

Cardio girls and walking sets of abs:
Building the perfect body in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*

Master's thesis

Iina Halttunen

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Language and
Communication Studies
English
December 2018

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä – Author Iina Halttunen	
Työn nimi – Title Cardio girls and walking sets of abs: Building the perfect body in <i>Women's Health</i> and <i>Men's Health</i>	
Oppaine – Subject englannin kieli	Työn laji – Level maisterin tutkielma
Aika – Month and year joulukuu 2018	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 78
Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
Kehopositiivisuus on tullut jäädäkseen nykyajan kuvallistuneeseen ja sosiaalisen median koukuttamaan maailmaamme, mutta ulkonäkö on silti edelleen yleisimpiä arvottamisen kriteerejä. Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on valottaa sitä, miten kaksi aikakauslehteä käyttää valtaansa näyttääkseen ja muokatakseen ajatuksia siitä, millainen on täydellinen, tavoittelun arvoinen keho. Tutkimuskohteena ovat maailmanlaajuisten <i>Women's Health</i> - ja <i>Men's Health</i> -lehtibrändien Britanniassa julkaistavat painokset marraskuusta 2017 maaliskuuhun 2018.	
Tutkielman tavoitteena on selvittää, miten <i>Women's Health</i> ja <i>Men's Health</i> rakentavat sisällöillään kuvaan täydellisestä kehosta. Aineistonkeruu nojaa Aubreyn (2010) ajatukseen siitä, miten aikakauslehdet rajaavat viestejään. Aineistosta poimitut kehoteemoihin liittyvät havainnot on jaoteltu Aubreyn kategorioiden mukaan ulkonäkö-, painonpudotus-, terveys- ja kehokompetenssi-viesteiksi. Tämän lisäksi tutkielma pureutuu tarkemmin lehtien kehosisältöihin hyödyntämällä Ballentinen (2005) ajatusta siitä, että lehdet sekä rakentavat että romuttavat negatiivista kehonkuvaan. Lehtien toimintamallit kertovat sekä niiden suhteesta kehoihin että niiden arvoista. Vallankäytön, kielen ja sukupuolen välistä suhdetta tarkastellaan myös feministisen kriittisen diskurssintutkimuksen avulla.	
Tutkimuksessa käy ilmi, miten molemmat aikakauslehdet vahvistavat sisällöillään stereotyyppistä, perinteistä näkemystä sukupuolirooleista. Samalla tarkentuu kuva siitä, miten tarkkoja ulkonäköpaineet ovat nykyajan yhteiskunnassa. Huomattavaa on, että vaikka kehonkuvan ongelmat ja niistä seuraavat mielenterveyden ongelmat ovat yhteiskunnassa leimautuneet naisten sairauksiksi, median ja vertaisten asettamat paineet vaikuttavat myös miehiin.	
Asiasanat – Keywords body image, media studies, magazines, feminist critical discourse analysis	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	5
2.1	Body image research	5
2.2.	Body image distortion	9
2.2.1	The beauty myth	9
2.2.2	Gendered bodies in magazines	11
2.3	At the crossroads of language, power and gender	17
3	METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	24
3.1	Research aims and research questions	24
3.2	Introducing <i>Women's Health</i> and <i>Men's Health</i>	25
3.3	Methods of analysis	27
4	ANALYSIS	30
4.1	Appearance	30
4.2	Weight loss	38
4.3	Health	42
4.4	Body competence	46
4.5	Making and unmaking of body problems	49
5	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	61
5.1	Findings in relation to the research aim and research questions	61
5.2	Future of body image studies	69
6	BIBLIOGRAPHY	74

1 INTRODUCTION

Beauty ideals have a significant role to play in how the world works. Paying attention to appearances and not to what something actually is comes perhaps too naturally to us. Attractiveness guides our actions and decisions. Magazines and the media in general have taken up the role of a spin doctor that changes our perspectives on the world and the people in it according to the rules of business. If a certain opinion or item needs to be sold to the general public, media outlets make sure it will happen. Certain things will be lifted onto the stage, while others are carefully put away from the spotlight in the name of business and profit. Bodies and what one should think about them are one of the topics that remain in the spotlight.

In this study I will focus on the phenomenon of body dissatisfaction and investigate how magazines' content reflects their attitudes towards bodies. I have gathered my data with the help of Aubrey's (2010) observations on how magazines frame their messages, as my main aim is to discover what kinds of body messages magazines send out. After all, magazines have the chance to build their own representations of the ideal body and therefore enhance the idea of how a person should be in their readers' minds. However, the readers of a magazine are a heterogeneous audience: not everyone can fit into the narrow ideal of the perfect body. That is why I believe that it is worth investigating how magazines portray certain characteristics as the ideal and how societal ideas of perfection are created and maintained by them.

More specifically, my aim is to find out how the ideal body is built in two magazines. This will be done with the help of two research questions. Firstly, I want to find out how bodies are represented in the magazines and secondly, I am interested in finding out more on how these magazines both increase and ease body problems. As my data, I have chosen the print versions of the British editions of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines from November 2017 to March 2018. The magazines are chosen because they create very similar content to different target audiences. Both wish to campaign for an active way of life, but as their target audiences are different, they need different strategies to succeed.

This study will therefore provide a perspective on both male and female bodies in the media. There is now public discussion concerning female body dissatisfaction, and I would like to prove that dissatisfaction in one's body is not dependent of one's gender and that both men and

women are being subjected to highly influential views disseminated by the magazines on the topic. Male voices are starting to become heard on the topic of body dissatisfaction, too, and that is why it is extremely important to see what a men's lifestyle magazine has to offer for its readers as well. So, in order to do that, this study benefits from the points of view of feminist critical discourse analysis. Feminist critical discourse analysis will shed light on the field of masculine power use and will therefore be essential in investigating body attitudes.

In conclusion, the reason why I am conducting this particular study is because I believe that in the age of a strong body positivity movement, it is vital to underline how what we read changes the way we think. Reading is an activity one simply cannot do without using the background knowledge influenced by one's socioeconomic status, cultural background and previous experiences. What we read shapes our views of the world also in the case of bodies, and that is why it is important to highlight the impact of media on us all.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is based on research on body image and feminist critical discourse analysis. In the following section I will briefly introduce the concept of body image and discuss some of the main points of body image research so far. I will be looking into previous research on magazines as well, paying attention to what has already been discovered about points of view fitness magazines take on bodies. In addition, I will discuss the overall attitude of the media towards bodies. I will then move on to discuss discourse analysis as a way of conducting research and how power and language are closely tied together in critical discourse analysis.

This section will finish with a brief introduction to feminist critical discourse analysis. The benefit of bringing feminist critical discourse analysis as a part of the theoretical framework of this thesis is that feminist critical discourse analysis combines the two foci of this study, gender and power, and therefore provides a relevant perspective onto the study of the representation of bodies. The western world has lived for a long time in a world dominated by hegemonic masculine ideas about what is acceptable for men and for women, and that is why I believe knowledge of feminist critical discourse analysis will be a great help in analysing the data of this study.

2.1 Body image research

Body image is a multidimensional construct covering body-related beliefs and feelings both on the level of the individual as well as on a societal level. The term negative body image is used when feelings of shame and anxiety take over and one starts to see their body unlike it really is. In other words, having a negative body image is about seeing the inadequacy of one's body as a sign of failure. Positive body image, in contrast, is seeing one's body just as it is and knowing that physical appearance does not dictate one's value as a human being (National Eating Disorders Association 2016.)

In the following section, I will give a brief overview of body image studies and underline how studying body image issues is an excellent starting point for analysing magazines' body attitudes. Body image studies are a relevant part of this thesis, because they shed light on the expectations society has for everyone and on the outcomes of reacting too harshly to them. In

other words, body image studies assist in understanding why magazines publish the specific kinds of content they do.

Firstly, it must be pointed out, that instead of the more common positive-negative division, body image may also be divided into body image investment and body image evaluation (Kosut 2012, Hargreaves & Tiggemann 2006). Body image investment covers the cognitive and behavioural value put on bodies and appearance and body image evaluation means the satisfaction or dissatisfaction individuals feel with their bodies and appearances (Cash & Pruzinsky 1990, as cited in Hargreaves & Tiggemann 2006: 568). It is also argued, that the level of body image investment is also a stage of taking action and therefore the attempts of improving and maintaining one's appearance would be acknowledged as key ingredients of body image. On average, women are reported to have a greater investment in and stricter evaluation of their bodies than men. A negative body image, which is seen to be a problem for both men and women, can be caused by factors such as body mass index, puberty, self-esteem, ethnicity and media pressure. If left unnoticed, it can lead to eating disorders, anxiety and sexual issues (Hargreaves & Tiggemann 2006: 568, Kosut 2012: 20.)

Body image issues appear when one starts to assess one's own body and compare it to peers and to what is shown in the media. In Kosut's (2012: 20) view, it can be argued that social pressure around thinness and attractiveness creates body dissatisfaction and it also has a major role in how bodies are viewed in society. Similar ideas have emerged in a number of studies (see e.g. McCabe and Ricciardelli 2001) that have found out that it is natural for especially women to describe an ideal body to be like the bodies they see in the mass media. It is therefore clear that there is an apparent mismatch between beauty ideals and reality. Kosut (2012: 21) provides an interesting perspective on this dilemma by introducing social comparison theory, where people assess themselves with the criteria they have compiled with the help of the media. In other words, people are willing to conform to societal ideals, as their popularity makes them appear worthy of pursuit.

Social comparison theory is in action in the attitudes women and men take on bodies. The public praise given to the pre-pubertal female appearance and the post-pubertal male appearance is the starting point of a multitude of problems. Kosut (2012: 21) argues that underweight men and overweight women are the most critical groups as neither group fits the societal criteria of the ideal person. While thin men wish to become larger, their female counterparts wish for the exact

opposite: no matter what size a woman is, she still feels the pressure of becoming smaller. In pointing this out, Kosut (2012: 21) underlines the importance of understanding how significant a role weight has in defining women and their views of themselves. It is often thought that struggling to look at one's body realistically and therefore suffering from body dissatisfaction is an inevitable part of life, and especially the idea that the struggle should be visible is highly detrimental to all. In addition, if body dissatisfaction is accepted as the norm, it becomes easier to categorise oneself ill, even though one should instead question the societal norms causing the dissatisfaction (Markula 2001: 168, 176).

Another view on body image problems can be found in the work of McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001), who studied adolescents' body image and the sociocultural influences behind it. Of the adolescents studied, compared to males, females showed significantly less satisfaction of their bodies and were more likely to put a greater importance on affecting one's weight and body image in general (McCabe & Ricciardelli 2001: 230). The study also acknowledges a significant gap in research concerning boys' body image and points out that a majority of existing body image research wrongly focuses on the female need to lose weight even though the male behavioural patterns such as the need to get muscles should be discussed, too. It is argued that while restrictive eating is easy to notice, more information and research is needed to combat excessive exercising and eating disorders such as binge eating disorders and orthorexia that affect both males and females (McCabe & Ricciardelli 2001: 226.)

Also, research shows that peer and parental pressure are important factors in the process of developing an attitude towards bodies. It is argued that parents have an essential role in signalling a socioculturally acceptable body type, and the criticism and encouragement received from both parents is crucial. However important getting feedback from one's parents might be, receiving feedback is still surprisingly unequal as a large majority of compliments are directed towards girls. This is suggested to be yet another example of the strong will for girls to follow the societal beauty norms more closely than boys (McCabe & Ricciardelli 2001: 227, 236). Girls are also more easily encouraged to diet by peer pressure, and a positive outlook to dieting is expected no matter what the girl's body mass index is. Boys on the other hand are encouraged towards bulking by their peers (McCabe & Ricciardelli 2001: 237). According to McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001: 236), one of the most unfortunate results of peer pressure is supplement use; supplements may have their benefits, but girls overusing laxatives or boys overusing muscle-boosters can have very negative effects during and after puberty.

Moreover, McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001: 228) remind us in their study that although the media clearly have a role in teenage girls' disordered eating habits and views on dieting, it is not yet clear to what extent media content affects teenage boys. They have discovered that showing pictures of thin models to girls creates anxiety, but boys see thinness more neutrally. Interestingly, overweight boys are less likely to want to lose weight than average weight girls, because as far as boys' body norms are concerned, being bigger means having power. This would strengthen the claim that girls focus on becoming smaller, while boys' preferences are in looking strong. McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001: 235) discovered that these sociocultural thought patterns, in other words, thinness for females and a muscular figure for males, are adopted at a very young age, unless interfered in.

The effects of media have also been discussed by Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2006). Societal beauty norms possess extreme power, which is seen in the strength of the female need for thinness and the male need for a muscular enough physique. Like Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2006: 568) point out, this is very much a case of gender stereotypes: women are afraid of looking fat, and men are scared of appearing weak. Interestingly, though both men and women have an appearance-related fear, the cause-effect relationship between media content and body dissatisfaction gives different results. According to Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2006: 569), the reason for this could easily be the expectations of western society: it is a social taboo for men to be seen as weak and reacting negatively to media content is a sign of weakness.

It is suggested that another reason why girls and boys react differently to bodies is explained by the fact that they see the main motive for having a desirable body differently. Girls think of the ideal body as a prerequisite for fitting in among their peers and being a social success whereas boys tend to have body image issues when trying to impress a crush does not go according to plan (Hargreaves & Tiggemann 2006: 570). Boys' main motivations for muscles lie in impressing the people they are attracted to, being better at sports and rising in the social hierarchy. Their motivation can even be as practical as avoiding being robbed. In other words, girls see their bodies as a way of pleasing others while boys value the ability of being active and doing things (Wang, Liang & Chen 2009, as quoted in Kontoniemi 2014: 10). According to Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2006: 571, 573) boys feel the pressure of looking a certain way as it is seen to guarantee a place in the social hierarchy but talking about the pressures is seen as gay and girly. Vulnerability is to be avoided at all costs, and that is argued to be a main factor in the differences between a female and male approach to body dissatisfaction.

All in all, it is obvious that body image is a highly complex term that includes both individual and societal expectations and hopes. Studying body image is also a chance to see that although the western world has become relatively equal, there are still areas where gender is a very significant factor. Society has created sets of criteria for men and women and failing to meet the criteria can result in severe body dissatisfaction. One cannot build body expectations in a vacuum, and that is why it is essential that the reasons behind changing body image views are lifted onto the stage in the research community and elsewhere, too.

2.2. Body image distortion

In this section of my study, I will be looking more closely into the phenomena that cause body dissatisfaction in media users. First, I will introduce the concept of the beauty myth, a device that is said to guide media action in the field of appearances (Kosut 2012). I will then proceed to investigate bodies and magazines in more detail. Having a clearer understanding of how and why the media creates body-related content will aid me in my analysis and help me discover what kinds of criteria *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* set for ideal bodies.

2.2.1 The beauty myth

The inventor of the beauty myth, Naomi Wolf (1991: 10), declares that the beauty myth is a weapon used in politics to stop female advancement in society. Wolf (1991: 12-13) wants to point out that although beauty is not universal, the world sees that there is unchangeable beauty that women need to embody. Beauty is required of women, while men are required to want to possess women deemed beautiful by society. In other words, it could be said that the beauty myth, although built for women, is really about the extremely masculine field of power use. According to Kosut (2012: 16-17), the beauty myth is a capitalistic device guaranteed to make profit by feeding customer anxieties. It is therefore a means of building unrealistic demands for an ideal person and thus a relevant factor in this thesis.

The pressure of the beauty myth keeps women preoccupied with the ideas of femininity and beauty standards. It is crucial to note that these normative standards of beauty are based on western characteristics and are therefore extremely selective. Kosut (2012: 17) points out that

western ideals prioritize female appearance over intellect, ambition and other unique traits. Glamorizing highly exaggerated beauty ideals in the media is a very dangerous practice with far-reaching consequences, as it creates and reaffirms a cultural myth about what beauty actually is. The beauty myth depends on repetitions of the status quo, as it was always built around the masculine fear of losing one's power to those deemed less worthy of it (Wolf 1991: 18). According to Wolf (1991: 22), it can be argued that the use of the beauty myth and the lack of diversity in media images in general can be traced down to the fear of the discriminated becoming better than the discriminators.

It can be argued that the beauty myth is a tool of reminding women to follow the normative standards of femininity, if they wish to be given any power at all. At the same time, the beauty myth sets women against each other, despite the fact that less competition would lead to better improvements in the position of women in society (Wolf 1991: 14). Politics is one area where the beauty myth causes a great deal of inequality. For instance, the fashion choices and body types of female politicians are subject to strict and detailed media scrutiny, while their male counterparts make headlines for their policies and leadership skills. Kosut (2012: 17) discusses this phenomenon with two prominent female politicians as examples. Hillary Clinton is often snubbed due to preferring pantsuits over dresses and therefore not adhering to the strict femininity ideal. Sarah Palin, the vice presidential candidate for John McCain in the 2008 presidential elections, was the exact opposite: she followed the strict rules of normative beauty standards but was not as successful as a politician. The two women are a good example of the first rule of the beauty myth: it is widely acknowledged that it is acceptable for women to be either beautiful or smart.

As already stated above, the media have a great deal of power in creating and maintaining body-related criteria. Kosut (2012: 18) highlights the grim reality of the beauty myth in the public sphere. Without one's beauty being publicly judged, it is rarely possible to receive social acceptance. This is clearly shown in the increase of fat loss and makeover -themed television programmes and magazine features. Being publicly judged by a before and after photo collage is deemed necessary for the quest of improving one's life and self-esteem. Media outlets have managed to show that certain products can do miracles and therefore people are led to believe that one can achieve beauty and happiness through diets, plastic surgery and other appearance-enhancing procedures instead of seeing that showing certain products as miracle-makers is a

tool to boost economy and direct spending. This phenomenon is an excellent example of the impact that the media have in the lives of consumers.

In her book, Wolf (1991: 28-29) compares the use of the beauty myth to the American dream. Prioritising beauty is not a discriminatory act, if one believes that, like the American dream does, beauty is at everyone's reach if they are willing to put in the work required to reach for it. Women's magazines have employed this way of thinking impeccably, as their rhetoric voices that of the American dream. According to Wolf, magazines build meritocracies that discriminate unworthy bodies by focusing on emphasising the perseverance and the role of the reader in pursuing the dream body. This mindset is a clever way of protecting the status quo, as there always remains a fool-proof way of explaining failure: those who fail did not do enough. However, perfectionism rising from risky magazine content can have serious consequences in the terms of eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorders, too.

2.2.2 Gendered bodies in magazines

Magazines have a strong influence on their readers, and that is why they are a noteworthy part in the search for the heroes and the culprits of the body positivity and body dissatisfaction phenomena. Ballentine (2005: 291) divides magazines' use of power in the field of body image into two categories, which she calls the making and unmaking of body problems. She believes that contrary to the magazines' purpose, readers feel negative and inadequate when reading magazines and comparing themselves to the narrow societal body ideal portrayed in them. This inadequacy is created by the magazines' habit of creating and highlighting the so-called body of desire at the expense of other bodies and so branding certain bodies and certain kinds of body parts as problematic. This act of making body problems (Ballentine 2005: 291-292) can also be characterised by a clever use of positive and negative connotations as well as scary visions that promise horrible outcomes, if the advice of the magazine is not accepted.

It is also suggested that magazines are extremely skilled in creating a rhetoric of choice in where readers are led to believe they can freely choose how they look and in doing so have agency in managing their bodies. Ballentine calls this process the unmaking of body problems. Whereas the making of body problems is concerned with encouraging body dissatisfaction with constant coverage of the perfect body, unmaking of body problems is focused on the action that is

required to gain a good body. In other words, this means step by step -guides on fixing bodily woes and strengthening the idea that all bodily issues can be removed, if one is responsible enough and gets the necessary guidance. The unmaking of body problems is a demanding process that requires self-discipline and vigilance. What is extremely noteworthy is that the same magazine can successfully employ both strategies, and even the same piece of writing can both make and unmake body problems, depending on the position of the reader (Ballantine 2005: 292-294.). Ballantine (2005: 302) admits that while the ever increasing media exposure means that the patterns of body problems require further research, it is already clear that such patterns exist and conflict: making and unmaking of body problems both offer restriction and empowerment and it is the task of the individual to evaluate the impact of each process.

In the field of health and fitness, magazines are particularly eager to argue that they are committed to improving readers' body satisfaction and to fighting against the rise of eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorder. The reality is, however, different. According to Markula (2001: 158), fitness magazines were founded on the idea that it is perfectly acceptable and good business to provide diet and exercise tips so that readers would continue their desperate pursuit of the perfect body. After all, from their perspective, body dissatisfaction is something one can easily fix with the assistance of a fitness magazine workout programme. Despite wanting their readers to be their best selves, magazines send mixed messages: while it is expected to be concerned for readers' wellbeing, a significant number of reasons for body-related insecurities comes from the perfect bodies seen in the media. It is highly contradictory that magazines try to profile themselves as body positive while a majority of their content is showcasing how one's worth is based on appearances alone (Markula 2001: 166.)

The brainwashing capabilities of magazines were also studied by Malachowski (2013), who suggests that magazines can easily make those with little media literacy believe in extremely strict and potentially harmful body goals (Malachowski 2013: 33). It could even be argued that promoting thinness in the media is a gateway to eating disorders (Harrison 2000, as cited in Malachowski 2013: 34). This argument is supported by Andersen and DiDomenico (1992, as cited in Cusumano 1997: 702), who went as far as to suggest that the number of times diet advertisements and other diet-centred content appear in women's magazines compared to men's magazines mirrors the ratio of eating disorder occurrence among the two genders. However, other points of view are voiced on the topic, with Stice et al (1994, as cited in Cusumano 1997: 703) stating that the reason behind eating disorders is not one's gender but one's ability to

internalize sociocultural standards: those who think they know what the society expects of them, are at risk of falling under the heavy body image demands.

Another interesting perspective on magazines was provided by Aubrey (2010), who studied the covers of women's health magazines. The cover is one of the most valuable assets of a magazine, and Aubrey's mission was to discover what kinds of messages health magazine covers send and how the messages are framed. In this task she benefits from Scheufele's (1999, as cited in Aubrey 2010: 54) idea of the framing theory, the point of which being the act of making something more salient than something else.

Aubrey therefore argues that the covers of health magazines have an impact on how media users perceive different phenomena, as the topics featured in magazine covers have been carefully selected to best portray the particular magazine's values. Something is always lifted onto the cover, while other topics are left out. In her study, Aubrey investigates magazine covers with the help of five framing categories. Her frames are appearance, health, body competence, weight loss and miscellaneous. Aubrey's work sheds light on the fact that despite the efforts of health magazine advocating for healthy lifestyles, media frames stubbornly keep the attention of the reader on appearance. She (2010: 61) argues that a wider understanding of media frames would turn the attention of health magazine consumers from looking good to feeling good and thus prioritise health over aesthetics. That, she remarks, would sadly require a significant change in the society as we are still very preoccupied with appearance.

All in all, body image distortion is a useful marketing strategy: for as long as consumers are thinking about the potential flaws in their appearances, they will not question the media and will continue to be exposed to media images. Markula (2001) states that this phenomenon is all about popularizing health and using it for commercial gain. It is easy to offer advice on how to love one's body, because in order to reach the level of attractiveness deemed adequate by the society, one needs to find self-love. Body positivity is seen as a prerequisite and the route for successful changes in one's physical appearance but finding it is difficult in the current media climate.

Cusumano (1997: 703) points out that instead of focusing on the more common point of view of research, the attempt of exposing detrimental health content, more attention of both the research community and media consumers should be on people's awareness of the expectations

our sociocultural backgrounds have set for us all. This claim is supported by Reid Boyd (2011: 102), who states that more attention should be given to the ways young people read magazines. It is too easy for an inexperienced person to mirror magazine content to their personal life. Those with little media literacy are the most vulnerable and it should be a priority to guarantee that they receive the education, support and social surroundings they require in order to learn to decipher media messages better. This is essential because body dissatisfaction can have serious consequences unless treated, and media outlets will keep their ideals of the perfect body for as long as that specific idea of beauty and the perfect body sells and benefits them (Markula 2001: 163).

Health magazines are a paradox, as they both strengthen and ease health-related pressure. If a magazine offers both supportive information and tips on how to conform to the strict societal ideals, the reader will struggle to decide which opinion to believe (Reid Boyd 2011: 105). The same idea of magazine selectivity is present in Markula's (2001) study. Magazines promote ideas of real women being strong and sexy, but in their content and the way people are portrayed in magazines, a potentially harmful stand is being taken. For instance, visibly muscular women can be pictured demonstrating the correct techniques in an exercise plan, but the cover of the magazine is always reserved to a lean woman who does not appear muscular. In other words, the selective nature of magazines and their use of images in particular is harmful, as it strengthens the society stereotype of one's worth being measured by one's appearance (Markula 2001: 165, 167).

It is generally claimed that magazines show what women should look like and consequently give advice to men on what they should be expecting in a woman, but Bazzini (2015: 206) points out that women and men both being objectified by the media. Magazines offer sets of expectations and pieces of advice to reach certain coveted outcomes. A woman's path to success is a thin body, but men face appearance-related pressure from the society as well. Women are seen to pay too much attention on being attractive in the eyes of men, but men are also seen to overestimate the amount of muscles women find sexy. Beauty is shown to be a woman's greatest accomplishment, while men are shown that muscle is one of the keys to success, but also something that is not made to be the focus of one's universe.

Health magazines often portray exercise as being on a mission as exercising to reach a certain appearance strengthens the idea that people are judged by appearances instead of capabilities

(Bazzini 2015: 207). The emphasis on thinness is a clear sign of the cultural stigma on obesity. It is ironic, but the magazines' attempts of underlining the wrongs of obesity increases damaging behaviour such as eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorder. Also, Bazzini (2015: 207) points out that the use of objectifying words is a dangerous practice: compartmentalisation in particular is an area where this behaviour is exceptionally visible. Women are consequently seen to pay too much attention on being attractive in the eyes of men, but men are also seen to overestimate the amount of muscles women find sexy. The demands of looking exceptional are extremely difficult for women, as both men and women put more emphasis on bodies than faces when assessing women's appearance (Bazzini 2015: 208).

The arrival of men's health and lifestyle magazines

As stated above, while body-related magazine content tends to focus on women, men are not immune either. Jung's study on advertising in Men's Health magazine suggests that admiration of muscular men may be just as detrimental as the admiration of thin women (Jung 2011: 181). Jung (2011: 182) underlines the importance of the phenomenon by pointing out that the western ideals of female thinness and male muscularity are even supported by toys; the production of Barbies and Action Men is a way of keeping stereotypical gender roles firmly alive. Interestingly, the more people are exposed to media content, the less accepting they are of their bodies.

In the media, it is easy to spin an idea that one needs to build a certain type of a body to succeed in life. The ability to portray rewards and punishments for certain behaviours is what makes mass communication extremely dangerous (Jung 2011: 183.) Ricciardelli, Cow and White (2010, as cited in Jung 2011: 183) point out the fact that men are faced with great pressure to exercise in order to reach a desired lifestyle. In the case of women, the dilemma is one-sided: one needs to be thin to attract the opposite sex, and by being beautiful, other doors will also open. Men, however, are made to believe that they need to be able to reach a set of goals to be deemed a real man. Women are told by the media to look a certain way, but men are shown accomplishments they should be able to do. The pursuit of power through excessive exercising, though it might lead one to great things, could also be very dangerous to one's health.

Benwell (2002: 149-150) argues that perhaps the greatest difference between male and female magazine audiences is that women wish to befriend their magazine and trust its advice on how

to be their best selves, while men are extremely sceptical to do the same. However, the arrival of men's lifestyle magazines did also bring about a more sexualised representation of men: men could be allowed to show an interest in what they wear and how they should look like. Despite offering men the chance to have an interest on formerly unacceptable matters like fashion, men's lifestyle magazines have also underlined the gap between the genders. Benwell (2002: 155) states that in general, men's and women's magazines are filled with binary oppositions. Gender norms are always built and maintained in interaction, and the gender differences portrayed in magazines offer researchers a multitude of options for diving into the ways of femininity and masculinity.

In addition, gender is always an on-going process and that is why Benwell (2002: 151) finds it questionable that men's lifestyle magazines would portray masculinity as a relatively stable construction. It is argued that magazines are sold with the idea that they are used to confirm the readers' ideas of masculinity, but they should also add something to that (Benwell 2002: 154). That is why magazines of today are constantly challenging the limits of stereotypical masculinity and seeing how far it is possible for them to go.

In other words, showing masculinity is seen as a joint effort of holding onto the idea of male power (Benwell 2002: 152). Men's magazines make the conscious choices of putting idealised versions of men on their covers, but at the same time, various concerns are voiced about the downturn of sales caused by putting men on the cover. The magazines are required to support that strict ideas of hegemonic masculinity and portray their ideal reader as a successful man who is ready to take on the world. Masculinity is something every man should aspire to, and men's lifestyle magazines can act as a brainwashing tool that works for its benefit and against the alternatives, femininity and homosexuality (Benwell 2002: 158).

In order to keep with the standards of hegemonic masculinity, men's lifestyle magazines are seen to be obliged to provide their readership with the products they need to become powerful instead of giving them powerful role models to look up to (Benwell 2002: 159). This differs greatly from the women's magazines' usage of role models. According to Benwell (2002: 161), men's magazines are prone to use seemingly neutral voices that still carry a gendered point of view as a way of showcasing their message. The ideal man is a stereotypical masculine man, and not feminine or gay. All homoerotic or feminine implications are strictly forbidden, as they would not mix well with the magazine's main idea (Benwell 2002: 162).

However, there is a way for the magazines to work with the undesirable content. Nowadays men's lifestyle magazines are increasingly exposed to more feminine types of content and balance it with tongue-in-cheek material (Benwell 2002: 152). The possible sexual or gender ambiguities become less severe if combined with humour or irony (Benwell 2002: 163). Irony in particular is an essential tool of the magazines, as both its literal and non-literal meaning can be used for the magazine's purposes. As common as using humour to lessen the difficulties may be, it must be acknowledged that hegemonic masculinity and the commercial needs of magazines are facing problems (Benwell 2002: 165). The attempts of not losing face are of great importance, but the world and its opinions are changing as well. As Benwell (2002: 169) puts it, gender ideals are born and maintained in discourse, and when discursive strategies develop, the outcomes of using said strategies will be affected, too.

In conclusion, magazines and the media in general have a significant role in how oppressive images and ideas affect people and how the unhealthy attitude towards bodies still reigns in society. In order to guarantee consumer interest, magazines need to be extremely convincing and this is done through loud, superlative-filled headlines and addressing the status quo, the reality in which readers live (Markula 2001: 168). Markula (2001: 174) argues that power is gained only if the constant observation and judgement of right and wrong kinds of bodies and behaviours is stopped. The signals of being thin or looking strong being preferred over all other body types can have lasting consequences. That is why it is essential that research continues to focus on the power magazines and the media in general possess.

2.3 At the crossroads of language, power and gender

Studying magazines is about studying communicative events from multiple points of view. One needs to be able to determine what is said, how, where and why. This alone can justify the need for an understanding of critical discourse analysis in this study. Looking at language in action, as critical discourse analysis does, is a way of understanding, strengthening and questioning the cultural and socioeconomic factors that are attached to them. As Blommaert (2005: 4) puts it, one must always study both the language as well as the action where language is used. Problems are only problems when they are recognised as such.

In the following section I will briefly address some key points of critical discourse analysis and then go on to discuss feminist critical discourse analysis. Including both critical discourse analysis as well as the more specific feminist critical analysis in this section is necessary, because the two topics together provide me with sufficiently broad understanding of the relationship between power and language, a key phenomenon in this thesis. The addition of feminist critical discourse analysis is particularly important, because decisions of power can be seen differently when the inevitable effect of gender is recognised and understood.

Power is not all bad, at least to those who are in power. Critical discourse analysis investigates the link between language and power and addresses the effects, outcomes and inequality of using power. Many problems of daily life need to be looked into from the points of view of both power and language (Blommaert 2005:2). Analysing language is a skill that grows in importance as the media develop. Language allows one to investigate social dilemmas and controversies that have become so ordinary that they are taken for granted, making the power-users' hold on consumers even stronger.

Blommaert (2005: 14-16) introduces a set of principles that guide the way towards understanding the role of language in society. Understanding what language means to its users and what kind of an impact it has on their lives is essential, as language is highly dependent on its surroundings. Language does not operate in the same way in different surroundings, and that is why understanding the importance of context is necessary in order to taking a critical discourse analytic point of view on phenomena. Context expertise is highly useful, as the language one uses and analyses is always highly contextualised and far from the so-called pure language.

Blommaert's principles offer an interesting point of view on linguistic limits, too. He states that communicators are bound by their repertoires and therefore entire conversations and perspectives are closely tied to the quality and size of participants' repertoires. A repertoire is the material, in other words, the linguistic resources which we can use to communicate in a certain language. Our repertoire is affected by culture, schooling, gender and a multitude of other identity-building factors. A repertoire is not only a key factor of making ourselves understood, but also a way of underlining the important relationship between discourse and context as in order to understand a language user, one needs to understand what has affected this specific person (Blommaert 2005: 14-16, 18.)

Language is a way for power to highlight itself, but power can also be challenged through language. If alternatives are provided, there might be a way for negotiating power relationships and structures into more equal ones. According to Blommaert (2005: 5), it is voice, the practice of using discursive means to be heard, that defines linguistic inequality. To study voice is to study the effects of power in languages. The linguistic resources available for successful communication are not evenly distributed in society. Not everyone communicates the same way, and that should be encouraged. In other words, diversity in communication should always be seen as a richness instead of a hurdle slowing down progress.

Feminist critical discourse analysis as a means to understand the media

As discussed earlier, language can be both a sign and a challenger of power. While critical discourse analysis makes the inequality in power relationships visible, feminist critical discourse analysis highlights the inequality between the sexes. In recent years, problems with power, gender and ideology have become more prominent and complicated. The goal of feminist critical discourse analysis is to reach a nuanced understanding of how power creates and maintains gendered social arrangements. The aim is to recognize and understand how society uses gendered practices and employs hegemonic power. If these phenomena are recognized, they can consequently be negotiated or even challenged (Lazar 2007: 142).

Gender is a part of social identity-building, and therefore intersects with other categories, such as ethnicity, age, social class and sexuality. (Lazar 2005: 141). As Wodak (1997: 1-2) puts it, it is vital to look at gender in more detail in comparison to previous studies where the sole perspective has been that of biological sex. Gender is always a social construct, and that is why looking into the behaviours of interaction participants as well as their personal backgrounds is a way to fully understand gender.

Feminist critical discourse analysis is interdisciplinary, as it functions both as a way of looking at language and discourse critically and as a means of using those points of view to guide attention to feminist and gender issues (Lazar 2007: 142). The work is done through the analysis of text, talk and multimodal discourses in different communities. The critique is often aimed at the representation of biased practices that are working to maintain an unequal status quo (Lazar 2005: 6). For example, feminist critical discourse analysis views gender as an ideological tool of grouping men and women into two unequal sets of people. Gender-specific qualities are seen

as methods of justifying the inequality in treating women and other minorities, and that is why they need to be questioned (Wodak 1997: 2).

Gender is a tool for oppression, as gendered linguistic practices are firmly in place in patriarchal ideology (Cameron 1992, as quoted in Lazar 2007: 142). In other words, a feminist point of view on language use and power is desperately needed, as many fail to question common phenomena that have become so ordinary that inequality is hard to notice (Lazar 2005: 2-3). It is so ordinary to look at issues of gender in general and ignore the level of perception: as Wodak (1997) points out, it is so easy to cling to gender stereotypes that they inevitably affect the ways we see ourselves and the people around us.

Feminist critical discourse analysis aims to create a feminist humanist vision of society (Lazar 2005: 6). This project can be called feminist analytical resistance and also a way of doing activism against the patriarchy (Lazar 2007: 146). According to Lazar (2005: 5-6), feminist analytical resistance aims to showcase how social practices are always gendered. Men are automatically privileged with the status of the more valued social group, while women are excluded from power. Gender is a way of making sense of social practices and how they are created, but it is also a driving force behind all of our actions and social relations. So, if power between men and women is asymmetrical, that power can affect a multitude of social actions as well (Lazar 2007: 145).

In addition, feminist critical discourse analysis wants to underline that there is a multitude of consequences of being male or female, and that some of those consequences affect the way we communicate. After all, gender is always produced in interaction (Wodak 1997: 9). Although masculinity and femininity can be argued to exist as separate dimension within a person regardless of their biological sex (Connell 1993, as quoted in Wodak 1997: 3), it is a common procedure for people to define themselves in comparison to other members of the same biological sex.

Gender ideology is seen as highly problematic, because it is not seen as a way of using power. Lazar (2005: 7) adds that society has created different paths for men and women based only on the sexual difference. She then continues to point out that it has long been discussed in the feminist sphere that sex is too socially constructed. Not all people are exactly like the archetypal man or woman and all cultures have their own preferred personality traits but still men continue

to be seen as superior and to possess most high-profile positions in society. A feminine man is automatically given more power and he therefore possesses more symbolic, social and economic capital than a female peer solely due to being a man (Lazar 2007: 146). Lazar (2005:8) views that gender inequality is highly institutionalised and can be seen in politics and finance as well as advertising and news media. If children are brought up to think women are weak and men are active, the result of the education will be visible in their behaviour (Magalhaes 2005: 186). That is why knowledge of linguistic differences and inequalities is of utmost importance.

Feminist critical discourse analysis wants to shed light on the diversity among men and women and how widely spread traditional power views are. Power is all about actions and gendered subjects react to it in a myriad of ways (Lazar 2005: 9.) The rationale of a critical point of view to language and society is to investigate how power and dominant power roles are created and maintained. Another interesting example of the relationship between power and gender is Simone de Beauvoir's (1949, as cited in Wodak 1997: 22) idea that even though one can be born a woman, in the end it is society that shapes one into the right kind of a woman. This is an insightful perspective on a key feminist idea, the critique towards unequal power structures of society.

In addition to this, Wodak refers to Mathieu's (1989, as cited in Wodak 1997: 22-23) paradigms of gender, and Mathieu's second paradigm in particular offers excellent insights into gender and language. According to the paradigm, gender is formed through actions. Gender identity is the collective experience of life as a woman or a man. Though there is no such person as a generic woman or a man, societal expectations force us to create, accept and protect gender roles. An interesting factor of this phenomenon is that although biological sexes remain unchanged, gender roles can undergo transformations as different times and societies prefer different qualities.

The effects of gender may actually be visible when comparing women to women and men to men instead of comparing the sexes. Being a man or a woman is not about living inside a strict category but living one's other social identities in gendered manner (Eckert 1989, as cited in Wodak 1997: 33). Inequality is not only a matter of biological sex, because the actual inequality is created by several socioeconomic factors. Eckert (1989) emphasises that nobody is a generic

person, as age, race, financial status and many other factors affect the way people create and suffer from inequality.

Also, feminist critical discourse analysis acknowledges the power of gendered framing and wishes to make that practice more visible (Wodak 1997: 82). Magalhaes (2005) argues that as the world changes into a more gender-neutral one, it is vital to realize how gendered framing, the process of reaching desired outcomes by looking into phenomena from a gendered point of view, still affects language use. In her article, Magalhaes (2005: 182-183) discusses society's ways of branding communicative styles into a more acceptable, masculine one and a weaker, feminine one. Masculinity in communication is signalled by matter-of-factness and important topics while feminine communication is often characterised by over-politeness, chatter and more trivial topics. The male dominance is explained by the fact that men have been trained to communicate in such a manner that dominance is easier to grasp and maintain.

According to Lazar (2007: 150), people may easily be persuaded to join in a protest against injustices, but a small minority group can do harm for the wider minority, too. This can be seen, for instance, in questions of race or sexuality: if the conversation is not completely inclusive, it is extremely hard to draw conclusions on the phenomenon as a whole. A group of people cannot rely on sameness, even though they shared one key characteristic such as gender. Lazar (2007: 150) underlines that it is usually those with a middle-class, heterosexual, white background who are given a voice, and therefore only a fragment of the universal experience is made public. This phenomenon can be argued to echo greatly in the field of body satisfaction and dissatisfaction, too. If a white, young and able-bodied thin person is pictured as the ideal, too many are being left out. That is why it is essential, that all are given the chance to question the status quo on language use and consequently lessen the traditional power use in society (e.g. Magalhaes 2005).

In conclusion, it is vital to understand how feminist critical discourse analysis does not necessarily investigate women against men or women in isolation, but it takes a closer look at communities, where the true point of feminist critical discourse analysis may be found. This idea is applicable to the study of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines, in this study, too. Although the names of the magazines would suggest otherwise, *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* are not read by a homogeneous group of readers. Still, the magazines portray a version of the perfect woman or a man. One of the most important tasks of feminist critical

discourse analysis in this study is to provide a perspective on magazines and underline that portrayals of beauty in society are not based on male or female archetypes, but on individuals who are performing with strict rules set by society.

3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

My Master's thesis aims to investigate how bodies are represented in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines, how magazine content both increases and decreases body-related concerns and consequently draw conclusions on the ways *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* use power. In this chapter, I will discuss the aims of my research in more detail, introduce my two research questions and explain why *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* provide plenty of material for this study. I will conclude this chapter with how I collected my data and how I aim to analyse my findings.

3.1 Research aims and research questions

The purpose of this study is to conduct a content analysis and see how the idea of the perfect body is built by *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines. Both magazines campaign for a healthy lifestyle, but they are still rather exclusive as they portray a relatively narrow idea of acceptable body types. It can be argued that despite their overall focus on health, both magazines can also create feelings of inadequacy among their readership. Motivated by such initial observations, I will be conducting my research with the help of the following research questions:

1. How are bodies represented in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*?
2. How are body problems made and unmade in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*?

The purpose of the first research question is to guide my research and give an outline of what kind of versions of the perfect body are built by the content of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*. I aim to discover how language choices play a vital part in the magazines' use of power, as language is the means to both highlight and hide chosen points of view. Magazine content can be both encouraging and discouraging, and that is why attention should be paid on how the two popular health magazines address body-related problems. It is vital to investigate how magazines use power both in the level of language choice as well as in the level of broader content choices and the decisions of including and excluding certain features. In other words, the second research question will focus more on the different types of content of the magazines by highlighting the ways the two magazines both make and unmake body problems by choosing to publish certain kinds of content.

I believe it to be both vital and fascinating to discover how these magazines create their views on bodies, and how they try to guide their audience by portraying certain characteristics better than others. In today's society many possess good media literacy, but it is nevertheless interesting to investigate the variety of language choices that are used to influence the reader. Raising awareness of the exclusivity of body types in the media will provide readers with the opportunity to either believe or question the status quo. One tends to take for granted what mediums seen as trustworthy publish, even though all mediums are biased. That is why research must focus on the decisions of the press regarding content.

3.2 Introducing *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*

Magazines are an extremely seasonal genre of media. There are themes that are discussed throughout the year, but more often themes belong to a specific time of the year. The turn of the year is one of the most hectic seasons in the world of magazines, especially in the Western world. Before Christmas, readers are slipping into a panic about their calorie-dense Christmas menus and the need to fit into party attire, and they are therefore in need of advice on how to survive the holiday season without gaining a few extra kilograms and how to get the attention of that special someone at a Christmas party. The beginning of the new year, on the other hand, is the time to make resolutions and decide that certain aspects of one's life will change for the better. These New Year resolutions often have a link to body dissatisfaction as countless people commit to losing weight every January.

For these reasons, my data consists of the November 2017, December 2017, January-February 2018 and March 2018 issues of the British editions of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines. The turn of the year is an excellent time for magazines to make a good profit, maintain a relationship with old readers and attract new readers as well. That is why I believe that by focusing on *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* issues from the turn of the year I can draw conclusions on how the magazines work during the most important part of their year. As the time is highly body-conscious, those issues will provide plenty of data about the general attitudes the magazines take on body image. *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines both originate from the United States, but I have chosen to use the British editions, published by Hearst Magazines UK, as my data in this study. This is done because of two reasons: my personal interest in the British culture and the accessibility of the print versions of the British

editions compared to other countries' editions. Choosing the print versions for data collection and analysis was a personal preference as well.

As mentioned, the data of this study includes four issues of both *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*, but in order to make the study more manageable, main focus will be on typical excerpts that best illustrate the themes introduced in the following section of this thesis as analytical methods. The content studied in detail in this study includes an editor's letter, interviews, exercise guides and other types of content such as question and answer columns and nutrition content. In addition to the quoted content, this study refers to other features of the magazines in order to make comparisons between the two magazines and inspect the content more closely from the perspectives of the analytical categories.

Women's Health is a lifestyle magazine that discusses health, beauty, nutrition, exercise and sex. It has the average circulation of 132 728 (Audit Bureau of Circulations 2018b). Its main aim is to give its readers a detailed manual of becoming their best self while maintaining a busy lifestyle, and that is why the target audience of the magazine are between the ages of 25 and 44 (Women's Health UK Media Kit 2016). One of the most visible parts of *Women's Health* is its exercise section. The exercise section provides readers with versatile workouts with detailed instructions and a great deal of inspiration for those wishing to lose weight. Both cardiovascular and strength training are seen in the magazine, and the emphasis is often on tackling a specific part of the body, often called a problem area, such as arms or glutes. In every issue of *Women's Health*, a weight loss success story is celebrated with a page-long feature called "Fat Burner's Diary" and the topic of losing weight and toning in general is strongly present. The nutrition section, another prominent feature of the magazine, is filled with colourful pictures of healthy food and instructions for the avid home cooks. Points of interest for the nutrition section include boosting one's metabolism and energy levels, organic food and making prepping meals as effortless as possible. The focus of the food content is both on healthiness and on the presentation of the dish, as the meal needs to look good enough to be posted onto social media.

Women's Health tends to choose a celebrity as its cover star. The celebrity in question is required to be a healthy woman with an active lifestyle and thus a worthy role model for the target audience of the magazine. The cover star will get a feature story in the magazine combined with a photo shoot and usually a workout guide, too. The value of celebrities as opinion influencers is also visible in the advertising content of the magazine. Celebrities

endorsing products and fitness programmes is seen as a valuable marketing strategy and therefore actively used in *Women's Health*.

Men's Health, on the other hand, claims to be the most popular men's magazine brand in the world. Its British edition has the average circulation of 175 683 (Audit Bureau of Circulations 2018a). The magazine discusses health, nutrition, exercise, travel and technology. The role of *Men's Health* is to be a health magazine that provides its audience with interesting and useful lifestyle content as well. According to the magazine's media pack (2016), *Men's Health* targets educated, well-to-do professionals between the ages of 25 and 44.

The focus of *Men's Health* is on physical fitness. There is a multitude of workouts and stories of inspiring athletes in each magazine. The emphasis is on encouraging readers to find new ways to train and to build a body fit for the challenges of modern life. Though showcasing slightly more strength training, the content of the magazine addresses both cardiovascular and strength training. The nutrition section is designed to help readers in their quest of gaining muscle. *Men's Health*, unlike *Women's Health*, is determined to make also relatively unhealthy meals healthier and thus providing its readers with the same quality of life they would have without a focus on health and getting fit.

3.3 Methods of analysis

In this study I aim to do a content analysis. My goal is to discover how bodies are represented in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines and how the content of the two magazines can have the power to both ease and strengthen body-related dissatisfaction. Both magazines wish to build a picture of the perfect body as something worth pursuing. They work on the task with all their content categories ranging from editor's letters to exercise programmes and more scientific health articles. That is why this thesis is interested in the magazines in general instead of solely focusing on a single type of content.

Also, I wish to underline how magazines' messages can result in opposite outcomes. For instance, encouragement to restrict calories may lead to a reader restricting calories in order to look better and another reader doing the same in order to feel better. This visible issue in magazine content is the reason why I have chosen to study my data with the help of Aubrey's (2010) ideas on health magazine message framing as well as Ballentine's (2005) idea of

magazines both making and unmaking body problems. The two methods will direct my data collection, help me analyse my findings and highlight the potential mixed messages in the content of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines.

As stated, this thesis will benefit from Aubrey's framing categories, which she has derived from Scheufele's (1999, as cited in Aubrey 2010: 54) idea of the media making certain elements more salient while possibly hiding others. Aubrey's categories are appearance, health, body competence, weight loss and miscellaneous.

With the help of Aubrey's categories, the first phase of the analysis consisted of a systematic search of magazine content that highlighted these categories. It soon became obvious that a majority of the data could easily fit into more than one category. Appearance was by far the most prominent category of the data and therefore it was treated as a primary category for excerpts that possessed characteristics for several categories. The versatile nature of the data was also the reason why the miscellaneous category was omitted in my analysis. As all the data could be linked into at least one of the four categories mentioned, typical and recurrent ways of body representation started to emerge quickly. The first process of data collection notably benefitted my second research question as well, but the data was studied a second time so that necessary attention could be paid on the different content types, too. In other words, it was inevitable to study the data for a second time in order to pay sufficient attention to magazine content both on the level of words and sentences as well as on a broader level.

The purpose of the appearance category is to highlight the magazines' interest in both current and desired appearances of their readership (Aubrey 2010: 56). There are still strict expectations and requirements on appearance, and this category will help to underline that. Aubrey has studied women's magazines, but the same pressure of fitting into a certain model of the ideal person is present in men, too (e.g. Jung 2011). Weight loss, although used as a separate category, is also strongly tied to appearances, as one of the most common weight loss advice given by magazines is how to lose the last remaining excess kilos. Also, weight loss frames are often focused on improving one's nutrition in order to look good instead of feeling good, and this way of prioritising makes the frames appearance-centric as well as weight loss -focused (Aubrey 2010: 56).

As health magazines often are highly focused on appearance, it is vital to bring attention to actual health messages as well. Aubrey (2010: 56) points out, that although health magazines should be extremely interested in improving the health of their readership, the health messages in the magazines' content are carefully framed to signal warnings and the need to protect oneself. In other words, if a health magazine is sending strongly health-focused messages, they will be about protecting oneself from winter colds or educating the readership on the correct, safe use of health supplements.

The fourth framing category this thesis benefits from is body competence. Although being linked to appearances, body competence can be argued to stand alone as a category. If the category of appearance focuses on how one should proceed in the pursuit of the perfect appearance, body competence takes the focus away from aesthetics. Body competence frames tell what somebody can do and achieve with their body.

Another goal of this thesis is to shed more light on how body problems may be created by magazines. In this task, Ballentine's (2015) ideas of making and unmaking body problems are essential. Making of body problems is the magazine's process of strengthening the need to become the ideal person instead of being satisfied with the status quo. In other words, making body problems is to underline that something in a body is problematic and thus requiring instant improvement (Ballentine 2015: 290-291). Unmaking body problems, on the other hand, focuses on advice on how to remove the bodily woes instead of just being in agony about them. Involving these two processes to my study is relevant, because both strategies are employed by both magazines. Also, it will be beneficial for this study to reveal what kinds of broad content choices affect the magazine and its voice on the topic of bodies.

To summarize, this study will be a mix of conventional and directed content analysis. In the case of my first research question, Aubrey's media frames will guide my observations of the data. In this task directed content analysis will be useful, as it will aid me in my task of investigating what kinds of content the magazines use to represent bodies. Involving Aubrey's categories into the analysis will bring the necessary precision to the analysis. However, in the case of my second research question, less restricted content analysis will be better. Ballentine already gives a detailed explanation of how magazines make and unmake body problems with their content choices and here my task is to compare the findings to the content of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*.

4 ANALYSIS

Women's Health and *Men's Health* are leading brands in the world of health and fitness. Both magazines guide their readers on how to avoid the hurdles of busy life and reach the ultimate state of health. Becoming one's fittest self is often portrayed as the best way of leading one's life. The content of the two magazines is relatively similar, which is explained by their field as well as the fact that they are both published under the same brand umbrella. The ages of people featured in the magazines go from early twenties to early fifties, with the majority of people featured being in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties. As the magazines are published for the British audience, they address many topics well-known in the United Kingdom, such as commuting and pubs. Studying two magazines directed at the same nation provides the researcher with a fascinating window to the thoughts and opinions of a nation and gives one the chance to see what kind of different expectations are set for men and women.

4.1 Appearance

The main motivation for both *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines is to provide their readership with inspiring role models from whom they can learn and motivational content that will guide the readers on their way towards optimal health. Although both magazines are categorised as health magazines, their main point of view is often appearances. In this section, I will analyse the ways *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* use the perspective of appearance in building the perfect body.

The view of *Women's Health* on appearance

Example 1

The workout and mindset that built my body (*Women's Health*, January-February 2018, one of the cover headlines)

Women's Health is highly dependent on famous faces as a way of boosting its sales and inspiring its readers. Example 1, which is used to highlight a cover story about actress Gemma Atkinson, is an excellent example of the importance of recognisable cover stars to the magazine. The women chosen to appear in the cover of the magazine need to adhere to the magazine's values, in other words be healthy, beautiful, fit and have the right body type, too.

The woman on the cover usually gets a long interview in the issue, with a stylish photo shoot and usually an exercise feature as well, so the impact of the women is significant.

The wording of Example 1, and the use of the first person singular in general, cleverly bring out one of the key messages of the magazine: British women know the cover stars of *Women's Health* already and it is their looks, among other factors, that have made them famous. Cover headlines are usually a miniature version of the magazine's message and a summary of its values, but the headline seen in Example 1 also captures the essence of the magazine: these people are desirable, and we as a magazine make their lifestyle more achievable to the general public. In other words, a cover star's body is the body the readers wish to pursue for themselves.

Cover stars are one of the most significant appearance features in *Women's Health*. The data of this study consists of four *Women's Health* issues, and all four cover stars are wearing two-piece swimsuits in order to showcase their bodies. However, it must not be ignored that the person on the cover is not chosen solely due to her body. *Women's Health* cover stars need to be recognisable for something current as well, as a famous cover star can attract readers that might not otherwise buy the magazine. In November 2017 issue of the magazine, the cover star is actress Michelle Keegan. In December 2017 the cover star is pop star Mollie King and in the January-February 2018 double issue the cover star is Gemma Atkinson, who is also an actress. Personal trainer Alice Liveing, the cover star for the March 2018 issue of *Women's Health*, is the only fitness star of the data.

Keegan, King, Atkinson and Liveing all get a lengthy interview in their issues of *Women's Health*. All four interviews offer interesting glimpses on the magazine's attitude toward bodies. Firstly, there is an interesting juxtaposition between the cover stars' bodies and their eating habits. Michelle Keegan, for instance, is described a fast food fan who is "wolfin' down food" (Unwin 2017a: 31), a pursuit that clashes strongly with the magazine's idea of women eating smart portions of healthy food. In the Mollie King interview, there is also an interesting mention of the link between eating and appearance. King is told to be eating chocolate and popcorn while being interviewed, but she still remains "dewy of skin, blonde of hair" (Unwin 2017b: 40). In the case of Gemma Atkinson, there is a brief mention of her penchant for Toblerone chocolate. Alice Liveing is not mentioned to have a love of unhealthy foods, but her take on alcohol is more lenient than that of the other three cover stars, whose use of alcohol is said to be rare.

All in all, *Women's Health* has an interesting approach to food and drink and their link to desirable bodies. Throughout of the magazine, it is underlined that clean eating and rare use of alcohol are desirable qualities in a woman and that unhealthy eating will guide a person away from having a socially acceptable body type, in other words, being relatively small and lean. That is why it is surprising that the cover star interviews question this phenomenon and show that the cover stars can both indulge and look impeccable. "Fat Burner's Diary", the magazine's recurring weight loss story segment, is the instance where the gap between acceptable and unacceptable diets becomes the clearest. However, it can be argued that descriptions of eating habits serve a different purpose in the cover star interviews. While famous women are brought closer to the readership of the magazine and made more relatable by the descriptions of their love of chips and a hamburger, the juxtaposition between the cover stars' appearance and their love of unhealthy food items sends mixed messages to the readers of *Women's Health*.

The second point of interest in the *Women's Health* cover stories appearance-wise is the way the four women are described in general. In the case of Michelle Keegan, the idea of body dissatisfaction is strongly present. This is seen, for instance, in Example 2, which is lifted off context as a quotation in the interview:

Example 2

When I'm on set filming, I try to squeeze in press-ups and situps between scenes (Unwin 2017a: 32)

Michelle Keegan's small frame is discussed throughout her *Women's Health* interview. When she mentions having gained weight, the dismissive reply of the reporter is "Where? Your hair?" (Unwin 2017a: 32). Keegan is mentioned to be anxious over not being able to exercise enough, as Example 2 shows. Example 2 is also joined with the reporter's remark "you could bounce a kettlebell off that stomach" (Unwin 2017a: 32), creating an interesting juxtaposition. While Keegan is pictured to be someone who can eat anything and still look flawless, the inadequacy created by societal demands is still strongly present. In other words, she is simultaneously the ideal and not enough. This idea is strengthened by another remark of the reporter's: Keegan is reported to have rated her own body only seven out of ten, and when asked about the comment, she is asked to explain whether her judgement of herself is "healthy self-deprecation or something deeper" (Unwin 2017a: 35), hinting that being hard on oneself is a prerequisite for good looks.

Example 3

[Mollie King is] goofier than most very pretty girls allow themselves to be (Unwin 2017b: 40).

Mollie King, the cover girl for the December 2017 issue of *Women's Health*, is interviewed in a very similar style to Michelle Keegan. The King interview has two points of interest concerning appearance. Firstly, the interview is interesting due to its mix of body doubts and body positivity. King herself calls for body positivity but is still reported to have panicked about being in the *Women's Health* cover and having therefore the urge to do emergency sit-ups to improve her figure. Secondly, the interview partly has a traditional approach to the role of the woman, as seen in Example 3. Enforcing the idea that goofiness and beauty might still rule each other out in the 21st century is a tool that makes gender stereotypes even stronger and builds an unnecessary border to guide the appearance of females. It is also a sign of the beauty myth (Wolf 1991) being strongly in place, guarding the status quo.

Example 4

There's this thing Gemma Atkinson does right after every shot. She scrunches her face, pulling her mouth to one side like a child thinking about Sherbet Dib Dabs, bites the other corner of it, then looks out, away from the room, almost like she's embarrassed. Click-click, flash-flash, scrunch. It's like she's wincing at the idea of being sexy.

Christ, is Gemma Atkinson sexy. Five foot nine inches in her stocking feet (7ft-odd with the hair and heels we've given her), emerging from the cleverly art-directed shadows of the studio floor, she looks like the Pixar version of an Amazonian princess. She's what's known in the business as a "knockout" (Unwin 2018a: 28)

Gemma Atkinson's interview differs greatly from those of her two predecessors, as her "total disregard for what other people think or her" (Unwin 2018a: 26) is a strong contrast to Keegan and King's highlighted insecurities. The most significant difference setting the Atkinson interview apart from the other *Women's Health* cover star interviews is its overt focus on being sexy. Example 4 consists of the opening lines of the interview and highlights in detail the way a woman is treated in the media. The decision of pairing the idea of Atkinson not liking the idea of being sexy with the affirmation of her being sexy is problematic and descriptions such as "in her stocking feet" and "a knockout" offer examples of the traditional feminine ideals in place.

In addition to the slightly problematic stance on being sexy, the Gemma Atkinson interview provides a fresh point of view on female body ideals. According to the status quo, a western woman should strive to be calm and petite. Comparing an actress to an Amazonian princess, as seen in Example 4, is therefore an interesting decision, as Amazonian princesses are famous for being strong and fierce warriors, and those qualities are seldom linked to female celebrities. All in all, traditional sexism and the reference to action heroes in the same paragraph underlines the complexity of the media's attitudes towards women.

Example 5

I said to my mum the other day,” It’d be nice to have a fella”. Then the day after, I was like “I’m so glad I’m on my own!” Which sees like a bit of a waste of celebrity, hair that never knowingly doesn’t look like it just stepped out of a salon and legs longer than the A1. (Unwin 2018a: 31)

Also, as Example 5 shows, the Atkinson interview plays with the stereotypical belief that good-looking women would automatically be in relationships, confirming Wolf’s (1991) view that women are required to be beautiful and men to pursue beauty. Although Atkinson herself discusses body positivity throughout the interview, the reporter continues with the more sexist angle of Example 4, hinting to a period of Atkinson’s career when she was photographed “for all the right lads’ mags” (Unwin 2018a: 28) and describes her outfit to be “itsy-bitsy” (Unwin 2018a: 28). In the post #MeToo-era, these kinds of language choices may cause problems.

Interestingly, the Alice Liveing interview of the March 2018 issue of *Women’s Health* is less demanding appearance-wise, but it still possesses certain key characteristics of a *Women’s Health* cover story. Firstly, Liveing is described to be “in amazing shape” (Unwin 2018b: 30) that is “synonymous with the UK wellness scene” (Unwin 2018b: 32). Secondly, there is an element of the overt focus on sexiness with the mention of her personal training client list being “as long as the thigh-high boots we’ve dressed her in” (Unwin 2018b: 32). Although there are several mentions of Liveing’s career accomplishments and her wish of guiding women’s attention from the aesthetics perks of exercise to those of achievements, the focus on appearance is nevertheless equally there. This need to mix appearance-related comments into arguments about achievements is interesting as it also confirms the presence of traditional gender roles in society. In other words, it could be argued that if a woman is successful, her success needs to be explained by her looks.

In addition to the famous women portrayed on its covers and in other marketing material, *Women's Health* focuses on the appearance of its readers as well. Each issue entails a reader transformation story titled "Fat Burner's Diary", which is an interesting point of view on appearance. While the cover interviews also bring out the apparent unconfident moments of women publicly judged as extremely desirable, these stories of ordinary women bring out the black and white idea of acceptable bodies and showcase the society's need of categorising bodies solely into good and bad. With the help of before and after photos, *Women's Health* highlights the two possible lives; there is the life one should lead and the life one should avoid. Although clean eating and increased exercise have a multitude of health benefits, the decision made with the "Fat Burner's Diary" segment is to focus on the appearance-enhancement side of the transformations. Focusing on a healthier life is not enough, if one can focus on becoming more socially acceptable as well. The two outcomes do not rule each other out, but still it is interesting to discover that the magazine chooses to greatly emphasise the effect a better appearance has on one's social life and career.

The view of *Men's Health* on appearance

Men's Health also believes in the marketing power of its cover stars. All four cover photos emphasise strength, but interestingly, especially in contrast to *Women's Health* swimsuit covers, only one *Men's Health* cover star of the data is shirtless. Another feature worth noting in *Men's Health* cover stars is that only two of the four cover stars of the data are famous. Actor Chris Hemsworth is on the cover of the November 2017 issue with fellow actor Henry Cavill as his successor in the December 2017 issue. Also, it must be noted that while Hemsworth and Cavill both get a lengthy interview in their issue of *Men's Health*, the focus of the interview is on their success in general.

Example 6

After the ad premieres, Hemsworth strides into the room, tall, tanned and hypertrophied; like a sun god surrounded by scrawny, whey-faced worshippers, his radiant glow amplified by the brilliant white shirt straining to contain his physique. Even without the microphone, his voice booms like thunder. He is, by any objective standard, a big man (Millar 2017a: 54)

Example 6 offers good insight into the body attitudes of *Men's Health*: although the magazine is willing to use hyperbolic comparisons both as a rhetorical device and a source of fun, the attitude of the magazine is still clear: there are fit men and then there are unfit men dreaming

of rising into the more respectable category of fitness. Also, more negative connotations are used when discussing men who differ from the *Men's Health* ideal while men closer to the ideal get either positive or neutral descriptions.

In general, the language in which appearance is discussed in *Men's Health* is an interesting mix of male banter and more feminine words of admiration. While Chris Hemsworth is mentioned to have a “celestial body” (Millar 2017a: 56), a person who has not trained in the smart manner advocated by the magazine, is a “tunnel-visioned meathead” (Masoliver 2018b: 49). The language is clear in pointing out that while appearance is an important factor in a man’s life, it has strict criteria. There is also an ironic feel to all appearance-related admiration in the magazine, and Example 6 is an excellent example on this.

Physique is one of the most used marketing tools in *Men's Health*. On the cover of the November issue, there is a headline that challenges readers to “Build arms like this”, referring to Hemsworth on the cover. The issue plays with Hemsworth’s most recognisable role as the mighty god Thor in the Marvel action film franchise, advertising Hemsworth’s Thor workout as a the one that will create “all-mighty strength” (Millar 2017a: 59). Same strategy is used in the December issue, where Henry Cavill, the cover star of the magazine, is called by his most famous film role, Superman. Benefitting from both Thor and Superman as language choices clearly tells that the importance of looking strong is one of the most important goals of the magazine. Although Thor and Superman are fictional parts of superhero film franchises, they still portray two key characteristics of an ideal man: they both are successful and strong.

In comparison to *Women's Health*, it is surprising to see how little time *Men's Health* uses to discuss the topic of appearance. The cover star interviews focus on the stars’ training, work and life in general instead of paying a great deal of attention on how they have created their bodies. The reader transformation story, which is often a recurring part of a health magazine, is absent and in its place, there is a “How I built my body” segment that focuses solely on athletes without any transformation factor. Readers’ voices appear in the question and answer columns of the magazine, but otherwise it is the experts who rule the stage. Appearance is nevertheless constantly present in the content of *Men's Health*, affecting article perspectives, advertisements and language choices in general.

One part of the magazine where the importance of one's appearance is firmly present is the "Blood, sweat and tears" transformation feature of the January-February 2018 issue. Interestingly, the transformation feature is framed as an initiation rite instead of a necessary January activity. The feature follows five *Men's Health* staff members' journeys as they take part in the magazine's many exercise programmes.

Example 7

There were times when you'd think to yourself, "I can't go to another training session, I can't get up this early, I just can't do this". In those situations, the thing that used to get me fired up was calling to mind an idiot who used to bully me at school. I was a tiny kid; he was a big fat brute. I remember thinking, "Fuck you, [name removed], I'm going to be on the cover of Men's Health. And it kept me going". (Masoliver 2018b: 50).

Example 7 offers interesting insight on the *Men's Health* attitude to one's appearance. Firstly, there is the gap between being small and being large: size is a sign of power. From the point of view of traditional body ideals, this is not a surprise: while women are desperate to get smaller, men are looking for ways to appear larger. Secondly, the excerpt also explains the reason why *Men's Health* does not solely rely on famous people as its cover stars. Members of the editorial staff of the magazine are given the challenge of proving that the *Men's Health* exercise programmes truly work. Once the gruelling regime has been completed, the staff member faces the possibility of having his own *Men's Health* cover. Also, Example 7 shows how the main message of *Men's Health* is that the individual needs to find motivation from within and to focus on accomplishing greatness instead of merely reaching for the perfect body. In other words, the project is prioritised over its results. The cover star need not be famous, because the reason why he is valued and chosen for the cover is not his fame but the project he has successfully done.

Example 8

I was told that I had the metabolism of a 40-year old. I was only 25. (Masoliver 2018b: 49)

As seen in Example 8, an appearance factor that is strongly present in *Men's Health* is ageing. As the purpose of the magazine is to provide help with being and staying active, ageing is viewed to be an extremely scary phenomenon. March 2018 issue promotes "39 tricks to put ageing on ice" on its cover, emphasising the importance of the topic to the readers of the magazine. Elsewhere in the magazine, the fear of looking like one's father is clearly present.

According to a *Men's Health US* staff member who, along with his father, takes part in a set of tests in the March 2018 issue, “left unchecked, the dadbod can take hold sooner than you think” (Kita & Kita 2018: 59). The comment and the magazine’s general use of the word “dadbod” confirms the magazine staff and the readers’ dread of losing the young, strong body and being able to accomplish less. Together with general age-related content, the constant testosterone coverage of *Men's Health* proves that the topic of ageing is of extreme importance to the *Men's Health* readership.

4.2 Weight loss

The main reason why the data of this study consists of magazines from the turn of the year is the western society’s persistent urge to make lifestyle changes and especially lose weight in the beginning of a new year as a New Year’s resolution. It can be argued that if that idea of having to lose weight in January is rooted into the minds of the general public, one of the culprits is media coverage. *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* are no exceptions, as both magazines have a multitude of content that is targeted towards weight loss. In this section, I will go through the magazines’ weight loss messages.

The view of *Women's Health* on weight loss

In *Women's Health*, there is a reader transformation story called “Fat Burner’s Diary” in every issue. The segment is divided into three subsections titled “Then”, “How” and “Now”. In other words, it is a straightforward report of how a reader has transformed her life and is now smaller and happier. The transformation effect is strengthened with an unflattering before photo and a flattering after photo, together with details of how much weight has been lost.

Example 9

I'd always been a “big kid”, but when I hit secondary school, the pressure to lose my puppy fat became toxic (Mitchell 2017b: 83)

“Fat Burner’s Diary”, like Example 9 showcases, is an interesting perspective on our society’s body requirements. Although it is also an opportunity to end body myths, it is simultaneously a chance to enhance them. With the “Then”, “How”, “Now” progression it is clear to see how the women interviewed have benefitted from losing weight but still the segment supports the

strict beauty ideal of the media: one must be able to fit in or change profoundly to do so. As seen in Example 9, being larger than everyone else is shown to be an extremely painful experience. Moreover, there is trouble in the term “puppy fat”, too. The term is interesting, as it suggests that until one reaches a certain, still young age, fat can be somewhat acceptable, but after that it is not. Another interesting word choice is “toxic”, the use of which in its part underlines societal views on bodies and the detrimental consequences the pressure to conform to societal ideals may have.

Another feature of *Women’s Health* that has a strong weight loss angle is its January transformation special, where three staff members are given the challenge of participating in a 12-week transformation programme. All three women are of healthy weight in the beginning of their transformation process but still their weights and body fat percentages are carefully followed in order to give the readers an idea of the actual transformations taking place. All in all, the use of the word “transform” is a risky choice by the magazine. As the word is used in a similar manner to describe both an overweight person losing weight and reaching a healthy weight by doing significant lifestyle changes as well as a person of a healthy weight making small changes in order to become even more leaner it risks its rhetorical force. In other words, it dims the idea of a transformation by treating small and significant changes equally.

A third topic of interest from the perspective of weight loss is Christmas. Christmas is seen as a threat to one’s figure, and therefore *Women’s Health* provides a myriad of advice on how to survive the festivities without major sacrifices. For example, the December issue of the magazine provides information on how to make Christmas food less calorific and how to squeeze exercise into busy December schedules. In other words, Christmas is one of the times where the ethos of the beauty myth (Wolf 1991) becomes the clearest as magazines’ Christmas coverage signals the unrealistic societal beauty standards to which women need to adapt. The weeks leading to Christmas are to be spent making sure that one stays on track, and the weeks following the festivities searching for the most suitable weight loss method. For instance, the cover of the January issue of *Women’s Health* claims that the magazine possesses “Best weight-loss advice ever. Fact”. That particular line on the cover of the magazine with its addition of “Fact.” for emphasis highlights the societal pressure of January remarkably well, as many pursue the most effective weight loss scheme at that time. Advertising for the best weight loss tips would therefore be an extremely beneficial choice financially.

Example 10

Think you can't maintain your goals over the holiday season? Think again. (Contents 2017: 16)

As seen in Example 10, Christmas preparations can also act as a call for arms. The fight against fat is a state of mind from which one cannot take a break. Societal expectations guide our holidaying, and one of those expectations is excess eating combined with the lack of exercise. However, it must be noted that while this is not a universal truth, it is treated as such for marketing purposes. Forgetting this makes it easy for magazines to create more body problems by increasing levels of body dissatisfaction in readers. The use of “Think again.”, however, is interesting, as it provides a softer perspective on the message, hinting that while the message may scare readers as they are reminded of Christmas dinners and the lack of exercise, “Think again.” reveals that this particular magazine will stop the inevitable Christmas chaos by providing useful advice and in this task it works in a similar manner to “Best weight-loss advice ever. Fact”.

Everyone is expected to lose control at Christmas, and even the “What happens when...” question column in the December issue of *Women’s Health* is about binge eating at Christmas. Instead of making bingeing optional, the use of *when*, though a part of the permanent headline of the segment, makes it almost obligatory. Although the Christmas content of *Women’s Health* is very encouraging in terms of inviting readers to join the battle against fat, showing Christmas as a holiday of restriction and bingeing has a multitude of negative consequences as well, the most significant of them being demonising fat.

The view of *Men’s Health* on weight loss

Men’s Health does not have a recurring reader transformation story, but its content clearly shows the need for removing excess fat, too. Men are generally judged by what they have accomplished instead of their body fat percentages, and that phenomenon is visible in the content of *Men’s Health*. Removing excess fat is seen as an accomplishment done in order to feel healthier instead of a way of improving one’s appearance. Weight discussion is absent from the cover star interviews, and the often weight-obsessed January is greeted with a story titled “Why your weight does not matter” (Masoliver 2018a: 34), where it is admitted that although many wish to change after Christmas, performance should always be the priority. “Why your weight does not matter” emphasises the magazine’s message by pointing out that obsessing

over one's weight and overanalysing one's diet and exercise regimes will in the end harm one's exercise goals.

Fat is nevertheless seen as an enemy in *Men's Health*, but instead of being distracted with panic, the magazine advises its readers to cleverly combat it. It is interesting to notice that Christmas panic is practically absent from *Men's Health*. Instead, the December issue of the magazine acknowledges Christmas as a heavy party season and offers tips on stoking one's metabolism and getting weight loss results while simultaneously advocating for occasional days of relaxation. All in all, the mood in the fight against fat, is relatively calm in *Men's Health*. There is a multitude of tips on cutting excess fat, but weight loss content is always characterised with the fact that fat is always cut in favour of muscle gain and not in favour of becoming smaller.

Example 11

Harness the art of weight-loss (Dessent-Jackson & Wrench 2018: 82)

In order to truly understand fat loss, *Men's Health* staff members go through one of the magazine's exercise plans and therefore learn their employer's standpoint in the fight against fat. Moreover, the magazine takes a scientific approach on fat loss, underlining the importance of "scientific tinkering" (Dessent-Jackson & Wrench 2018: 82) on losing weight. Like Example 11 shows, burning fat is a set of actions. The March 2018 issue of the magazine is particularly interested in the effects of science on weight: one's biology can be hijacked, and fat loss genes altered, if one has learned enough to do so. Gaining knowledge is the key to, in Example 11's words, harness one's weight loss project. It is essential for *Men's Health* to voice that fat should not be the sole focus of one's life; rewiring one's brain to progress with fat loss automatically is an attitude that is typical to the magazine.

The weight loss vocabulary used by *Men's Health* highlights the magazine's weight loss attitude well: verbs like detonate, demolish, harness and incinerate are colourfully describing how weight loss is simply about taking action and following a set of rules.

Example 12

Fire on all cylinders: Stoke your metabolism and cash in on effortless weightloss, even in the throes of a heavy party season (Evans 2017: 41)

Example 12 shows that weight loss is a project and it should be met with the necessary dedication. If one does it right, weight loss can be easy. In other words, the perspective and the clever vocabulary shown in Example 12 emphasise the fact that the reader himself is the most important actor of his weight loss journey. Example 12 also underlines the general opinion of *Men's Health* well: losing weight should not be too important, so by making the right arrangements, weight loss can be made simple. In addition, Example 12 offers proof of the magazine's attitude to Christmas: instead of stating that all partying is forbidden, *Men's Health* provides its readers with tips on how to combine the need to be social with taking care of one's weight loss. Panic is replaced with careful planning on how to both enjoy oneself and to keep following one's fitness dreams.

In conclusion, it is interesting to notice how masculinity is emphasised even in the context of weight loss. Instead of just stating that readers need to burn fat, *Men's Health* employs a more colourful, action film -like vocabulary. Word choices are essential in creating the magazine's overall message and in the case of *Men's Health* it is clear that the message is about taking action. The action film -style vocabulary is present in the cover of the magazine as well, with the January-February 2018 cover promising moves that "hit flab where it hurts". This line together with *Men's Health*'s penchant for action-filled verbs like detonate and demolish emphasise the idea of weight loss as a fight and Example 11's portrayal of the "throes of a heavy party season" is one example of the obstacles in the reader's way.

4.3 Health

Like their titles suggest, *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* are magazines with a primary mission of providing their readership with advice on how to become their fittest selves. However, content with a clear health angle is a minority in both magazines. Health content is often framed as appearance content and that is why the many points *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* make on health alone can easily be unnoticed. In this section of my thesis, I will discuss magazine content that is produced primarily from a health point of view.

One particular type of health content present in both magazines is nutrition advice. Every issue includes a myriad of recipes and tips on making healthy food a part of life. The two magazines, *Men's Health* in particular, take into account the busy lifestyles of their readers and therefore offer recipes for meals one can eat as a quick work lunch or a weekday dinner. *Men's Health*

has even named its quick recipes “microwave muscle meals”. All in all, prepping one’s meals is shown as a strong requirement for those wishing to pursue true health and fitness in both *Women’s Health* and *Men’s Health*.

Whereas *Men’s Health* offers more detailed cooking tips, *Women’s Health* is interested in food diaries and has a segment called “My week on a plate” in all issues. The purpose of the segment is to interview healthy eaters from the point of view of what they eat in a week and simultaneously inspire readers to make healthier choices. The “My week on a plate” segments of the data include food diaries from a doctor, a fitness personality, a Paralympic champion and a vlogger. All four women provide information on their meals and mealtimes and share details of their lives and exercise schedules, too. At the end of each “My week on a plate” segment is a nutritionist’s verdict on the food diary. The verdicts are mainly positive, but all offer tips for further diet improvements. The glimpses of the women’s lives and the nutritionist’s advice will both guide the reader towards a healthier life.

In *Men’s Health*, there is a focus on making unhealthy favourites less unhealthy, so that readers could continue enjoying their favourites without sacrificing their healthy life goals. The magazine’s food feature, titled “The health snob’s guide to”, even addresses hangover food. It is interesting that a health magazine offers detailed information on how to survive excess drinking, but as the purpose of *Men’s Health* is to introduce readers to hangover food where the amount of fat, salt and bad carbohydrates is controlled, including hangover food as a part of the magazine’s food content starts to make sense. After all, it supports the main message of *Men’s Health* and underlines the importance of balance.

A second interesting health topic present in both magazines is body positivity. Mollie King, the cover star of the November 2017 issue of *Women’s Health*, is stated to wish that everyone could learn to love themselves as they are, but her wish is joined with Example 13, the reporter’s remark of her being displeased with her appearance. The excerpt makes her feel relatable, but also sends mixed messages, making readers feel that if a magazine cover star does not fully love herself, they cannot do so either.

Example 13

Back to those hang-ups, Mollie’s got a list longer than all our arms of the bits she doesn’t like and would love to improve or replace (Unwin 2017b: 41)

In addition, in the January–February 2018 issue, cover girl Gemma Atkinson is quoted to find *Women's Health* inspiring due to the magazine's coverage of women of all shapes and sizes. This is an interesting statement, because a majority of women portrayed in the magazines of this study's data are thin or athletic Caucasian women, who also belong to the magazine's target audience bracket of women between 25 and 35 years of age. Praising diversity in a magazine with a narrow idea of appearance is an interesting editorial choice.

Surprisingly, *Men's Health* is a more straightforward advocate of body positivity. In its January–February issue there is an article on how performance should always be prioritised over one's weight and appearance. Also, in the cover star interviews, there is strong emphasis on becoming an all-around good person instead of solely focusing on one's appearance. Compared to *Women's Health*, the difference is significant: while *Women's Health* cover interviews focus on the cover star's appearance and what she has achieved with her appearance and "Fat Burner's Diary" focuses on positive changes created by weight loss in general, *Men's Health* gives appearance a significantly smaller stage. In *Men's Health*, the focus is on life in general and what the person in question has achieved and can achieve by leading an active life. Appearance is an advantage but succeeding in one's job and being a good friend, father and husband remain more important.

A third important health factor in the data is the attitude towards ageing. Interestingly, the topic of ageing does not really appear in the *Women's Health* issues of the data apart from a few advertisements, but it is one of the most significant concerns in *Men's Health*. *Men's Health* wants to be profiled to cover health at every age, and its content on ageing fits this purpose well. The magazine is very interested in the role of testosterone, and hormonal issues are discussed both in the November 2017 issue as well as the January–February 2018 issue of the magazine. Hormones and their impact on health and fitness is something that is closely monitored and seen to interest readers. That is why the magazine is taking a scientific stand on the effect of ageing and testosterone on training and activity levels in general. Ageing, after all, stops a man from being as active as he would like to be. By having the opportunity to at least affect, if not slow down ageing, the process of growing old will be made less scary.

In discussing health, one cannot ignore the importance of mental health in the overall well-being. *Women's Health* addresses the topic of mental health by calling its December 2017 issue *The Mind Issue*. In the issue, there is a mental health feature with candid interviews from both

famous and ordinary women. The names, photos and diagnoses of the women are published together with their experiences with life with a mental health condition. One of the most noteworthy stories of the feature is that of Claire Sanderson, the editor of *Women's Health*, who discusses her experiences with depression and anxiety. The feature includes stories from well-known media personalities, writers, medical professionals as well as women in business and politics. The versatile nature of the feature is important, as it breaks barriers around mental health and showcases that anyone can be affected. Interestingly, only a small minority of the women interviewed suffer or have suffered from an eating disorder or a body dysmorphic disorder. Eating disorders in general are seldom present in the *Women's Health* issues of the data. The only exception is the introduction of diabulimia, an eating disorder of diabetes sufferers.

Surprisingly, *Men's Health* is very willing to discuss mental health issues. In the transformation feature of the magazine's January-February 2018 issue, staff members speak candidly about the mental effects of strict diets and how mentally insufferable dieting can really be.

Example 14

Admittedly, I started taking myself too seriously, in terms of the way I looked. I was awful to the girl I was going out with at the time. I became really judgemental about her food choices (Masoliver 2018b: 50)

Example 15

My wife appreciated the physical changes in my body, but fundamentally I think it's difficult to be around somebody who's so self-obsessed (Masoliver 2018b: 50)

"Blood, Sweat and Tears", the transformation feature of the January-February 2018 issue of *Men's Health* follows five men who have "lived, breathed and lifted" (Masoliver 2018b: 46) according to the magazine's exercise programmes. Example 14 and Example 15 represent two of them. Throughout the feature, it is clear to see that the project these men undertook was not without its difficulties. The men admit feelings of body inadequacy and the struggle of having to control one's life meticulously. Admitting that relationships, sexual lives and work motivation have all suffered due to a *Men's Health* exercise programme is a bold move. However, the impact of admitting one's self-obsession on the magazine's main message of balance is vital. Looking good is desirable, but as Examples 14 and 15 show, taking oneself too seriously due to a strict diet may damage other areas of one's life.

4.4 Body competence

Women's Health and *Men's Health* are both fascinated by the capabilities of a fit person. In the following section, I will investigate and discuss their views on body competence, in other words, the expectations of how a fit person should truly perform.

The view of *Women's Health* on body competence

Alice Liveing, the cover star of the March 2018 issue of *Women's Health*, is advocating for an accomplishment-focused attitude to females working out. Prioritising general health and well-being instead of aesthetics is shown as a relatively fresh idea, and its direct opposite can be found from the earlier *Women's Health* issues of the data. In Example 16, for instance, the cover star of the November 2017 issue, Michelle Keegan, is shown in a very aesthetics-dominant light. Oddly, she is simultaneously pictured to be in great shape and not enough. Not being satisfied with one's appearance being categorised as healthy self-deprecation is extremely dangerous, as it sends readers a false message of women having to be displeased with their appearance.

Example 16

I wonder how happy Michelle is with her body, the evidence in front of me suggesting it'll be a resounding “very”. “I’d say seven out of 10. If I’m training, maybe an eight”. Is that just healthy self-deprecation, or something deeper? (Unwin 2017a: 35)

The media is focused on portraying women as beautiful instead of showcasing their capabilities. The Gemma Atkinson interview in the January-February 2018 issue has an interesting exception to this rule, as her independence and strength are highlighted alongside her good looks.

Example 17

Gemma Atkinson. Strong independent woman, with thighs that could crush an orchard. “Xena Warrior Princess!” she grins, when I ask who her role model is, expecting someone much more bland and, well, real. “My mum bought me the DVD boxset for my birthday. I’ve always loved strong, athletic women” (Unwin 2018a: 31).

Although it is a compliment on Atkinson's strength, the wording of Example 17 is surprisingly negative. Strength is a word seldom used to describe women, and orchard-crushing thighs is a particularly interesting choice of words, since it draws the attention to Atkinson's size instead of complimenting her strength. So, it can be argued that Example 17, in both the way of describing Atkinson and the way of dismissing her strong role model, illustrates the other perspective on body competence well: there is a persistent idea in society that women can be too powerful and too muscular, and using negative connotations when discussing female strength and achievements is a vital part of this phenomenon.

All in all, it can be argued that content specifically framed as body competence content is scarce in *Women's Health*. The magazine focuses on how one may look and feel with the help of exercise, but the accomplishments of women are not as frequently showcased. For instance, all cover stars of the data are successful in their field, but their accomplishments cannot be looked without including their appearance in the conversation, too. Another example is that building muscle is often framed to be a side-product of a weight loss project. Also, it must be noted that when muscles are highlighted in *Women's Health*, the muscle group in question is usually abs or glutes. A focus on biceps, a muscle group often attached to ideas of strength, is rare.

The view of *Men's Health* on body competence

Men's Health is a strong advocate of accomplishments. Strength is one of the core elements of the magazine, which can be seen, for instance, in the November 2017 issue, where a workout is promised to create "all-mighty strength" (Millar 2017a: 59). Body competence is also a useful marketing device; for example, both famous cover stars of the data, Chris Hemsworth and Henry Cavill, benefit from their most famous film roles, too. Hemsworth has played the Norse god Thor and Cavill has played Superman, and therefore these roles and what they symbolise are carried throughout their *Men's Health* issues. The November 2017 cover promises "Chris Hemsworth's Thor workout!", while the December 2017 states "Get Henry Cavill's Superman body plan!". The interviews of Hemsworth and Cavill are also filled with references to their roles, with the Cavill interview even having the title "The new adventures of Superman".

The Cavill interview is particularly interesting from the perspective of body competence, as it spends a considerable amount of time discussing martial arts. In Example 18 Cavill is quoted

to say he is happy to be talented at martial arts as it provides him with the opportunity of protecting himself and those around him. In other words, instead of prioritising aesthetics, one should focus on what one is able to do. Cavill's will of combining inevitable exercise with learning something new is a good example of the attitude of *Men's Health* in general: exercise is one of the ingredients of success.

Example 18

"It's handy to be handy", he says. "It's nice to be able to protect those around you, and yourself." And handily, martial arts training is also a kick-ass form of conditioning: "I like going to the gym, I do. But if I'm going to be sweating and breathing hard, I'd far prefer doing it while learning a skill, rather than just for the sake of seating and breathing hard." (Millar 2017b: 62)

According to *Men's Health*, an ideal man is one who sets goals and accomplishes them. Each issue of the magazine has a segment where an expert is brought in to coach how to perform a certain weight training movement with the correct form. The aim of these segments is to bring the reader a step closer to becoming an athlete. For instance, in the March 2018 issue, deadlifting is taught because deadlifts are "the anchor of every elite athlete's strength training" (Jennings 2018: 96).

Example 19

No one seeking real fitness resolves to be a skinny-fat dieter or a bloated bodybuilder, so if you're serious about success you need to take a holistic approach. Your health will benefit from striking a balance, so double down on your efforts to see proper results. (Cooper 2018 24).

It is a fact underlined in *Men's Health* in numerous occasions that instead of just training madly, one needs to train in a smart manner. Example 19 shows the magazine's idea of pursuing normality well: neither extreme is healthy, and training accomplishments are easily obtained if one stays in the middle of the workout spectrum. While the society in general spins a polarised idea of bodies, the attitude of *Men's Health* shows that there are grades of desirability among the desired body type, too. One needs to prioritise avoiding becoming a "tunnel-visioned meathead" (Masoliver 2018b: 49) and focus on having a normal life and accomplishing exercise goals simultaneously.

Example 20

You can't come to the gym and fuck about taking selfies and posting them, warns Gotting [expert interviewed]. Strongman training is awkward and without proper form and focus can cause injury. "Have fun, but

don't be the guy who spends more time finding the best lighting for a shot than he does mastering a lift" (Lane 2017b: 46)

As seen above in Example 19 and Example 20, *Men's Health* is a prolific campaigner for normality. Here the stereotypical gender roles are also highly visible, as Example 20 clearly brands taking a selfie as a feminine and unnecessary act. It is also a good example on the magazine preferring accomplishments over aesthetics. Overall, the magazine encourages its readers to limit distractions and set realistic exercise goals. The most important factor in gym accomplishments is one's own motivation. One's personal trainer may be "a walking set of abs" (Jenings 2018: 19), but most importantly, it is the trainee who needs to take his responsibilities into account and focus on training efficiently, scaling own expectations to what is realistic to them.

Although the frequency of body competence messages in the *Men's Health* issues of the data is surprisingly low, all excerpts support the traditional masculine idea of the perfect man. For example, in Example 20, there is a strong divide between working hard, which is considered to be the masculine way of acting and taking a mid-exercise selfie, which is branded as a feminine, and hence unnecessary act.

4.5 Making and unmaking of body problems

The purpose of the following section is to investigate the present data from the point of view of my second research question and thus discover how the content of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines both makes and unmakes body problems. Making of body problems refers to the act of constructing a body of desire and normalising certain characteristics as the ideal (Ballentine 2005: 290), whereas unmaking of body problems gives agency to the individual instead of solely believing the status quo of body ideals (Ballentine 2005: 292).

Making of body problems in *Women's Health*

The most significant maker of body problems in *Women's Health* is its cover. The cover is a key factor of a magazine's success as it can draw attention in newsstands, but in the case of body ideals, it serves another, yet extremely important, function. A cover is a summary of a

magazine's values, and it is therefore a means to showcase the perfect body and encourage readers to pursue it. As seen in the images below, all four covers of the data feature a thin and young Caucasian woman in a two-piece swimsuit. In addition to this, the desired characteristics of a woman are also emphasised in the cover headlines. For instance, one of the prominent headlines of the December 2017 cover of the magazine, calls out for "Strong, hot and sexy" as the theme for the upcoming holiday season. November 2017 issue of the magazine advertises a "Total body shred" and the January-February 2018 issue is even titled as The Transform issue, underlining the importance of reaching strict body goals.

Image 1: *Women's Health*,
November 2017

Image removed for copyright
reasons.

Image 2: *Women's Health*,
December 2017

Image removed for copyright
reasons.

Image 3: *Women's Health*,
January-February 2018

Image removed for copyright
reasons.

Image 4: *Women's Health*,
March 2018

Image removed for copyright
reasons.

In addition to the cover itself, the cover star interviews are also a way of encouraging readers to pursue a certain type of a body. The motivations of cover interviews are for introducing admirable women, revealing new details about already famous women and underlining how the celebrities in question have reached peak fitness. Also, the cover star interviews are also a way for the magazine to prioritise certain kind of bodies over others. In other words, the inclusivity of the magazine may normalise a type of body and decrease the respect of other types of bodies, which, according to Ballentine (2015), is highly detrimental.

The “Fat Burner’s Diary” segment, present in all issues of *Women’s Health*, is an interesting example of *Women’s Health* content, as it can act both as a maker of body problems as well as a way of unmaking body problems. In the case of making body problems, “Fat Burner’s diary” functions as an alarming example: if one does not follow the instructions given by the magazine, one may end up unhappy and with an undesirable body, too. In the March 2018 issue, the fat burner is a Londoner ready to re-assess her life goals. Example 21 showcases her realisation of the harmfulness of her unhealthy life and therefore acts a warning sign. One of the common factors of these warning signs is the idea that if one follows the example provided by the magazine, there is a chance to start a new life.

Example 21

At 37, 5ft and 20st, I’d constantly pick up seasonal bugs, and I struggled with pelvic and stomach pain and heart palpitations – but the only thing my doctor could put it all down to was my terrible lifestyle. Then, one night in August 2015, after a work meeting finished at 1am, I surveyed the mess of empty beer bottles and takeaway containers left behind and started crying uncontrollably. I couldn’t believe this was my life. Then and there, I decided to start afresh. (Mitchell 2018: 85)

Warnings for not adhering to the magazine’s values are present elsewhere in *Women’s Health* as well. One instance is the November 2017 issue’s story of sugar damage. The article, titled “Seeking sweet relief?” underlines the importance of a healthy diet and show the alternative results in an unflattering, scary way, too.

Example 22

You wouldn’t follow an anxiety diagnosis with a G&T, but there’s nowt wrong with a kilo bar of Dairy Milk, right? You’re also sure to have delivered a box of flapjacks or box of millionaire’s shortbread to a friend struggling with emotional problems that go far deeper than the average craving. (Sarner 2017: 66)

As Example 22 shows, the words of warning on the damages of sugar are given with relatable, common examples. In the article, emotional eating is pictured as a very common phenomenon, but its downsides are clearly underlined, and repercussions are also revealed. What is interesting about this cautionary tale is that it focuses on mental health instead of one's figure. It is a refreshing point of view to focus solely on the anxiety and mental health consequences of a bad diet instead of the physical changes. The story ends with an interview with a former sugar addict, who supports the main message of *Women's Health* and tells readers of her newfound happiness and energy. All life changes have been made possible by the task of replacing unhealthy sugars with healthy alternatives.

Another example of warning signs is the magazine's Christmas coverage. *Women's Health* chooses to spin the holiday season as a chaos filled with dangers, and the only solution to surviving the season is to carefully follow the advice given in the magazine. The inevitability of overeating is highlighted in the December 2017 issue of the magazine, where the magazine's recurring "What happens when..." question column discusses ways of dealing with binge-eating during the holidays and ponders the question of whether "the real magic of Christmas is its ability to render rational humans incapable of stopping at just the six mince pies" (Mitchell 2017a: 34). Although the perspective of expecting everyone to lose control during the holidays is harmful and will undoubtedly raise feelings of inadequacy, it is still interesting to notice that despite the strong headline, the column actually provides relatively neutral information on the working of the body after heavy meals.

In sum, the most common strategy of making body problems in *Women's Health* is the way the magazine introduces and compliments women who have succeeded in creating the ideal body. The cover stars all have very similar body types, and they are given the opportunity to showcase their bodies by appearing on the cover of the magazine in a two-piece swimsuit. The ideal body is lean, low in fat and something the woman wishes to show to the world. This is visible, for instance, in the magazine's way of describing women's bodies as impeccable or enviable. To look good means to be a target for envy, too. A second way how the process of making body problems is visible in the content of *Women's Health* is the frequency of instructions and warnings in the magazine. There is a myriad of instructions for living a certain kind of a life, and everything that does not fit into the required lifestyle is discussed with negative connotations and a warning tone. As the magazines of the data are all from the turn of the year, the most significant danger between a woman and the perfect body is Christmas. Due to the

problems the holiday season will cause, *Women's Health* is well prepared with a multitude of tips.

Unmaking body problems in *Women's Health*

One of the most prominent ways *Women's Health* unmakes body problems is to underline the importance of the individual in her quest towards the perfect body. The magazine provides its readers with a multitude of information on how to have an impact on one's own body and how to become who one wishes to be.

Firstly, *Women's Health* introduces a variety of body routines that will help a reader on the way to body perfection. One of the most significant routines is eating well. Each *Women's Health* issue ends with "My week on a plate", a page-long food diary by a famous person. The segment serves two functions; it is firstly a guide for eating well, but it is also a portrait of an interesting person and their life. In other words, it is believed that the example given by "My week on a plate" will lead to readers being inspired to change their diets. The magazine also provides more general cooking inspiration for its readers. For instance, the January-February 2018 issue introduces five-ingredient meals and the November 2017 issue offers chickpea meal ideas. All food content is characterized by the need to be healthy and nutritious.

The food content of *Women's Health* follows the magazine's values and readers' expectations well. For instance, in the December 2017 issue's "My week on a plate", the week of fitness personality Hollie Grant is filled with vocabulary that highlights key interests of the magazine. In other words, "My week on a plate" is an advocate for prepping one's meals beforehand, choosing a myriad of vegetables into one's diet, focusing on lean meats and pampering oneself from time to time. It is interesting to notice that while the content of *Women's Health* in general does not advocate for unhealthy meals, "My week on a plate" includes glimpses of flexibility, as seen in Example 23. The occasional unhealthy meal supports the idea of balance, and statements like Hollie Grant's "pudding is non-negotiable" (Mitchell 2017c: 154) and Example 23 make the women interviewed for the section more relatable.

Example 23

I don't fixate on weight and if I want a glass of wine or a beer in the evening, I have it. Life's too short.
(Mitchell 2017c: 154).

Another body management routine is exercise. All *Women's Health* issues include several different exercise guides. All cover stars get an exercise guide, usually designed by their personal trainers. The names of the exercise guides are "Get fighting fit with Michelle", "Sculpt a killer body like Mollie's", "Sculpt a killer body like Gemma's" and "Transform your body with Alice". It can therefore be argued that the cover stars are of utmost importance as marketing tools for the magazine's exercise guides, too. It is easy to sell an exercise guide, if a well-known person with a desirable body has endorsed it. Alongside the cover star exercise guide, there are several other guides, too. For instance, the November 2017 issue includes a technique school on the windscreen wiper movement, expert advice from Alice Living on dynamic warmups, a one-piece workout with wrist weights as well as a longer feature on TRX yoga.

The third body-related routine presented in the magazine is taking care of oneself by purchasing certain products. All issues of *Women's Health* include both advertisements and staff-created content about different beauty products and clothes. By buying recommended products one may feel closer to the desirable bodies presented in the media. This phenomenon is present in the magazine on a larger scale, too. In the November 2017 issue of *Women's Health*, there is a feature titled "Welcome to fitness's VIP scene", where luxurious exercise classes are being tested. While beauty products and clothes may be more generally accessible, the coverage about prestigious fitness studios is to inspire only those who can afford it.

In addition to showcasing routines for appearance enhancement, *Women's Health* tends to portray bodies as projects. The projects in question will be conducted with step-by-step guides, fool-proof expert advice and quick results. Endorsement from health professionals or from celebrities is also clearly present. The multitudes of exercise guides are an excellent example of step-by-step guides, as is the "Fat Burner's Diary" segment, where readers are given a straight-forward transformation split into three time periods, marked "Then", "How" and "Now". Whereas the "Then" section has the task of scaring readers and making them see the possible faults in their own eating and exercise regimes, the purpose of the "How" and "Now" sections is to be more encouraging and to offer concrete information. The emphasis is on the inevitability of the transformation and how much good it brings to the transformer's life. All transformers of "Fat Burner's Diary" share details of their current exercise routines and diet plans, giving the reader the required push to start reassessing her own. In addition to "Fat Burner's Diary", the transformation feature of the January-February issue of the magazine

shows how bodies can be viewed as projects. Both “Fat Burner’s Diary” and the transformation feature benefit from using before and after photos and statistics, as the information acts as proof for the effect of the transformations themselves.

A second prominent way of unmaking body problems in *Women’s Health* is fighting the status quo and providing alternative opinions. One of the recurring segments of the magazine, titled “Well worth it?” highlights current popular trends, busts myths around them and clearly judges some to be ineffective. The segment judges detox teas, with one unlucky former user of the product quoted to have felt cheated for buying into the clever marketing of detox tea companies (Dening 2017: 52). The popular ketogenic diet is also critically investigated. All in all, “Well worth it?” is an interesting part of the magazine, because it creates limits for the female need to become smaller and leaner. While the task of the magazine is to encourage people to change their lifestyles for the better, “Well worth it?” reminds readers to not risk their overall health.

A third way of unmaking body problems in *Women’s Health* is a call for readers to focus on self-discipline and vigilance. This is most visible in the magazine’s Christmas content, where a plethora of Christmas scenarios are built, the common message being that all fall off track during the holiday. Interestingly, the phenomenon is present elsewhere in the magazine, too. For instance, in the November 2017 issue of the magazine, there is a story advising readers to handle panic.

In conclusion, *Women’s Health* sees a woman’s body as a project. Although the magazine promotes a relatively narrow idea of the perfect body, it also provides its readers with a multitude of tips on how to truly have an impact on one’s own body and life in general. The advice is simple, filled with expert advice and step-by-step guides. The role of body management routines in the pursuit of the perfect body is also emphasised: nutrition advice is given in detail and all issues include several celebrity-endorsed exercise guides. However, it must be noted that despite the significant amount of content that is created to encourage readers to feel better, the magazine’s call for self-discipline may create body problems instead of unmaking them.

Making body problems in *Men's Health*

For *Men's Health*, the cover is a key part of the magazine's success. The four issues included in the data of this study have a white muscular cover star who is in his thirties. As can be seen from the images below, the focus of all four covers of the data is on the cover star's arms. The emphasis on strength is present in the cover headlines as well. The March 2018 issue highlights "XXL arms", while the November 2017 issue encourages the reader to "Build arms like this", referring to actor Chris Hemsworth, the cover star of the issue. These observations alone confirm the claim that the ideal *Men's Health* man is strong and, therefore, powerful. All four covers of *Men's Health* highlight the importance of gains, and therefore also advocate for fat loss so that the desired muscles could be more visible. There is also a hint of the need for transformations present in the March 2018 cover, where the magazine tells readers to "Build a brand new body in time for spring!".

Image 5: *Men's Health*,
November 2017

Image removed for copyright
reasons.

Image 6: *Men's Health*,
December 2017

Image removed for copyright
reasons.

Image 7: *Men's Health*, January-February 2018

Image removed for copyright reasons.

Image 8: *Men's Health*, March 2018

Image removed for copyright reasons.

Men's Health is eager to discuss the scary details of ageing. Ageing, although inevitable, is portrayed as a process that needs to be controlled as much as possible. The November 2017 cover reveals the issue will advise on how to “Rewind your body clock: Undo years of damage in 15 mins”, whereas the March 2018 cover reveals the issue includes “39 tricks to put ageing on ice”. The frequency of ageing-related stories underlines the fact that the society expects men to be strong, successful doers and that ageing is in the way of success. The ideal man of the magazine is young and strong, and the need to remain as such is evident, and that is why *Men's Health* shows both alternatives to the quest of avoiding the downfalls of ageing.

The importance of strength for *Men's Health* is inevitable: suitable body parts, such as strong arms are highly complimented, while unsuitable bodies receive opposite connotations. For instance, in the cover of the magazine's January-February 2018 issue states: “Shred your gut: two simple moves that hit flab where it hurts”. This excerpt and the *Men's Health* covers in general offer an interesting example on the magazine's ways of working: the difference in connotations is one way the magazine shows which is acceptable body-wise while still maintaining a friendly tone reminding readers of common male banter. By giving readers advice to shred their guts, the magazine manages to portray its body ideal as well as remain relatable.

To summarize, it is interesting to notice how *Men's Health* does not highlight its version of the perfect body from the perspective of appearance. Instead of making the appearance of cover

stars and other men featured in the magazine desirable, *Men's Health* focuses on praising accomplishments and strength over good looks. This obviously creates challenges, too. As the men featured in the magazine are young, muscular and able-bodied, the readers who do not fit into these groups will feel left out and pressured to try to fit in. In other words, the stereotypical idea of a man being the strong provider for his family is emphasised and the men in the magazine are judged by their acts. A man is seen through his accomplishments and those who do not aim as high or have failed in their pursuit of fitness are discussed in a negative manner.

