Recontextualising Ageing as a Choice

Dedication

To the loving memories of Roy Palm, my great grandmother Mphone Monageng and my grandparents Kenalemang & Tseo Tsimakwane, and Rebecca Loeto.

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LAME MAATLA KENALEMANG-PALM

Recontextualising Ageing as a Choice:
A Critical Approach to Representations of Successful Ageing

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the intersection between representations of ageing femininities, empowerment, and oppression in marketing and advertising practices, within the context of successful ageing. In the current era of population ageing, debates on gender and ageing are becoming more pronounced. Due to population ageing, there is a visible increase in representations of (successful) ageing in the media. As a result, we are experiencing an expansion in the "grey market" of anti-ageing products and services, e.g., cosmetics, mainly aimed at wealthy older women who constitute an important market segment for such. Given that the media helps form people's ideas about ageing, there is a need to critically examine this growing market and how older women are represented and/or addressed in it. Such representations are crucial for understanding contemporary feminist discussions on the contestation between women's empowerment and oppression. To provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, I use an intersectional feminist perspective combined with the methodology of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). This perspective highlights and deconstructs the complex ways in which power and ideology work to maintain and reinforce existing intersectional structural inequalities based on age, gender, class, and race that marginalise women. This thesis consists of three empirical studies. The findings suggest a shift from the postfeminist gaze towards a neoliberal self-objectifying gaze that closely operates alongside discourses of successful ageing. This self-objectifying gaze encourages women to actively work on and transform the ageing self through intensifying self-surveillance, self-scrutiny, and self-improvement practices. These self-transformation practices are presented as the free choices of empowered, entrepreneurial, and responsibilised subjects. Nonetheless, such choices confine women to never-ending forms of self-governance that promote the internalisation of patriarchal and capitalist ideal standards of beauty, thus reinscribing privilege and oppression.

Keywords: cosmetic advertising, grey market, intersectionality, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, neoliberalism, older women, postfeminism, successful ageing

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Philippians 4:13

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Part II: List of studies

This thesis is based on the following studies, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

I. Kenalemang, L. M. (2021). Visual ageism and the subtle sexualisation of women's ageing in *L'Oréal* advert campaigns: A multimodal critical discourse analysis. *Ageing & Society*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686x20002019

II. Kenalemang-Palm, L. M. (submitted 2021). "It takes a long time to become young:" A critical feminist intersectional study of Vogue's Non-Issue." Submitted to *Women's Studies in Communication*.

III. Kenalemang-Palm, L. M., & Eriksson, G. (2021). The scientification of "green" anti-ageing cosmetics in online marketing: A multimodal critical discourse analysis. *Social Semiotics*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2021.1981128

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1 Introduction

This thesis examines the intersection between representations of ageing femininities, empowerment, and oppression in marketing and advertising practices within the context of successful ageing. The media interest in ageing femininities is prompted by an increasing awareness of the socio-demographic changes in the ageing population (e.g. Dolan & Tincknell, 2012; Jermyn, 2016; Jerslev, 2017). As a result, there is now a growth in the "grey market," i.e. consumers aged 50 years and above (Carrigan, 1999; Bergström & Edström, 2022). This has given rise to an increasing "commercialised retirement culture" (Katz, 2013, p. 36; cf. Gilleard & Higgs, 2000). In such a culture, older people, especially women, constitute an important market segment for anti-ageing products and services such as cosmetics and beauty products (e.g. Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Prieler & Kohlbacher, 2016; Edström, 2018). This growth in the grey market also attests to the significant increase in representations of older people in advertising and marketing campaigns. These campaigns are saturated with images of a glorious retirement during which older people can stay "eternally youthful" (Loos & Ekström, 2014; cf. Katz, 2001; Richards et al., 2012; Jermyn, 2016; Jerslev, 2017; Tiidenberg, 2018). There are many examples of this shift in contemporary advertising used to promote products aimed at wealthy, mainly White (Western at least) older women, through a discourse of empowerment. The empowerment discourse invites women to purchase products that promise "agelessness" (see e.g. Windels et al., 2020). This shift, thus, provides a good imperative to (re)think the relations of power involved in ageing (cf. Dolan & Tincknell, 2012; Krekula et al., 2018). It also offers an opportunity to study how these campaigns construct/address older women and what discourses about ageing femininities are embodied in these representations. This is because such representations capture the contestation between female empowerment and female oppression, central to feminist media studies debates (see e.g. van Zoonen, 2009).

The *L'Oréal* "Age Perfect" advertising campaign for "mature skin" (launched in 2015), which features older female celebrities such as Jane Fonda, Helen Mirren, and Andie MacDowell, appears as a good example of this kind of marketing. As *L'Oréal* brand ambassadors, these women, "each in *their* unique way, uphold and empower a particular female strength, inspiring others…through their commitment to causes that echo *L'Oréal* values of feminism, inclusivity…and equal rights" (L'Oréal, 2021).

In Figure 1 below, we see an image of Fonda located underneath the heading "our brand ambassadors" on the *L'Oréal* website (L'Oréal, 2021). Below her image is a brief text that details her achievements as an actress, author, and activist, as well as a statement of what makes her beauty unique, which reads: "Jane Fonda, a role model for generations, personifies the idea that beauty is not a question of age but…comes from self-confidence" (L'Oréal, 2021). This statement comes across as ambiguous.

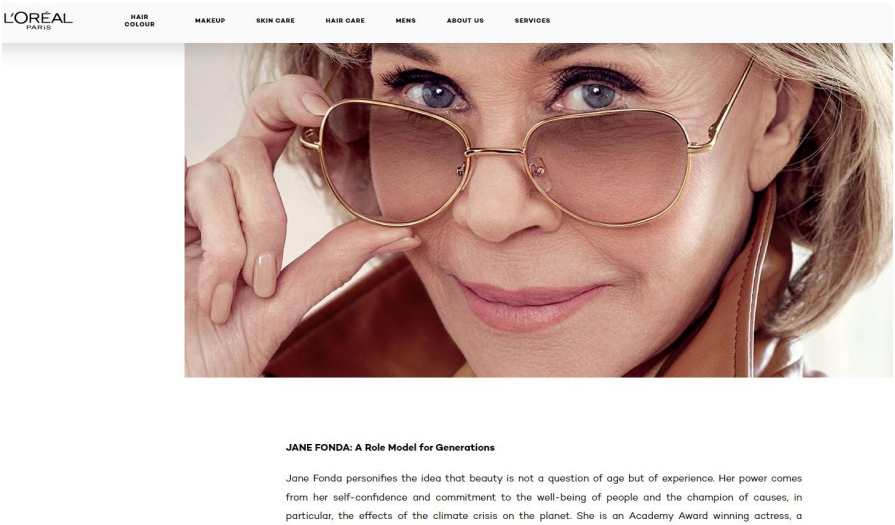

Figure 1. *Screenshot image of Jane Fonda under her profile as brand ambassador for L'Oréal found at https://www.loreal-paris.co.uk/our-brand-ambassadors*

On the one hand, the "made-up" image of Fonda, a well-off, attractive 84-year-old woman, who not only does not look a day over 50 but has also had several plastic surgeries, symbolises the kind of "good ageing" woman who takes great care of her skin. Through her position as a brand ambassador for *L'Oréal*, Fonda's positive image of ageing is explicitly tied to her consumption of *L'Oréal* anti-ageing products. Her direct association with these products demonstrates that women can remain physically attractive even in their 80s. This helps *L'Oréal* foreground the anti-ageing products' effectiveness in "youthifying" women's appearances.

On the other hand, Fonda's positive image of ageing is attributed to her confidence in her skin "because she's worth it." Women are here encouraged to also boost their self-confidence through the purchase and use of *L'Oréal* anti-ageing products; and a continuous self-improvement in their appearances, that they can both look good and feel good about. Although the need for physical perfection is not repudiated, it is still defined as not enough in itself, emphasising the psychic work that the gendered (ageing) body is expected to perform (cf. Wearing, 2007; van Zoonen, 2009; Gill & Orgad, 2017). Essentially, confidence is presented as a source and solution for women's problems. These advertisements, thus, invite women to work on and perfect themselves through individual consumption practices (cf. Lazar, 2011, 2017; Gill & Orgad, 2017; Favaro & Gill, 2019). Here, the agency incited is on "aesthetic labour," where women, through postfeminist notions of freedom, choice, and empowerment, are increasingly encouraged to engage in different forms of beauty and bodywork practices to manage and transform their appearances (see e.g. Elias et al., 2017). From a postfeminist perspective then, aesthetic labour can be described as "what women want, *they* can achieve…*which* implies the moral character of the postfeminist subject as determined, proactive and confident, taking pride in her groomed appearance because it 'speaks for' the woman she ostensibly is" (Lazar, 2017, p. 52). This focus on empowerment vs oppression, and choice, i.e. whether women are socially coerced or freely chose to objectify themselves to patriarchal standards of beauty, highlights the ambiguity that forms the point of departure of this thesis.

This ambiguity is increasingly important to scholarly debates on gender and ageing, especially now as the world continues to experience growth in the number and proportion of older people in the population (cf. Dolan & Tincknell, 2012; Whelehan, 2013; Meagher, 2014; Jermyn & Holmes, 2015; Jermyn, 2016; Anderson, 2019). This demographic shift is accelerating more rapidly in developed countries compared to developing countries. According to United Nations estimations, by 2050, one in six people will be aged 65 or older, a majority of whom will be women, who already account for 55 per cent of the global population aged 65 years or over (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). Naturally, this has become the focal point of many social and political debates in most Western countries. At one level, there are increasing concerns over the "grey tsunami," where older people are positioned as a societal and economic threat that profits at the expense of younger generations (e.g. Robertson,

1997; Calasanti, 2020; Krekula & Vickerstaff, 2020). This development raises concern over the implications for the functioning of welfare and pension systems and how to respond to health and long-term care needs (cf. Krekula & Vickerstaff, 2020).

Preparing for an ageing population is prioritised on the political agenda of most European states (cf. Krekula & Vickerstaff, 2020). Accordingly, the European Union (EU) has taken the initiative to inject large sums of money into research to address the challenges of the ageing population (European Commission, n.d.). These challenges are addressed through the development of policies that promote "active/healthy ageing" (European Commission, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2020), or what I, here, refer to as "successful ageing." Successful ageing[1], preliminary defined by Rowe and Kahn's (1997, 1998) model, focuses on three components of well-being: 1) avoiding disease and disability; 2) maintaining high mental and physical functioning; and 3) remaining socially engaged. This understanding of successful ageing is said to better fit with the current ageing generation, who are often viewed as healthier and wealthier, and hence seen to have more (consumerist) resources that enable them to live longer and more active lives (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Calasanti et al., 2006; Sandberg, 2013). Successful ageing, hence, fosters the idea that older people can be active, productive, and autonomous, neoliberal consumerist terms that highly correspond with youth and midlife (Sandberg, 2013, p. 13). Representations of older people in a consumer context are, thus, driven by commercial interests that promote images of youthful older people (e.g. Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Twigg, 2018). In this sense, successful ageing can be seen to mean "not ageing, not being 'old' or, at the very least, not looking old" because "constructions of old age contain little that is positive" (Calasanti et al., 2006, p. 15). Successful ageing thereby promotes the idea of "agelessness." Critics have called this idea of agelessness "the denial of age," in that it views later life as a continuation of midlife (cf. Sandberg, 2013; Chen, 2015a; Bouson, 2016).

Hence, ideas of successful ageing come with both intended and unintended positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, the positive

[1] Successful ageing is used globally to capture the notion of "ageing well." Other conceptualisations include healthy ageing, active ageing, positive ageing, productive ageing, and competent ageing. Although these concepts are often used interchangeably, each one of these concepts suggests a different approach to the gains and potential of ageing and hence should not be used synonymously.

consequences of successful ageing can include: at the individual level, 1) adopting an active lifestyle; at the societal level, 2) maintaining functional health and enhancing capacities such as individual responsibility and civic engagement, which additionally could lead to 3) a reduction of older people's dependability on public system provision at the governmental level (Neilson, 2006; Loos & Ivan, 2018). On the other hand, the possible negative consequences include the marginalisation and/or invisibility of the ageing process and the societal exclusion of those aged 80+ years, especially those who are no longer able to enjoy so-called successful ageing (e.g. Neilson, 2006; Rozanova, 2010; Ylänne, 2012; Loos & Ivan, 2018). Subsequently, most people "fail" to age successfully (Rozanova, 2010). Successful ageing places a strong emphasis on individual choice such that the success or failure of older people is seen as the sole responsibility of the individual (e.g. Katz & Calasanti, 2015; Loos & Ivan, 2018). Coupled with a neoliberal emphasis on individualism as the basis of success, successful ageing fails to notice the heterogeneity of older people and excludes those who do not have the financial resources, educational background, physical health, etc. to "age well" (Laliberte Rudman, 2006; Rozanova, 2010; Martinson & Berridge, 2015; Stephens, 2017). In this way, the notion of successful ageing is problematic because it ignores the intersecting structural inequalities such as age, gender, class, and race, that occur over the life course, which can determine people's "choices" to age successfully (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Holstein & Minkler, 2003; Rozanova, 2010; Laliberte Rudman, 2015; Martinson & Berridge, 2015). At the same time, successful ageing highlights the individual's power as an "entrepreneur" of their own life, assuming individual responsibility for their own failures (cf. Genz, 2006; Bockman, 2013; Gill, 2019).

This entrepreneurial, responsibilised subject fosters a postfeminist sensibility based on individualism, choice and empowerment that asks women to monitor, manage, and discipline the self (cf. Gill, 2007; Gill & Scharff, 2011; Elias & Gill, 2018). The focus on the self encourages women to see themselves as "flawed" and in need of constant (self-)transformation (e.g. Gill, 2007; Elias & Gill, 2018; Riley et al., 2019). Working on and transforming the self becomes a way for women to exercise their agency insofar as they construct the self into "standardised femininities" (Genz, 2006, p. 338; cf. Gill, 2007). In this sense, women come across as knowing and active subjects who choose to objectify themselves as a way to declare their "liberation" from patriarchy and empower themselves (cf. Gill, 2007; Lazar,

2011; Winch, 2011). Choice then becomes the "bottom-line value of postfeminism," wherein women's actions are understood as a result of their own autonomous choices, warranting no further analysis or problematisation (Stuart & Donaghue, 2011, p. 99; cf. Gill, 2007, 2008; McRobbie, 2009). As seen in Fonda's beauty statement, for instance, women's flaws or "problems" are framed in part as a form of confident subjectivity that informs wider debates on the "makeover paradigm." This paradigm is central to the postfeminist focus on self-improvement (often gendered, racialised and classed). The ideal female neoliberal postfeminist subject must, thereby, continually work upon the self, becoming the best and most successful version of herself through a range of consumption practices (see e.g. Gill, 2007; Jermyn, 2016; Gill & Orgad, 2017; Wood, 2017; Gill & Kanai, 2019). From a critical perspective of postfeminism, some feminist scholars would argue that women who "choose" to engage in such practices are victims of false consciousness whose bodies are disciplined by the male gaze to conform to hegemonic standards of beauty (e.g. Negrin, 2002; Genz, 2006; Stuart & Donaghue, 2011; Budgeon, 2015).

Seen more prominently in advertisements and magazines, conceptions and representations of ageing are being transformed, "made-over," within the postfeminist discourse through a seemingly endless range of anti-ageing products and self-help discourses in which older women can invest to resist or "fight" ageing (cf. Jermyn, 2016; Fiedler & Casey, 2021). The cultural preoccupation with ageing, or rather with avoiding ageing, allows advertisers and magazine editors to (re)construct ideas and values about ageing that prioritise youth (e.g. Calasanti, 2007; Coupland, 2007; Del Rosso, 2017). This promotes a lifestyle trajectory that suggests to women that there is no need to succumb to old age any longer, as the technologies exist to stave it off or at least keep it at bay (cf. Fairclough, 2012; Gill & Orgad, 2017). Subsequently, advertisements and magazines tend to feature images, like the one of Fonda in Figure 1, of "supernaturally ageless celebrities…over an image of a woman who actually looks 50 or more" (Tiidenberg, 2018, p. 2; cf. Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998, Bytheway, 2003; Richards et al., 2012). However, the aesthetic labour involved is omitted, such that women should appear as not made-up (e.g. Wolf, 1990; Negra, 2009; Lazar, 2017). Seemingly, women are expected to work on their self-appearances without appearing to do so (Twigg, 2018; cf. Marshall & Katz, 2012; Lazar, 2017). This is because women, unlike men, are held to narrower and more stringent standards of attractiveness, contributing to the "double standard" of ageing

(Sontag, 1972) or even a "triple standard" of ageing, when considering the intersections of age, gender, and class (Åberg et al., 2020; cf. Hurd Clarke & Griffin, 2008; Richards et al., 2012; Brooks, 2017).

The idea of constructing women within discourses of youthfulness and attractiveness is reflected in feminist media studies and media cultural studies (e.g. van Zoonen, 2009; Meagher, 2014; Gill, 2019; Jerslev & Jepsen, 2020). In earlier studies, ageing has largely been ignored (e.g. Calasanti et al., 2006; Jermyn, 2016; Gill, 2016). However, in recent years, a significant body of work has paid critical attention to media representations of ageing femininities (e.g. Jermyn & Holmes, 2015; Jermyn, 2016; Jerslev, 2017). A central theme within these studies is the underrepresentation of older women and their negative representations when they are represented (see e.g. Roy & Harwood, 1997; Robinson, 1998; Miller et al., 1999; Simcock & Sudbury, 2006; Lee et al., 2007; Raman et al., 2008; Lemish & Muhlbauer, 2012; Sandberg & Marshall, 2017; Edström, 2018). When older women are represented, they are often "constructed in terms of age-denial, shame and a loss of self-control" (Fiedler & Casey, 2021, p. 3). By contrast, however, some studies show a significant and positive increase in representations of older women, characterised by health, activity, independence, and consumption (e.g. Lee et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2010; Lumme-Sandt, 2011; Lemish & Muhlbauer, 2012; Fairclough, 2012; Dolan, 2014; van den Bulck, 2014; Jermyn & Holmes, 2015; Ylänne, 2015; Jerslev, 2017, 2018; Loos & Ivan, 2018).

These "newer" representations of women are contingent on a conformity to neoliberal discourses about successful ageing and postfeminism (e.g. Dolan, 2014). The ageing body (and face) become charged with meaning and is key to understanding ageing and being old in present-day society (Givskov & Petersen, 2018). In contemporary advertising and magazines, older women are represented as keeping lifestyles that they are assumed to aspire to. These representations convey ideas and values about what constitutes more successful ways of life and what it means to "age well." Ideas and values about ageing well naturalise and legitimise certain ways of life and certain social practices while omitting others.

As such, there is a need to critically examine representations of ageing femininities in order to highlight the role of the media in the social and cultural construction of the ageing female body/face and age (cf., Dolan & Tincknell, 2012; Dolan, 2014; Gill, 2016; Givskov & Petersen, 2018; Krekula et al., 2018; Ylänne, 2021). The heterogeneity of older women and the

substantial inequalities within the group call for an approach that captures the complexities of contemporary representations of ageing femininities in the media. The conceptualisation of age as intersectional offers a closer understanding of the diversity and complexity of ageing (see e.g. Krekula et al., 2018). Therefore, an intersectional approach is crucial to understanding how representations of ageing femininities work to (re)produce and reinforce inequalities (e.g. Åberg et al., 2020; cf. Krekula et al., 2018). I argue that an intersectional lens helps highlight relations of power that sustain intersecting inequalities such as age, gender, class, and race that contribute to the ongoing contestation between the empowerment and oppression of women in media representations, especially in advertising (see e.g. van Zoonen, 2009). Some feminist media scholars single out advertising as "one of society's most disturbing cultural products…*that* displays a preoccupation with gender that is hardly matched in any other genre" (van Zoonen, 2009, p. 67). Advertisements, as such, are instrumental in the construction of particular understandings of women and should be critically examined.

