

# The Dirty Work of “Clean Eating”: is the “Nutritionista” Tying Feminism to the Kitchen Sink?

**James Deeley**

Department of Sociology

21st Century popular culture routinely assures us that with a little hard work, women can achieve professional success, personal fulfilment and physical beauty: they can “have it all”. Yet feminist scholars have shown that women work harder than men in the workplace to reap the same rewards, they retain the majority of “shared” domestic labour, and are targeted ever more strategically by popular media in regulating body image.

Enter the “Nutritionista”. A portmanteau of “nutritionist” and “fashionista”, my research uses the term to describe a contemporary “lifestyle icon” who evangelises the benefits of healthy – “clean” – eating across multiple print and social media platforms. My research shows that whilst “clean” eating may be a slippery idea – ranging from gluten-free veganism to slurping bowlfuls of “bone broth” – the unifying factor throughout Nutritionista culture is a shared aesthetic of “natural”,

conventionally feminine, youthful, white beauty; coupled with the representation an aspirational lifestyle centred around food preparation, invoking the visual characteristics of fashion journalism. Today’s “modern woman” is thus encouraged to achieve satisfaction by locating her authentic “self” not in the world of work, but in the kitchen.

My research charts the autobiographical “makeover” of five Nutritionistas as they describe the excess and malcontent of their former professional lives, and their “journey” towards fulfilment through locating their “authentic” selves by forgoing paid labour and embracing domesticity. In doing so, these Nutritionistas represent “cleanliness” not simply as a way of eating and cooking “naturally”, but as a way of conforming to the “naturally” gendered realm of domesticity.