a reminder to take things little by little *and* that you don't have to make banana bread just because everyone else on Instagram is. 😊 Tell us. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_qLydjFVCr/

Well+Good [iamwellandgood] (2020b, April 25) In this topsy-turvy time, many of us want to make   use of our time productively. But this might not be motivation so much as it's you trying to   transform your stress into something else. At the link in our bio. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_XPvmNAwwJ/

Woman Be Kind [womanbekind] (2020a, April 20) Monday wisdom ♡#womanbekind #womankind #women #woman #female #feminist #feminism #womenshealth #womenshealthblog #femalehealth #femalehealthcare #uterus #contraception #reproductivehealth #sexualhealth #vagina #endometriosis #endometriosisawareness #pcos #hormones #femalehormones #education #empoweringwomen #womensrights #bodylove#selfcare#positivebodyimage #inspirationalquotes #nooneisperfect #begentl ewithyourself [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_LhPbJp_Z0/

Woman Be Kind [womanbekind] (2020b, April 21) Put in the time, effort and attention and you will REAP the benefits. Just like the seed we plant and nourish that grows into a beautiful flower, so too can you. Treat yourself with love, learn about your body, what. [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B_OzNxHpwtL/

World Health Organisation (2020). Timeline: WHO's COVID-19 Response. Retrieved October 27, 2020 from https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline

Worthwild [worthwildco] (2020, April 14) And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." — Marianne Williamson When you have

a strong sense of. [Instagram photograph] Retrieved from
https://www.instagram.com/p/B-8H_NwphzR/

Your Monthly Club [yourmonthly] (2020, April 2) Imagine learning about your body, your
hormones and how your monthly is connected to your total well-being all from the
comfort of your couch? Imagine no more, gorgeous! [Instagram photograph].
Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B-d7Dw3JiXq/

Appendix A

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz