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Hard Body 2.0
The Construction of the Fitness Subject:
An Analysis of Swedish Fitness Blogs

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Abstract:

Through conducting a discourse analysis of Swedish fitness blogs, aided by the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault in terms of technologies of the self, and the concept of habitus as it is explained by Pierre Bourdieu, as well as a critical perspective concerning the morals of health, I've investigated how human beings engage and negotiate discourse and social structure through writing practices mediated through cyberspace. The results indicated that the fitness field is a field of possibilities, and that it is through agency that discourse and social structure come in to play, and thus it is through agency that different practices of appropriating fitness and health were displayed, signifying that the fitness subject is heterogeneously constructed.

Key words: Virtual ethnography, fitness, health, discourse, habitus.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Hard Body 2.0	4
1.1 Hard Body 2.0	4
1.2 Disposition	6
Chapter 2 Context	7
2.1 Fitness and health	7
2.2 Fitness and cyberspace	8
Chapter 3 Previous research	11
3.1 Fitness and health	11
3.2 The social construction of gender	17
3.3 Writing practices and the possibilities of cyberspace	21
Chapter 4 Method	23
4.1 Virtual ethnography	23
4.2 Material - Swedish Fitness blogs	24
4.3 Discourse analysis	28
Chapter 5 Theory	32
5.1 The constructional properties of the subject	32
5.2 Habitus	38
5.3 Critical health	42
Chapter 6 Analysis –Appropriating fitness	44
6.1 Production and reproduction	44
6.2 Fitness conductors and health advice	45
6.3 Management of time	47
6.4 The construction of gender	51
6.5 The ease of fitness	54
6.6 Externalizing the body and oneself	57
6.8 Producing cultural goods	62
6.9 Form and function and the unification of the subject	64
Chapter 7 Conclusion and discussion	66
7.1 Conclusion	66
7.2 Discussion and future research	68
Chapter 8 References	70

Chapter 1 Introduction: Hard Body 2.0

1.1 Hard Body 2.0

Our contemporary world is enmeshed with technology; we are interconnected with each other in a non-spatial way through the Internet. The current developed state of the Internet, usually termed as Web 2.0, is signified by its interactive and user-friendly qualities (Aghaei et al 2012), and this has induced the proliferation of the practice of blogging (Scott Sorensen 2009:66). This, in congruence with the rationalization of health care, has made blogs into a source for health expertise. Today the imperative of health is the new moral (Metzl et al 2010), and entangled with the concept of health is that of fitness, and the commitment to fitness practices is further fueled by the economic rationalization of health care, where disease prevention is key and thus locating risk management within the individual body (Smith Maguire 2008: 47). This implies encouraging individuals to be their own health experts, making health another sphere of consumer choice, while expert authority such as medical expertise, are constructed as assistance of advice in process of choice making (Smith Maguire 2008: 48). Resources of advisory assistance are found in traditional health experts, but also increasingly through commercially talk shows, news programs and self-help books (Smith Maguire 2008:48), and correspondingly with the technological development of the internet, advisory elements are present in cybernetic mediums, such as in fitness blogs, or as they are likewise called, online diaries.

Research concerning online diaries has been developing in tandem with the proliferation of the practice of self-representation through internet media and with the diffusion of blogging, the online diary, as a mundane practice, analyzing blogs has become an useful instrument in order to comprehend how humans make sense of their social reality and thus how culture is represented, as well as illuminating new ways of writing (Serfaty 2004:457). Autobiographical representation through blogs can be seen as a practice of self-justification and self-creation (Serfaty 2004:461), and a narrative of selfhood, an archeological reconstruction of the “I” (Serfaty 2004:465). But what, who, is this “I”? Viviane Serfaty is writing about generic diary bloggers in an American context, but what can be told in a specific cultural field, namely the fitness field within in a particular spatial location of Sweden? This query is of importance, since entangled within the area of fitness is the concept of health and today health seem to be the new moral that penetrates every aspect of living (Metzl et al 2010). Hence, by analyzing fitness blogs, as they are part of our everyday practices, one can comprehend the far reaching

grasp of the moral of health and fitness in mundane endeavors that we take for granted as otherwise trivial and insignificant. Further, by using a theoretical framework given by Pierre Bourdieu, the practice of blogging within the thematic area of fitness can be seen as a cultural good, that is the blog itself, answering the demand for advice on health and fitness, but simultaneously, the very “I” of the blog becomes a cultural good by the exploitation of the lifestyle, the life of the writer. Following, by an additional aid of the theoretical work of Michel Foucault, I am in the pursuit of comprehending the process of how writers of fitness blogs make sense of and negotiate the entangled discourses of health and fitness and through the production of text in cyberspace, in the form of the self-expressing blog, understand the construction of the healthy fitness subject.

Regarding the construction of the subject, research has directed us towards the understanding of how social structure is an integral part in the makings of a subject, an individual, and a category within the real social world within which we live (Dworkin 2001, Eriksson 2009), but how are these social structures negotiated in the “virtual world” of the internet, and how are gender and class (re)produced at a site where the human body isn’t “really” there, are the workings of gendered social structures still prevalent in cyberspace? However, the research concerning fitness, or lifestyle sports and blogging is scarce (Griggs 2011:8), in relation to research that has been conducted of fitness culture in “real” life or other printed media. It is from this gap of knowledge that I am asking the questions: “What becomes of the human being in the process of the construction of the fit and healthy subject, its aesthetics and its meaning when it is placed in an immaterial setting, such as cyberspace? How and through which strategies is the subject constructed within and through discourses of fitness and health?”

These are questions that I am in the pursuit of answering and I will do so by investigating the practices at work in Swedish fitness blogs. Some blogs have been selected with a specific emphasis on female Body Fitness. These blogs are chosen because of the specific tension between muscularity and femininity that is harbored by the “real” life of the Body Fitness athlete. Even though there has been a considerable amount of research concerning this strain between muscle and womanhood concerning female athletes in real life (Dworkin 2001, Craig & Liberti 2007, Verbrugge 2002, Boyle 2005), the literature about this phenomenon in virtual reality is limited and I intend to narrow this knowledge cavity through analyzing Swedish female Body Fitness Blogs. My claim is that the transgression of gender norms are still

prevalent in cyberspace, but just as there are constraints of how far this lapse may reach in real life (Dworkin 2001), there will still be a circumscribed presentation of gender in these blogs, but the constraints might not necessarily look the same as they do in “real” life. Further, I am also guided by my claim that the construction of the gendered subject is embedded within fitness and health discourse, as well as the social stratification of class, and this is being articulated in fitness blogs

1.2 Disposition

Before unveiling the results of my analysis I will first in chapter 2 contextualize my study in terms of the status of health and fitness in Sweden and its correlation to cyberspace. In chapter 3 I will give a more extensive review of previous research concerning fitness and health, the social construction of gender, and the writing practices and possibilities of cyberspace. Following, in chapter 4 I will explain just how I conducted this study from selecting the different blogs to the use of discourse analysis through instruments given by Michel Foucault. In this chapter I will also offer a compressed account of virtual ethnography. The theoretical framework of this study is being encompassed in chapter 5, where the work of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu will be put forth, but also a critical perspective concerning the meaning of health. Thus, the methodology will be applied in chapter 6, where the results of the analysis will be presented according to the different themes that I found in the material. Finally, in chapter 7, a summary of the analysis will be given, as well as a discussion concerning the study and possible future research.

Chapter 2 Context

In this chapter I will lay forth the context within which my study has taken place, especially regarding the field of fitness, body fitness and the practice of blogging.

2.1 Fitness and health

The concepts of fitness and health can be found at different locations and thereof bearing different meanings, such as within the scientific field, fitness can be seen as measurable and quantifiable data of the human body regarding cardiovascular endurance, strength and flexibility, but fitness can also be understood as being an experience of physical ability, such as lifting weights or the grocery bag (Smith Maguire 2008: 1). However, by changing the perspective from the individual body, fitness can be seen as a construction of social structures, and thus, the scientific numbers of fitness can't be understood as pure facts of a person's fitness status, since the meaning and the reason for these numbers are being given or produced through discourse. Nevertheless, by investigating the writings of fitness blogs, which are practices by human agency, authorship cannot simply be given to social structure, rather, social structures are enabling factors for agency. Thus, I am in the pursuit of exploring what the social conditions for the positioning of subjects by a narrative unfolding through social media. Further, the individual that dwell in this body of numbers may perceive fitness in a certain way in relation to these social structures and "scientific data" (Smith Maguire 2008:2), in that "The lived definition of fitness is not clear-cut. It involves feelings of capacity, notions of control (over ourselves; over how others see us), and understandings of societal norms and expectations, be they articulated in advertising and the media in terms of beauty and youth, or in medical and government documents in terms of risk and health. Fitness is a complex concept, its criteria and objectives varying within and between individuals" (Smith Maguire 2008:2). This would infer that fitness would be related to a practice of living up to certain expectations or attaining specific appearances, making fitness a visual category (Smith Maguire 2008:1), rather than a scientific and numeric. In order to understand the differentiated value positions within the fitness field, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, taste, and distinction (Bourdieu 1984) are useful measures for an analysis concerning fitness practices, which I will more extensively make an account of in chapter 5. Further, fitness could also be associated and measured against how one feels (Smith Maguire 2008:1, 2). The meaning of the concept of fitness also vary according to the timely situation it may be found (Smith Maguire: 2). Research concerning fitness culture in Sweden has mainly been concerned with the material body in a material setting such as the

gym (Hedblom 2009) while academic inquiry of fitness culture in cyberspace in Sweden has been marginal. On the other hand, participating in fitness activities is a frequent phenomenon among Swedish people. According to the National Sports Association (*Riksidrottsförbundet*), in 2004 69% of the population were engaged in some kind of activity at least two times per week (Hedblom 2009:12, see also www.rf.se “Förändringen av andelen motionsutövare 1998-2004). Among the athletic undertakings that were most popular were; walking/powerwalking (55%), workout/aerobics (22%), weight training (20%), running/jogging (18%) (Hedblom 2009: 12). This indicates that fitness practices are quite ubiquitous for the general Swedish population. Nevertheless, in spite of the increasing interest and concern by individuals in their health and the congruent fitness practices, days of sick leave from work is escalating in Sweden (Frykman & Hansen Carlssons 2009:12,13). So even though we are increasingly participating in fitness activities, we are yet getting sicker, indicating that the conditions for health and fitness transcend the individual body. This paradox is an important social condition to account for when grasping the delineation the fit and healthy body as it is represented in fitness blogs.

2.2 Fitness and cyberspace

Even though blogging is a common practice in Sweden, and as mentioned earlier, fitness is of great concern for the general Swede, only a small amount of research has been conducted concerning fitness culture and blogging, which has been situated within an American cultural frame of American female fitness blogs (Andreasson & Johansson 2013). One might argue that the spatial location of where the blogs may be written is not of any greater importance, since the very practice of utilizing the internet as a medium for representation is not tied to any specific location. However, the combinations of words are being authored by somebody positioned within in a specific cultural and social context which is constantly emerging in a co-productive context, where spatiality is one of the conditions for the emergence of cultural context (Hymes 1962:26). Put in simpler words, a blog written by an American, within an American context, has a specific frame of reference, which has an impact on the text written. By this, inquiries of Swedish Fitness blogs are of further interest, since they are situated in a cultural context other than the American.

Female Body Fitness is a competitive sport for women and is one of several disciplines governed by IFBB (International Federation of Body Building and Fitness). The creation of the Body Fitness division, was a reaction towards the female bodybuilding scene in the 1990's, which was seen as a “grotesque subculture” (Andreasson & Johansson 2013), while fitness

women were seen as desirable and feminine” (Andreasson & Johansson 2013). Even though the lapse between the general fitness practitioner and the body fitness athlete might seem to be wide, I still find it of importance to investigate both blogs concerning health and fitness in general, as well as blogs directed towards a competitive aspect of fitness, since this would give an implication of how vast the fitness field is.

The practices surrounding bodybuilding, which is a sport that is seen as a predecessor and as having similarities to Body Fitness (Andreasson & Johansson 2013), are considered as being elements of a subculture, but almost prevalent in any gym (Stoloff 2004). Further, according to recent ethnographic studies, due to the expanding presence of cyber communities and increased accessibility to the internet, clusters of people that are considered to belong to a unconventional lifestyle sport, have found this space on the internet to be a place for civic belonging (Griggs 2011), which would explain the attractive feature of some fitness blogs that are more concerned with the preparation for an upcoming Body Fitness competition.

By taking a closer look on the regulations concerning the actual Body Fitness competition, it becomes evident that the tension between masculine and feminine is already present in the way that muscularity and low body fat is preferred and these are traits that are generally considered as masculine (Dworkin 2001), but at the same time muscularity and leanness are only favored to a certain extent. By gazing up on the BF stage, a tension, a transgression of socially constructed gender norms are at display.

A critical question concerning examining fitness blogs in the pursuit of investigating productive discourses in the creation of a gendered body and social class stratification, might simply be, why not merely go the gym and do a regular field study in “real life”? However, due to previous research regarding the gendered body and the transgression of gender norms by the female athlete in “real” life, the field of knowledge in this area is quite vast. By moving towards the depths of the blogosphere, articulations of discourse in a much different setting can be made. Since the internet and the practices of reading and writing blogs are part of our everyday life (Andreasson & Johansson 2013), research aimed at performances in cyberspace, is important in order to critically inquire mundane acts that we take for granted and not specifically structures in any particular way, as enunciations of discourse. Following, in Sweden, blogging is a very common everyday undertaking, especially in the diary format, which is a self-description published publicly online (Eriksson 2009). The blog is an interactive

homepage, and it is often used by the author to describe herself and her ordinary life (Eriksson 2009: 47) and in the case of the fitness blog, the textual and visual representations are specifically about the life of the body fitness athlete, and, or the fitness professional, what she or he does in an ordinary day, the workouts, what has been eaten, the preparation for competition and progress updates, as well as comments on fitness practices in general.

As such, the knowledge concerning fitness as such is vast, and so for the particular fitness practices as well. For instance, engaging in fitness practices is a common endeavor for the general population in Sweden, as well as blogging. However, there has been a scarce amount of research connecting fitness and blogging as an object of study. In the following chapter I will offer an overview of the current state of knowledge regarding fitness and health, the social construction of gender, and the writing practices and the possibilities of cyberspace.

Chapter 3 Previous research

3.1 Fitness and health

Even though there hasn't been a considerable amount of research that has in particular centered on fitness by the means of blogging, there has nonetheless been research about fitness within other frames of references. The former research has been essential in order to understand the meaning of fitness, or rather the meanings of fitness and thus comprehend the texts of the fitness blogs, as my objective is to uncover the strategies of how individuals through text, as an action, appropriate fitness and consequently construct a subject of fitness. However, since the term fitness is not a straightforward concept, but entangled with the notion of health, and also the consumer culture of today (Smith Maguire 2008), I've in addition, also reviewed research concerning these topics, in order to reach a more comprehensive understanding of how the fitness subject comes to be. Furthermore, as the tactics of construction also involve the exploitation of social structures of gender, I've correspondingly utilized knowledge from earlier research regarding gender and fitness. In this chapter I will thus make an account of this previous research relating to fitness, health, consumer culture, and gender.

The usage of the term fitness as a commonsensical and mundane category has its origin in the US in the 1970s, which was contemporary and intertwined with a culture of self-improvement and a political emphasis on individual responsibility (Smith Maguire 2008:4). Today, fitness is primarily a commercial enterprise (Smith Maguire 2008:5), and located as a cultural field as Jennifer Smith Maguire explains it in her book, *Fit for consumption: sociology and the business of fitness* (2008) in which she examines fitness as cultural field, drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "a *cultural field* – a network of sites, texts, producers and consumers that generates practices for and meanings of the body." (Smith Maguire 2008: 5). This study was conducted through analyzing printed media, such as fitness magazines and instructional manuals for both fitness professionals as for the average fitness consumer, and by interviewing fitness professionals and fitness consumers alike (Smith Maguire 2008).

The use of Bourdieu's theory has become quite useful when researching fitness culture as Smith Maguire utilize the term *cultural field*, when describing fitness as "a network of sites, texts, producers and consumers that generates practices for and meanings of the body." (Smith Maguire 2008: 5). Also both Smith Maguire and Hedblom stress the importance of investigating fitness through the perspective of class, in the way Bourdieu describes how

different social groups in terms of class and occupation are directed towards different ways of thinking about the body (Smith Maguire 2008:15, Hedblom 2009: 14,15). By understanding fitness as a cultural field, fitness can be comprehended as "... a set of relatively structured positions within which individuals and institutions, producers, and consumers struggle over the status and definitions and practices of fitness and fit bodies." (Smith Maguire 2008:8). The construction of fitness is inextricably linked to the production of the body and is constructed through a field of negotiations, which Smith Maguire explicates as "Fitness is best understood as a field of negotiations, within individuals contend with the competing, and often conflicting, demands made of them by consumer culture and the service of economy...It is through such navigation and negotiation that individuals – both fitness consumers and producers – produce the body's status: as a status object *per se*, a site of investment, and an instrument of self-production." (Smith Maguire 2008: 3). In this perspective Smith Maguire is dividing the field of fitness culture into two categories, the consumers and the producers, even though it is seen as both of these categories are co-producers of the body as an object "fit for consumption", the agency of the consumer as a co-producer of fitness culture as such, is obscured. Therefore it is a critical change of the scope of the analytical focal point by investigating fitness blogs, as the writers of these blogs can be seen as both fitness consumers and producers of fitness culture simultaneously.

Tied to the concept of fitness is the body, a term which is in itself difficult to define (Hedblom 2009: 13), and there have been a considerable amount of work written about the delineation of the body within different academic disciplines (Hedblom 2009:14). What constitutes a "fit body" is not a static occurrence, but rather "the fit body cannot be fixed, and remains difficult define scientifically...fitness is a complex historical category" (McCormack 1999:160 in Hedblom 2009:229)

As for the fit body in Sweden, research has mainly been directed towards the physical body in real life, such as the dissertation in social anthropology *The Body is Made to Move: Gym and Fitness Culture in Sweden*, where Christina Hedblom is exploring gym and fitness culture in Sweden through conducting a field study at gyms and fitness centers in Sweden (2009), within which she states that "Aspiring to live and eat healthy, and to shape the body, has for many become an integrated part of life" (Hedblom 2009: 12). As such it can be said that exercise, fitness, and health are components that have entered the mundane. Further, Hedblom

deconstructs the moving bodies found at her field site, and investigates why they move and why they move in specific intentional manners (2009:181). Through this deconstruction Hedblom delineates norms that circumscribe “how to think and speak about exercise and the reasons for exercise, connected to groups of different ages and gender, norms and ideas that are medially transmitted and learned from outside the gym.” (2009:183). Consequently, this will explain how and why bodies move, since it is dependent upon the internalization of ideas, science, and beliefs (Hedblom 2009: 13). Following this argument, the individual within fitness culture, is guided by specific structures in order to achieve a certain fitness status. Hedblom also centers her writing upon how scientific knowledge is being negotiated and adapted by individuals within fitness culture through their practices (Hedblom 2009). While Hedblom pursued an ethnographic study at gym and fitness centers, I intend to investigate health and fitness culture at a cybernetic field site. However, I find that the discussion concerning how ideas, science and beliefs guide the exercising body rich, as such as thinking of how a subject is being constructed through textual representation within fitness blogs. In this sense I have the intention of finding new and wider understandings of health and fitness culture in Sweden, or rather the conditions for understanding health and fitness, and hence, the possible subjects within these entangled discourses.

When considering the meaning of health, the general definition of health is that health is the absence of disease (Lock 1998), and at face value one can detect one’s health status through numbers, such as BMI (body mass index), cholesterol levels, triglyceride levels, bodily circumference and so forth (Smith Maguire 2008). However, since my interest lay not specifically within the range of mere numeric representation per se, in that I am in the pursuit of investigating the construction of the “fit” and healthy subject through examining fitness blogs, I have directed my attention towards academic literature that comprehends health in a critical view. For instance Locke argues that: “Social, cultural, and political meanings are inevitably implicated in how health is being conceptualized.” (Lock 1998: 48). Health is not self-evident, the meaning of health changes historically and it also differs cross-culturally (Lock 1998), which furthers the argument for the investigation of fitness culture and understandings of health at differentiated sites and marginally explored settings such as blogs in a particular timely and spatial context.

The understanding of the entangled relationship between health, fitness, and consumer culture within our world of today is an important element when considering the construction of the fitness subject and its body. This, since the body is usually seen through the lens of health or disease, and these bodily states are matters of individual will or fail (Smith Maguire 2008: 40), obscuring social factors that enable or disable health and fitness practices (Smith Maguire 2008), for instance the so often guilt that is laid upon the obese individual constructing the unwarranted fat as nothing but self-acquired, while the majority of obese individuals in the US are found among the poor and non-white, making obesity a symptom of a collective social problem (Berlant 2010:26), rather than somebody's own fault. Further, the form or health of the body is usually associated to the ocular perception of the body and through this, making an investment in the body's form and health is a way to achieve a competitive position within a consumer service economy (Smith Maguire 2008: 40). It is stated that in the US, "health has become a commodity and an industry." (Klein 2010:16). The entanglement between the concepts of health, fitness and consumerism can be read through the statistics of dieting women in the US, which constitutes 50 percent of America's female population, of these 95 percent will fail (Klein 2010:16). Through these numbers Richard Klein is asking the critical question of whether the practice of yo-yo¹ dieting is even more harmful to an individual than obesity is (Klein 2010:16). Klein is also concerned of how public health is constructing moral imperatives as means of social control with political implications for individual freedom (Klein 2010:17). And when regarding the trends of both the increase in dieting and obese persons, Klein concludes that "The more we diet, the fatter we seem to become" (Klein 2010). A similar paradoxical relationship can be found in a Swedish context as the Swedish population hit the European record of numbers of sick leave in the beginning of the 21st century, while at the same time there was a story told of the inhabitants in Sweden as "obsessed of their own health" (Frykman & Hansen Carlssons 2009:12,13) and people were cramming the aerobic rooms, and almost everyone was on some kind of diet, and the sales of health supplements and self-care products hit all time high (Frykman & Hansen Carlssons 2009:12,13). Health was a way of understanding the meaning of life, but still people were getting more sick than ever (Frykman & Hansen Carlssons 2009:13). Between the years 1997 and 2007 over 100 billion kronor of

¹ Losing weight through diet and then gaining it back again repeatedly and often during short periods of time (Klein 2010)

tax money were used to pay for sick leave, that is the same amount that were used to pay for health care, and all higher education and research (Frykman & Hansen Carlssons 2009:13). By the financial amount to cover individuals' sick leave, it is not surprisingly a pressing matter to understand the causes of the sick leave and there have been a considerable quantity of research in the quest for solving this economic burden (Frykman & Hansen Carlssons 2009:14,15). For instance, there's been research relating unemployment, age and gender (ibid). However in Jonas Frykman and Kjell Hansen Carlssons' study, the spatial location of the individuals on sick leave was put in focus, since there seemed to be a considerable difference in health status depending on where you lived in Sweden (Frykman & Carlsson 2009:10,13). The result of Frykman and Hansen Carlssons' study shed light on how a specific location with a specific culture did in large part influence the quantity of sick leave. The healthier southern parts of Sweden, with a higher density of bigger cities, a culture of the "self-made man" were prevalent, in that the individuals felt they were in the position to shape their own lives and the safety net the government provided were considered as something in the background, only to be mentioned in truly dire situations (Frykman & Hanssen Carlsson 2009: 227). The less involvement with the government, the more hope for the future was noticed with the inhabitants (ibid). As for the more northern regions, where the numbers of sick leave were predominant, the sentiment were more of the feeling of being a victim in a changing society, which gave rise to a feeling of entitlement to utilize society's institutions, such as paid sick leave (Frykman and Hanssen Carlssons 2009:226).

Engaging in exercise and fitness practices are seen as an ideal route acquiring physical capital constituted by the body's function and form, and its health and appearance (Smith Maguire 2008:40). "The accomplishment of a youthful, attractive appearance brings status rewards; so too does the development of one's health.", therefore "...the body is the individual's first and foremost important project." (Smith Maguire 2008:41). By public health promotions that encourages exercise in order to reduce the risk of lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease and cancer, fitness practices are given legitimacy from health discourse (Smith Maguire 2008: 44,50).

In turn, consumerist rhetoric of social and economic norms is working under the condoning scientific information (Metzl 2010:6). In correlation to my study of fitness blogs, I would argue that these blogs should be seen as a part of this advisory field within health and fitness culture,

and therefore important locations of inquiry in order to widen the understanding of the construction of the fit body and the fitness subject, especially since therapeutic and educative experts mobilize the individuals to examine, know and act upon themselves in certain ways (Smith Maguire 2008:48).

In returning to the malleable definition of fitness and health, fitness could be conceptualized as a floating signifier, within which individuals can project any ills or deficiencies they detect in their lives (Smith Maguire 2008: 127), and within the same concept, the fitness practice of exercise is seen to be the panacea for relieving these ills (Smith Maguire 2008). Just as fitness is seen as the panacea for physical distress, health is often perceived as a transparent universal good (Metzl 2010:2). Even though health is constructed through quantifiable data, the constitution of our own health is through distinction of other's health in our value judgments about others (Metzl 2010:2). Morality is embedded in the connotation of health. For instance, being overweight or obese is considered to carry evident health risks, however the shape of the body is supposed to be a consequence of a lifestyle of your own choosing. Therefore an excessive body size suffers the moral judgment of failure and laziness (Metzl 2010). The conflation of health, appearance and fitness is put to the fore when assessing the slender and "fit" body standing beside the overweight one. The mere appearances juxtaposed for ocular measurement bear understandings of what is valued and what is not, what is healthy and what is not, who has control and who has not, what is attractive and what is not, and who has a healthy lifestyle. A healthy appearance is a status marker.

According to Foucault the economy of health is the integration and improvement of health, health services, and health consumption in the economic development of privileged societies (Foucault 2000:135). There was an economic imperative to control the danger of ill health due to late 18th century capitalism, which depended upon a productive labor force, therefore the body was socialized as an object of productive force and this was realized through what Foucault terms as *biopolitics* (Foucault 2000:137). The body became a biopolitical reality, whereas medicine became a biopolitical strategy (Foucault 2000:137). By means of the capitalist system humans become bound to the production apparatus for which they labor, bodies became transformed into hyperprofit (Foucault 2000:86). Even though Foucault is problematizing the social medicalization centuries ago, the argumentation is still valid today, and in correspondence to the topic of inquiry in this paper, fitness achieves its legitimacy

through the medical framing of how exercise wards off the dangers of disease. Through this perspective health is constructed as risk management, framed as for the individual's own sake, but in its political sense for the sake of the body in production. Fitness is thus a strategy of handling perils towards the forces of production.

In the anthology *Against Health: How health became the new morality*, the authors are investigating what new selves, citizens, and what non-selves and non-citizens are being constructed through the current health rhetoric (Metzl 2010: 6, 7). In a similar vein I am also in the pursuit of locating the strategies for the construction of the "fit" and healthy subject through fitness blogs, and just as Metzl et al are using the critique of health in order to discover new possibilities for subjects in health discourse, I am also lead by the curiosity of in what ways the use of the particular medium of blogs may create certain potential other positions within health and fitness culture.

3.2 The social construction of gender

Gender is often taken for granted as something natural and dictated through biology, but even though our hard working bodies are constitutions of flesh and blood, "...bodies are also shaped and constrained through cumulative social practices, structures of opportunity, wider cultural meanings, interactions with others and more." (Dworkin 2001: 333). Recent studies show a significant increase of participation in fitness activities, especially among women (Dworkin 2001, Verbrugge 2002). Implicated by this trend is what Shari L. Dworkin refers to as that "...the more muscular millennium is here..." (2001: 333), and that this directs us to opportunities to investigate a gender-paradox, that of gender and muscles (Dworkin 2001). Further, the history of women exercising and participating in sports that precedes this new millennium of muscles is by itself an informative example of the social construction and significance of female physicality (Verbrugge 2002: 54). Even though there has been a progression regarding women's participation in sports, Martha H. Verbrugge contends that; "American apprehensions about female exercise will continue, not because our science is incomplete but because the social dimensions of women's nature and power remain contested in a society so invested in "difference" as a concept and practice" (Verbrugge 2002: 64). This is evidenced through the practice of scientific studies that are pursued along gender constructing questions, such as whether or not women are more prone to injuries than men, and

if exercise can compromise reproductive abilities among women. These kinds of questions are based upon an understanding of difference and therefore through research there is a reproduction of concepts of gender difference and the experts in the area of sports and body science have been working within social frameworks rather than through intellectual curiosity. Research about women's exercise has played a contributing part of constructing the nature of womanhood and this endeavor was to a large part initiated during the nineteenth century, when a growth in women's activities was evident (Verbrugge 2002). This transitional phase of exercising practices was due to new patterns of work and leisure, the commercialization of recreation, the popular health movement, and concerns about women's health. This in turn induced biomedical interests in exercise (Verbrugge 2002). This translated into the twentieth century a bourgeoisie culture of "the new woman, an ideal that celebrated vibrant, wholesome, white heterosexual femininity." (Verbrugge 2002: 55).

At present day, women exceeds men in quantity when it comes to participating in sports and fitness activities and this correlates to the thriving business of sports apparel, recreation means big business in America (Verbrugge 2002). Alongside this development is also the maturation of the science of fitness, which lately in conjunction with the explosive increase of women in fitness, have been particularly occupied with the reproductive repercussions of athletic activities among women, especially athletic amenorrhea "...athletic amenorrhea was only the tip of the dysfunction iceberg." (Verbrugge 2002: 59) and in 1992 the co-morbidity of eating disorders, premature osteoporosis and amenorrhea (the loss of menstruation) among active girls and women, was labeled the "Female Athlete Triad" (Verbrugge 2002: 60) by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and further in 1997 it was concluded by ACSM, that one or more elements of this triad would probably constitute a risk for all physically active girls (Verbrugge 2002). A higher risk of injury among female athletes was also a topic highly debated within scholarly work and popular media. Underlying these kinds of investigations was the question of whether exercise was something unnatural to the female body (Verbrugge 2002). This understanding of the naturalness of the woman body was in alignment with the appreciation of the skills presented by the male body as the standard and in this appropriation the awkward body of the woman, born for reproduction, was constructed unnatural within an athletic setting and "Such a system naturalizes "difference", devalues the female body and often translates into real-world inequalities" (Verbrugge 2002: 63). This inequality is further discussed in the article "Holding Back": Negotiating a Glass Ceiling on Women's Muscular

Strength” by Shari L. Dworkin (2001), where the author refers to ideologies that dictate women not to discard the weight rooms, since natural differences grounded in biology constrains the woman body from getting too big muscles (Dworkin 2001). Nonetheless, women can and do gain muscle. This ideology of incommensurable difference between men and women regarding gaining muscle mass, is working under the cloak of common sense. Dworkin contends that “...the tension that results from the difference between common sense and the knowledge of one’s own bodily experience is compounded by widespread bodily ideologies about what women’s bodies *should* [sic] do.” (2001: 334). Dworkin is asking the question whether or not women are celebrating and embracing the image of the strong woman with muscles to show off, or do women only workout as hard as the upper limit of muscularity of the woman body, and thus, do women negotiate a culturally produced glass ceiling? (Dworkin 2001). Furthermore, there are also concerns whether or not this recent celebration of muscle should be seen as such a transgressing practice, when it just might be a reformulation of what Foucault would determine as docile bodily self-surveillance (Foucault 1979 in Dworkin 2001), that is a practice of self-assessment according to an ideal in order to keep the individual body at the top of its game to be as productive as possible. The productive body is the docile body that is being produced through a practice of self-surveillance (Foucault 1972, 1975, 1976, 1977).

In spite of these ideological limitations many women have felt sport and fitness as bodily self-empowering practices (Dworkin 2001) and especially through the practice of female bodybuilders, with their impressive size in musculature contesting norms of femininity (Dworkin 2001). This arena, on which the female bodybuilder stands, has been a captivating stage where investigations of gendered bodily negotiations have taken place. Earlier research has shown that “women’s bodybuilding both challenges and reproduces ideals of emphasized femininity, which refers to the most privileged forms of femininity, because the increasing size of the female bodybuilder is only acceptable when “tamed” by beauty” (Dworkin 2001: 335), which is evidenced through the judging practices at female bodybuilding contests, where competitors are being measured against feminine physical markers, such as breast implants, painted nails and dyed hair (Dworkin 2001). The study pursued by Dworkin, where she investigated the practices of women at two different gyms, resulted in the conclusion that there is a predominance of an awareness of an upper limit of the pursuit of the attainment of muscular size and strength, and that this glass ceiling induced specific strategies of weight lifting

practices and cardiovascular exercise, in order to negotiate and mediate the culturally constructed border of female muscularity (Dworkin 2001).

In the article “Cause that’s what girls do” *The Making of a Feminized Gym*”, Maxine Leeds Craig and Rita Liberti (2007) are describing how both men and women join the gym, however there is a structural sex segregation at work while at the gym, which was evidenced through Dworkin’s ethnographic study of a fitness center, where men were predominantly found in the weight rooms and the women were preferably occupied with cardiovascular activities. However, the study of female participation in fitness activities undergone by Craig and Liberti (2007), is an exception within sociological research, in that it considers the gender coding of the gym as an institution (Craig & Liberti 2007). The bulk of the preceding research of women and fitness activities have centered upon the meaning of fitness activities in women’s lives (Craig & Liberti 2007). As there has been an increase in mixed-gender gyms and an emergence of new slightly muscularized images of women, researchers of sports and gender has investigated whether women’s participation in aerobics bolster conformance or transgression of gendered social norms (Craig & Liberti 2007). According to Dworkin’s study, the reason for choosing cardiovascular exercise over weightlifting was that this kind of activity allowed women to gain strength without transgressing gendered norms of female appearance (Craig & Liberti 2007). While former research provides an understanding of how fitness activities affect women’s experience of their bodies, Craig and Liberti are putting forth a study of the organizational process according to Acker’s theory of how “...organizations may have gendered divisions and symbols, structure gender into interactions, foster gendered identities, and build gender into institutional logic.” (Craig & Liberti 2007: 697). Craig and Liberti also center their article on the notion of how the context directs women to do gender in particular ways (Craig and Liberti 2007). At the core of Craig and Liberti’s article lies the investigation of the ways an organization’s use of technology and labor created a specific context that promoted a particular feminized culture within the historically masculine institution of the gym (Craig & Liberti 2007). Their conclusion of how this particular organization of all-female gyms, was that conformity to an idealized female appearance mattered little, but social expectations for feminized interactions were prevalent (Craig and Liberti 2007). Their findings concluded that the notion of the gym as a masculine institution is still very evident (Craig and Liberti 2007). “Real” and “regular” gyms were seen as male boxing gyms and bodybuilders’ gyms as well as regular mixed-gender gyms (Craig and Liberti 2007). The all-female gym was

not considered as a “real” gym, but rather as a “pseudo-gym” (Craig and Liberti 2007), by the means of the equipment that was offered.

3.3 Writing practices and the possibilities of cyberspace

One of the underlying assumptions that rests in the back of my head as I am aiming at investigating how previously mentioned social structures constrain gender production, is how these social structures of gender are, if they are, displayed in cyberspace, more specifically through the means of Body Fitness blogs. It is in this very area I find an omission of knowledge. As recounted in earlier sections of this thesis, there has been a considerable attention paid to academic research when concerning the female body in the flesh and how social structure builds this flesh as the female body is exercising and accumulating muscle. However in a very recent study conducted within a Northern American context by two Swedish researchers, Jesper Andreasson and Thomas Johansson, gender construction was analyzed through investigating blogs written by American female personal trainers through the objective of that internet communities “...can be viewed as cultural manifestations” and how “...bloggers define their perception of the(ir) world, and thereby contribute to shaping a specific understanding of gender and the body within (Internet-mediated) fitness culture” (Andreasson and Johansson 2013:4). The result of the study indicated that the field of fitness allows us to explore different ways of doing and (re)presenting gender, and that the commercialization of fitness and the selling of fitness and bodies, is part of the self-representations, but there were also challenges to hegemonic masculinity (Andreasson & Johansson 2013:8).

While Andreasson and Johansson centered their study upon of the texts and pictures as such by the means of discourse analysis, my objective was also to understand the very writing of the blogs as an act of self-construction. Therefore I found Michel Foucault’s literary work regarding *technologies of the selves* useful, within which writing is seen to be a strategy of this (Foucault 1997). Since the writing of blogs are not done by social structures alone, but created by material hands in the flesh of human beings, there lies an important concern of what it means, what implications it might have to be a writer in this cybernetic setting. Writing in ancient times were considered as a *technology of the self* by Michel Foucault (1997), as a way of taking care of oneself, a requirement in order to live an ethical life (Foucault 1997). In this sense, self-writing is a significant element in the construction of the self. The analogy between the act of writing in ancient times and the contemporary practice of writing personal blogs may seem farfetched, but still valid in the sense that within the framework of technologies of the

self, given by Foucault, it is an useful instrument in order to comprehend the very practice of writing blogs, the individual act of it. That is to say, understanding the agency is important in order to avoid the risk of treating the individual as a passive subject acting blindly according to social structure.

This in congruence with an employment of Pierre Bourdieu's theory concerning the economy of cultural production and social stratification and its correlating human acts (Bourdieu 1984) will even further function as an auxiliary component in constructional forces enabled and deployed through fitness blogs. Subsequently, in the following chapter I will offer a more explicit account of the method of discourse analysis which has enabled the identification of strategic undertakings in the construction of the subject of fitness, health, and gender. Furthermore I will also give a compact overview of virtual ethnography as my empirical material consists of Swedish fitness blogs, and subsequently I will also provide a presentation of these blogs.

Chapter 4 Method

4.1 Virtual ethnography

Ethnography is explained as “a form of theoretical practice and that it is a theoretically informed encounter with the other” (Shumar & Madison 2013:266). An ethnographic study conducted in a virtual field site such as the Internet is also referred to as netnography (Lopez-Rocha 2010:291) (Shumar & Madison 2013:264). A study conducted at a virtual field site does not inherit the traditional ‘face-to-face’ encounter attached to a locality with tangible borders, but on the hand, it is rather attentive towards flow and connectivity (Lopez-Rocha 2010:292, and different forms of interactions (Shumar & Madison 2013:264). Critics against online research argue that the non-terrestrial connection is not complacent with traditional notions of ethnography (Griggs 2011). Nevertheless, researchers claim that the Internet should be seen as inherently social (O’Reilly 2009: 216), and that virtual ethnography is still a form of theoretical practice that involves an encounter with the other (Herzfield 2001 in Shumar & Madison 2013:265). As such “Creating methodological guidelines for this type of research faces the same problems of offline research, which involve the massive diversity of human social experiences”, and thus using a singular methodology that can be employed in different online contexts is not a realist endeavor (Lopez-Rocha 2010:291). Still, even though the characteristics of the Internet is changing and movable, it is not exempt from critically assessing the validity of the research, such as reliability, ethic concerns, issues of privacy and informed consent (Lopez-Rocha 2010:293) (O’Reilly 2009: 218). Further, even though retrieving the material in cyberspace does not involve direct face-to-face interaction, the utterances made and analyzed can in a similar vein to traditional ethnography, be treated with some critical consideration as in both instances things can be said and written with untruthful content (Lopez-Rocha 2010:293).

My research conducted regarding fitness blogs in Sweden is influenced by Andreasson and Johansson’s analysis regarding self-portrayals and gender constructions among female personal trainers within an Internet-mediated framework of fitness culture, and they, as I, utilized the empirical material of fitness blogs (Andreasson & Johansson 2013:1). Andreasson and Johansson also discussed the ethical questions regarding the use of blogs and web pages as empirical material, such as the writers of the blogs may not expect that their blog posts will be read and analyzed within an academic framework, which raises questions of consent and degree of publicity (Andreasson & Johansson 2013:4). However, by the argument that: “The

status of the selected blogs is that they are accessible to anyone with an Internet connection.” (Andreasson & Johansson 2013:4), the persons who express themselves through this medium must be aware of this (ibid). As follows, I have, on the basis of this argument, and the fact that through current search engine technology anyone can easily enter a quotation and locate the authors of the blogs (Andreasson & Johansson 2013:4), treated the blogs as published printed media and not used any pseudonyms. However, as with Andreasson and Johansson’s study, the quotations I’ve used as examples in my research are not of delicate private matters, but are relevant to my research objectives (Andreasson & Joahnsson 2013:4).

As the selected method of use has been discourse analysis of text written through the practice of blogs, this study might not be counted as taking a theoretical stance in the encounter of the other, and as such not an ethnographic study, but rather rendered as a textual analysis within the social sciences. However, blogs are usually thematized in ways that will attract particular audiences and lifestyle groups, and thus could be seen as embedded in a particular sociocultural and/or national context (Andreasson and Johansson 2013:3). Additionally, since former research concerning fitness and sporting lifestyles have primarily been concerned with the lived experience of the participants (Griggs 2011), blogs can be seen as self-expressions of culture, thus analyzing blogs is about understanding culture and the human encounter with culture and her negotiations of it. Also, some researchers argue that in our contemporary world one cannot distinguish our dwelling as either online or offline, as we are always engaged in both (Shumar & Madison 2013:264, 265).

4.2 Material - Swedish Fitness blogs

Due to the development of the internet, contemporary blogs contain elements of interaction (Griggs 2011), which is in accordance of the definition of web 2.0. Web 2.0 is a term used for expressing the evolution of the Word Wide Web, where the progress is described as a movement from web 1.0 to web 2.0 to web 3.0 to 4.0 (Aghaei et al 2012). While web 1.0 is defined as read-only and mono-directional, web 2.0 is characterized as read-write (Aghaei et al 2012). In this perspective web 1.0 is more similar to regular printed media, while web 2.0 is more participatory in its existence. Even though cyberspace is an everyday occurrence in our lives, still ethnographers have yet still much to explore at this site of reality (Griggs 2011). As has been stated earlier, academic research has paid a marginal interest in online communities of alternative sports practitioners (Griggs 2011: 85). This fact is especially evident when considering the scholastic curiosity regarding fitness blogs (Andreasson & Johansson 2013).

The research that has been done has mainly been focused within an American context (Andreasson & Johansson 2013). In the article *Female Fitness in the Blogosphere: Gender Health, and the body*, Jesper Andreasson and Thomas Johansson are analyzing central parts of fitness culture through investigating blogs and home pages, “where female fitness experts share their knowledge and expertise.”, and through this analyze how ideals of gender and femininity are constructed (2013:2). Just as in America, the authors of fitness blogs are often writing through their professional role as a gym instructor, a personal trainer, or a profession related to fitness and health (Andreasson & Johansson 2013, Twingly 2012), integrating the personal life within the professional life and vice versa. Andreasson and Johansson value the importance of analyzing specifically female bloggers when concerning fitness culture, a stance that may be applicable in a Swedish context as well, since according to Twingly’s report, Twingly being a Swedish data mining company, 4 out 5 fitness bloggers are female (Twingly 2012). While Andreasson and Johansson mainly were occupied with the construction of gender within fitness culture in and through blogging, I am directing my focus more towards the entangled relationship between fitness and health and how the good/bad subject is being created through and by discourses that structure fitness and health culture, therefore I have not solely concentrated my analysis upon female bloggers. Guided by this intention, I have selected 9 different blogs written by 4 male and 5 female authors. Additionally, even though I didn’t have access to the different writers’ earnings, I took it as an established knowledge that the fitness professionals by occupation is part of the socioeconomic position of the middle class, due to former research (Smith Maguire 2008).

One of the more challenging aspects of nethnography is the selection of a field site (O’Reilly 2009:215). The process of selecting the empirical material was thus also one initial task to tackle as the plethora of Swedish fitness blogs is vast, and even though I was already familiar with some fitness blogs as I have a personal lifelong interest in fitness and exercise, in order to avoid complete arbitrariness, even though total absence of a biased eye is impossible, I have based a large part of my selection through Twingly’s report of the most influential Swedish fitness blogs in 2012, *Blogging engages the fitness world* (Twingly 2012). I found my way to Twingly’s website through using search engines online via keywords such as ‘Swedish fitness blogs’ (svenska fitnessbloggar), ‘best Swedish fitness blogs’ (bästa svenska fitnessbloggar), and ‘body fitness blogs’ (bodyfitness bloggar), and was through interlinking, directed towards

the report made by Twingly and to bloggportalen.se. This method is congruent with how O'Reilly describes virtual ethnography as a way of looking to connections between things (O'Reilly 2009:217).

Twingly is a data mining company founded in 2006 in Linköping, which focus on indexing blogs and provide companies with solutions to encourage bloggers to advertise about brands and products (Twingly 2012). Twingly also owns bloggportalen.se, which is a catalogue of Swedish blogs, and as of September 2013 almost 30 000 Swedish blogs were included in bloggportalen.se's register (bloggportalen.se 2013). Twingly's report over fitness blogs was made through the selection of both Twingly's and bloggportalen.se's data indexes. This report summarized the 26 top fitness blogs in Sweden, based on how many other bloggers had linked their blogs to theirs, which is the same method Google uses in order to rank searched hits (Twingly 2012). This report was presented during the fitness festival in November 2012 in Sweden (Twingly 2012). By the ranking of interconnectedness, these top blogs could be seen as particular nodes within fitness culture present in the blogosphere, much in the same manner as Christina Hedblom describes certain individuals that she encountered during her field work at Gym and Fitness centers, that "If we see the spread of ideas as overlapping networks, there are some people and sources that function as more influential nodes in the network than others" (Hedblom 2009: 122). Within Twingly's report there were several blogs that were quite similar both in content and demography, therefore only some were selected for my research and in addition to the blogs present in the report, I have also selected fitness blogs from two prominent Fitness blogging communities, such as, My Fit Body at myshowroom.se and shapemeup.se. Some of the blogs from these sites are also present in Twingly's report. The reason for this selection is that even though many blogs are indexed with Twingly and bloggportalen.se, there are still many blogs that aren't. In addition to this both shapemeup.se and My Fit Body harbor prominent names within the Swedish fitness scene. Further, the topics that were mostly featured within the Swedish fitness blogs according to Twingly's report, were competition and preparing for a competition in fitness, to be healthy, and to get back in to shape after a pregnancy (Twingly 2012). The blogs that I have chosen all include these previously mentioned topics and the empirical material from the blogs comprised blog posts published between September 15 2013 to December 15 2013, and they consists of the blogs found below.

The blog *Cope More*, is written by Anna, whose surname is not mentioned in the blog. Anna is a middle-aged mother of two, living in the most southern part of Sweden. Professionally she has been working with fitness for quite some time, and has also two companies of her own.

Kick in the butt (Spark I baken), is written by Therese Alvéén (2013), who started blogging in 2007, and since then Alvéén has received several awards, such as “Best sport blog of the year” by Aftonbladet, “Best role model of the year” by Health Academy in 2009, “Best exercise blog of the year” by Cosmopolitan in 2010 and by Finest in 2011. Alvéén’s blog was also named “Sweden’s most powerful exercise blog” by Twingly. Alvéén is a fitness professional with 16 years of work experience in the field as a certified group exercise instructor, personal trainer, diet consultant, web editor, and a freelancing writer. Alvéén resides in Stockholm with her husband and two children (Alvéén 2013).