Moreover, given that we live in a "society *that* is increasingly saturated by the visual" (Machin, 2014, p. 29; cf. Ledin & Machin, 2020), the importance of studying visual representations of ageing femininities is growing (cf. Tiidenberg, 2018; Lazar, 2021). This "visual turn" pays attention to the multimodal nature of media texts such as advertisements and magazines (cf. Machin, 2013; Ledin & Machin, 2020). As seen in Figure 1, for example, both the image of the model and the text below her image are crucial for how ideas about ageing are communicated. There is, therefore, a need for a theory of communication and methods that help reveal the often-hidden meanings found in advertisements and magazines. Although previous research provides us with valuable information on representations of ageing femininities and older women, very few studies have considered the significance of the growing grey market and the pervasiveness of visual communication today, which make approaches to multimodal representations even more pronounced (e.g. Lazar, 2021; cf. Ledin & Machin, 2020).

The social semiotic theory of communication (e.g. Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2010), and the methodology of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) (see e.g. Machin & Mayr, 2012; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020) offer a useful way for analysing visual/multimodal representations. Consequently, I set off to examine multimodal representations of ageing femininities using MCDA and social semiotics. From the theoretical approach of social semiotics, advertisements and magazines

are regarded as complex forms of communication involving many different semiotic resources (e.g. image, colour, typography, etc.), which contribute to representing ideas about older women and their ways of life. As such, they create and reproduce particular discourses about older women and what it implies to keep an active and healthy lifestyle, which affects how women think and act in reality. This communication is, of course, situated in a broader societal context and is both shaping and shaped by discourses circulating in society today, and in the case of this thesis, discourses about successful ageing that help to normalise ideas about ageing embedded in power relations.

I found it crucial to analyse intersecting inequalities such as age, gender, class, and race using MCDA in order to deconstruct the power relations and hidden ideologies found in cosmetics advertisements and magazines. These relations of power and ideologies become "common-sense," sustained both through language use and other visual elements and cue. MCDA is also a useful tool for understanding how different modes of communication work together to (re)produce certain ideologies about feminine ageing. In addition, I propose using an intersectional feminist approach within MCDA to highlight the complex ways in which power and ideology work to maintain inequalities and how they may be challenged (cf. Lazar, 2018, 2021; Del Rosso, 2017; Slevin, 2006; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001). This allows me to discuss how and why the social, political, and economic contexts about (older) women (those aged 50+) are constructed the way they are and draw out the specific ways in which ageing women and events are represented.

Ultimately, this thesis focuses on media representations of successful ageing. I am interested in showing how discourses of successful ageing find their place in society through advertising and magazines; and how social practices of consumption have come to colonise and shape people's ideas of what it means to age well and act as moral and responsible citizens. I argue that such an understanding can create a space for broader discussions on the intersection between ageing and feminism.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of the thesis is twofold: 1) to examine how older women are constructed and/or addressed in advertisements and magazines, and 2) to identify what discourses about gender and ageing are communicated through the multimodal representations of ageing femininities. This will help me to understand the complex ways that power relations and intersecting social

inequalities are sustained and challenged through these discourses. In addition, I can critically question what it means for women to grow older in the current context of successful ageing. To fulfil the aim of this thesis, I pose the following four research questions:

1. What are the dominant discourses used to construct/address older women in cosmetics advertisements and magazines?
2. In what ways and how do these discourses legitimise/delegitimise successful ageing?
3. How do these discourses (re)produce intersecting inequalities of gender, age, class, and race?
4. How do intersecting inequalities over the life course relate to successful ageing?

The first three questions are addressed in the individual studies that make up this thesis, while the fourth research question is addressed on a more abstract level in the conclusions chapter. This thesis contributes to longstanding feminist media debates on "empowerment" and "oppression" using an intersectional feminist approach combined with MCDA. Such an approach helps me examine how older women are constructed and/or addressed in advertisements and magazines. Because of its "overtly political stance" and its concern with "all forms of social inequality and injustice," this approach is relevant to call attention to women's individual multiple intersecting identities (Lazar, 2005, p. 2; see also Lazar, 2018). My work will show how such an approach can help uncover the often-subtle ageist, sexist, and discriminatory discourses that continue to marginalise women in society today.

2 Literature review

The first part of this chapter gives an account of successful ageing. Successful ageing first gained prominence in gerontological research through the work of Robert J. Havighurst in the 1960s and has later been widely used and discussed within different disciplines. As a result, successful ageing has acquired many definitions and is used differently by various scholars. For example, in a review of 29 successful ageing studies, Depp and Jeste (2003) identified 28 different definitions, while in a study conducted by Cosco et al. (2014), 105 operational definitions of the term were identified. The aim of this chapter, as such, is not to provide a detailed account of the many definitions of successful ageing but rather to provide a background to the term and show how it developed within gerontological research. A section summarising the criticism against successful ageing follows. Based on the criticism, I propose looking at successful ageing from an intersectional life course perspective. The second part of this chapter gives a brief overview of existing research on representations of older people[2] in the media. More specifically, I look at how older women are represented both in general terms and from a feminist media studies perspective in advertisements and magazines, providing a summary of the results from the quantitative and qualitative studies conducted to date.

2.1 What is successful ageing?

Since the early work of Robert J. Havighurst (1961) in the first issue of *The Gerontologist*, successful ageing has played a central role in discussions on research and public discourses about ageing. Successful ageing was defined by Havighurst (1961) as "the conditions of individual and social life under which the individual person gets a maximum of satisfaction and happiness" (p. 8). His understanding of the concept differed from activity theory, which defined successful ageing as the "maintenance as far as long as possible of the activities and attitudes of middle age" and with disengagement theory, which construes successful ageing as "the acceptance and the desire for a process of disengagement from active life" (Havighurst, 1961, p. 8). Instead, Havighurst advocated a subjective definition of successful ageing that emphasised well-being. As such, the key to successful ageing was seen as the

[2] "Older people" can either refer to those aged 60 and above (Williams et al., 2010) or those aged 50 and above (Chen, 2015a; Prieler et al., 2015).

continuation of activity in older age and the retention of values typical of those in middle age.

These ideas were later progressed, especially by the work of Rowe and Kahn (1987). These scholars proposed a more objective understanding/measurement of successful ageing, not based on subjective interpretations of ageing processes and outcomes. In their work, Rowe and Kahn (1987) argued that dichotomising ageing into pathological versus normal states does not capture the range of ageing experiences. The authors then differentiated "normal" ageing into "usual ageing," in which individuals experience non-pathological age-related changes but are at high risk of disease, and "successful ageing," in which non-diseased individuals experience high functioning and are at low risk of disease, thus, putting emphasis on maintaining physical health and avoiding disease. Their approach was well-received, and subsequent publications helped underline it and popularise Rowe and Kahn's definition. This conceptualisation was, however, one-dimensional in its focus on objective physical functioning, a limitation that Rowe and Kahn (1997) addressed a decade later when they proposed a three-factor model, referred to as the Rowe-Kahn model. This model of successful ageing encompasses the: i) avoidance of disease and disability; ii) maintenance of high physical and cognitive function; and iii) sustained engagement in social and productive activities, arguing that the area where they overlap indicates successful ageing (see Figure 2).

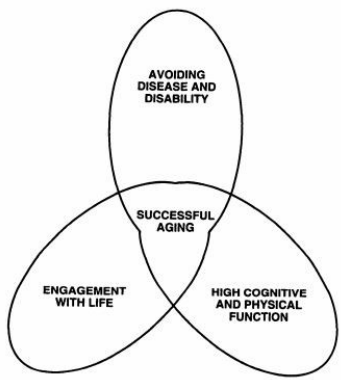

Figure 2. *The Rowe-Kahn (1997) model of successful ageing*

The Rowe-Kahn model has given rise to widespread discussions of successful ageing. There are four key aspects of their argument that are particularly noteworthy and continue to characterise the model today. These aspects are summarised by Timonen (2016, pp. 15-16) as follows. First, the idea that people need to understand successful ageing because the increase in older populations is a "challenge" (that is, a problem to be addressed). Second, the idea that to age successfully, a person has to "tick" several "boxes" across selected domains of life: physical, cognitive, and social. Third, the argument that specific characteristics and behaviours bring about successful ageing and that people know what these are. The authors stress that intrinsic (genetic) factors are influential but "do not dominate the determination of risk in advancing age" because extrinsic (lifestyle) factors exert a strong influence (Rowe & Kahn, 1997, p. 435). Fourth, the argument is that interventions can and should be developed with the aim of bringing the successful ageing experience to a more significant number of older people.

2.1.1 Why successful ageing is problematic

The extensive use of the Rowe-Kahn model has drawn substantial criticism. Several scholars have shown that the model is problematic because of the harmful effects of the meaning and location of successful ageing discourses in society (see e.g. Riley, 1998; Holstein & Minkler, 2003). The main critiques of the notion of successful ageing may be summarised within three general areas: i) homogenisation, ii) healthism, and iii) responsibilisation.

First, the concept of successful ageing supports homogenising ageist discourses and unattainable ideals. Successful ageing encourages unattainable ideals of success that not all people can live up to, as well as inappropriate ideas of failure. The model also appears to promote the idea that older people should maintain the qualities of youth for as long as possible. Even so, the concept takes little account of the lifelong inequalities and different opportunities for different groups of people to age successfully (Holstein & Minkler, 2003). For example, the social and physical activities that older people should aspire to, such as formal volunteer work and golfing, are most often associated with privileged statuses, which shapes barriers to and opportunities for people to achieve the dimensions of successful ageing. As Calasanti and Giles (2018) argue, intersecting inequalities over the life course influence which vision of ageing is seen to be "successful" and shapes

barriers to and opportunities for individuals to achieve the different dimensions of successful ageing. Still, the model pays little attention to what successful ageing means for older people based on their own experiences over the life course and what success means for them (see e.g. Torres, 2006; Katz & Calasanti, 2015). Several scholars (see e.g. Bin-Sallik & Ranzijn, 2001; Calasanti, 2007; Victor, 2010; Calasanti & Giles, 2018; Holman & Walker, 2021) highlight how intersecting inequalities such as age, gender, race, sexuality, and income intersect to influence how people age or experience later life. For instance, the several disparities that exist amongst White women and women of colour means that women of racial and ethnic minority groups are most likely to enter old age in poorer health, particularly due to a lack of financial resources that limit their access to healthcare (see e.g. Calasanti & Giles, 2018). The overemphasis on individual agency overlooks macrostructural factors such as income, level of education, social class, gender, race, etc. that shape a person's environment and access to health resources, e.g. nutritious food, good healthcare (Holstein & Minkler, 2003; Brandt et al., 2012; McLaughlin et al., 2012). The resources required to achieve successful ageing are, as such, only available to certain, more privileged groups. When poor health is blameworthy and independence is prised, older people may deny their need for help and support. The concept, thus, imposes standards or expectations that are unattainable for many, especially marginalised individuals, and groups, and in this sense, reinforces their social exclusion. In summary, even though older people living in restricted material circumstances and with poor health are excluded from participating in society, they are still expected to age independently or successfully.

Second, successful ageing supports the ideology of "healthism" (Crawford, 1980), a concept used to describe an individualised version of health that encourages the individual to take responsibility for their own health (Crawford, 1980). Successful ageing sees good health as the product of specific practices or "self-correction variables," such as diet, exercise, and social interaction (e.g. Walker, 2013). This perspective emphasises individual lifestyle practices to prevent decline and disability. Such a focus shifts responsibility for health from the public sector to individuals and families while constructing later life circumstances as the culmination of individual decision-making. As Pond et al. (2010) show, older people today recognise many effects on their health while drawing most strongly and consistently on health promotion themes of diet, exercise, mental stimulation, and social

engagement. There are two main concerns about the effects of this focus on health as a product of individual behaviours. First, a moral imperative pervades, those who are healthy and diligently follow dominant health messages are seen to be living virtuously, while those who are unhealthy or indifferent to the prescriptions for health-related behaviour are viewed as irresponsible and even blameworthy for illnesses that develop (Stephens, 2017; cf. Galvin, 2002; Crawford, 2006). Consequently, when older people talk about their health, this can be seen to include a moral dimension in which people take responsibility for their health and feel ashamed for their ill-health (Pond et al., 2010). However, it is difficult for older people to be subjected to this discipline because they are more likely to suffer from a disability or general loss of physical abilities as they age. The model's focus on the maintenance of health and avoidance of decline as a measure of success while disregarding the experiences of embodied ageing (Katz & Marshall, 2003, cf. Dolan, 2013) carries an "implied hostility toward ageing bodies" (Morell, 2003, p. 69), particularly toward disabled or diseased bodies that are by default deemed failures. Consequently, this categorises many older people as "unsuccessful" (see e.g. Strawbridge et al., 2002; Bowling & Dieppe, 2005; Montross et al., 2006), creating a binary between successful and unsuccessful bodies that subjects older people to moral judgements by society (e.g. Holstein & Minkler, 2003; Rozanova et al., 2006), and produces a "new" form of ageism[3] (Angus & Reeve, 2006, p. 143). Policy applications, therefore, tend to focus on maintaining work or other contributions without allowing for changes in ageing bodies.

Third, successful ageing supports a dominant ideology of responsibilisation that increasingly addresses people as actors who "understand and enact their lives in terms of choice" (Rose 1999, p. 87; see also Chapman, 2005; Rubenstein & de Medeiros, 2015). As Rowe and Kahn (1998, p. 37) note, successful ageing "can be attained through individual choice and effort." The autonomous self is, thus, expected to act and to make the "right" choices (Higgs et al., 2009) through an appeal to "free will" that promotes active citizenship and self-governance in ways that align with the values and

[3] Ageism is defined as "a coherent set of shared ideas and beliefs that constitutes a particular justification of the interests of dominant groups: the state, employers, hospitals, media" (Bytheway, 1994, p. 130 as cited in Loos & Ivan, 2018, p. 163), while "new ageism" is defined as the "fear of ageing with a disability" (Angus & Reeve, 2006, p. 143).

aims of successful ageing (Laliberte Rudman, 2015). The model, hence, encourages independence, surveillance, and personal blame for the failure to age successfully (Pond et al., 2010). For example, to those with more privilege, lower-class women of colour who are disadvantaged in later life might be seen as personally responsible for not having higher educational backgrounds (Calasanti & Giles, 2018). Furthermore, some scholars argue that constructing successful ageing as an individual achievement means that those who age successfully take personal credit. At the same time, those who end up in poor circumstances are blamed for any problems they may encounter in old age, at the neglect of social structural and institutional influences involved in people's choices to age successfully (Riley, 1998; Breheny & Stephens, 2010; Rozanova, 2010; Rubenstein & de Medeiros, 2015). However, as Kahn (2002, p. 726) argues, the focus of their model is not on what societies can do but on "what individuals themselves can do to use, maintain, and perhaps even improve what they have." The de-emphasis of structural influences and social inequalities in the Rowe-Kahn model, while stressing self-determination in ageing, creates further challenges and greater disadvantages for some older people. This means that the resources and experiences necessary to achieve successful ageing are only available to certain and more privileged groups.

In conclusion, discourses of successful ageing closely relate to neoliberal policies to develop a divisive "two-class system" of older people (Rubenstein & de Medeiros, 2015, p. 4), which blames those in poverty and encourages independence in those who could well seek help in a supportive system. The most crucial critique of the "individual control" or "individual action" assumption relates to the influence of biological and genetic factors on outcomes associated with successful ageing. As stated by Baltes and Carstensen (1996), the concepts focus on the identification of normative criteria is limited and detrimental to a better understanding of ageing because it neglects individuals and cultural variations. Such variations account for the observed heterogeneity of older people's ageing highlighted by several scholars (e.g. Bowling & Dieppe, 2005; Torres, 2019). The Rowe-Kahn model, therefore, fails to capture developmental processes and trajectories of continuity and change in function over time.

Based on this literature review, I argue for an intersectional life course perspective of successful ageing to draw out the multiple and interlocking forms of oppression that privilege successful ageing (cf. Gibbons, 2016; Calasanti & Giles, 2018; Holman & Walker, 2021; Bergström & Edström,

2022), which I use to answer the posed research question 4: "how do intersecting inequalities over the life course relate to successful ageing?"

2.1.2 A new frame: The intersectional life course perspective of successful ageing

Intersectionality[4], since introduced as a term in Black feminist scholarship[5] (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Hill-Collins, 1990), has grown and spread significantly within and to different disciplines and has been widely discussed in various scholarly debates (see Hoffart, 2021). Intersectionality is broadly used to describe the ways in which people's lives are constructed by multiple intersecting inequalities such as race, age, gender and class and other systems of oppression (e.g. Carastathis, 2014). In feminist gerontology and age studies, intersectional analyses often focus on race, gender, and class, paying little attention to age (Calasanti & King, 2015; Gibbons, 2016; cf. Krekula, 2007) or the life course (Holman & Walker, 2021), which calls for further exploration. Here, I begin with first discussing the life course perspective.

A life course perspective is useful in "understanding lives through time" (Fry, 2003, p. 271). Scholars of the life course (see e.g. Mannheim, 1952; Elder, 1975; Dannefer, 2003) are interested in how the social and historical changes that influence a particular generation at a particular point in time "govern the manners in which members of that generation make sense *of their past, present and future lives*" (Cohler & Hostetler, 2003, p. 557, my italics). Five principles define the life course perspective (Elder et al., 2003). The first principle of the life course is based on the idea that ageing and human development are lifelong processes. The second and third principles highlight the importance of human agency and socio-historical contexts in shaping individual lives. The fourth principle stresses the relevance of timing when making choices. Finally, the fifth principle of linked lives emphasises the interdependence of human relationships across the life span. A life course perspective, thus, provides a way of making sense of the social construction of age (e.g. Fabbre, 2017; Meliou & Mallet, 2021).

The corpus of advertisements and magazines that I examine offers representations of normative expectations of ageing — marked by post-retirement ideas of rejuvenation, well-being, and longevity — against which individuals should assess and make meaning of their lives (see e.g. Gilleard &

[4] Refer to Chapter 3 for a more detailed description of intersectionality.

[5] The concept the term denotes is, however, much older (see e.g. Hearn, 2011).

Higgs, 2000; Twigg, 2018). These representations produce a new generation of older people fashioned through discourses of successful ageing and thus, redefine how people have come to understand ageing, altering expectations of how they can and should reconstruct their lives. Intersectionality is, thus, an important means of exploring how social inequalities intersect to produce the societal mandate that older women should remain youthful and healthy throughout the life course (see e.g. Gibbons, 2016). Here, I attempt to show how an intersectional life course perspective of successful ageing can help gain a better understanding of how representations of older women in magazines and advertisements contribute to inequalities of age, gender, race, and class that intersect across the life course and privilege successful ageing.

Successful ageing has been criticised as it reinforces resistance to old age and frames ageing as something that must be appropriately managed (e.g. Marshall & Katz, 2012; Calasanti & Giles, 2018; Hurd Clarke, 2018). As Hurd Clarke (2018) argues, primarily valuing women on their appearances, specifically their approximation to youthful beauty ideals, socially excludes them from full citizenship (cf. Calasanti & Giles, 2018). Subsequently, women who are marked as "old" lose authority and power and become culturally devalued and stigmatised (see e.g. Hurd, 2000; Calasanti et al., 2006; Brooks, 2010; Liechty & Yarnal, 2010; Calasanti & King, 2015); putting a strong pressure on women to hide visible signs of ageing and emulate more closely the successful ageing ideal. Achieving successful ageing is, however, out of economic reach for most women, and especially for Black and other ethnic minority women (e.g. Calasanti et al., 2006; Warner & Brown, 2011; Jermyn, 2016; Calasanti & Giles, 2018). Historically, in the United States of America (USA/US), for instance, this is due to systems of domination, such as racism, patriarchy/misogyny, and colonialism in which Black women/people were denied access to education, work, and other opportunities. As a result, Black women, who were often employed as domestic workers or in other lower-paying jobs, receive lower incomes in old age, reducing their capacity to "age successfully" (see e.g. Calasanti & Giles, 2018). Furthermore, compared to men, women perform more unpaid work, including care work and domestic labour, thus spending fewer years in paid labour. In Sweden, although both men and women are almost equal in the labour force, women frequently work part-time and are paid less than men (Edström, 2018). Women are also employed in lower-paid jobs more frequently than men (Calasanti & Giles, 2018). In this sense, people's ability

to age successfully cannot simply be reduced to individual choice without first considering the institutional and social structures, such as race, class, and sexuality, that influence successful ageing over the life course (see e.g. Riley, 1998). An intersectional life course perspective of successful ageing can, thus, be used to interrogate how structural inequalities that occur over the life course continually limit women's choices to age successfully. For example, based on her social, gender, and economic status, a White, middle-class older woman might be able to pass for younger than her actual age due to the access she has to anti-ageing products and services (see e.g. Calasanti, 2007). An intersectional life course approach is thus useful in understanding the complex ways in which structural constraints, illuminated by social inequalities, differ within such groups.

In summary, the objective of this section was to build on the previous literature to propose an intersectional life course perspective of successful ageing that can be used to analyse women's mediated representations. This framework builds on the strengths of intersectionality and the life course to better understand how (successful) representations of older women reproduce age, gender, class, and race inequalities in specific contexts. As Rowe and Kahn (2015) subsequently argued, there is a need for ageing societies to adopt a life course approach to successful ageing that includes the redistribution of life's major activities, e.g. education, work, childrearing, leisure, and retirement across the entire life span. While this thesis does not claim to employ the life course conceptualisation to test successful ageing outcomes empirically, this section has considered how different factors across the life course such as education and work promote inequalities of gender, class, and race that shape older women's opportunities to age successfully. Hence, it is important to not only consider how older women are represented but how intersecting inequalities influence such representations. An intersectional life course approach to successful ageing, thus, recognises that older women are not a homogeneous group. Understanding women as defined by intersecting inequalities can help scholars to address the gendered, racialised and classed representations of older women in advertisements and magazines. The contribution of this section is further explored in the concluding discussion (Chapter 5).

2.2 Representations of older people in the media

The representation of older people in various media has been relatively well-explored; prime time television (e.g. Harwood & Giles, 1992; Harwood & Andersson, 2002; Kessler et al., 2004; Kessler et al., 2010), film (e.g. Bazzini et al., 1997; Lauzen & Dozier, 2005; Robinson et al., 2007), documentaries (e.g. Robinson et al., 2004), magazines and newspapers (e.g. Rozanova et al., 2006; Rozanova, 2010; Lumme-Sandt, 2011) and social media (e.g. Oró-Piqueras & Marques, 2017; Tiidenberg, 2018; Xu, 2020). Advertising research has looked at magazine advertisements (e.g. Carrigan & Szmigin, 1999a, 1999b; Miller et al., 1999; Williams et al., 2007; Robinson et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2010; LaWare & Moutsatsos, 2013; Low & Dupuis-Blanchard, 2013; Del Rosso, 2017), television advertisements (e.g. Simcock & Sudbury, 2006; Zhang et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2007; Chen & Ylänne, 2012; Chen, 2015a; Prieler et al., 2015) and social media advertisements (e.g. Rosenthal et al., 2021). A great majority of this research has adopted content analysis as its method of analysis. Content analyses provide valuable information about the frequency counts of representations of older people and how often they occur (see e.g. Williams et al., 2010; Chen, 2015a). Still, such analyses do not effectively capture the "communicative *affordances* employed to convey age-marked advertising messages" (Chen, 2015a, p. 168–169, my italic).

There are, however, several studies that have conducted visual and textual analyses, using methods such as social semiotic analysis and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)/Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). Critical approaches to representations of ageing are useful for expanding studies conducted using content analysis (e.g. Williams et al., 2010; Chen, 2015a; Ylänne, 2021). Studies that employ critical approaches examine the interaction between visual and linguistic elements and offer a more in-depth reading of specific content to reveal meaning, which is sometimes hidden (Ylänne, 2021; cf. Lazar, 2021; Bergström & Edström, 2022). Such studies have become popular in feminist media studies "because of their ability to unravel structures of meaning beyond the mere presence or absence of women" in media representations (van Zoonen, 2009, p. 74). In the following section, I summarise the key findings of the research conducted to date from both qualitative and quantitative studies.

2.2.1 Underrepresented and negative representations of ageing

Although the proportion of older people has increased in the world, several studies have shown that older people, and especially older women, are underrepresented in the media and continue to be invisible in advertising discourses despite their increased spending power (e.g. Langmeyer, 1993; Roy & Harwood, 1997; Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998; Harwood & Roy, 1999; Simcock & Sudbury, 2006; Zhang et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2007; Kessler et al., 2010; Rozanova, 2010; Baumann & de Laat, 2012; Low & Dupuis-Blanchard, 2013; Chen, 2015a; Prieler et al., 2015; Edström, 2018). For instance, through a content analysis of 246 British magazine advertisements, Carrigan and Szmigin (1998, p. 242) found that only 28% of the examined advertisements featured women over the age of 50. This observation is further supported by a more recent study of television advertisements in the US conducted by Lee and his colleagues (2007, p. 25), which indicated that older men (82%) appeared more frequently in advertisements than older women (38%). The underrepresentation of older women has real consequences in that it can shape societal attitudes towards older women (see e.g. Gerbner, 1998; Bandura, 2009; Hurd Clarke, 2018; Bergström & Edström, 2022). For example, through such representations, people might learn that older women are not as "valuable" as older men (Bandura, 2009). Furthermore, several researchers have found that marketers and advertisers give limited attention to older consumers and remain focused on the younger consumer market (e.g. Thomas & Wolfe, 1995; Lee, 1997; Roy & Harwood, 1997; Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998, 1999a, 2000). This stemmed from the "fear that appealing to older consumers would make products less attractive to younger consumers" (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2000, p. 219). In line with feminist theories, the limited attention on older consumers supports the existence of subtle sexism in which younger women are celebrated while older women disappear (e.g. Lee et al., 2007). For example, Carrigan and Szmigin (2000) suggest that "UK marketers see older people as 'losers' and do not want to be identified with them" (p. 219). In these advertisements, marketers further associate older consumers with "stereotypes of decrepitude, imbecility and physical repugnance" (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2000, p. 219).

Advertisers, at least in the early 2000s and earlier, thus, feared using older models to advertise their products because they believed older models would damage their image and alienate the "more desirable" younger market (Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998, 2000). The focus on the youth market was,

therefore, expected given that "advertisements for the anti-ageing industry draw on cultural constructions *that* resonate with the most potential customers" (Calasanti, 2007, p. 339; cf. Carrigan & Szmigin, 2000). As a result, it was common for younger models to dominate advertisements, even for products specifically aimed at older consumers (e.g. Smith & Moschis, 1985; Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998; Bytheway, 2003; Richards et al., 2012). When older models were used, they were likely to be digitally or cosmetically enhanced to sell the benefits of the products (Richards et al., 2012; cf. Tiidenberg, 2018). These enhanced images of older models have led some scholars to conclude that the advertising industry is guilty of ageism (e.g. Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998, 2000; Simcock & Sudbury, 2006; Hurd Clarke & Griffin, 2008; Low & Dupuis-Blanchard, 2013; Bai, 2014), or even more specifically, gendered ageism (e.g. Edström, 2018; Krekula et al., 2018). Gendered ageism is understood as a "double jeopardy" that places emphasis on the "dominance of patriarchal norms combined with a preoccupation with youth that results in a faster deterioration of older women's status compared to that of men" (Krekula et al., 2018, p. 34).

Some feminist scholars argue that such gendered ageism entails the assumption that youth is "good" and old age is "bad" (e.g. Hurd Clarke & Griffin, 2008). This assumption constructs women into two polarised categories of the "young," i.e. "the desired age characterised by beauty, vitality, and strength" vs the "old," i.e. "the feared age associated with decline, disease, and weakness" (Krekula et al., 2018, p. 38; cf. Bergström & Edström, 2022). The loss of a youthful appearance is, as such, damaging to women who are socialised to be more concerned with their appearances than men (Hurd Clarke & Griffin, 2008; Hurd Clarke, 2018; Krekula et al., 2018; Åberg et al., 2020). For men, the focus is not on their appearances but on their masculinity and performance (measured in terms of physical strength and sexual function) (see e.g. Marshall & Katz, 2002; Calasanti, 2007; Coupland, 2007). Accordingly, women (more frequently than men) are encouraged to adhere to youthful beauty ideals (Liechty & Yarnal, 2010) and frequently engage in beauty work practices. Engaging in these practices is a way for women to maintain their youthful appearance and ability, which can be interpreted as a strategy against inequality (Krekula et al., 2018; cf. Dumas et al., 2005). On the contrary, men's signs of ageing, such as grey hair and wrinkles, are ignored and often signify their value and masculine power (cf. Fairclough, 2012; Edström, 2018; Fiedler & Casey, 2021).

It is, therefore, not surprising to find that cosmetics advertisements tend to be primarily associated with older women (see e.g. Prieler et al., 2015). Since the late 2000s, the change in the degree of visibility of older women has been associated with the general societal changes of the ageing population (Jerslev, 2017). Studies on textual and visual analyses show that these advertisements bombard (older) women, especially White and middle-class, with images and messages that construct ageing as something to be fought and resisted through lifelong investments in the body "project" or as Smirnova (2012, p. 1236) puts it, "the life-extension project" (cf. Shilling, 1993; Coupland, 2007; Fairclough, 2012; Marshall & Katz, 2012; LaWare & Moutsatsos, 2013; Del Rosso, 2017). The advertisements take advantage of the social impact of science to position the products as scientific innovations that help cure age-related problems (Coupland, 2007; Arroyo, 2013; Chen, 2015b; Ringrow, 2016). The use of scientific and authoritative language (Chen, 2015b) allows advertisers to "set up" old age as an adverse condition that can be overcome by buying the advertised products (Ylänne-McEwen & Williams, 2003; cf. Raman et al., 2008; Ylänne et al., 2010). References to science or rather pseudoscientific claims in these advertisements, thus, make them appear as pharmaceutical rather than cosmetic (Coupland, 2007, p. 56). The presentation of these products from a medical-scientific perspective helps draw a parallelism between cosmetics and medicine to make assumptions about "ageing youthfully" (Arroyo, 2014). In this sense, growing old is pathologised and treated as a disease (few of these advertisements focus on men, see e.g. Coupland, 2007) that can be cured if one is committed to "ageing successfully" (Slevin, 2010) or "ageing gracefully" (Jankowski et al., 2016). This focus on ageing successfully/gracefully urges older women to take positive action to maintain their health and well-being and puts forward the idea that this action is possible and desirable.

Older women who fail to perform the beauty work needed to age successfully are in turn viewed as moral failures and lose their cultural relevance and social visibility (Holstein, 2006; Hurd Clarke, 2018). As a result, older women are charged with an individual imperative to construct morally good (i.e. "youthful") bodies and to produce bodies that they must not become. Indeed, as Calasanti and King (2015) remind us, the ideal of youthfulness in Western societies has become equated with moral goodness and responsible citizenship. Unfortunately, Western society's pervasive obsession with youthfulness leads to the stereotypical and often negative representations of older women found in advertisements (see e.g. Hurd, 2000;

Calasanti et al., 2006; Simcock & Sudbury, 2006; Del Rosso, 2017). For women, these negative representations reinforce cultural understandings of growing or rather looking older as inherently undesirable (Brooks, 2010). The undesirability of the ageing appearance has led Del Rosso (2017, p. 188) to suggest that "ageing has gradually come to stand for the 'epitome of ugliness.'" Even so, recent studies show more positive constructions of older women in advertisements.

2.2.2 Increased positive representations of "successful ageing"

While older people tend to be underrepresented and negatively represented in the media, findings from several studies suggest that not only are they positively represented in advertisements (e.g. Roy & Harwood, 1997; Robinson, 1998; Harwood & Roy, 1999; Miller et al., 1999; Miller et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2007; Brooks, 2010; Williams et al., 2010; Lumme-Sandt, 2011; Richards et al., 2012; Lövgren, 2012; Balazs, 2014; Chen, 2015a), but their visibility in the late 2000s has also increased and may eventually become comparable to their presence in real-world populations (Lee et al., 2007). Some studies have even reported an "overrepresentation" of older people in magazine print advertisements aimed mainly at older readers (Williams et al., 2010). Such increased positive constructions resonate with the commercialised retirement culture (Katz, 2013) and demonstrate the increasing importance of older people, especially older women, as a market segment (e.g. Prieler & Kohlbacher, 2016; Edström, 2018). As such, these advertisements are often directed at wealthy older consumers (e.g. Ylänne, 2021).

Using the conceptual framework of age stereotypes proposed by Hummert et al. (1994), several of these studies have attempted to identify specific stereotypes of older people being reproduced in advertisements. The framework consisted of negative (e.g. severely impaired, despondent, shrew/curmudgeon, recluse) and positive (golden ager, perfect grandparent, and John Wayne conservative) stereotypes used to categorise older people. The findings from these studies indicate that advertising representations often reproduce positive stereotypes of older people. For example, Miller et al. (2004) conducted a content analysis of television commercials from the 1950s to the 1990s in the US. They found that positive stereotypes[6] such as the "productive golden ager" (productive, intelligent, capable, successful, skilled,

[6] See Table 5 in Miller et al. (2004, p. 327).

knowledgeable, independent) and the "adventurous golden ager" (adventurous, fun-loving, lively, interesting, sociable, determined, active) occurred more frequently in the commercials. Also, using Hummert's et al. (1994) stereotype trait structure results from Lee et al.'s (2007) study indicate that the "golden ager" appeared in 91% of television advertisements, while negative stereotypes were almost absent, while in British advertisements, Williams et al. (2010) identified positive stereotypes such as the "golden ager," "mentor," "coper," "perfect grandparent," "celebrity endorser" and "comedian," associated with traits such as being active, wise, happy and affluent. The positive stereotypes that dominated the advertisements closely coincided with stereotypes held more generally in Western societies. Older people are often presented as "super seniors" who are healthy, wealthy and age-defying (Milner et al., 2012). According to Milner et al. (2012), these stereotypes draw on the value of productivity in Western societies, where people show good neoliberal citizenship by being healthy, independent, and economically and socially agentic (ibid., cf. Rozanova, 2010).

These characteristics are associated with discourses of successful ageing (see e.g. Brooks, 2010; Ylänne et al., 2010; Lumme-Sandt, 2011; Richards et al., 2012; Chen, 2015a; Marshall & Rahman, 2015). For example, Bytheway (2003, p. 44), in his analysis of advertisements in *YOURS* magazine, found "familiar images of later life: reflection and fulfilment, travel and activity; and advice and support." The study's conclusion shows that, through its imagery and other coverage, the magazine provides guidance for its readers on what active steps can be taken to fight the challenges and inevitabilities of old age (Bytheway, 2003). Similarly, in their study of the retirement magazine *Choice*, Featherstone and Hepworth (1995) found that most images of positive ageing comprise representations of middle-aged and older people who look relatively glamorous, healthy, youthful and to some extent, "ageless." Such images are used to depict the "heroes of ageing" who seem to remain "forever youthful" (Featherstone, 1995, p. 231), setting an agenda for successful ageing that acts not only as a template for how to survive old age but also as an aspirational identity for older people to be fit, fashionable, functional, and flexible (Marshall & Rahman, 2015, cf. Ylänne et al., 2010).

In line with this argument, scholars suggest that, through these advertisements, older people are persuaded that there are alternative lifestyles to be selected and enjoyed post-retirement (cf. Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Twigg,

2018). In another study, Lumme-Sandt (2011) examined mediated constructions of successful ageing in 1996 and 2006 in a Finnish magazine (*ET*) advertisements aimed at readers over 50 years of age. Three dominant themes emerged from this study: i) looking good and taking care of one's appearance, which included praise for the charisma of ageing and not imitating youth; ii) freedom from paid work and predetermined roles, including possibilities for new identities; and iii) activity, which comprised of both physical and mental activity. These themes promote the idea that older people should assume individual responsibility to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle (cf. Katz & Marshall, 2003; Ylänne et al., 2010; Ylänne, 2015; Loos & Ivan, 2018). The individual choice and/or individual ethic of successful ageing gives rise to the blaming and shaming of older people for simply being and growing old and for failing to do *anything* about it (cf. Brooks, 2010; Loos & Ivan, 2018), no matter how constrained individuals might be economically, racially, socially, or otherwise.

In sum, positive constructions of ageing are a necessary way to deal with the problems of rapidly ageing populations since they can "not only empower older people to achieve a better ageing process but can also persuade the rest of us to throw away negative age stereotypes" (Bai, 2014, p. 232). These positive constructions are, however, problematic in that they often define successful ageing with terms such as activity, productivity, and autonomy; terms strongly associated with youth and midlife (Chen 2015a, cf. Williams et al., 2010; Lumme-Sandt, 2011; Sandberg, 2013; Edström, 2018; Loos & Ivan, 2018). Such an emphasis is likely to crystallise into a denial of ageing, potentially creating a binary opposition between successfully and unsuccessfully ageing bodies (see e.g. Loos & Ivan, 2018; cf. Bouson, 2016). In this sense, successful ageing does not challenge old age as a devalued status but instead reinforces it as something negative that must be appropriately managed. The body, and by extension the face, becomes a primary measure of success for women, whose young or old look determines whether they are labelled healthy or diseased (Smirnova, 2012; cf. Holstein & Minkler, 2003), reinforcing stereotypes about how older people are or should be (Williams et al., 2010). This homogenised and "unrealistic" image of ageing becomes naturalised as a normative standard of old age that excludes "others," such as the older-old, older people of colour and poor older people (Low & Dupuis-Blanchard, 2013, cf. Featherstone & Hepworth, 1995; Bergström & Edström, 2022). These positive images are,

therefore, problematic as they do not account for the diversity of older people in society.

2.2.3 (Post)feminist representations of older women

There is also extensive literature on ageing, especially women's ageing, based on feminist perspectives. (Post)feminist representations of (older) women, including older female celebrities, in various media such as magazines and advertisements (e.g. Gill, 2003, 2007, 2008; Lazar, 2006, 2011; Negra, 2009; Brooks, 2010; Stuart & Donaghue, 2011; Butler, 2013; Scharff, 2016a; Jermyn, 2016; Jermyn & Jerslev, 2017; Del Rosso, 2017; Jerslev, 2018; Favaro & Gill, 2018; Windels et al., 2020), show that women — often White, Western, middle-class, heterosexual, and young — are empowered through discourses of freedom and choice to engage in beauty and bodywork practices and assume full responsibility for their own self-care (e.g. Gill, 2003; Lazar, 2006, 2011; Johnston & Taylor, 2008). In these advertisements, the language and images of empowerment are "not about defying sexism… but defying one's own signs of ageing by effectively doing battle with one's own body" (LaWare & Moutsatsos, 2013, p. 190). This contradictory message has prompted some scholars to suggest that women who engage in beauty and bodywork practices are victims of false consciousness whose bodies are disciplined within an oppressively patriarchal society that functions to keep women's power restricted (see e.g. Negrin, 2002; Genz, 2006; Stuart & Donaghue, 2011; Budgeon, 2015). In other words, by engaging in these practices, women effectively submit themselves to the male gaze.

The objectification of the female body/face in cosmetics advertisements, e.g. the *Dove* Real Beauty campaign of 2004, promotes women's consumption of products that encourage conformity to beauty ideals, in contradiction to their self-acceptance message (Johnston & Taylor, 2008). For older women, this means that their ability to "age successfully"[7] becomes explicitly tied to their consumerism and use of the right products, which can help them control the process of ageing (e.g, Jermyn, 2012; cf. LaWare & Moutsatsos, 2013). In this sense, the hypervisible ageing female face becomes depicted as a "needy consumer *face*" (Woodward, 2006, p. 183, my

[7] Calasanti et al. (2006, p. 15) argue that successful ageing "assumes a 'feminine' aspect in the ideal that the good elderly woman be healthy, slim, discreetly sexy, and independent."

emphasis) as visible signs of ageing are often seen as a failure of femininity (Fairclough-Isaacs, 2015), and at worst deviant and unhealthy (e.g. Calasanti, 2007). Older women are, thus, faced with the option to continually attempt to control age-related "problems" or to refuse to incorporate consumerist choices in their life as part of their well-being (Ylänne et al., 2010; Loos & Ivan, 2018). The ability to make such choices makes women personally responsible for their ageing faces and bodies; in other words, ageing becomes "their fault" (Brooks, 2010, p. 247). In this sense, women are addressed as neoliberal subjects "who can lead responsibilised and self-managed lives through self-transformation" (Scharff, 2016a, p. 271). The resources to become a neoliberal subject are, however, unevenly distributed and vary by class, race, age, and gender (Gill, 2021). Critics of postfeminism argue that these intersecting structural inequalities serve to "undo" feminism (see e.g. McRobbie, 2009; Favaro & Gill, 2018). The question then is, do representations of ageing femininities undo or redo feminism? Is feminism making a comeback, as some scholars (e.g. Banet-Weiser, 2018) argue?

Developing this critique, Sandberg and Marshall (2017) call for critical theories such as feminist theory and intersectionality to deconstruct representations of successful ageing. In my study, analysing representations of older women from an intersectional perspective allows me to critique the way that discourses of successful ageing help construct/address women through narrow images of (feminine) beauty (Sandberg & Marshall, 2017; cf. Wanzo, 2016) that both create and sustain gender, racial and class inequalities. Consequently, this thesis calls for an intersectional perspective to successful ageing that addresses representations and ideas of ageing in cosmetics advertisements and magazines and how they reproduce and reinforce privilege (e.g. Åberg et al., 2020).

2.3 Summary

In summary, the research on media representations of older people is extensive and has provided valuable information on the various ways that older people are represented. The existing literature shows a general pattern of underrepresentation, particularly for women who tend to be underrepresented and more negatively stereotyped than men and younger women. Given that media representations play a powerful role in shaping people's attitudes, ideas, values, and opinions about the world, negative representations about older women can be damaging. For example, people might learn that older women do not hold as much value as older men or younger

women, which some scholars claim excludes them from full citizenship (see e.g. Hurd Clarke, 2018; Calasanti & Giles, 2018). The literature on older people also shows a significant shift towards increased and positive representations, especially in advertisements, given that their positive associations with products need to be enforced. Moreover, this trend towards a positive representation of older people in advertisements is embedded in larger discourses of successful ageing, within which individual choices in terms of lifestyle appear to be primarily seen as the responsibility of the individual and something that they can control. The individualistic focus of successful ageing is problematic in that it fails to consider the social and structural inequalities that allow people to age successfully. I, thus, propose applying an intersectional life course perspective to analyse successful ageing, which seeks to uncover how representations of ageing femininities can reproduce inequalities of age, gender, class, and race in specific contexts. Introducing such a perspective to the analysis will allow scholars to address the heterogeneity of older women.

Previous studies on representations of older people are often criticised for their overuse of content analysis as a method. Although this method of analysis has been effective in showing the various patterns of how older people are generally represented in the media, its lack of a more detailed, in-depth analysis is somewhat problematic. Hence, there is a need for a critical approach, such as the one offered by CDS/MCDA[8], to help reveal the complex, subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) ways in which taken-for-granted assumptions about feminine ageing are produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in cosmetics advertisements and magazines. Moreover, combining MCDA with an intersectional feminist approach enables me not only to draw out these assumptions but also to highlight the intersecting inequalities carried by these assumptions, thereby contributing to an understanding of feminine ageing that is not only based on gender and ageing but on how they intersect with other inequalities such as of race and class.

[8] A more detailed account of why CDS/MCDA is a relevant method for this thesis is provided in Chapter 4.

3 Theoretical position

The thesis draws on different but interrelated sets of theoretical traditions, in particular the social semiotic theory of communication, on the one hand, and approaches to neoliberalism, postfeminism and intersectionality, on the other. In this chapter, I start by accounting for the key principles of social semiotics as outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006). This perspective will help me to understand how communication is organised and works to create meaning. Based on this understanding, I then introduce the concepts of neoliberalism, postfeminism, and intersectionality to enable me to examine how older women are both constructed and addressed in cosmetics advertisements and magazines. Interrogating neoliberal postfeminist constructions of older women through an intersectional lens allows me to highlight intersecting inequalities of age, gender, race, and class present in such multimodal representations.

3.1 Social semiotic theory of communication

This thesis takes its point of departure in the social semiotic theory of communication and focuses on the choices that communicators make when communicating (see e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2005). There is a relationship between social semiotics and MCDA (see Chapter 4 for a presentation of MCDA). Social semiotics has its background in Halliday's theories of language as social semiotic and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and was later developed as a theory of multimodal sign-making, especially by Günther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (see e.g. Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; van Leeuwen, 2005; Kress, 2010). More recently, this approach has been progressed further by Per Ledin and David Machin (e.g. Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020).

Social semiotics is "interested in meaning, in all its forms" (Kress, 2010, p. 54) and studies the modes of communication that people use to represent their understanding of the world (Jewitt & Henriksen, 2016). In cosmetics advertisements and magazines, for instance, meaning is created multimodally by the way in which language interacts with other visual elements and cues. It is, therefore, important to look at how all such semiotic resources jointly carry meaning and communicate certain ideas and values about feminine ageing.

One of the core elements of social semiotics is the idea that "representation is always multiple" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. vii). It implies a need to conceive communication as always working through several modes, i.e. "socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resources *used* for making meaning" (Kress, 2010, p. 79). In everyday social interaction, people communicate not just through language but also through, for instance, postures, gestures, gazes, and the way they are dressed. Cosmetics advertisements and magazines operate through modes such as images, graphics and colours, and fonts to contribute to the meaning being expressed (Jewitt, 2009).

The notion of choice is a key principle of social semiotics (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Social semiotics assumes that when people want to describe a person, object, place, or idea, they have a range of choices that they can choose from to fulfil certain communicative functions (van Leeuwen, 2005; Kress, 2010). For instance, advertisers have a choice with regards to the kinds of colours (tones, saturation, purity, and brightness levels), typefaces, borders, fonts etc. to use when designing cosmetics advertisements. Such choices rely on the available semiotic resources[9] (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). These semiotic resources are used to create meaning, are "generative of meaning," and are motivated by the interest of the sign-maker (people) in any given social context (Kress, 2010, p. 54).

This suggests that semiotic resources lend themselves to doing different kinds of "communicative work" — each is apt for different purposes in that each mode of representation offers a unique potential to create meaning. This potential proves to be different from other modes of representation (Kress, 2010). Meaning or sign-making, as such, should always be understood as motivated (Kress, 2003, 2010) rather than as an arbitrary[10] association between form (*signifier*) and meaning (*signified*). Kress (2010, p. 62) means that signs, or rather the motivated sign, are *made* and not *used* by sign-makers.

The idea that semiotic resources are socially motivated allows people to see meaning-making in more fluid and dynamic terms than using pre-given and agreed-upon signs (see e.g. Kress's example of the child's drawing of a "car"). As Kress (2010, p. 54) aptly puts it, "signs are always newly made

[9] See e.g. van Leeuwen (2005) and Ledin & Machin (2018, 2020) for a description of semiotic resources. Semiotic resources are also sometimes referred to as "signs," these terms are here used interchangeably (see e.g. van Leeuwen, 2005).

[10] See Saussure (1974) for a detailed account of the concept of arbitrariness.

in social interaction." The meaning potential of texts is, thus, open to multiple interpretations that come loaded with *affordances* that shape communication and social behaviour (Fairclough, 1992; Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt & Henriksen, 2016; Ledin & Machin 2018, 2020). Affordances (associated with the work of Gibson, 1979) refer to the practical uses of semiotic materials, i.e. "the actual objects which the semiotic choices form" (Ledin & Machin, 2020, p. 30)[11], that are available to people (Hutchby, 2001). Such affordances enable and constrain the possibilities of actions and differ from context to context or between different people (ibid.). For instance, the use of several modes of communication to represent older women can be understood as socially motivated and most apt (for the advertisers) in that given moment to communicate very specific ideas about ageing well (see e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; Kress, 2010, 2015). The affordances of advertisements/magazines, thus, allow advertisers/editors to perform different ideological functions to recontextualise social practice and serve specific relations of power that often carry traces of intersecting inequalities such as age, gender, race, and class. I come back to the concept of affordances in the methods chapter.

In sum, a social semiotics approach enables me to describe and document all the particular semiotic choices made and view these in the context of the observed available resources. It allows me to understand the meaning potentials or affordances of the semiotic choices and how certain ideas about the world are communicated, as well as the specific relations of power they serve. I discuss the concepts of discourse, ideology, and power in the methodology section (Chapter 4). Social semiotics is, therefore, important to this thesis as it affords me the opportunity to understand the different ways that older women are constructed and/or addressed in cosmetics advertisements and magazines and the underlying ideologies, i.e. neoliberalism and postfeminism, that such constructions (re)produce. In turn, this allows me to highlight the intersecting inequalities of age, gender, class, and race carried in these constructions. Next, I briefly discuss the notions of neoliberalism, postfeminism, and intersectionality. Here, I choose to discuss neoliberalism and postfeminism under the same heading in order to highlight the strong relationship between neoliberal and postfeminist values in contemporary culture, to the extent to which postfeminism is sometimes considered to be

[11] An advertisement, for instance, is a semiotic material.

a gendered version of neoliberalism (see e.g. Gill, 2019; cf. Gill & Scharff, 2011; Gill, 2017; Favaro & Gill, 2019).

3.2 Neoliberalism and postfeminism

Neoliberalism is a contested concept that has been conceptualised differently by various scholars (Brown, 2003, 2005; Scharff, 2016a; Gill, 2021). It is not my intention to provide an overview of these conceptualisations here, but rather to draw on its notions of individualism, independence and taking control of one's life to problematise how older women are being remodelled/reconstructed through neoliberal discourses.

In its broadest terms, neoliberalism is understood as a political and economic rationality that emphasises "that human well-being 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" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2); thereby limiting the role of the state to create and preserve this framework. Neoliberalism involves the extension and dissemination of market values into *all areas* of life and "to *all* forms of conduct" (Burchell, 1993, p. 275; cf. Brown, 2005; Mudge, 2008; Dardot & Laval, 2014; Springer et al., 2016). Drawing on the Foucauldian notion of governmentality (Foucault, 1988), some scholars understand neoliberalism as a "dominant political rationality that moves to and from the management of the state to the inner workings of the subject" (Rottenberg, 2014, p. 420; cf. Elias & Gill, 2018; Shimoni, 2021). In this sense, neoliberalism brings the self into a productive relationship with its own subjectivity through technologies of self-control (e.g. Lewis, 2016). The individual woman becomes constructed as an "entrepreneur *of her* own *life*, managing choices within a highly volatile world and taking individual responsibility for *her* failures," no matter how constrained she might be (Bockman, 2013, p. 15, *emphasis added*; cf. Brown, 2003, 2005; Genz, 2006). This construction of individuals as entrepreneurs of the self is a construction that closely relates to discourses of successful ageing that increasingly place emphasis on the neoliberal expectation that ageing individuals should actively manage their own ageing process (cf. Shimoni, 2021).

While neoliberalism is often largely theorised as a political and economic system characterised by increasing individualisation, privatisation, deregulation, and the emergence of the free-market ideology in the 1980s and 1990s (see e.g. Brown, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Gill & Scharff, 2011), my in-

terest here is how neoliberalism, based on these characteristics, is increasingly promoted as an affective and entrepreneurial mode of subjectivity (e.g. Gill & Kanai, 2018; Elias & Gill, 2018; Favaro & Gill, 2019; Gill, 2021). In recent years, a growing body of work has critiqued neoliberalism as a social, cultural, and psychic project, built around "feeling rules" that promote positivity and a broader trend towards self-help discourses (see Gill & Kanai, 2019, p. 131; cf. e.g. Elias et al., 2017; Favaro & Gill, 2019; Gill, 2021). This extension of neoliberalism moves the concept beyond its focus on economic and political power to indicate the ways in which it "operates as an everyday sensibility that shapes modes of relating to the self and others" (Gill & Kanai, 2019, p. 131). As such, it "*calls* into being…rational, calculating and self-motivating subjects who will make sense of their lives through discourses of freedom, responsibility and choice" within the marketplace (Gill & Kanai, 2019, p. 133). In this thesis, I understand neoliberalism as a dominant mode of governmentality that positions individuals as entrepreneurial subjects who are active, rational, and calculating and "whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for 'self-care' — the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions" (Brown, 2005, p. 42; cf. Favaro & Gill, 2019).

Advertisements and women's magazines are central to this construction of the entrepreneurial and responsibilised subject invested in transforming the self (e.g. Favaro & Gill, 2019; Gill, 2021). This subject "*does* not need to be governed by others, but will govern *herself*, master *herself*, *and* care for *herself*" (Rose, 2006, p. 150, *emphasis added*). In this manner, the individual as *homo economicus* can willingly and actively self-govern as part of their "patriotic duty" as a citizen (Rose, 1999, p. 145). Working on and perfecting the body, and by extension, the face (e.g. Negra, 2009), becomes a way for individuals to show agency and control over their own lives, thus defusing any criticism of oppression (cf. Chen, 2013). Crucially, beauty work practices are to be understood as "freely" chosen by a woman who simply wants to "please herself" rather than being subject to external pressures (Gill, 2007, 2019; cf. Brown, 2005). Self-chosen practices, thus, operate to produce responsible citizens who self-monitor, self-manage, and self-discipline, irrespective of how well or badly they do so (Bockman, 2013; cf. Brown, 2005; Gill, 2007), or how constrained they may be (e.g. economically, or racially) (Gill & Kanai, 2019). In this sense, neoliberalism fosters an individualistic and competitive ethos, in which women learn to con-

stantly monitor their appearances to produce their "best" and most successful selves (Leeds Craig, 2021, pp. 3-4; Wood, 2017). The woman's face, thereby, becomes her "asset, her product, her brand and her gateway to freedom and empowerment in a neoliberal market economy" (Winch, 2015, p. 21). In this framework, women become constructed and/or addressed as "aesthetic entrepreneurs" (Elias et al., 2017; cf. Gill, 2021).

This aesthetic entrepreneur is often compelled by specific rules, increasingly produced, disseminated, and policised/governed by adverts that emphasise calculation, autonomy, self-invention, self-regulation, and personal responsibility in the pursuit of beauty work practices (Gill, 2021, p. 39; cf. Rose, 1992; England & Ward, 2016; Gill & Kanai, 2018, 2019). By default, individual women become homogenised rather than seen as people who are raced, classed, gendered, or disabled (Gill & Kanai, 2019); thus, ignoring the power relations relating to race, gender, and class, that account for the uneven distribution of the resources necessary to become an entrepreneurial subject (Scharff, 2016b). Women who fail to do or perform the necessary (individual) work to achieve a "successful feminine[12]" appearance become deemed immoral, irresponsible, and failed citizens who lack self-control (e.g. Marshall & Katz, 2002; Higgs et al., 2009; Rozanova, 2010). It is to this degree that Rottenberg (2014, p. 420) critically asserts that the intensified individuation of women works to reinforce a regressive form of "neoliberal feminism" that offers no critique of neoliberalism but is instead complicit with and legitimating of neoliberalism[13] (cf. Walby, 2011; see also, Hesse-Biber, 2011; Evans et al., 2014; Disch & Hawkesworth, 2016). The shift in interest from systems of power to agency (Walby, 2011) gives rise to a "new" neoliberal feminist subject who accepts full responsibility for her own well-being and self-care and, in turn, mobilises women to "con-

[12] For a detailed accounted on successful femininity see e.g. Budgeon (2015).

[13] The concept of feminism is certainly diverse and has been approached in several different ways (e.g. Walby, 2011; see also the many handbooks on feminism(s), e.g. the *Handbook on Feminist Research* (Hesse-Biber, 2011); the *Sage Handbook on Feminist Theory* (Evans et al., 2014); or *the Oxford Handbook on Feminist Theory* (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2016)). These include as an ideology, a social or political movement, a knowledge production, or a theory about gendered and intersectional relations (e.g. Banet-Weiser, 2018). Here, feminism is widely defined as a way to "consider people and projects that pursue the goal of reducing gender inequality to be feminist" (Walby, 2011, p. 3).

vert continued gender inequality from a structural problem into an individual affair" (Rottenberg, 2014, p. 420; cf. Douglas, 1994; Genz, 2006; McRobbie, 2013).

In other words, the systematic and structural differences that exist between men and women can be understood as a result of the free exercise of individual choice (see e.g. Lazar, 2006; Stuart & Donaghue, 2011; Ferber, 2012; Budgeon, 2015; Gill, 2019). Individuals become constructed as the agents of their own lives, achieving "goals of… happiness, productivity and wellbeing through their individual choices and self-care practices" (Ouellette, 2016, p. 77). Such individualisation has led to the intensification and extensification of appearance surveillance in cosmetics advertisements, in which women can "choose" to conform to self-scrutinise and surveil their faces and bodies for flaws or problems or simply actively reject doing so (Gill, 2019, 2021; cf. Hurd Clarke & Griffin, 2008; Stuart & Donaghue, 2011; Richards et al., 2012; Meagher, 2014; Riley et al., 2016; Elias et al., 2017). Women are thereby positioned as autonomous and self-responsible subjects, who through their own desires and capacity to make choices, can resist being passive victims of oppressive ideologies; rejecting any suggestion that women's actions are bound by wider social influences and institutions such as the media (cf. Stuart & Donaghue, 2011). Linked to this is the idea of self-transformation prominent in a postfeminist sensibility culture (Gill, 2007, 2019, 2021; cf. Gill & Kanai, 2019).

Postfeminism has become an important and contested concept in the lexicon of feminist cultural scholars working in areas such as Media and Cultural Studies (Gill & Scharff, 2011; Gill, 2016; Litosseliti et al., 2019). Even so, there is little agreement on what postfeminism is (Gill, 2007), and it is often used in multiple and even opposing ways (Litosseliti et al., 2019). The term has, however, been used both implicitly and explicitly in four main broad ways: i) to highlight an epistemological break within feminist thought; ii) to theorise a historical and generational shift within feminism; iii) as a backlash against feminism; or iv) as a distinctive cultural sensibility related to feminism and neoliberalism (cf. Litosseliti et al., 2019, p. 2). In this thesis, I refer to Rosalind Gill's (2007) conception of postfeminism as a distinctive cultural sensibility consisting of several interrelated themes. These include:

femininity as a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus on individualism, choice, and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference; a marked sexualisation of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference (Gill, 2007, p. 149).

Taken together, these themes encourage women to consider themselves as "free," "choiceful," and "empowered" subjects who form the basis of "new femininities" (Gill & Scharff, 2011), wherein women are constructed as "knowing, active, and desiring sexual subjects" who are no longer victimised objects of the male gaze (Gill, 2003, p. 103). The subjectification of women is increasingly characterised by the shift toward entrepreneurial modes of self-hood marked by the demand to work on, discipline and improve the self (e.g. Banet-Weiser, 2012; cf. Gill, 2019, 2021). This individualised focus of postfeminism that permeates late consumer capitalism commodifies and commercialises empowerment, subsequently producing a new form of opposition to progressive gender relations that exploit women by supporting a neoliberal subjectivity (Walby, 2011, p. 20; cf. Gill, 2003). Hence, postfeminism as a cultural sensibility is a way to show how feminism is intertwined with neoliberalism, positioning women as its ideal subjects (Gill & Scharff, 2011; Walby, 2011; Rottenberg, 2014; Gill, 2017). Indeed, as Gill (2016) suggests, postfeminism may be quite simply gendered neoliberalism. Gender, in turn, is understood as intersectional, i.e. as always intersected by other inequalities, e.g. age, race, and class (see e.g. West & Zimmerman, 1987; Krekula, 2007; Lorber, 2010, Collins & Bilge, 2016).

3.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality has been celebrated as the "most important contribution that women's studies has made so far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). Despite its acquired status as a "buzzword" in contemporary feminist scholarship, intersectionality is an ambiguous and open-ended concept that has sparked several discussions on how it should be used (Davis, 2008). However, as Cho et al. (2013, p. 795) emphasise, it is more important to look at "what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is." Accordingly, this thesis considers intersectionality as a heuristic term to highlight how

the intersections of the aged, gendered, raced and classed (neoliberal post-feminist) representations of older women in cosmetics advertisements and magazines reinforce particular subjects' privilege and sustains inequality and power relations between groups.

Intersectionality was introduced as a term in Black feminist scholarship in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the influential works of Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill-Collins[14] (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Hill-Collins, 1990). The term emerged as a critique of the one-dimensional analyses of social inequalities and drew attention to the ways in which systems of inequality mutually construct one another (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill-Collins, 2000). What Crenshaw (1991) meant was that "the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (p. 1224). Intersectionality was, thus, used to highlight the ways in which a "single-axis framework" limits the visibility of the experiences of Black women and leads to their marginalisation in society (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Crenshaw's work demonstrated that the lives of Black women are better understood as not being shaped by a single axis of inequality, be it race, gender or class, but by multiple axes that work together and influence each other (e.g. Collins & Bilge, 2016; Calasanti, 2019). An intersectional approach, as such, provides a way to think about axes of power and difference non-reductively, i.e. individuals have multiple social identities that cannot be examined and understood in isolation (e.g. Gill, 2017; cf. Thornton Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Intersectionality, therefore, does not only regard inequality or oppression as additive but also considers how structural power relations related to age, gender, class, and race intersect to form a range of inequalities in specific contexts (e.g. Mullings & Schulz, 2006). This dual focus on inequalities and how they interrelate differentiates an intersectional approach from other approaches.

An intersectional perspective can be understood to consist of two main aspects. The *first aspect* explicitly focuses on social inequalities. Social inequalities consist of power relations in which people of naturalised social categories, such as those defined by age, gender, race, and class, lose au-

[14] The concept denoted by the term is certainly much older. Some argue that it dates back to the nineteenth century (even longer) and was reaffirmed in the 1960s (Hearn, 2011).

thority and power and are stigmatised by those with such status (e.g. Calasanti, 2019). For instance, in gender and feminist studies, women's power is inseparable from their bodies, such that showing any signs of ageing (e.g. wrinkled, unfirmed skin, grey hair and age spots) often leads to them being stigmatised for being "old" either by younger women or by men (see e.g. Hurd, 2000). By contrast, however, older men's power resides in money, status, and social dominance, such that signs of ageing, e.g. grey hair, are read as markers of maturity and authority (e.g. Twigg, 2004). The gender disparities of growing old point to the way in which social inequalities are relational, i.e. the privileges of one group are tied to the disadvantages of another group. Further, social inequalities are often accepted as natural, divinely ordained, or rational and hence beyond dispute (Calasanti & King, 2015).

The naturalisation of social inequalities is largely embedded in social institutions such as the media. For instance, in cosmetics advertising, specifically for advertisements targeted at female consumers, the images and constant negative constructions of the appearance of the ageing female face naturalises the ideal of a youthful appearance and reinforces a resistance to old age (e.g. Marshall & Katz, 2012). Such ideas and images of ageing are frequently repeated and become normalised as taken-for-granted assumptions, forming the basis of how women should (re)construct themselves, through consumption, into acceptable and ideal forms of feminine beauty. These taken-for-granted assumptions, however, remain invisible to those with privilege, e.g. White, middle-class older women, while disadvantaging the "other," e.g. lower-class, older women of colour (e.g. Calasanti & Slevin, 2001), allowing the mediated meanings ascribed to (successful) ageing to go unchallenged. Accordingly, the production of the entrepreneurial self-hood works to reinforce inequality through its production of "others" (Scharff, 2011).

The *second aspect* of intersectionality relates to how inequalities are examined. An intersectional perspective is based on the idea that social inequalities are interrelated and mutually constitutive such that race is gendered, and gender is raced, and both are linked to transformations of social class (e.g. Davis, 2008; Calasanti, 2019). The approach, thus, focuses on the interactions amongst various categories (Browne & Misra, 2003), but no one intersection is more important than another (Carbado, 2013). All those bound together within systems defined by gender, age, and race need to be included as the explanations that apply to those disadvantaged by

these systems points to the ways that others are advantaged. For example, an older Black man and an older White woman are each privileged and disadvantaged on one status characteristic, either gender or race. Hence, it makes no sense to compare how they age. It is, therefore, important to use an intersectional approach to understand the complex ways in which structural constraints differ within such groups. For example, all women grow older/age. However, it is suggested that some women, e.g. White women who are traditionally privileged by social class, have the financial means to engage in cosmetic surgical procedures that help starve off the process of ageing, afford good medical care, eat balanced meals and so forth, which allows them to "age well" (e.g. Jermyn, 2016). The privilege of class here increases inequalities amongst women. Intersectionality suggests that this is problematic and "demands a feminism theorised from a recognition of differences among women" (Williams, 2016, p. 251). Hence, an intersectional approach moves us beyond observation of difference to specify relations of inequality between groups in a neoliberal context. Intersectionality is, therefore, an important concept for developing analyses of neoliberal postfeminist representations, often White, Western, non-disabled, middle-class, heterosexual young women (Gill, 2016; Del Rosso, 2017; Litosseliti et al., 2019) because it shows how privilege is maintained (cf. Gill, 2016).

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the theoretical framework, drawing on social semiotics, neoliberalism, postfeminism, and intersectionality, to be employed in this thesis. The first theory I introduced is social semiotics– an approach to communication that seeks to understand how people communicate by a variety of means in particular social settings. This theory of communication is important to my study as it will help me to understand the way that different modes are used to communicate meaning in cosmetics advertisements and magazines multimodally. Based on this understanding, I then introduced concepts of neoliberalism, postfeminism, and intersectionality to examine how older women are represented and addressed in cosmetics advertisements and magazines. By discussing neoliberalism and postfeminism under the same heading, I wanted to show the interrelation between the two concepts, where women are increasingly positioned as freely choosing agentic subjects who embrace risk and take responsibility for themselves, decollectivising the feminist movement in favour of "made-over" forms of selfhood. Interrogating neoliberal postfeminist constructions

of older women in advertisements and magazines through an intersectional lens will allow me to highlight intersecting inequalities of age, gender, race, and class present in such constructions.

4 Method and materials

This study is situated within the methodology of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020), a well-established tradition under Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). MCDA is developing into an academic field in its own right and demonstrates the ways in which the visual dimension is becoming more important in all kinds of communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; cf. van Leeuwen, 2014). The tools provided by MCDA allow me to break down the compositions of advertisements and magazines into their most basic components to critically examine the multimodal representations of ageing femininities. These tools, thus, help me to understand how these components work together to reproduce ideologies about feminine ageing. Below, I first give a brief account of the background of CDS and how it first developed. I then give an overview of CDS and define the key theoretical concepts from this tradition and used in this thesis: discourse, power, and ideology. A description of MCDA follows this. I then present a brief overview of the different analytical tools employed in each individual study. This is followed by an account of the data and data collection, which is followed by a summary of the three studies that make up this thesis. The chapter ends with a reflection on the methodology.

4.1 Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)- background and its key concepts

Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) is often described as an interdisciplinary approach to language in use practised in various disciplines within language studies, media studies, health studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, geography, etc. (see e.g. Wodak & Meyer, 2016). CDS, popularly referred to as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), mainly progressed in the early 1990s (see e.g. van Dijk, 1990; Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 1989) and has developed over the years into its own research field consisting of several different approaches. Amongst the main approaches[15] is, e.g. 1) the discourse-historical approach (DHA), which has a strong interest in historical research (Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl); 2) the social actors approach, which studies how people are represented (Theo van Leeuwen); 3) dispositive analysis, which aims to identify how knowledge is transmitted through

[15] See e.g. Figure 1.4 in Wodak & Meyer (2016, p. 18).

everyday communication (Siegfried Jäger and Florentine Maier); 4) the socio-cognitive approach, which highlights the role of social cognition in the formation of ideologies and prejudices (Teun van Dijk); and 5) the dialectical relational approach, which analyses the relationship between semiosis (including language) and other social elements (Norman Fairclough). Although these different "schools" offer partly different kinds of analytical frameworks (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), they are all-in-all problem-oriented or problem-driven (Wodak, 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). As such, CDS tends to focus on unequal relations of power such as social inequalities, discrimination, marginalisation, and domination. This implies critical investigations of diverse social phenomena such as racism, gender inequality and ageism.

CDS has its background in Critical Linguistics (CL), an approach to the study of language developed in the 1970s by scholars such as Günther Kress and Roger Fowler (see e.g. Kress & Hodge, 1979; Fowler et al., 1979; Fowler, 1991). These scholars thought of linguistic structure as strongly linked to and characterised by social structure. They argued that linguistic meaning should be seen as inseparable from ideology and that both are dependent on social structure. In this sense, linguistic analysis necessitated a prolific way to study and comprehend ideological processes (Fowler et al., 1979; Kress & Hodge, 1979; Fowler, 1991). Influenced by Halliday's (1978) linguistic theory, CL builds on three basic assumptions (Fowler et al., 1979). The three assumptions assert that: 1) language has three predominant functions, i.e. ideational, interpersonal, and textual; 2) language functions are systematically organised, and 3) language carries the social meaning of its users. To this degree, scholars within CL argue that language serves to promote and reinforce certain ideologies that work to control people and maintain power relations in society (see Fowler et al., 1979, p. 190).

It is this view of language, social structure, and ideology that is crucial for CDS. CDS scholars, therefore, seek to investigate and reveal the relations of power in socio-political contexts inscribed in and mediated through language use (see e.g. Machin & Mayr, 2012; Machin et al., 2016). Such power relations are understood as discursive; they are transmitted and practised through discourse. The way in which these discourses are constructed through language is important for people's understanding of the world (Machin & Mayr, 2012). There is, thus, a need for a detailed and systematic analysis of the linguistic and grammatical choices made in communication, such as in the case of this thesis, an article about feminine ageing in *Vogue*

magazine. This is because such choices are linguistic materialisations of the ideological interests of, for instance, advertisers and magazine editors (Machin, 2014; Machin et al., 2016). At the same time, the same choices made available to advertisers and magazine editors carry traces of power relations in society, e.g. the concepts used to talk about older people as a social group (cf. Machin et al., 2016; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). In turn, this allows CDS scholars to analyse how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse (e.g. Machin & Mayr, 2012). Additionally, it permits scholars to draw out unequal relations of power to challenge the often taken-for-granted assumptions found in, for example, newspaper articles, magazines, and advertisements.

This thesis heavily draws on and is influenced by Fairclough's (1992) dialectical relational approach and van Leeuwen's social semiotics approach, which other than van Leeuwen himself, has been progressed by scholars such as Günther Kress, David Machin[16] and others. Through these influences and the methodology that comes with them, I can carefully analyse cosmetics advertisements and magazines that promote discourses about successful ageing. This methodology provides the potential to challenge assumptions about feminine ageing found in such communication and how it works to construct the "othering" of older female consumers. In short, I can demonstrate how such communication works ideologically (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Below, I further discuss the concepts of discourse, ideology, and power central to CDS. Given that CDS researchers rely on a variety of grammatical approaches, these concepts are also subject to different understandings and usages in academia (Wodak, 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Based on this, I do not provide a complete overview of these concepts but rather define how they are understood and used in this thesis.

4.1.1 Discourse

One of the central concepts of CDS and in this thesis is "discourse." This thesis understands discourses as a "recontextualisation of social practices" (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; van Leeuwen, 2008). In his book, *Discourse*

[16] Machin's work on multimodality has been highly influenced by the work of Kress and van Leeuwen in *Reading Images* (1996, 2006) and *Multimodal Discourse* (2001).

and Practice, van Leeuwen uses Foucault's (1977) understanding of discourse as "socially constructed knowledge of some social practices" or what people *do* (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 6). He then connects this social understanding of discourse to Bernstein's (1981) concept of "recontextualisation" to demonstrate the ways that discourses are used to represent social practices. These social practices can be and are reconstructed/recontextualised, i.e. "observed, described, interpreted and explained…within a new context" (Danermark et al., 2001, p. 91); or in the words of van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999), recontextualisation of social practice is concerned with how "social practices (including discursive practices) are turned into discourse (into representations of social practices) in the context of specific discursive practices" (p. 93). Crucially, discourses are open to many different interpretations by different people and thus include and exclude different ideas depending on the power interests they serve (see e.g. van Leeuwen, 2008). Against this backdrop, successful ageing is understood as a practice that is recontextualised in a variety of ways and draws on multiple discourses. This thesis is, therefore, concerned with how the social practices of consumption are turned into discourses about feminine ageing and represented through the discursive practice of advertisements and magazines.

Discourse is both socially constitutive and socially conditioned by the "situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Discourse is also seen as a form of "social practice" that considers the "context of language use," realised in written, oral, and visual texts, to be crucial (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 5; cf. Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In other words, there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social practice. This means that discourse not only helps to sustain, reproduce, and transform power relations but also raises important issues of power through the ways in which people and events are represented and positioned (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Recontextualisation plays an important role in "making choices about how to *represent and position people and events*; *how the* different semiotic resources will be used for different purposes, and the end result of these choices" (Eriksson, 2015, pp. 26-27, *emphasis added*). Discourses, thus, not only constitute selective and transformed versions of social practices, but they can legitimate or de-legitimate the practices which they recontextualise (cf. van Leeuwen, 2008). These practices are both discursively constructed and linked to the practices which they legitimate, and the same practice may

be linked to quite different purposes and legitimations in different contexts. For example, I look at what discourses about feminine ageing are represented in advertisements and magazines, and how these discourses encourage women to transform themselves (e.g. by showing consumers images of models, see e.g. Figure 1, that have been "made-up," just to mention one possibility). By showing older consumers what they might expect as they age, such transformation discourses add value to the anti-ageing products. In this sense, these discourses, which often offer contradictory messages, help construct ideas about what it means for women to "age successfully" and how they can make sense of ageing. Individual women can, however, both challenge and reproduce these discourses.

These discourses, however, are not represented through actually giving a clear account of events, logical arguments etc. but are recontextualised through processes of substitution, deletion, rearrangements, additions, repetitions, reactions, purposes, legitimations, and evaluations. In this thesis, I pay specific attention to:

> *Addition*: Discourses may add "reactions" and "motives" to the representation of social practices. Reactions are the mental process which, according to a given discourse, accompany specific actions of specific actors, e.g. how older women's skin supposedly "feels" and "looks" after using the advertised anti-ageing product/s or older women's perceptions about using the products. In different discourses, however, different reactions accompany the same actions of the same actors. Additions also speak to the abstract ways of referring to specific actions, which serves to highlight qualities of the action that may carry positive or negative connotations, as seen in the analysis of the data.
>
> *Substitution*: This involves the different ways of transforming an actual element of an actual social practice into an element of discourse. For example, represented people as specific individuals or collectively as a group. People can also be referred to in abstract or specific terms through decontextualised settings. In such settings, it is not clear which processes are being carried out or what kind of causalities are taking place.

Deletion: A representation cannot represent all the aspects of social practice, so it is important to ask what is not represented or what has been deleted, which actors, actions, settings, etc. It is, thus, important to question why such information has been omitted and what effects it might have.

Legitimation: Recontextualisations also add legitimations to social practices, explaining what must take place or how it must take place. Such legitimations provide reasons for why women *should* engage in beauty work practices, which has the effect of legitimising or de-legitimising ageing. These advertisements can, however, both legitimate and constrain the use of anti-ageing products.

Evaluation: In texts, recontextualisations involve the evaluation of social practices, depending on the concerns, goals, values, and priorities of the participants.

The processes of addition, substitution, deletion, legitimation, and evaluation will allow me to show how the neoliberal and postfeminist notions of choice and empowerment are recontextualised in advertisements and magazines to serve particular meanings in particular contexts (Machin, 2013). This helps analyse the complex and diverse ways in which gender ideologies and hegemonic power relations are produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged (Lazar, 2018). Discourses are not only expressions of social practice but also serve particular ends, i.e. the exercise of power. In other words, discourses serve very specific power interests and are deeply ideological. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss discourse in relation to ideology and power.

4.1.2 Ideology and power

Similar to discourse, ideology is used to understand the way that people share broader ideas about how the world works. In its broadest terms, ideology refers to the "ideas and value systems held by particular groups in society" (Ledin & Machin, 2018, p. 27). The concept of ideology is usually closely associated with the work of Karl Marx (1933). From a Marxist perspective, ideology is an important means by which dominant forces in society can exercise power over subordinate and subjugated groups. It is claimed that all human consciousness, i.e. ideology, is rooted in material

conditions, and can be changed only by transforming these conditions (Eagleton, 1994). As Marx (1933) argues, ideology is dependent on material circumstances in which people live in their daily lives, being engaged in social and economic activities. It is these conditions that determine human consciousness and form their system and framework of ideas through which they can understand the world and their positions in the world. In addition to the material conditions, the class relations of production also determine ideology. Ideology then is a "system of ideas which expresses the interests of the dominant class, but which represents relations in an illusory form" (Thompson, 1990, p. 37). The system of ideas in this sense means that the ruling class or dominant social groups try to maintain their ruling position and achieve control of subordinate classes by articulating their theories of economics and society, which misrepresent the actual class relations but are in favour of the interests of a few.

Much has been written on ideology, I, however, follow Fairclough's (1992) understanding of the concept. In his book *Discourse and Social Change*, Fairclough (1992, p. 87) understands ideology as "significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformations of relations of domination." This perspective of ideology is heavily influenced by the work of French philosopher Louis Althusser and forms the basis of Fairclough's three important claims about ideology in CDS: i) discursive practices are material forms of ideology;[17] ii) ideology affects subjects through discourse, and iii) ideology affects not only relations of people, but the orders of discourse. These claims suggest that ideologies are embedded in the practices of institutions such as the media, school, and church and is acquired by people through both their interactions with each other and with these institutions.

The work of Fairclough (1989, 1992) is amongst the work of CDS scholars that seeks to reveal the ideologies found in such institutional discourses and how they help to promote, naturalise, and reproduce relations of power by presenting them as worldviews and "common-sense." Fairclough's

[17] This understanding of ideology as embedded in discursive practice draws on John Thompson's (1990) view of ideology as a practice that operates in processes of meaning production in everyday life, whereby meaning is mobilised to maintain relations of power.

(1992) work on advertising discourse, for example, is based on the idea that to make sense of any text[18], people draw on features of their own ideological positions to establish an "image" for the product being advertised. As he states, advertising discourses normally present a positive image of products related to an "ideal" image of a lifestyle, which seems to be accessible to anyone who buys the products (Fairclough, 1992). For instance, as in the advertisements I analysed in Study I, the purchase and use of anti-ageing creams and serums is promoted as something "good" and "positive" that can help women "cure" age-related problems. The process of promoting an ideal image of anti-ageing products is ideological because it "*leads older female consumers* to acknowledge and pursue *a* lifestyle *that… helps* to legitimise contemporary capitalism" (Fairclough, 1994, p. 206, *my emphasis*). As such, ideological values are implicit in and reproduced by the distribution of texts such as advertisements and appear to be common-sense. However, Fairclough challenges Althusser's view of ideology and argues that ideologies are not fixed but vary in their constructions. What Fairclough means is that, even though people are ideologically positioned and hence subjected to different forms of domination, such as age, gender, class, and race, they are still capable of transcending ideology.

The concept of hegemony (see Gramsci, 1971) is also important here: dominant groups create a hegemonic culture, which reinforces certain ideologies in a particular socio-economic context (Fairclough, 2003; cf. van Zoonen, 2009). Such ideologies appear as "natural" and legitimate and have come to be taken as "common-sense" and accepted by all members of society; they consent to it, which contributes to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination, and exploitation. Hegemony is, however, contested and subject to constant struggle and change (e.g. Hearn, 2004). Women's ageing is contested within consumer culture as something that can be controlled by purchasing and using anti-ageing products and services. The "constant struggle," thus, relates to the way in which patriarchal relations of power may work to maintain women's subordinate status to men through engagement in beauty work practices, which may encourage them to "freely" choose their inferior status and accept their exploitation as natural (see e.g. Paechter, 2018). CDS, as such, is interested in denaturalising and problematising these discourses and the social relations in which

[18] Understood in Halliday's (1978) broad sense of spoken as well as written language.

they are produced to affect social change (Fairclough, 1992). For instance, by questioning the particular ways in which people's understanding of ageing is made to appear true, natural, and given, I can draw out the kinds of ideas, absences and taken-for-granted assumptions found in cosmetics advertisements and magazines. This helps me to reveal the kinds of power interests buried in them.