Unmaking of body problems in *Men's Health*

One of the key messages of *Men's Health* is that a body is an on-going project one needs to pay attention to without sacrificing a comfortable lifestyle. A key aim of the project, “Swap fat for ripped”, can be found on the cover of the November 2017 issue of the magazine. The improvement project is witnessed from the perspective of *Men's Health* staff members in the January-February 2018 issue, where staff members follow some of the magazine’s famous exercise plans and report the experience in a feature titled “Blood, sweat and tears”.

Men's Health believes in leading by example, like “Blood, sweat and tears” suggests. Although all issues of the magazine do not have a famous cover star, the impact of the cover star is significant, too. For example, the November 2017 issue has “the Hemsworth plan for all-mighty strength” and the December issue plays with the fact that its cover star, Henry Cavill, is an actor famous for playing Superman.

However, not all body improvement tips are endorsed by professionals or portrayed from the point of view of others. *Men's Health* offers its readers a multitude of tools to have an impact on their own fitness journeys. This is seen, for example, in the magazine’s “How I built my body” -segment, which emphasises the individual’s role in his own project. “How I built my body” is always about an athlete, but the athlete’s tips and experiences are hoped to inspire readers to improve themselves. In addition to the strong emphasis on experts, *Men's Health* promotes vigilance and self-directed motivation, too. A *Men's Health* reader is expected to become inspired by the example of the professionals and start improving his own life with the tips and detailed exercise guides the magazine provides. Exercising safely and keeping one’s motivation high has been made easy for the reader, as every issue of *Men's Health* includes

exercise guides targeting different muscle groups, tips on performing exercises with correct technique and more general advice on how to work towards a better body.

Another factor worth noticing in the way *Men's Health* unmakes body problems is its relatively merciful attitude. Although the magazine wishes to guide its readership towards even higher weights and other exercise accomplishments, it simultaneously speaks strongly against impatience. Impatience leads to injuries, and an injury stops one from pursuing fitness goals. While issues of self-discipline tend to be about restriction in a negative way, *Men's Health* provides a more positive example by encouraging readers to sensible choices. The magazine emphasises the role of sleep, advises readers on fighting against office job immobility and even illustrates how one may best survive a hangover.

The merciful nature of *Men's Health* is visible in its coverage of mental health issues, too. The November 2017 issue introduces the magazine's mental health projects and overall the magazine encourages its readers to relax. The same mindset is present in the editor's letter of the March 2018 issue, as seen in Example 24:

Example 24

We build up a steam through November, embrace abandon in December, pay penance in January and then endure the cold winds of penurious late-winter- And so it goes on. And on. What goes around comes around.

It needn't be like this. We create this predictable carousel for ourselves under the assumption that this is just what men do. But life is too shot to be writing off two months of the year just for the sake of a festive-themed cheat week. (Wiseman 2018: 17).

In Example 24, the editor of *Men's Health* is offering words of critique for the panic-laden media of the new year. By firmly taking a stand against the status quo of Christmas preparations, the magazine will also take a stand for mental health. All in all, it could be argued that the point *Men's Health* makes with its relaxed approach to traditionally panic-inducing topics is a clear stand against the status quo of body ideals.

All in all, *Men's Health* unmakes body problems by creating content that emphasizes the importance of balance. Exercise and nutrition should be natural, carefree parts of life and offer men the chance to be their best selves and achieve their goals. However, celebrity-

endorsements are still used as an inspiration tool. Of all the ways *Men's Health* unmakes body problems, the most significant one is the magazine's wish to offer careful and healthy advice. Weight loss content takes a scientific point of view and all the numerous exercise guides focus on getting the best results with as safe a technique as possible.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Women's Health and *Men's Health* use a wide variety of ways to build their models of ideal bodies. Both magazines provide plenty of material for my research questions, in other words to how ideal bodies are constructed and how body problems are made and unmade in them. The findings prove that language is an extremely powerful tool in affecting sales and the general opinion.

In this chapter of my study I will be going through my findings, looking at them from the perspective of my research aim and research questions as well as discussing possible implications for both the general public and the research community. In short, the aim of this section is to provide the reader with a detailed description of how *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* view bodies and discuss what kinds of consequences the actions of the magazines might create for the future.

5.1 Findings in relation to the research aim and research questions

The Western world of the 21st century is extremely appearance-centred. Most of the blame can be put on media outlets and especially on the increase of images and the rise of social media platforms. All types of media let their readers be exposed to the societal expectations on beauty and appearance in general. Media exposure, in turn, creates social pressure. Social pressure is a dangerous phenomenon, because if left unnoticed, it can lead to body dissatisfaction and to changes in how bodies are perceived in general.

Media can both create body dissatisfaction and provide users with the tools to combat it. In other words, a one-sided look into the topic of body ideals will inevitably have negative outcomes, but if the topic of body ideals is approached from a versatile set of perspectives, media outlets may help to improve users' attitudes towards their bodies. However, it needs to be acknowledged that all forms of media need to stand out in order to attract new followers, too. Magazines are not an exception, and therefore careful planning should take place in order to both gain a better understanding of body-related content as well as meet financial goals.

In this study my purpose was to investigate how the British editions of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* use power in the ever-changing field of health journalism, highlight how they

built their ideas of the perfect body and see their different strategies of making and unmaking readers' body problems. The study was conducted with the help of the following research questions:

1. How are bodies represented in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*?
2. How are body problems made and unmade in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*?

The first research question was approached with the help of Aubrey's (2010) research on how magazine covers can be framed and what kinds of messages the magazines could be argued to send. The contents of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* were therefore approached from the point of view of Aubrey's framing categories, which are appearance, weight loss, health and body competence. The second research question was used so that the importance of the different content categories could be further investigated, and conclusions drawn on the topic of how the content produced by *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* treats the body as a problem. This task benefitted from the use of Ballentine's (2005) idea of magazine content both making and unmaking body problems.

Women's Health and *Men's Health* both campaign for a healthy lifestyle, but they are still rather exclusive as they portray a relatively narrow idea of body types as healthy. The main target of *Women's Health* is to look thin while *Men's Health* focuses on strength. This is in line with the argument of Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2006), who state that men are afraid of appearing weak and women of looking fat. The general focus of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* might be on health, but since they offer homogenous body-related ideas to a heterogeneous readership, feelings of body hatred and inadequacy are still present.

In both magazines, the ideal body is a strict concept. Although the beauty myth (Wolf 1991) was originally targeted to point out inequality between men and women, it is also a valuable tool in pointing out differences between acceptable and unacceptable bodies as the pursuit of flawlessness is increasingly gender-neutral in today's image-obsessed society. Wolf's (1991: 12) idea of beauty as a currency system is very much in place in the values of magazines, as those who look the part, act and those who are not judged to be adequate, need to follow in the sidelines or change. This idea clearly echoes the acts of making and unmaking of body problems, too. Both magazines investigated in this study are carefully showcasing both

desirable and undesirable types of appearance and they are also providing readers with detailed, step-by-step advice on how to avoid the negative consequences of not looking acceptable enough.

The chosen editions of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* magazines serve the British public, and the main difference in their reader bases is gender. That is why it is both important and interesting to see how exactly *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* use the power given to them. Good media literacy may be required with many headlines, but in reality, it is too easy to accept the status quo and consequently strengthen a version of the truth instead of exploring alternative options. All media is biased, and that is why studying the language of different media platforms is necessary.

How are bodies represented in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*?

The fact that *Women's Health* strongly relies on its cover stars is clearly visible when the magazine is investigated from the perspective of the most dominant Aubrey category, appearance. The women chosen for the cover of the magazine need to adhere to the magazine's values and therefore fit into the criteria of beautiful, fit women. Desirable people make the magazine more desirable for the general public. This observation is in line with Benwell's (2002) idea that female readers want to form a connection with the person about whom they are reading. The need to connect is clearly visible in the magazine, with famous people sharing their diet and exercise secrets as well as relatable fellow readers reporting of their successful weight loss projects and body transformations. This practice is close to Wolf's (1991) comparison of beauty to the American dream; in other words, being exposed to stories of people reaching ultimate beauty and fitness can make readers believe that they can reach similar goals as well.

Out of the four Aubrey categories, appearance is the most frequent one in *Women's Health* and clearly present in the way the cover stars are described, too. Two of the four *Women's Health* cover stars of the data are described to feel highly insecure about their bodies. In addition to this, Gemma Atkinson, the cover star of the January-February 2018 issue of the magazine, is described in overtly sexist manner, referring to her previous modelling career and overall looks. Atkinson is single, and that is also being framed as a waste of good looks. Interesting perspective on looks is also given in the Mollie King interview of the December 2017 issue,

where King is described to be goofier than most pretty girls are usually allowed to be. All in all, these findings underline how strict the rules for the right kind of a woman may be.

The point of view *Men's Health* takes on appearance confirms Benwell's (2002) views as well. Benwell argued that while women want to know more about the people portrayed in magazines, men are far more skeptical on this. Only two of the four *Men's Health* issues of the data have a celebrity as a cover star, which shows that *Men's Health* is less dependent of famous faces as marketing devices. The celebrities in question, actors Chris Hemsworth and Henry Cavill, are not explored in as much detail as all the *Women's Health* cover stars are. The focus is on what the two actors have accomplished both professionally and in the gym and although their appearance is discussed, it does not take center stage. For *Men's Health*, the emphasis in general is on accomplishments, and increasing strength is a goal much more valued than that of becoming good-looking. However, there is one appearance-related topic constantly worrying *Men's Health*: ageing is a firm feature of *Men's Health*, as growing old will decrease the chance to accomplish enough. The impact of accomplishments and ageing brings an interesting perspective on Aubrey's ideas on appearance. Appearance does not merely mean beauty, as success is clearly a defining factor of it.

From the perspective of weight loss, *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* generally agree that a call for arms is necessary to fight against the dreaded excess fat. Both magazines have produced a January-February issue with a strong focus on weight loss and body transformations and therefore they have adhered to the readership and the society's need for weight loss content for January publications. In order to make their weight loss advice more credible, both *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* include a transformation special with staff members' stories on participating in a transformation programme. Interestingly, the magazines' interest in tracking the successes of the transformations varies. While *Women's Health* tracks the weights and body fat percentages of the participants, the focus of *Men's Health* is on process photos and how much more the participants can achieve in the gym. The transformation participants of *Men's Health* are also more willing to discuss the negative effects of a strict weight loss scheme to one's physical and mental well-being.

Men's Health does not have a part of the magazine solely dedicated to weight loss, as *Women's Health* does, but its content clearly shows the need for removing excess fat, too. Men are generally judged by what they have accomplished instead of their body fat percentages, and

this phenomenon is clearly visible in the content of *Men's Health*, too. Although weight discussion is not a part of the cover star interviews, the topic gets attention in a more general manner in the January-February 2018 issue of the magazine. The magazine offers a multitude of scientific and practical tips on how to combat excess fat, but the emphasis is always on the fact that cutting fat is always done to benefit future muscle gain.

As mentioned above, *Men's Health* is surprisingly eager to discuss matters of mental health. While *Women's Health* does have a mental health feature with stories of ordinary and famous women with mental illnesses, it does not pay much attention on mental health problems caused by strict diets and exercise. *Men's Health* discusses mental health multiple times and focuses once again on the need for normality instead of a very binary attitude to life. This was the most surprising observation for me when analyzing the data from a health point of view. However, this also confirms Wodak's (1997) view that there are no gender stereotypes, no matter how forcefully society tries to argue otherwise. All gender stereotypes are created in interaction.

Other types of health-themed content are fairly similar in both *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*, as both magazines cover the importance of proper nutrition in great detail and focus on sleep and social life, too. What I found especially interesting, however, was the way the magazines reacted to body positivity. The general accomplishment-driven attitude of *Men's Health* is body positive, and the magazine's perspective on the topic is strengthened with articles emphasizing the fact that one's weight is not the most important feature in a person. *Women's Health*, on the other hand, was not as straight-forward. Many cover stars and others portrayed in the magazine voice body positive opinions, but still the treatment of cover stars in particular is more traditional and even sexist. Although body positivity is present as a phenomenon, the magazine still sends mixed messages to its readers in the form of how it reacts to women on its pages.

The fourth framing category, body competence, was the least common Aubrey category of the data for both magazines. Many appearance-related excerpts had a body competence side as well, but as a primary category, body competence was rare. In *Women's Health* accomplishment-driven exercise was often shown as a relatively new phenomenon, and the focus therefore remained on the aesthetics. *Men's Health*, on the other hand, was much more focused on accomplishments and strength in general. Interestingly, the amount of body

competence instances was not high in *Men's Health* either, though strength and endurance were actively emphasized in all other categories as well.

To summarize, my findings prove that Aubrey's ideas of media frames are still very much in use in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*. In her study, she found the four categories to be somewhat equal, with appearance holding the position of the most frequent category. However, in my study it soon became obvious that there are clear differences in the frequency of different categories. Appearance and weight loss were equally important to both *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*, but the differences between those two categories and health and body competence were significant. The most surprising observation was the lack of body competence messages in both magazines. Another key observation supports one of Aubrey's own claims. In her study she (2010: 61) argues that media frames may guard the strong preoccupation with appearance instead of strengthening the magazines' main aim, which is to promote healthy lifestyles. In my study, *Women's Health* in particular showed clear signs of preferring appearance over all other options. The mental health stands taken by both magazines also confirm Aubrey's belief that unless interfered in, the fixation on appearance over health may have serious mental health consequences.

How are body problems made and unmade in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*?

In Ballentine's (2005) view, the making of body problems is the act of building a body of desire and prioritising certain appearance characteristics over others. The audience is therefore encouraged to build a certain kind of a body and simultaneously given the unpleasant alternative which will take place, if the magazine's advice is not followed. All in all, making of body problems relies on the society's habit of categorising bodies merely as acceptable and unacceptable. While making of body problems is seen as society-driven action, unmaking body problems is a process of questioning the status quo and giving agency to the individual (Ballentine 2005: 292). According to Ballentine, this is done by emphasizing body management routines, the project-like nature of bodies and the importance of self-discipline.

The most significant maker of body problems in both *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* is the cover. It has a strong impact on readers and will need to attract both current and new readers. Being recognisable is why the cover needs to portray the magazine's values. In the case of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*, the cover needs to signal the magazine's values regarding

bodies. In addition, the ideal body is signaled by the cover headlines, too. Women are encouraged to become lean while men are pursuing “XXL arms”.

In *Women’s Health*, the similarity of its cover stars can act as a means of making body problems. The cover stars of the magazine all represent a small group of people with a myriad of resources of staying fit, but they are still lifted onto the light as role models for readers. In *Men’s Health*, cover stars do not possess such power, but the idea of strength being a prerequisite for men is strongly present throughout the data.

Both *Women’s Health* and *Men’s Health* offer scary visions of what may take place if readers choose not to follow their advice. In *Women’s Health*, one of the scary visions is created by the transformation stories and their “Before” sections. There is a clear change in connotations between the stories of the person’s life before and after the transformation. The “After” photo is often clearer and the person is styled more for it, which adds to the message of desirability. *Men’s Health* does not offer such clear division between acceptable and unacceptable bodies as *Women’s Health* does, but its “Blood, sweat and tears” -transformation feature in the January-February issue addresses the same topic, voicing the transformers’ concerns and dislikes about their appearances. The scariest visions for *Men’s Health*, however, are ageing and growing tired and both topics are carefully discussed throughout the data.

It can be argued that the ways *Women’s Health* and *Men’s Health* make and unmake body problems offer clear proof of western society’s traditional gender roles being present in the media. According to Wolf (1991), the society requires women to be beautiful and men to be in a position where they can pursue and possess beauty. This phenomenon is evident in the content of *Women’s Health* and *Men’s Health*. While both magazines are appearance-centric, they do it for different purposes. Although in numbers the frequency of appearance-related content in the magazines is relatively similar, *Women’s Health* sees the pursuit of a certain appearance as more valuable as *Men’s Health* does. In *Women’s Health*, the focus is on looking good, while *Men’s Health* focuses on improving one’s accomplishments in the gym as well as professionally and socially. These findings confirm Ballentine’s (2005: 302) idea that magazines always send mixed messages about bodies and that in all media messages, there are ideas of empowerment and restriction. In this study, it soon became obvious that the processes of making and unmaking body problems conflict and the same piece of magazine content can both strengthen and ease body dissatisfaction. That phenomenon is also noted by Ballentine (2005: 302), who concludes

by pointing out that even though patterns of body problems can be found in magazine content, the individual and their cultural background are, in the end, the deciding factor on whether an issue becomes a body problem.

Ideal bodies in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*

In *Women's Health*, the main focus is firmly on improving one's appearance and removing excess fat, but a new accomplishment-driven point of view on bodies is gaining ground. Still, it can be argued that the perfect *Women's Health* body is beautiful, healthy and low in fat. The most significant driving force behind a woman's will to pursue the perfect body is the need to look and feel better, but another significant motivation for the pursuit of the perfect body is the example of successful people portrayed by the media. The cover stars of the magazine appear act as role models for the readership of the magazine. The role of a cover star is to both make and unmake body problems, as she is put on a pedestal due to her body type but she is chosen for the magazine cover for the purpose of inspiring readers to improve their own lives, too.