What is important here is the way that different kinds of semiotic resources can be used to communicate processes of deletion, addition, and substitution. Using these concepts permits me to reveal hidden discourses and how the use of semiotic resources in processes of recontextualisation and legitimation help to promote and maintain social relations that serve specific interests of power.

4.2 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)

A key principle for this thesis is that the way people create meaning is not only through language but also through visual features and elements such as images, colour, gaze, etc. (e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; Machin, 2013; Machin et al., 2016). In other words, communication is now increasingly achieved through *multimodal* modes that offer multiple meaning potentials in texts. These multiple meanings are apparent when it comes to advertisements and magazines. MCDA provides a tool kit that allows me to develop analyses that move beyond linguistics in order to identify the underlying ideas, values, attitudes, and identities that are communicated non-linguistically (Machin, 2013; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020). This method considers both the textual and visual modes used with the same kind of detail and enables potential choices, patterns, and grammar and how they interact to be described and systematically documented (Machin, 2013; Bouvier & Machin, 2013). Hence, MCDA affords me the opportunity to analyse both the visual elements of advertisements and magazines as connoting particular meanings and look for their communicative uses in the same way that language can create moods and attitudes and convey ideas, etc. (Machin, 2013). By employing MCDA in this thesis, I can, thus, reveal discourses about ageing, the kinds of social practices that they involve and the ideologies they serve (cf. Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020). This will help me to uncover buried ideologies in cosmetics advertisements and magazines to show how those with power, e.g. advertisers, seek to recontextualise social practices in their own interests (Machin et al., 2016).

Key to understanding multimodal communication is "new writing" (van Leeuwen, 2008; cf. Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020). New writing, a core concept in all of my three papers, can be thought of as "the way language and visuals now often operate in highly integrated ways," which Ledin and Machin (2018, 2020) refer to as "integrated design." In cosmetics advertisements, for example, claims about the benefits of anti-ageing products can be presented to consumers not through language but through the combination of different semiotic resources, such as images, fonts, symbols, colours, etc. This form of integrated design is important for revealing the choices involved in the design of, for instance, advertisements and magazines, and can help identify the meaning potentials of these texts.

Integrated design has changed the way that both language and other semiotic resources are used (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Communication is now often interrelated to images, diagrams, and charts, changing the way basic things like causalities, processes, and motivations are communicated (Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020). Said differently, the overall coherence in texts no longer comes from what linguists' call "cohesion," for example by conjunctions such as "because," "consequently," or "thus." Instead, it comes from a visual design where different semiotic resources are used, such as colour coordination, spacing and alignment. In MCDA, these semiotic resources are not realised individually but as whole "semiotic materials" found in social practices such as advertising. These semiotic materials are loaded with ideas and assumptions or affordances that shape communication and social behaviour (Ledin & Machin, 2018, p. 19), which can shape what ideas they carry, how people act, and what they can and cannot do (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

For instance, cosmetics advertisements may contain images and graphics to communicate ideas about the naturalness of anti-ageing products. The combination of such images and graphics together with the colours, bullet lists, fonts, framing, orientation, etc. interrelate and operate as coherent wholes to favour certain kinds of meanings while suppressing others. These advertisements, for instance, may draw on the affordances of these visual cues to present the core benefits of "natural" anti-ageing products. At the same time, these affordances allow advertisers to suppress or gloss over important information regarding the naturalness of the ingredients found in the products and why they are good to use.

However, what such elements mean or how these parts interrelate is not clearly communicated. Such an integrated design carries particular discourses about anti-ageing products and can be understood as part of an ideology of a "resistance to ageing." Looking at how semiotic resources such as colour are used, the different ways that people, objects, places, and actions are represented and how readers are positioned allows me to describe and examine more accurately what I see in the advertisements, but also what is concealed. MCDA, thus, provides me with tools that allow me to describe how these non-linguistic forms are being used to communicate ideas, values, attitudes, and identities (Machin, 2013). To do this, I adopt the analytical tools of MCDA (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020) to carry out the analyses in each individual study.

4.3 Analytical procedures

In this section, I briefly present the analytical tools that I employ in each individual study[19]. The analytical focus throughout the studies is multimodal, which means that I look at both the images, graphics, etc. and lexical choices used in the advertisements and magazines, and how they are combined and interact with each other (e.g. Machin & Mayr, 2012; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020). The choice to focus on the multimodal nature of the advertisements and magazines responds to the call by Machin et al. (2016) for more multimodal work in the area of gender, language, and discourse. Furthermore, multimodal analysis represents a significant step forward in undertaking a more holistic analysis of communication (Lazar, 2021). The move towards multimodality widens the analytical focus to show that other modes of communication, are equally important as language in creating meaning. This is especially relevant today considering the pervasiveness of visual communication (Lazar, 2021). In all three studies, partly different methodological concepts and analytical tools have been used to demonstrate how language and other visual features and elements work together in combination to communicate particular ideas and values. As mentioned above, the concept of new writing or integrated design is a core concept in all three studies (cf. van Leeuwen, 2008; Ledin & Machin, 2018).

[19] Refer to the individual studies in Part II for more concrete details of the specific analytical tools I adopt.

Drawing on this concept of new writing/integrated design, Study I examines how the use of language and other semiotic resources such as colour (saturation, modulation, purity, coordination), settings, positioning of the viewer (gaze, pose, proximity) and iconography in *L'Oréal* cosmetics advertisements work together to communicate discourses about ideas and values of successful ageing. The study also draws on the key concept of "modality," primarily the modality of images (see Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The modality of images was used to indicate the modality value of the advertisements, i.e. how true or real images are meant to be seen. Typically found in advertisements, the modality value of the advertisements is divided into the top (the "ideal"), where the model is positioned, and shows what the reader might or could be, and the bottom (the "real"), where the anti-ageing product is placed to show what the reader can actually purchase if they so choose. The study, therefore, uses modality to indicate the extent to which the image of the model was reduced to make her appear more idealised, to show how these truths extend to Western contexts and neoliberal discourses about successful ageing.

In Study II, I use the concept of integrated design to examine the visual design of the *Vogue Non-Issue*, which differs from Study I, where I examined the composition of the cosmetics advertisements. The visual design of the magazine, e.g. text, icons, colours (saturation, range, brightness, coordination), works in combination with different elements, such as the positioning of the viewer (gaze, distance), participants (individuals), settings, actions and indexical links, and grammatical and lexical choices to communicate ideas and values of women's ageing in society. Analysing how these elements are used and the different ways that people, objects, places, and actions are represented helped me to reveal the overt and hidden meanings embedded in the images found in the magazine. Furthermore, these meanings were critically questioned from a feminist intersectional perspective in order to understand how ideas and representations of older women (re)produce intersecting inequalities of age, gender, class, and race. Another key concept employed in the study was that of "visual modality," which has been used by other scholars in the analysis of magazines (e.g. Machin & van Leeuwen, 2007; Chen & Machin, 2014). Through such an analysis, I was, for instance, able to determine whether the details of the objects and background were represented in fine focus or if they were reduced, and whether aspects of colour appear naturalistic or if they are exaggerated to make the

images appear more idealised. Such details play an important role in how images are interpreted or understood.

The focus of Study III is to identify the meaning potentials of cosmetic webpage designs. This study employed a model proposed by Ledin and Machin (2020) to examine the semiotic features of advertisements. In particular, it looked at five semiotic features: i) *classification*, which considers how things and processes are grouped together; ii) *symbolisation*, which accounts for how the combination of different graphic elements, e.g. fonts, shapes, diagrams, colours, etc. work to create meaning; iii) *orientation*, which involves the organisation of information in spatial compositions such as left-right, bottom-up and centre-margin orientations; iv) *framing*, which relates to how elements are separated on grounds of sameness and difference, usually through space, frames or colours; and v) *causality*, which is concerned with how the representation of graphic elements have effects on each other often through arrows between elements and linguistic labels. Furthermore, and drawing on integrated design, the study draws on the semiotic features and the lexical choices found in the advertisements to demonstrate how they work together to recontextualise and commercialise discourse of science and nature. Also important to this study was the concept of "communicative affordances," which deals with the different communicative affordances of media technologies (Hutchby, 2001). The communicative affordances of the cosmetic webpages were here used to highlight how the communicators of advertisements make available, for instance, links to other webpages, include videos, provide several images, etc. which afford the user to interact with the content. These affordances offer other possibilities to realise the meaning potentials of the advertisements.

4.4 Study design and data collection

This study follows an "intensive" research approach (see e.g. Danermark et al., 2001; Sayer, 2010). In contrast to the extensive quantitative approach that seeks to uncover general trends and patterns of a population as a whole, an intensive approach, common to qualitative research, focuses on a limited number of cases (e.g. Danermark et al., 2001; Sayer, 2010). These cases are then studied more intensively for an in-depth understanding of complex issues in a specific context (Danermark et al., 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Sayer, 2010). Case studies are important as they enable me to develop a more nuanced and deepened understanding of discourses of successful ageing. Through using methods associated with MCDA, I can uncover these less

obvious, nuanced, hidden meanings found in the data corpus and interpret the complex meanings conveyed (e.g. Danermark et al., 2001). Such complex meanings cannot be meaningfully understood simply as commonsense, taken-for-granted assumptions, as they are likely to conceal underlying power relations and hidden ideologies (cf. Machin & Mayr, 2012; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Case studies, thus, afford me the ability to provide descriptions and interpretations through a continued proximity to the studied phenomenon, which permits for a more comprehensive contextual understanding of the cases and facilitates rich knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In the case of this thesis, a case study design enables me to perform detailed, systematic, empirical analyses of the data corpus, which leads to a deeper understanding of the three selected case studies in the context of successful ageing (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In line with the methodology of an intensive approach, the selection of cases is "strategic" (Danermark et al., 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Subsequently, I established what I was going to study along the way (Sayer, 2010). This is in no way meant to be a "justification for empty-headed 'fishing expeditions'" (Sayer, 2010, p. 164) or a form of "cherry-picking" (a critique often directed at CDS). Still, it is rather a way to show that there is not always a need for researchers to specify what they are going to find out before they begin their research (e.g. Sayer, 2010). The selected cases, thus, build upon each other. For instance, when analysing the advertisements in Study I, the prominence of youth, Whiteness, and class were illuminated. The study, however, does not interrogate these structural inequalities of age, race, and class and how they intersect. The interrogation of the intersecting inequalities of age, gender, race, and class are instead carried out in the analysis of *Vogue* in Study II. Similarly, in Study I and II, I noticed that advertisements often made references to science and highlighted food-based ingredients to legitimise their products. From this observation, the idea of Study III emerged.

The first and second case studies in this thesis are considered as "critical cases" (Flyvbjerg, 2006; cf. Danermark et al., 2001). To identify both critical cases, I looked for cases that were "most likely" or "least likely" to confirm or reject the phenomenon I was exploring (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 231; see also Danermark et al., 2001, pp. 170-171). The selected advertisements in Study I, were chosen because they featured older celebrity models as endorsers of the advertised anti-ageing products, which contrasts with the more common use of younger models. From a postfeminist perspective, the

unconventional use of older models can be seen as a positive change, thus, providing a more optimistic view of ageing.

While exploring the data for Study I, it was observed that a great majority of the advertisements that I examined tended to privilege the White, thin, middle-class subject, pointing to a need to explore such advertisements through an intersectional lens (Study II). Hence, when selecting the data for Study II, I chose to examine British *Vogue's Non-Issue* due to its claims to democratise beauty through an aim that sought to demonstrate that "age should no longer be an issue" (British Vogue, 2019, p. 2). The *Non-Issue*, referred to as a "movement," wanted to explicitly challenge stereotypes, normalise ageing and promote a positive image of ageing, and thus, was least likely to promote stereotypes, but with these ambitions, the *Non-Issue* qualifies as a critical case. The issue appeared to be an important case to study since it fulfils the opposite of what it intended to do.

The data from Study I also revealed that advertisers often refer to science (using pseudo-scientific terms) to legitimise their products as well as their age-defying properties. A closer examination of these advertisements, as well as those featured in the *Non-Issue* (Study II), showed that these advertisements simultaneously referred to food substances as having age-defying properties. The aim of Study III was, therefore, to examine how the use of authoritative language, used to address older consumers in these advertisements, works to encourage consumers to conduct themselves in ways that are broadly consistent with the advertisers' goals that promote neoliberal self-care practices (cf. MacGregor et al., 2018; Sau-wa Mak, 2021). Unlike the first two critical cases, the third case is regarded as a paradigmatic (Flyvbjerg, 2006) or a typical case (Danermark et al., 2001).

So, the case was used to highlight the more "typical" features of cosmetics advertisements. This includes features such as the advertised product itself and a text description detailing the benefits of the products. These advertisements often address women as potential consumers of anti-ageing cosmetics and hence, promote ideal images and messages of ageing that involve important representations of ageing within the context of successful ageing. It is, thus, important not only to examine how women are constructed in advertisements and magazines as in Study I and II, but also how they are addressed as potential consumers of anti-ageing products (Study III).

One limitation with the case study approach, as some scholars argue, is that it cannot be used to produce general knowledge that is representative

of whole populations (see e.g. Danermark et al., 2001; Eriksson, 2006; Flyvbjerg, 2006). This is because the samples of case studies are considered to be too limited to be representative of whole populations. However, this does not imply that case studies do not contribute important and valuable insights of the phenomena under study (e.g. Eriksson, 2006). One of the (arguably most) important aspects of research is to gain deeper knowledge of any given phenomenon rather than describing how frequently it occurs (Flyvbjerg, 2006; cf. Eriksson, 2006). What is most crucial here is "not whether the findings can be generalised to a wider universe but how well the researcher generates theory out of the findings" (Bryman, 2012, p. 71). Subsequently, even though I cannot generalise the results of the studies through empirical extrapolations and statistical inferences in the way that it is done in extensive quantitative research; I place emphasis on the theoretical concepts that I employ to provide knowledge and a greater understanding of the phenomenon under study in more abstract and general terms (see e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2006; Bryman, 2012). Theoretical or analytical generalisations are useful for producing more general theories and concepts that are well-grounded in the data (Eriksson, 2006; cf. Flyvbjerg, 2006; Bryman, 2012). This allowed me to theorise the data to make logical connections that go beyond the particular cases that I examined (Eriksson, 2006), as I demonstrate and develop in the concluding discussion (Chapter 5).

Through an intensive research approach and the careful analysis afforded by MCDA, I reveal the ideas and values communicated in advertisements and magazines and then proceed to explain them through theoretical concepts. I further situate the interpretations of the phenomenon I study against the critical readings of other scholars who examine similar phenomena, which allows me to re-interpret and improve the analysis (cf. Bryman, 2012). Given that these interpretations are understood in more general structures of power (e.g. Eriksson, 2006), I can, on good grounds, assume that they are maintained and/or (re)produced in other forms of advertisements, making my claims valid. Theoretical generalisations, thus, rely on logic and not numbers to produce valid knowledge (Bryman, 2012). The selection of the case studies was, hence, carefully selected based on their potential to provide information-rich cases that can highlight the more general characteristics of the specific contexts that I examine, increasing the possibility to progress more general theories and concepts (e.g. Danermark, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

To best demonstrate how discourses of successful ageing are recontextualised to other contexts, I chose to examine representations of ageing femininities in advertisements and magazines. This was partially due to the growth of the grey market in advertising and its focus on successful ageing discourses (Bergström & Edström, 2022; cf. Gilleard & Higgs, 2000). While sometimes considered banal, advertisements and magazines are everywhere in modern, urban, industrialised societies (Lazar, 2007). The focus on advertising is, as such, considered as an "appropriate choice" for examining representations of gender and ageing, given their relevance and salience in society as a whole (van Zoonen, 2009, p. 67). Additionally, advertisements and magazines continue to be an important focus of feminist scholarship in Western societies, especially in the development of contemporary understandings of empowerment, oppression, choice, and freedom (cf. van Zoonen, 2009; Favaro & Gill, 2019; Gill, 2021). The sample used in this thesis consists of a total of 345 web-based advertisements from global brands (e.g. *Clarins*, *Clinique*, *Dior*, *Estée Lauder*, *L'Oréal*, and *Olay*), and global women's magazines (e.g. *Elle*, *Harper Bazaar*, *Woman & Home*, *Women's Weekly*, and *Vogue*) from several Western societies, including Australia and New Zealand (NZ), Canada, United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland, and the USA, collected between 2019-2021.

These countries were selected because they represent the world's leading advertising markets (Statista, 2021) and are also taken to share Western values such as individualism and autonomy. While they comprise the world's leading advertising markets, Nordic countries like Sweden, Denmark, and Norway were intentionally excluded to delimit the sample to English-based advertisements. This is because English is considered the standard language for global advertisers (e.g. Nelson & Paek, 2007). The choice to use web-based advertisements was informed by the significant increase in web advertising among global advertisers due to its unrestricted global reach capability (An, 2007; cf. Bergström & Edström, 2022). Older people also constitute the fastest growing segment of users of the Internet worldwide (Givskov & Deuze, 2018). Consequently, such advertisements offer advertisers the opportunity to reach a defined segment of (older) consumers, often with a considerable income (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Ylänne, 2021), who share consumption-related symbols across the globe (Nelson & Paek, 2007).

4.4.1 Presentation and summary of the studies

The following section briefly introduces and summarises the case studies that make up this thesis. I present the studies in the order in which they were conducted.

Study I. The L'Oréal Age Perfect campaign

In 2015, Helen Mirren, Jane Fonda, Julianne Moore, Isabelle Adjani, Iris Berben, and Vanessa Williams (all over the age of 50) became spokespersons and ambassadors for the *L'Oréal* Age Perfect campaign. According to the brand managing director of the *L'Oréal* consumer products division, Adrien Koskas, the campaign aimed to "celebrate and empower women at every age." The campaign was launched in association with findings that indicated that 70% of women over 50 feel "invisible in society," while 87% felt underrepresented in advertising, and 81% felt unacknowledged by retailers (Pike, 2018). Since then, *L'Oréal*, which has a wide international market presence, has produced several Age Perfect advertisements globally. When collecting data for this study, I looked at different *L'Oréal* websites that I categorised by country. I then decided to limit the sample to English-based websites, which left me with websites from Australia and New Zealand (NZ), Canada, the UK, Ireland, and the USA. Below is a summary of the advertisements collected per country (Table 1).

In total, I collected 73 web advertisements and six video advertisements. From the 73 advertisements collected, I chose to examine the advertisements from the UK and Ireland website, which are 22 in total. This is because, unlike the other websites, the UK and Ireland website featured advertisements that presented both the anti-ageing product and an image of a celebrity model endorser (either Helen Mirren, Jane Fonda, or Julianne Moore). From this sample, I then focused only on advertisements that featured English actress Helen Mirren, whose "dame" title demonstrates her respectable and influential position in the UK. Mirren was, hence, an interesting case to study because her image is often used to represent examples of well-respected, visible, attractive, and successful (older) women (e.g. Twigg, 2018). I, therefore, wanted to demonstrate how images of older female celebrities, such as Mirren, are constructed in advertisements and in what way they are used to construct particular ideas about (successful) ageing in providing role models that older women should look up to. More specifically, the aim of the study was to reveal what kind of ideas and values about ageing are promoted through the use of older female celebrities.