The typical reader of *Women's Health* is eager to improve her figure by trying out new celebrity-endorsed exercise regimes and maintaining other body routines as well. This is seen, for instance, in the magazine's recurring "Fat Burner's Diary" segment, where the transformations from unhealthy couch potatoes to a healthy, successful women are divided into a step-by-step order. "Fat Burner's Diary", alongside other lifestyle change content of the magazine is strengthened with process photos and measurements. Transformer stories always prioritise a certain body type over others and may use derogatory language towards those who do not possess the required body. The content can both create body problems as well as offer readers tools to combat their body dissatisfaction and consequently unmake their body problems.

In terms of the Aubrey categories, *Women's Health* is almost equally focused on appearance and weight loss. One of the most salient features of the appearance frame is the process of prioritizing aesthetics over accomplishments: the need to pursue and maintain beauty confirms Wolf's (1991) view of women as objects, too. Weight loss content is characterised with making fat into a villain, while appearance frames often tell about the myriad of goals that are accessible for beautiful, fit people. Health content of *Women's Health* is often framed to be an aide to the reader's task of looking more beautiful instead of just feeling healthier. Body competence is the

rarest of the Aubrey categories, but there are hints in the issues that accomplishment-driven perspective of female fitness and health is slowly winning over aesthetics.

The man portrayed in *Men's Health* is firstly an ambitious worker, who is ready to achieve his goals. He is not very interested in the lives of celebrities but is eager to be inspired by their exercise routines. An ideal body is created with safe, careful exercises that are planned to guide the man to success in the gym and elsewhere in life, too. The typical reader of *Men's Health* is a busy man and therefore the magazine needs to focus on providing sufficient information on how to stay healthy and energetic as effectively as possible. Paying attention to nutrition and exercise with a good price-quality ratio is important, as it helps to keep the negative consequences of ageing away. In addition to ageing, mental health is a key factor in a fit man's life as health and happiness is clearly prioritised.

In terms of the Aubrey categories, the impact of body competence in *Men's Health* is surprisingly insignificant. This highlights the case that despite society constantly branding men to be interested in gaining muscle alone, questions of general appearance are starting to become more important. Still, stereotypes are firmly in place in the main motivation *Men's Health* offers for training: one needs to look successful.

In conclusion, the perfect bodies created by *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* follow the pattern noticed by previous body image research. The focus of female appearance being preferred over capabilities (see e.g. Bazzini 2015, Markula 2001) is strongly present, as is the male need of combining sensitive, feminine topics with tongue-in-cheek language (Benwell 2002). Another noteworthy factor in the portrayals of ideal bodies is how certain behaviours are rewarded and for others one may be punished (Jung 2011). This idea is visible in making and unmaking of body problems, and also confirms why a feminist critical perspective is needed in the field of body ideals. As we live in the age of the image, it is even more necessary to allow different voices into the light and stop the tradition of portraying just one kind of an ideal person.

5.2 Future of body image studies

Magazines have a great deal of power in body-related issues. Magazines need to sell as many copies as possible, and guaranteeing profit requires a well-thought, detailed idea of the

magazine and what it should contain. However, in today's competitive world, magazines need to focus on both keeping their current readers entertained and wanting more as well as attracting new readers. The constant need for renewal and reacting to current topics are factors that will most likely continue to affect the behaviour of magazines. Magazines have created profiles of their target audiences, but they should still acknowledge that not all readers fit into the picture of the ideal reader. Members of the target audience are different and therefore understanding what magazines offer to their readers is important.

Increasing media literacy, especially in the realm of bodies and self-esteem, will grow in importance in years to come and therefore it can be argued that an increase in media studies in secondary schools would be extremely beneficial. Studies (see e.g. McCabe & Ricciardelli 2001, Hargreaves & Tiggemann 2006) confirm that teenagers are very vulnerable around media-built body expectations and by targeting them, it would be possible to lower the risk of eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorder. Cusumano (1997) and Reid Boyd (2011) have been among those who highlight the importance of raising awareness on the dangerous nature of misunderstanding media and as media outlets change and the user bases and habits of social media platforms in particular evolve, the need for more research increases.

Women's Health and *Men's Health* do important work in the field of inspiring people to be active. They are some of the leading voices in the health industry, and due to that responsibility, they have a great deal for which to answer. My study has shown that despite the world changing into a more equal one, stereotypes are still in power in magazines with wide reader bases. Men are still expected to be strong, accomplished providers for their families, while women need to make sure that they are and remain aesthetically pleasing. That is why it is essential that media is studied in more detail from a critical perspective. The world cannot be changed unless its problems are recognised as such, and this process needs informative data on how those with power decide to use it.

My study shows how easily magazines can frame their messages: by choosing to highlight a topic at the expense of another, the magazines can shape their readers' views. I believe it to be vital as well as interesting for future research to study in detail how language choices can guard the status quo and thus gain power. Also, in the age of the fake news phenomenon in the news media, it is important for the leisure media to pay attention to what is said and what perspectives

are taken on phenomena as well. All this is something that needs to be taken into account in future research.

One of the most significant implications of this study for the broader community is that it points out how no man is an island. Everyone is affected by the things they see, hear and do, and often motivations for doing something are based on a learnt opinion about that particular action being worth doing. Magazines and their way of suggesting that there are only certain ways to excellence affect all readers to an extent. Providing readers with adequate tools to see and question the polarised thinking of many magazines is a task research should and will take in years to come.

In this study I have provided a quick look into the world of magazines. I was able to prove how easy it is for magazines to build ideals and set criteria. The point of view of making and unmaking of body problems is particularly interesting, as it highlights the fact how magazine content can serve many purposes and how the same magazine can have many different kinds of content. The ways how *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* discuss body ideals and create body transformation content, for instance, can act both as an encouragement and as a source for further body dissatisfaction. Media studies would greatly benefit from this type of perspective. However, the most important consequence will definitely be coaching readers to see a version of the truth instead of the truth. My study is one of the many examples why more research is needed to help people improve their media literacy.

In addition to this, I believe it would be extremely beneficial for the research community to investigate gender roles in the media further. As Kosut (2012) states wisely, the act of glamorising exaggerated beauty ideals is highly detrimental. It will do nothing but create and reaffirm myths about bodies and appearances in general. As previous body image studies have focused on women, and often only on fitness athletes, it is vital to bring a wider view of the phenomenon. Body image crises among both women and men are increasing and eating disorders as well as body dysmorphic disorders are even making headlines due to worrisome numbers of those affected. Women and men face different pressure and prejudices, and therefore it is necessary to widen the scope of research on this topic. Also, as research is still focused on muscular men and lean women who identify as heterosexuals, it would be vital to gain more knowledge on body image issues from outside this narrow box.

Therefore, it can be argued that discussion on the societal demands set on bodies needs to continue, as it is the only way of questioning the status quo and showing that the current phenomenon of inaccessible body criteria is harmful. The world is changing, but at least in the present study, it is still evident that magazines play with strict, traditional gender roles. Many users of media fail to question phenomena because they have become so common that they are accepted as the truth instead of just a version of it, and this is visible in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* as well. The ideal body in *Women's Health* looks good, while the ideal body in *Men's Health* is capable of achieving greatness in all areas of life. Societal demands force people to perform gender identities accordingly (Wodak 1997) and as we all are increasingly fascinated by magazines and the media in general, studying media content more closely will be of importance.

However, it must be noted that the change in body attitudes is already visible. Social media has risen to the challenge of providing media-users with body positive content to combat mass media's stricter body views. For example, the Australian writer Taryn Brumfitt rose to fame with her documentary *Embrace* and the Body Image Movement community around it. *Embrace* brings a versatile set of voices into the body image discussion and shows a different side of the societal body ideal bubble. The documentary has been viewed online over 25 million times (Body Image Movement 2016). Another strong voice that has emerged in the body positivity field is that of Megan Jayne Crabbe, England-based self-titled body positivity warrior. The attitude of Crabbe's body positivity quest is more gender-neutral than Brumfitt's, and her fight against media and societal expectations is a clear sign that body positivity is becoming increasingly gender-, appearance- and ability-neutral. The work of Brumfitt and Crabbe highlight the need for further research on body image, where more diverse sets of people would be studied.

All in all, in my study I have provided a perspective on the topic of body dissatisfaction and the role of magazines in its creation. With the help of Aubrey's (2010) media frames and Ballentine's (2005) views on how magazines can both make and unmake body problems I have found out that *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* still hold on to rather traditional views on what it is like to be a woman or a man. With only four issues of each magazine, I have managed to provide a look into the magazines' body attitudes, but more concrete findings would have required a larger data. A year's worth of *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* issues would have increased my awareness of the magazines' body ideals, as then I would have been able to find

similarities and differences in their attitudes from different times of the year. Due to the limitations of this study, the focus was strictly on qualitative research, but as a significant number of previous studies are quantitative, adding a quantitative aspect to this study would have widened its view on bodies. Also, studying the advertisements and general photo choices of the magazines would have brought another fascinating perspective into the topic.

There is still a plethora of topics to be explored by future researchers in *Women's Health* and *Men's Health*, let alone the field of media in general. For instance, it would be interesting to compare a magazine that is more inclusive in terms of appearance and ability to a magazine that follows strict guidelines on the people it features on its pages. I believe that multimodal content choices are especially worth studying; some people respond to the written word strongly, but for a significant number of people, multimodality is the most efficient way to be influenced. Another fascinating point of view for future research in this field would be the comparison of social media and magazine content.

In conclusion, it is vital that the discussion around bodies is kept alive. This Master's thesis has shown that even the leading health magazines still rely on traditional views on gender and body ideals. Although health should continue to be of utmost importance, the fields of media and research need to make society aware of both the inspiring as well as the destructive side of media content. That will inevitably increase media literacy and strengthen the belief that all are worthy of respect and happiness regardless of their size or appearance in general.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Women's Health UK. Hearst-Rodale Ltd.

The pictures of the covers of the *Women's Health* issues of the data used in this study were collected at <https://www.hearstmagazines.co.uk/back-issues-subscriptions> during the spring of 2018.

Abrahams, A. (2017). "Welcome to fitness's VIP* scene *very important planking". *Women's Health*, November 2017, pp. 114-117

"Contents". (2017). *Women's Health*, December 2017, pp. 15-16

Dening, L. (2017). "Detox teas: the dirty truth". *Women's Health*, November 2017, pp. 50-52

Derwisch-O'Kane, R. (2017). "Burn fat burn". *Women's Health*, November 2017, pp. 41-44

Joy, V. (2018). "Transform in 12 weeks" *Women's Health*, January-February 2018, pp. 46-49

Mitchell, F. (2017a). "What happens when...You eat too much?" *Women's Health*, December 2017, p. 34.

Mitchell, F. (2017b). "Exercise helped me beat my food issues". *Women's Health*, December 2017, p. 83

Mitchell, F. (2017c). "My week on a plate". *Women's Health*, December 2017, p. 154.

Mitchell, F. (2018). "I transformed my life to build a body I love". *Women's Health*, March 2018, p. 85

October, M. (2017). "Technique school: Tricep dip". *Women's Health*, December 2017, p. 27

"Parallettes". (2017). *Women's Health*, December 2017, pp. 84-85

Sarner, M. (2017). "Seeking sweet relief?" *Women's Health*, November 2017, pp. 65-68.

Unwin, S. (2017a). "Michelle Keegan pulls no punches". *Women's Health*, November 2017, pp. 28-37.

Unwin, S. (2017b). "Mollie King is smashing it". *Women's Health*, December 2017, pp. 38-45.

Unwin, S. (2018a). "Gemma". *Women's Health*, January-February 2018, pp. 26-33.

Unwin, S. (2018b). "Alice Liveing: All grown up". *Women's Health*, March 2018, pp. 28-37.

"Your festive fitness plan". *Women's Health*, December 2017, pp. 73-76

Men's Health UK. Hearst-Rodale Ltd.

The pictures of the covers of Men's Health of the data of this study were collected at <https://www.hearstmagazines.co.uk/back-issues-subscriptions> in the summer of 2018.

Cooper, E. (2018). "Measures or weights?" *Men's Health*, January-February 2018, p. 24

Dessant-Jackson, L. and Wrench, S. (2018). 24 Ways to hack your fat loss genes. *Men's Health*, March 2018, pp. 82-85.

Evans, M. (2017). "Fire on all cylinders". *Men's Health*, December 2017, p. 41

Jenings, M. (2018). Ask MH. Fast answers that cut through the noise. *Men's Health*, March 2018, p. 19.

Jennings, M. (2018). "Form masterclass #2: Raising the bar". *Men's Health*, March 2018, p. 96-97

Kita, J. & Kita, P. (2018) "Generation X vs Generation Y" *Men's Health*, March 2018, pp. 56-61

Lane, T. (2017a). "Make your body great again". *Men's Health*, November 2017, pp. 40-41

Lane, T. (2017b). "Strength in depth". *Men's Health*, December 2017, p. 46

Masoliver, D. (2018a). "Why your weight doesn't matter". *Men's Health*, January-February 2018, p. 34.

Masoliver, D. (2018b). "Blood, Sweat and Tears: An oral history of body transformation". *Men's Health*, January-February 2018, pp. 46-53

Millar, J. (2017a). "Rolling Thunder". *Men's Health*, November 2017, pp. 52-59

Millar, J. (2017b). “The New Adventures Of Superman”. *Men’s Health*, December 2017, pp. 58-68.

Wiseman, T. (2018). “Don’t let February bring you down. Embrace it”. Editor’s letter. *Men’s Health*, March 2018, p. 17

Secondary sources

Aubrey, J. (2010). Looking Good Versus Feeling Good: An Investigation of Media Frames of Health Advice and Their Effects on Women’s Body-related Self-perceptions. *Sex Roles*, 63(1), 50-63.

Audit Bureau of Circulations. (2018a). *Men’s Health*. July 2017 to December 2017. <https://www.abc.org.uk/Certificates/48755926.pdf>. Retrieved 2 June 2018.

Audit Bureau of Circulations. (2018b). *Women’s Health*. July 2017 to December 2017. <https://www.abc.org.uk/Certificates/48750022.pdf>. Retrieved 2 June 2018.

Ballentine, L. W. (2005). The Making and Unmaking of Body Problems in Seventeen Magazine, 1992–2003. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 33(4), 281-307.

Benwell, B. (2002). Is there anything “new” about these lads? The textual and visual construction of masculinity in men’s magazines. In Litosseliti, L. & Sunderland, J. *Gender identity and discourse analysis*, 149-176.

Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Body Image Movement: About the film. <https://bodyimagemovement.com/brace/about-the-film/> Retrieved 12 March 2018.

Cusumano, D. (1997). Body image and body shape ideals in magazines: Exposure, awareness, and internalization. *Sex Roles*, 37(9), 701-721.

Holmes, J. (2005). Power and discourse at work. In Lazar, M. (eds.), *Feminist critical discourse analysis: Gender, power and ideology in discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 31-60.

- Jung, J. (2011). Advertising Images of Men: Body Size and Muscularity of Men Depicted in Men's Health Magazine. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 2(4), 181-187.
- Kennedy, E., & Markula, P. (Eds.). (2011). *Women and exercise: The body, health and consumerism*. New York: Routledge.
- Kontoniemi, K. (2014). *Nuorten naisten kokemuksia ja näkemyksiä kehonkuvaan rakentavista asioista*. University of Jyväskylä. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/43864>
- Kosut, M. (Ed.). (2012). *Encyclopedia of gender in media*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications.
- Lazar, M. (2005). Politicizing gender in discourse. In Lazar, M. (Eds.), *Feminist critical discourse analysis: Gender, power and ideology in discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-30.
- Lazar, M. M. (2007). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis 1. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4(2), 141-164.
- Magalhaes, I. (2005). Interdiscursivity, gender identity and the politics of literacy in Brazil. In Lazar, M. (Eds.), *Feminist critical discourse analysis: Gender, power and ideology in discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 181-204.
- Malachowski, C. C. (2013). Reconstructing the Ideal Body Image in Teen Fashion Magazines. *Communication Teacher*, 27(1), 33-37.
- Markula, P. (2001). Beyond the perfect body: Women's body image distortion in fitness magazine discourse. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 25(2), 158-179.
- Martin Rojo, L. & Gomez Esteban, C. (2005). Female style in labour organizations. In Lazar, M. (Eds.), *Feminist critical discourse analysis: Gender, power and ideology in discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 61-90.
- McCabe, M. & Ricciardelli, L. (2001). Parent, peer, and media influences on body image and strategies to both increase and decrease body size among adolescent boys and girls. *Adolescence* 36(142), 225–240.

Men's Health Media Pack 2016-2017.

<http://assets.menshealth.co.uk/main/assets/MHMediaPack2017.pdf?mtime=1488802545>.

Retrieved 2 June 2018.

National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/what-body-image>. Retrieved 13 October 2017

Reid Boyd, E. (2011). Swimsuit issues: Promoting positive body image in young women's magazines. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 22(2), 102-106.

Wodak, R. (1997). *Gender and discourse*. London: SAGE.

Wolf, N. (1991). *The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women*. New York: Morrow.

Women's Health UK Media Kit 2016.

http://hearstcouk.wp.cdnnds.net/tmp/wpro1455628017973919/2016/02/15120056/New-Womens-Health-Media-Pack-Feb_16.pdf. Retrieved 2 June 2018.