The paper drew on the theory of social semiotics and the method of MCDA (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020). Although these advertisements use older celebrities as examples of successful agers, the analysis indicated that the dominant discourses that construct older women pathologise their ageing appearances. These advertisements treat ageing as a problem that needs to be corrected through the consumption of the "right" (anti-ageing) products. Ageing is, here, constructed as something negative and undesirable. The appropriation of discourses that support resistance to ageing promotes women's consumption of products that tie them to a youthful and sexualised ideal of beauty. In this way, such discourses represent women's sexuality as a form of power signified through their individual consumption choices. Such choices are entangled with neoliberal discourses about "successful ageing" that call on the individual woman to constantly manage and improve her ageing appearances. This self-improvement discourse positions women as empowered subjects whose aestheticisation of the appearance of ageing grants them greater agency. The campaign, thus, draws on discourses of empowerment to ask older consumers to redefine the meaning of age by defying their own signs of ageing and emulate more closely the image of the celebrity (Mirren) in the advertisement. In this way, Mirren's image is used as a model of how to "age gracefully/successfully," reinforcing the idea that beauty is endless work and a constant battle.

Country	**No. of web advertisements**	**No. of video advertisements**	**Total**
Australia & NZ	18	0	18
Canada	17	3	20
UK & Ireland	22	3	25
USA	16	0	16
Total	**73**	**6**	**79**

Table 1. Summary of L'Oréal advertisements collected per country

Study II. The British Vogue Non-Issue

Several women's lifestyle magazines such as *Women's Weekly*, *Woman & Home*, *Elle* and *Vogue* have featured older female cover stars in recent years. My initial sample consisted of 25 issues from *Elle*, *Harper Bazaar*, *Woman & Home*, *Women's Weekly* and *Vogue* with older women on their covers (see Table 2). To collect these issues, I first went through the official Instagram pages of the respective magazines and took a screenshot of the posts that advertise their issue with the cover star for the month. I then downloaded the different magazine apps on my phone and purchased the issues that I wanted to examine closer. After examining all the issues, I decided to focus on *Vogue* magazine because of its exploration of a number of age-related texts and images over a long period of time.

Between July 2007 – July 2017, British *Vogue* has featured age-related issues identified by the tag "Ageless Style." These issues, however, have not specifically included older women, especially on their covers. In April 2019, nonetheless, British *Vogue*, through its partnership with *L'Oréal* Paris, published a special issue — the *Non-Issue* — what they call "a ground-breaking celebration of ageless style and beauty" (British Vogue, 2019, cover page), featuring cover star Jane Fonda. The aim of the issue was to "challenge stereotypes and positively shape *people's* perception of age, encouraging a future where *all women* can look forward to growing older" (ibid., p. 2, *emphasis added*). What is interesting with the *Non-Issue* is that the entire issue features women all over the age of 50, including icons like Helen Mirren, Isabella Rossellini, and of course, Jane Fonda. As expected, the *L'Oréal* advertisements found in the issue were also targeted at women 50+. Hence, the purpose of this study was to explore the "new" visibility of older women in magazines from a feminist intersectional perspective. The feminist intersectional perspective was used to interrogate the kinds of ideas and representations of older women circulating in the *Non-Issue* and how it reproduces inequalities based on age, gender, race, and class, which I do not explicitly highlight in Study I. The analysis of the content of the magazine was informed by MCDA. After I examined the whole issue, I identified three examples typical of "postfeminist" discourses occurring in the *Non-Issue*. The study was thematically organised around three themes: i) managing the ageing body, ii) the self-confident older woman, and iii) punk as a collective attitude. Under managing the ageing body, the analysis demonstrated that the magazine uses the image of models such as Jane Fonda to "empower" older women, mostly thin, White, and middle-class, to constantly work on

the body. Working on the body is a way to achieve the "embodied firmness" of successful ageing and inscribe the body with value (cf. Dolan, 2013). The second theme calls individual women, again mostly thin, White, and middle-class, to act upon the self through a culture of confidence. This culture of confidence asks women to positively embrace their ageing appearances, i.e. grey hair, wrinkled faces, etc. but at the same time, women are being sold anti-ageing products that work to reduce the appearance of ageing, which also come attached with confidence. The final theme shows that older women (thin, White, and middle-class) are represented as "punk" to show their collective resistance towards hegemonic beauty ideals that tie them to patriarchy.

Overall, the paper showed that the demands put on the older female body confines women to never-ending rigid forms of self-surveillance, self-monitoring, and self-disciplining. These forms of self-transformation and self-management are tied through a "postfeminist gaze," what some scholars refer to as the "girlfriend gaze," which encourages women to scrutinise both themselves and other women (see e.g. Riley et al., 2016). Ultimately, these demands subject women to a new set of bodily inscriptions and prescriptions of acceptability entangled with respectability politics (cf. Skeggs, 2004, 2005; Woods, 2021). These prescriptions of acceptability privilege the thin, White middle-class subject, reinforcing traditional patriarchal standards of feminine beauty, which does nothing to challenge prevailing gender norms and other inequalities based on class, race, and age. Furthermore, reconstructing women's age-related problems as confidence issues ignores the structural inequalities that relate to age, gender, class, and race that work to marginalise women, especially those without the sufficient resources (be it financially or racially) to work on and improve the self. Consequently, women who are unable to self-transform become entangled in a form of "oppression-blindness" (Ferber, 2012), dependent on postfeminist neoliberal tropes of freedom and choice, wherein women are personally blamed for failing to age successfully. This helps to breed new forms of power and privilege in society, making it even more difficult to achieve equality.

Name of magazine	Issue & date	Cover star	Age
Elle (Canada)	November 2017	Julia Roberts	50
	Summer 2019	Jane Fonda	82
	Winter 2019	Julia Roberts	52
	February 2020	Celine Dion	52
	March 2020	Cate Blanchett	51
Harper Bazaar	April 2021	Jane Fonda	84
Woman & Home	May 2018	Helen Mirren	73
	June 2018	Twiggy	68
	May 2020	Ruth Langsford	72
	July 2020	Joanna Lumley	74
	March 2021	Saria Khan	51
	April 2021	Ruth Langsford	73
	May 2021	Mel Giedroyc	53
	July 2021	Helen Mirren	76
Women's Weekly (Australia)	July 2018	Quentin Bryce	75
	October 2018	Sally Field	72
	April 2020	Helen Mirren	75
	July 2020	Queen Elizabeth II	94
	September 2020	Rebecca Gibney	55
	June 2021	Judi Dench	87
	July 2021	Maggie Tabberer	84
Vogue (UK/USA)	December 2017	Meryl Streep	68
	July 2018	Oprah Winfrey	64
	April 2019	Jane Fonda	82
	June 2020	Judi Dench	86
Total	**25**		

Table 2. Summary of magazines featuring older female cover stars

Study III. The "scientification" of "green" anti-ageing cosmetics

When examining material from Study II, I observed that most of the cosmetics advertisements found in the magazine made references to plant extracts enriched in anti-ageing products. For example, an advertisement for *Lancôme Rénergie* multi-glow cream found in the *Non-Issue* contained schizandra berry and linseed extracts, while two advertisements from the *L'Oréal* Age Perfect range contained Manuka honey, and black truffle and fermented black tea, respectively. Following this observation, I went through the websites of different cosmetic companies, including *Clarins*, *Clinique*, *Dior*, *Estée Lauder*, *L'Oréal*, and *Olay,* to look for advertisements promoted as containing plant extracts or natural ingredients, referred to in the study as "green anti-ageing cosmetics advertisements." I limited the sample to advertisements aimed at women 50+. In the case where the targeted age group was not specifically mentioned, for instance, in the *Clinique* advertisements, I looked at advertisements "designed" for a "de-ageing routine." When collecting these advertisements, I noted that the advertisements simultaneously made references to science, either explicitly or implicitly. I then purposively selected all the advertisements found on the web pages that made both references to containing natural plant ingredients and made explicit references to science. In the end, the total sample consisted of 241 advertisements (see Table 3). Given that a key interest for this study was to examine how the communicative affordances of the web were used to promote these anti-ageing products, the sample was further narrowed down by selecting advertisements that made use of the interactive communicative affordances of the web. For example, I selected advertisements that I could zoom into to "examine" the ingredients in more detail. This left me with a total sample of 27 advertisements from *Clarins* (10) and *Clinique* (17). Unlike the previous two studies that were interested in older women's representations, this study aimed to find out how older female consumers are addressed in cosmetics advertisements.

Cosmetic company	No. of advertisements on website
Clarins	10
Clinique	17
Dior	19
Estée Lauder	15
L'Oréal[20]	62
Olay	118
Total	**241**

Table 3. Summary of "green" cosmetics advertisements collected by cosmetic company

The study employs the concept of "integrated design" from the method of MCDA (Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020) to examine how marketers use the communicative affordances of the web to promote green anti-ageing products. Presenting the anti-ageing products as "natural" is a way for the cosmetic companies to connote the idea that their products are "safe" and promote their use as a legitimate means to care for the "fragile" ageing body. In the advertisements, the marketers, thus, make use of the affordances of lists and web design to address women as "empowered" consumers with significant knowledge about the benefits of using natural anti-ageing products on the skin. At the same time, the empowerment discourse is also used to magnify the problems related to ageing skin. In turn, women are charged with personal responsibility to make good consumption choices that relate to practices of self-care. This rhetoric of choice and empowerment addresses women as neoliberal subjects who are haunted by notions of consumerism to construct "good" (youthful-looking) bodies that show "successful" neoliberal citizenship. Working on the self through the consumption of anti-ageing products is, hence, a way to symbolise the "right" attitude towards ageing.

[20] The number of advertisements from *L'Oréal* were a combination of advertisements from their Australia and NZ, Canada, UK and Ireland, and USA websites.

The integrated design of the cosmetic websites further indicates that the natural products are simultaneously presented as scientific, though things like causalities, classifications and processes are left unspecified and unexplained. The references to science are a way for the cosmetic companies to increase the effectiveness of the products in curing age-related problems through people's trust in science. These advertisements legitimise discourses about successful ageing that emphasise self-care, placing personal responsibility on the individual woman to control the self and their own life by extension. Here, self-care practices are promoted as morally legitimate means to care for the body and face. In this sense, women who fail to successfully resist ageing are personally blamed for their "failures" and even more problematically are framed as immoral citizens who lack self-control. At the same time, however, these discourses of successful ageing construct ideas about what is a desirable and appropriate way of ageing, which works to delegitimise other ways of ageing/growing older.

Here, I would also like to indicate the division of labour that went into writing this study. As the study's main author, I contributed to 80 % of this work and the co-author (G. Eriksson) to 20 %. I collected all the empirical material myself and wrote the literature review, the method, data section and abstract alone. I also conducted most of the analysis of the data. The co-author then went over the analysis I had conducted and added to it as necessary. The co-author then sent me the parts of the analysis he added, which I either agreed or disagreed with. This continued until we were both satisfied with the analysis. We then wrote the introduction and the conclusions together and conducted a joint final run-through of the entire paper.

4.5 Methodological reflections

Some scholars raise concerns over the methodological/theoretical shortcomings of MCDA. These scholars argue that this method of analysis is "too selective," which makes it difficult to determine if the selected sample is valid given that little data is analysed and selection is normally random (Stubbs, 1997; cf. Widdowson, 1995; Breeze, 2011). As such, there is a need to use a large body of data to allow for reliable conclusions to be made (Stubbs, 1997). Following this recommendation, I have worked with rather extensive data samples which I then narrowed down through analytical processes as described above in 4.4. Although I ended up analysing two images in Study I, one magazine in Study II, and two examples from *Clinique* and *Clarins* in Study III, the overall sample from these studies was 320 cosmetics

advertisements and 25 magazines. Furthermore, these scholars assert that CDS/MCDA heavily relies on the researcher's own interpretations, often failing to take the broader social context into account (e.g. Widdowson, 1995; Stubbs, 1997; Breeze, 2011). Case study researchers are also often critiqued for applying "subjective" judgements that confirm their preconceived notions when collecting data (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2018). Nonetheless, case studies, which I make use of in this thesis, are often used to assess the reliability and validity of the analyses conducted (see e.g. Bryman, 2012). For example, in the critical case studies (Study I and II), I use well-developed theories, e.g. social semiotics, postfeminism, and intersectionality, to make a detailed examination of the cases, which served to help develop a better understanding of the analysis. Similarly, when working with the typical case study (Study III), I examined the implications of, e.g. commodity feminism in order to highlight the link between gender and consumption and the commodification of successful ageing in present-day society. The articles, thus, provided examples of how discourses of ageing, prominent in the samples, appear in cosmetics advertisements and magazines and how I detect them through a detailed and systematic analysis.

In this analysis, I used the analytical tools of MCDA adopted from the work of Machin and Mayr (2012) and Ledin and Machin (2018, 2020). These tools are part of an established and often used analytical model. Therefore, they enabled me to conduct a careful and transparent analysis of the data. The use of MCDA in this thesis has helped me to produce rich and insightful analyses that are not based on language alone but rather consider the several modes of communication used to produce advertisements and magazines. Through this critical approach, I have conducted an in-depth reading of the advertisements and magazines to reveal the often-hidden ideas about feminine ageing. My work, therefore, addresses any criticism that CDS is "too linguistic" (e.g. Blommaert, 2005). Thereafter, I interpreted the data in terms of the analytical concepts, theories, and literature that I made use of and positioned the interpretations into a larger social context to make their significance clear and provide a more reliable picture of their meanings. These interpretations have been tested and validated through continuous critical reflection upon these and through peer-review processes (see e.g. Yin, 2018, p. 327). This has been done practically with colleagues at seminars and the journals' peer-review processes. This research process allowed me to increase the possibility of generalising the results from the studies and, hence, make valid interpretations that contribute

to a deeper understanding of feminine ageing (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2006, Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2018).

To make such a contribution in this thesis, I point to the need to conceptualise age as a power structure that intersects with other social inequalities, e.g. gender, class, and race, to limit older women's access to power. I argue that combining MCDA with an intersectional feminist approach is a way to capture and understand the complexity and diversity of ageing and by extension, of ageism and sexism. There are also other scholars who have taken a similar approach (e.g. Lazar, 2005, 2018). I argue that this approach, especially how it is applied in Study II and III, helps me to analyse the gendered, agreed, classed, raced nature of the ideas about feminine ageing, and how they intersect to advantage some women and disadvantage other women. In so doing, I can explore how structural relations of power form multiple inequalities that marginalise and suppress women. This contributes to an understanding of age as deeply situated in power structures that are constantly being reconstructed (cf. Krekula et al., 2018).

5 Concluding discussion

In this chapter, I present the concluding discussion and conclusions of my key findings, as well as proposals for future research. The chapter presents the contribution my work makes to feminist media studies. This thesis has examined the intersection between representations of ageing femininities, empowerment and oppression in marketing and advertising discourses within the context of successful ageing. Four questions have guided me throughout the development of this thesis: 1) What are the dominant discourses used to construct/address older women in cosmetics advertisements and magazines? 2) In what way and how do these discourses legitimise/delegitimise successful ageing? 3) How do these discourses (re)produce intersecting inequalities of gender, age, class, and race? 4) How do intersecting inequalities over the life course relate to successful ageing? In what follows, I reflect on how the answers to research questions 1, 2 and 3 have been addressed in the three empirical studies. Outlined below under 5.1 is a core argument that what we see today in advertising discourses and demon-strated in this thesis is an ongoing shift from a postfeminist gaze (what some scholars refer to as the girlfriend gaze) towards a neoliberal self-objectifying gaze that closely operates alongside discourses of successful ageing. I then go on to show under 5.2 how this neoliberal self-objectifying gaze works to reinscribe hegemonic patriarchal standards of beauty and thus reinforces intersecting structural inequalities such as age, gender, class, and race that occur across the life course. To answer research question 4, I propose and demonstrate under 5.3 that there is a need for future studies to examine and develop a deeper understanding of the construction of older women's femi-nine beauty ideals through an intersectional life course perspective of suc-cessful ageing.

5.1 From a postfeminist gaze to a neoliberal self-objectifying gaze

I use the term neoliberal self-objectifying gaze to show the ways in which (older) women internalise patriarchal standards of beauty as a mirror that they use to surveil and govern themselves (cf. Elias & Gill, 2018). This neoliberal self-objectifying gaze (re)produces the idea that all subjects are capable of transforming the self through self-scrutiny and practices of beauty/bodywork. As part of the self-transformation individuals can, thus, compare the actual ageing self with the ideal "successfully aged" self. Central to the neoliberal self-objectifying gaze is the postfeminist emphasis on

choice, empowerment, and freedom. As I indicate, in advertising and marketing discourses, beauty/bodywork practices are recontextualised and accepted as the moral and autonomous choices of empowered postfeminist neoliberal subjects.

One of the most significant shifts in Western advertising in the last few years is the representation of women as sexual subjects (Gill, 2008). This resonates with my own findings, namely that older women are expected to maintain their physical attractiveness, which is tied to a sexualised (and youthful) ideal of Western beauty (Kenalemang, 2021). Instead of being portrayed through the traditional male gaze that objectifies women to standards of patriarchal hegemony, women are portrayed as knowing and active subjects who "deliberately" choose to objectify themselves because it suits their "liberated" interests (see e.g. Gill, 2007, 2008; cf. Genz, 2006). Through this internalised male gaze, women form a new disciplinary regime referred to by some scholars as the postfeminist gaze (see e.g. Riley et al., 2016). The postfeminist gaze promotes the idea that practices of looking are now between women. As I show in Study II, this encourages women to assess and scrutinise both themselves and other women on how well or badly they manage the ageing body and the self. In this sense, the postfeminist gaze "requires" women to work on and perfect themselves through practices of aesthetic labour (cf. Riley et al., 2016; Elias et al., 2017; Gill, 2021).

These practices of aesthetic labour inform the neoliberal self-objectifying gaze. In contrast to the postfeminist gaze, the neoliberal self-objectifying gaze instead requires women to look at themselves through an objectifying lens that they use to actively govern the self into consumerist standards of beauty, presented as the free choice of the entrepreneurial subject. Such practices, as I argue in Study II, convey the idea that women are entrepreneurs of their own images, who assume individual responsibility to work on and manage their own ageing appearances (cf. Genz, 2006; Bockman, 2013; Elias et al., 2017; Gill, 2019, 2021). This increased positioning of women as entrepreneurs who govern themselves highlights the ways in which patriarchal standards of beauty have now become internalised through a neoliberal self-objectifying gaze. Subsequently, women are charged with personal responsibility to work on the self through intensifying practices of self-surveillance, self-scrutiny, and self-improvement (see e.g. Gill, 2007, 2021). These self-transformation and self-management practices confine women to

never-ending forms of self-governance, understood as freely chosen (see e.g. Study II).

The emphasis on discourses of choice is crucial for understanding the neoliberal self-objectifying gaze. In cosmetics advertisements, women's ageing is recontextualised as a moral choice through which consumers can care for and work on the ageing self (Kenalemang-Palm & Eriksson, 2021). As the findings from Study I (Kenalemang, 2021) indicate, the dominant discourses found in these advertisements tend to pathologise and construct ageing, at least of the face, as a curable "problem." This problematisation of the ageing face allows advertisers to treat ageing as something that can (and should) be continually managed and transformed through beauty work practices. In these advertisements, advertisers tend to construct women's ageing appearances through negative discourses that promote fear about growing old or, more appropriately, "looking old." As I point out in Study I (Kenalemang, 2021), such advertisements often draw on positive discourses that privilege youth, while visible signs of ageing are considered to be undesirable and unattractive. Through the affordances of the extensifying visual turn, these advertisers use images of "ageless" celebrities such as Helen Mirren and Jane Fonda, who are celebrated in the media as physically attractive to signify the promise of their products in combating signs of ageing (Kenalemang, 2021).

Furthermore, as seen in Study II, the demand to work on the self increasingly extends to the rest of the ageing body. In addition to preserving the youthful appearance of the face, women are also expected to maintain the physical fitness of the ageing body. The *Non-Issue* examined in Study II, for instance, draws on the youthful-looking, slim, well-toned image of celebrity Jane Fonda (a well-known feminist), which alongside her longstanding career as a fitness persona, makes her appear as an expert of successful ageing. In so doing, the magazine puts her in a position of power that allows her to directly address the reader on how to age successfully. The celebrity's "embodied firmness" of successful ageing alongside her accepted position as a role model of successful ageing is used by *Vogue* as a point of reference of how a successfully aged body/face can and should look like. This, in turn, urges other women (the readers of the *Non-Issue*) to look inside the self through a neoliberal self-objectifying gaze that encourages them to see themselves as "flawed" and in need of endless self-work (see Study II; cf. Riley et al., 2019). Thus, women are prompted to work on their bodies/faces and "appropriately" manage themselves through the "right" consumption

choices that help them emulate more closely the White, youthful-looking image of the model in the *Non-Issue*.

Both Study I (Kenalemang, 2021) and Study III (Kenalemang-Palm & Eriksson, 2021) highlight the important role discourses of empowerment play in how these products are marketed as something "good" and positive for consumers. As demonstrated in Study III (Kenalemang-Palm & Eriksson, 2021), these advertisements are designed through self-help discourses that come across as empowering women with knowledge about the benefits of anti-ageing products in curing age-related problems. The claims concerning the benefits of the products are, however, presented with a low commitment to real effects on the skin. Nonetheless, and as pointed out (Kenalemang-Palm & Eriksson, 2021), advertisers draw on pseudo-scientific solutions to legitimise the effectiveness of the products through people's trust in science (see also Kenalemang, 2021; Coupland, 2007; Arroyo, 2013; Chen, 2015b). Advertisers have increasingly leaned towards promoting anti-ageing products that contain natural "superfood" ingredients (Kenalemang-Palm & Eriksson, 2021). These "green" anti-ageing products, as referred to in the study, are used to highlight the functions and natural healing powers of plants in curing age-related problems. Based on this, women are addressed as consumers who possess the relevant information to make their own well-informed consumption choices on what anti-ageing products to purchase and use (Kenalemang-Palm & Eriksson, 2021).

As I argue in Study II, responsibility is placed upon individual women to use their entrepreneurial freedom to find consumerised solutions that they can use not only to preserve the youthful appearance of the face/body but also to remain physically attractive. This promotes conformity to a youthful and sexualised ideal of beauty that reduces women's agency to how they look, which, as I pointed out in Study I (Kenalemang, 2021), confines women to the male gaze. However, as I highlight in Study II, women are not only confined to the male gaze but are increasingly encouraged to envision themselves through the neoliberal self-objectifying gaze as subjects in need of constant transformation. In so doing, women are made to internalise mediated patriarchal standards of beauty as their own, which are often legitimated as "common-sense" (Study II).

One of the conclusions that I draw in Study II shows that although it appears as though the neoliberal self-objectifying gaze affords women "freedom" from patriarchal standards of beauty, women are at the same reinscribed to the same standards of beauty that they were supposedly liberated

from. This so-called freedom is challenged by the contradictory neoliberal imperative of successful ageing promoted through the advertisements and magazines, which for women is closely related to maintaining the (sexual) appearance of youth (Study II). Even though women may not be socially coerced to engage in beauty/bodywork practices, these self-chosen, empowering practices are problematically equated with the patriarchal norm that works to dominate, oppress, and exploit women. In this sense, there seems to be no difference between the male gaze and the neoliberal self-objectifying gaze, other than that the latter comes across as providing women with freedom, choices, and empowerment.

For women, working on and transforming the body seems to be an accepted and appropriate way to deviate from the old, "devalued," "pathologised" body (see for instance, Kenalemang, 2021). The neoliberal self-objectifying gaze, thus, functions through a pathological discourse that seeks to polarise women into the successfully aged vs the unsuccessfully aged. In Study II, I relate these ideas about (un)successful ageing to politics of respectability (cf. Skeggs, 2004; Woods, 2021). Respectability is central to the choices women make within structurally constrained circumstances (cf. Skeggs, 2004). Here, the free choices made by women to engage in beauty/bodywork practices are used as key signifiers of their "value" in society and means through which they can remain visible (Study II; cf. Skeggs, 2005; Woods, 2021). The value inscribed on the (ageing) body is used to signal a well self-governed and thus moral body (Study II; cf. Skeggs, 2005). As I demonstrate in Study II, the respectable body becomes "normalised," while the rest, the "disrespectable," are pathologised simply because they have not been worked on. As a result, the female consumer ends up "buying in" to the "pursuit of eternal youth" as part of her patriotic duty as a responsible citizen, denigrating ageing. Working on the body and face, then, can be seen as a way for cementing the idea that visible signs of ageing are problematically undesirable and should hence be erased from view.

5.2 The reinforcement of intersecting structural inequalities

Working on the ageing self is construed of as an individual lifelong project which puts the tension on women to self-objectify themselves, as shown in Study I (Kenalemang, 2021) and in Study II (cf. Shilling, 1993; Smirnova, 2012). Therefore, it is a common strategy for magazines and advertisements to represent women as individuals instead of as a collective/group (Kenalemang, 2021, Study II; cf. Lazar, 2006; Chen & Machin, 2014). However,

as I highlight in Study II, the emphasis on individualism is problematic because it ignores the intersecting structural inequalities and power imbalances that exist between groups of people in society.

As I show in Study II, the inequality that exists between groups of women here becomes individualised and presented as something that can be resolved through consumerist practices of self-care and self-transformation. In the advertisements that I examine in Study I (Kenalemang, 2021), for example, women are both constructed and addressed as individuals who exercise their agency to age successfully. This is also true for the *Non-Issue* (Study II) despite its advocacy for women's collective action in "challenging *age* stereotypes" and "encouraging a future where we (*women*) can look forward to growing older *together*" (British Vogue, 2019, p. 2; *emphasis added*). The strong focus on the postfeminist value of individualism in the *Non-Issue* further emphasised through the use of the pronoun "your," e.g. "your perfect age," "your skincare," "your silver," "because you're worth it," highlights the agency placed on women to take charge and act upon themselves. Here, women's agency is confined to how well they manage to aestheticise their ageing appearances (Kenalemang, 2021; cf. Lazar, 2006). In this sense, these advertisements can be seen to "empower" individual women, often White and middle-class, to buy the advertised anti-ageing products and become more visible in public spaces (Study II).

In the *Non-Issue*, White, wealthy women are, thus, offered the opportunity to use their privileged positions to counterbalance their marginalisation and invisibility in society. As such, practices of aesthetic labour work to reinscribe privilege and oppression such that White, upper, and middle-class women become advantaged at the expense of Black and lower-class women, whose bodies are pathologised by default because they have not been governed. In turn, the respectable ageing body, inscribed with class and race, confines older women to "new" forms of acceptability. Promoting these forms of acceptability in advertisements and magazines comes across as empowering women (mainly White, thin, upper/middle-class) to construct appearances that legitimise successful ageing. Such legitimation, however, works to exclude "other" older women, e.g. Black women and women from lower-class backgrounds. This is seen, for instance, in the near invisibility of Black women in the *Non-Issue*. The Black female celebrities who do appear in the magazine, Vanessa Williams, Oprah Winfrey, and Valerie Campbell, are relatively wealthy and successful in their respective careers. It is the successful careers of these Black women that lend them visibility in

the *Non-Issue*. The images of these women are hence used to signify their "success" in a "White" society because they "conform to normative conceptions of race, class, and gender" (Butler, 2013, pp. 49-50).

From politics of respectability, the near invisibility of Black women in the *Non-Issue* (Study II) allows the magazine to position Black women in a way that restricts them from engaging in beauty/bodywork practices and promotes Whiteness as the gaze through which raced/classed "others" are known. As I point out in Study II, this is because for Black women, working on the self is often seen as challenging the White middle-class definition of feminine beauty (cf. Butler, 2013; Woods, 2021). In this manner, the *Non-Issue* positions Black women and women from lower-class backgrounds in a way that continues to restrict their place within the racial and gender hierarchy in society (cf. Butler, 2013; Woods, 2021). This is emphasised in the *Non-Issue* by promoting images of White, rich female celebrities, such as Mirren, Fonda, Julianne Moore, and Isabella Rossellini, whose images are used as role models of successful ageing. Buying the *Non-Issue* and engaging with these models (by reading the magazine) becomes a way for "other" women to emulate more closely to the White ideal of beauty. In this sense, *Vogue* contributes to the exclusion and invisibility of Black women and women from lower-class backgrounds, despite their shared claim with *L'Oréal* to promote the diversity of beauty (see British Vogue, 2019, p. 2; and L'Oréal, 2021).

Moreover, the highly-priced anti-ageing products seem to suggest that engaging in White Western ideals of beauty, which includes working on and perfecting the (youthful) appearance of ageing, continues to be morally inscribed with middle-class ideas of respectability and purity (see e.g. Woods, 2021). These products, taking, for instance, the *Clarins* Double Serum, which is recommended for daily use morning and/or evening, retails at 78 British pounds (now 80 British pounds on the website, which is about 1040 SEK) per 50ml bottle (see e.g. Figure 2, in Kenalemang-Palm & Eriksson, 2021). Furthermore, advertisers of these products often recommend consumers to follow certain steps in their beauty routine to optimise maximum results. In the *Clarins* ad, for instance, they recommend a 4-step routine with four different products that in total cost 272 British pounds (approximately 3400 SEK). The high cost of these products means that not all women can afford to use them. While these advertisements are often targeted at wealthy, White, Western (older) women, they still appear to address

all female consumers as though they have the financial means and otherwise, to buy these products. All female consumers are, in turn, expected to exercise their agency to age successfully by purchasing these products. As I show in Study II, women who are disadvantaged by class and by default race often "fail" to age successfully.

Moreover, women are individually addressed through discourses of confidence that encourage them to positively embrace their own signs of ageing (see e.g. Study II). As I argue in Study II, this is problematic in that women are essentially blamed for their own oppression, i.e. it becomes their own fault that they are marginalised/invisible because they are not confident enough in their own looks of ageing. In the *Non-Issue*, for instance, Mirren's image appears to be left in its natural state. This gives the impression that her signs of ageing (e.g. fine lines, wrinkles, and grey hair) have not been reduced to make her appear more idealised or youthful-looking. In her short interview in the magazine, Mirren attributes her embrace of ageing to confidence (see British Vogue, 2019, p. 43). The visible display of Mirren's signs of ageing is, thus, a way for the *Non-Issue* to empower women to confidently accept their own signs of ageing, in the same way, Mirren seems to do. Her image is here used to serve as an example of how a confident, successfully aged body *should* (and can) look like. The *Non-Issue*, as such, celebrates Mirren's look of ageing and uses her image in "newer ways" that grant her power and visibility in the public sphere.

Paradoxically, Fonda's image in the *Non-Issue* appears to be reduced to make her look more youthful. In her interview in the magazine, Fonda openly talks about undergoing several cosmetic surgeries to help her look younger because she was not "brave enough" to embrace her signs of ageing, something she sees as a "moral weakness" (British Vogue, 2019, p. 69). However, as Fonda asserts, her identity as a "true feminist" has given her more self-confidence in her ageing looks, which she is learning to embrace positively (British Vogue, 2019, p. 69). This works to reduce feminism to an issue of confidence (or lack thereof), emptying feminism of its political significance, which does nothing to challenge prevailing gender norms alongside its other inequalities based on class, race, and age.

The *Non-Issue*, thereby, seems to draw on the positions of these White, wealthy women as brand ambassadors and endorsers for *L'Oréal* anti-ageing products to promote the idea that women's power and visibility is explicitly tied to how well they manage to self-govern into consumerised, successful versions of themselves. This entrepreneurial spirit is used in the *Non-*

Issue to indicate the "correct" attitude towards ageing. The "correct" attitude, in turn, is attributed to the "right" consumerist choices, e.g. the use of expensive anti-ageing products that afford women the confidence they need to embrace ageing positively. Accordingly, women who, for whatever reason, are unable to age successfully appear to be personally blamed for failing to take the necessary action(s).

The promotion of discourses of self-confidence, closely tied to consumption practices, as such homogenises women's differences and conceals collective forms of agency, decollectivising and depoliticising the feminist movement to advance the goal of social change and reduce inequalities. The opposition or backlash against feminism is not new (see e.g. McRobbie, 2009). However, the promotion of the "Non-Issue movement" that constructs ideas about ageing as something entrepreneurial that can be self-chosen is problematic. As already established, the resources to be a neoliberal subject are unevenly distributed and differ by age, class, race, and gender, which works to further advance power imbalances in society (see e.g. Gill, 2021). This backlash against feminism reinscribes women to patriarchal hegemony and capitalist hegemony. In this way, the magazine can be seen as promoting "new" forms of oppression that offer women limited options rather than liberating choices of growing older (cf. Walby, 2011).

The acceptance (if we can even claim that) of "appropriate neoliberal ways" of ageing in the *Non-Issue* clearly demonstrates the hegemonic struggle for the meaning of old age today. This intensification of the neoliberal self-objectifying gaze refutes the idea that societies are now post-feminist. The question then is, are we experiencing the resurgence of feminism as other scholars (e.g. Banet-Weiser, 2018) have suggested? Or are we entering a new wave of feminism? These questions should be examined more closely in future research.

5.3 Future research: The intersectional life course perspective of successful ageing

My study chose to analyse representations of successful ageing from an intersectional feminist approach combined with MCDA, but another approach could be to use an intersectional life course perspective. Subsequently, future research should consider conducting studies that analyse discourses of successful ageing from the intersectional life course perspective that I propose in this thesis. Older people continue to be positioned as a homogenous group, not least in the media (cf. Bergström & Edström,

2022). However, as several social gerontologists indicate, older people are a heterogeneous group defined by several intersecting inequalities such as class, race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, functionality, health, etc. (see e.g. Torres, 2006, 2019; Calasanti & Giles, 2018). These inequalities tend to increase throughout the life course and shape people's experiences and abilities to participate in and achieve successful ageing (e.g. Calasanti, 2007; Calasanti & Giles, 2018; Holman & Walker, 2021). This highlights the need for research that utilises an intersectional life course perspective to ageing (e.g. Holman & Walker, 2021; cf. Bergström & Edström, 2022).

From previous research, we know, for instance, that racial/ethnic minorities are more likely to have poorer health in old age than their White counterparts. This is especially true for women who tend to suffer from chronic illnesses more often than men (e.g. Warner & Brown, 2011; Calasanti & Giles, 2018). Similarly, White, middle-class women when compared to Black, middle-class women and other groups of women often have the privilege to use anti-ageing products, engage in cosmetic surgery and other means of maintaining attractiveness required by successful ageing (cf. Calasanti et al., 2006; Calasanti, 2007; Jermyn, 2016; Calasanti & Giles, 2018). Despite this, few qualitative and quantitative studies examine how inequalities of class, race, age, and gender intersect to define the differences between older people across the life course and how this affects their ability to age successfully (cf. Holman & Walker, 2021).

On the one hand, the intersectional perspective applied here focuses on structural inequalities and proposes that the differences that exist between people based on factors such as age, gender, class, and race, mutually construct and reinforce one another in multiple ways in the (re)construction of discourses of successful ageing across the life course (cf. Mullings & Schulz, 2006; Holman & Walker, 2021). Intersectionality is, thus, a useful approach for highlighting the disadvantages between groups of people, which might otherwise go undetected (cf. Crenshaw, 1991). Using an intersectional perspective, I argue that the construction of older women in the media is equally gendered, aged, classed, and raced. In this sense, the expectations put on women to age successfully in, e.g. cosmetics advertisements and magazines, depends on the simultaneous combination of these social categories.

On the other hand, the life course perspective shapes processes of ageing and shows how ageing is a socially constructed phenomenon (e.g. Holman & Walker, 2021). The perspective is built on five key principles that place emphasis on the idea that ageing is a lifelong process shaped by individual

choices and social circumstances that are contextually embedded in time and place and are influenced by other significant people, e.g. spouses, family members (Elder et al., 2003). Drawing from the life course perspective, I argue that the construction of (older) women's feminine beauty ideals are both shaped by the social context of successful ageing and through interactions with significant others, key life events (e.g. educational experiences) and of course the media across the life course. However, little is known about how influences from women's intrapersonal relationships (e.g. partners or parents), the media and key life events shapes the ways in which women chose to resist or enact their own gendered (understood as intersectional) performances across the life course.

To this end, I argue that there is a need for studies that employ an intersectional approach grounded in a life course perspective to yield new and more comprehensive critical insights into discourses of ageing while highlighting the influence of personal life events, historical changes, and women's own individual perceptions of and responses to such experiences (Liechty & Yarnal, 2010, p. 1198). Through ethnographic studies, for instance, researchers can conduct in-depth interviews with women aged 50+ to examine women's perceptions of images of successful ageing, how and why they engage in beauty and bodywork, their experiences, and attitudes with these kinds of beauty work, what life events and circumstances shaped their image of ageing across the life course, etc. Standard questions to be included in the interviews can be, for instance, the interviewees' social categories such as age, race/ethnicity, marital status, educational background, household income, and spatiality (urban/rural) and how they intersect with women's mediated constructions in images of ageing. Researchers can develop discourse analyses of the verbal statements and conversations from this.

I argue that studies that focus on in-depth interviews and discourse analysis can provide a good starting point towards a deeper understanding of women's ageing appearances from their own perspective across the life course (cf. Liechty & Yarnal, 2010). It is important to understand how women's culturally mediated images of ageing develop over the life course as they age and how women use these images to interpret their own ageing. An intersectional life course approach to successful ageing, thus, provides a useful theoretical framework to explore how women, on the one hand, accumulate disadvantage with ageing and suffer from inequalities specifically associated with ageing; and on the other hand, experience opportunities for

individual empowerment in contrast to the tradition ageing-as-decline narrative. As such, these studies will help develop the critique that CDS favours particular meanings of texts that largely ignore how ordinary people read and understand texts (Widdowson, 1995; cf. Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Moreover, such studies can investigate whether the link between changing life roles and changing gender ideologies depends on the individuals' race, gender, and class categories, as well as how they interrelate with one another. This will help develop an understanding of how gender ideologies are constructed and how they change across the life course. Such research findings can be analysed to identify the themes of ageing that emerge from the data to allow researchers to draw out the differences and similarities between older men and women of different backgrounds. Another interesting avenue of research can be on how postfeminism, ageism, and ableism work together to reproduce social inequalities and relations of power.

5.4 Final remark

As a final remark, it is my contention that images of successful ageing, made more prominent by the increased visual turn in advertising and marketing discourses, operate to oppress women through hegemonic neoliberal postfeminist discourses. Within these discourses, the findings of the studies indicate that women are constructed and/or addressed through dominant discourses that treat ageing as a pathology that can and should be cured through marketing interventions that help legitimise successful ageing as a self-care and self-transformation practice (see Study I & III). Rather than offering older women liberating choices, the neoliberalisation of successful ageing together with the intensifying commercialisation and commodification of post-retirement discourses characterised by youthfulness works to (re)produce internal demands and pressures on women to attain ideals of successful ageing that they use to govern themselves (see e.g. Study II). Not only is this ideal difficult for most women to attain, but it is achieved and sustained through a self-governing, self-objectifying gaze that confines women to hegemonic patriarchal and capitalist standards of beauty that help reproduce inequalities based on age, class, race, and gender (see Study II).

These hegemonic and capitalist ideals are, nonetheless, not immediately recognisable as there is an elusiveness to neoliberal postfeminist dominant discourses of choice, empowerment, and freedom used to construct and address older women. The *L'Oréal* Age Perfect advertising campaign serves as

a good example of how women are presented with choices that simultaneously promote and sustain the internalisation of hegemonic patriarchal and capitalist standards of beauty made to appear as common-sense and hence natural. These standards, often concealed, are enacted in the everyday practices of White, middle-class (older) women who willingly take individual responsibility for their own choices, recontextualising ageing as a moral choice. Associating the ageing body and/or face with an individual moral failing and the individual's own failure to control their body is a way to promote the undesirability of signs of ageing and the marginalisation of older women. Paradoxically, women are presented with the free choice to reject these practices and hence challenge their oppressive and subordinate status to men and in society. At the same time, they are bestowed with an individual moral responsibility to do so. Yet, the power that determines the options from which women can choose from and how to act as moral and responsible citizens lies, for instance, in the hands of the advertisers.

Subsequently, what I see as the three main contributions of this thesis can be summarised as follows: i) women now view themselves through a neoliberal self-objectifying gaze; that encourages them to ii) use their entrepreneurial "choices" and "freedom" to actively objectify themselves in the name of empowerment; and as part of their iii) moral obligation to produce a normative body/face, or at the very least, an improved version of it.

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