PT-Fia, authored by Sofia Sjöström. Sjöström is a 25 year old living in Stockholm, is a certified personal trainer, nutritional coach, gym instructor, and health consultant. Additionally, with her expertise within health, nutrition, and exercise, Sjöström is also the owner of two companies. Just as Therese Alvéén, Sjöström is an award winning blogger through receiving the awards: “Best health blog”, and “Best training blog”, in 2012. The blog’s popularity can further be comprehended through the 30 000 different readers each week (Sjöström 2013).

ARgetfit, is a blog written by Ako Rahim who has been blogging since 4 years back with a home base in Stockholm. Currently Rahim works as a coach for competitors in athletic fitness and men’s physique, and he is also a fitness model. As an athlete Rahim has several medals in athletic fitness both nationally, as well as internationally, and he is also a cast member of the Swedish version of the TV-show ‘Gladiators’ (Rahim 2013).

Philip Lailani is the writer of the blog *PT-Philip*, which has over 60 000 visitors per month and was awarded “Best exercise blog” by Finest. Lailani is a fitness professional working as a personal trainer in Stockholm, but has also a bachelor’s degree received as Stockholm University.

Em Löfgren writes about her road towards a future competition in body fitness and works within human resources (Löfgren 2013).

One of the younger writers is Bea Malecki with her blog *Svettlukt*. In addition to working as a personal trainer and a thaiboxing instructor in a suburb to Stockholm, Malecki is also studying to become an engineer at KTH Royal Institute of Technology (Malecki 2013).

Joakim Linder writes the blog *Just do it*, which is a blog mostly concerned with putting fitness within a scientific framework as many blog posts are referring to recent research regarding exercise, predominately about weightlifting, nutrition and supplements. As such, Linder is quite restrictive on the subject of his private life and centers his blog posts on his own exercise, intake of supplements, and nutrition (Linder 2013).

Peter Blaha, an author of a blog carrying his own name is, just like Ako Rahim, one of the characters in the Swedish version of 'Gladiators' and his training consists of primarily weightlifting, crossfit, and rugby, as he is part of Sweden's national team in rugby. In addition to Blaha's success in sports, he is also an achieved businessman as a CEO.

Some of the blogs had changed location and blog community from when they were published on Twingly's list, but as they were the same blogs by the same author with no change in theme, I did not see any reason to exclude these from the study. This merely displayed the ephemeral character of the Internet.

4.3 Discourse analysis

The analysis of discourses is described by Michel Foucault as: "identifiable collections of utterances governed by rules of construction and evaluation which determine within some thematic area what may be said, by whom, in what context, and with what effect" (Gordon 2000:xvi). In this study the thematic theme is fitness and the utterances are the writings found in the selected Swedish fitness blogs, the area as such is to be considered as the fitness field. Text is considered to be produced within the borders of certain power relations in a discourse and by realizing this, a positioning of a subject can be illuminated (Eldén 2005:67) (Bergström & Boréus 2005:14, 15). While the main object of analysis is the textual representation of the blogs, text in itself isn't power, but is rather constructive (Lykke 2009:165). Language is never given and does not exist in the same way as utterances. Language exists only as a constructional system for the utterances that are possible (Foucault 1969:107,108), while the discourse will govern how it is conceivable to speak of something (Bergström & Boréus 2005:306). Further, the concept of discourse analysis is productive in the way that it can be used in order to analyze a plethora of different kinds of texts, seen as products of certain power and knowledge relations

(Mills 2004:21). Thus, the text of the fitness blogs are seen as a display of the constructional properties of the healthy fitness subject, as it is produced within a certain field with certain possibilities. Yet, it is paramount to realize that the individuals writing the blogs are not just bodies governed by discourse, but rather as producers of discourse and culture, and that their practice is self-constituting. Also, since the practice of discourse analysis doesn't adhere to any specific methodological proceedings, but is rather open for creative use and development (Bergström & Boréus 2005:329, 349) (Lykke 2009:164). The analytical work is dependent upon the purpose, and since the objective is to uncover approaches which enables the construction of the fitness subject within the blogosphere, the discourse analysis that I am employing is led by the investigation of the textual representation of ordinary events which expose the fitness lifestyle and through this, while not explicitly uttered, but implicitly narrated, strategies for the becoming of the healthy fitness subject can be comprehended, and thus the positions that this subject can appropriate. Additionally, discourse is always in dialogue with other discourses, which implies the possibility of positions of resistance (Mills 2004:12-14). However, rather than describing incongruent positions as mere resistance, I would rather describe differentiating strategies as different practices of negotiating discourse and the possibilities of the fitness field. Thus, the writers of the blogs are individuals expressing themselves within a certain set of possibilities.

Further, the proceedings of a discourse analysis aims at exhibiting the inauthenticity of the object. Things do not have any deeper meaning, but through a discourse analysis it's possible to discern certain rules which make it possible to form discursive objects. This means that the purpose is not to retrieve the origin of the object, but rather an attempt to comprehend the network of regularities that govern its diffusion (Foucault 1969:65). Discourse which one can read and write is not just a meeting between words and things. Through discourse analysis one's intention is to uncover what has been taken for granted as constructed, since discourse is not just a conglomeration of signs, but rather it is through discourse that objects are constructed. Following, discourse may be made up by words, but do more than signs that signify (Foucault 1969:66, 67).

A discourse analysis can be applied to any forms of utterances, both spoken and written (Foucault 1969:41, 42). To analyze an utterance is to determine the terms for its existence, to proclaim its borders, assert the correlations it may have with other utterances (Foucault

1969:43). Hence, I am interested in the practicalities of the health and fitness discourse articulated through fitness blogs.

According to Foucault discipline produce individuals, as the disciplinary power govern through means of hierarchical supervision and normalizing systems, where the hierarchical supervision sees without being seen (Foucault 1975:171,172). The disciplinary power takes hold of the body through optics, hence power is seemingly immaterial, but highly physical nonetheless (Foucault 1975: 178). An instrument in a disciplinary system is to produce a hierarchy of good and bad individuals, which will instill the will to be alike (Foucault 1975:184) and through discipline productive individuals will be manufactured (Foucault 1975: 212, 218). However, it is crucial not to appropriate the individuals writing the blogs that are the object of analysis, as mere bodies that are being directed by discursive power into subject positions, but rather acknowledge that it takes a body in order to negotiate and transfer the discursive borders of our minds, i.e. our consciousness is embodied (Davies 2005: 191, 192). Therefore agency is not absent when conceptualizing discursive power, but rather it is a prerequisite (Foucault 2000:341).

An important interjection concerning this research is that my own perspective is dependent upon the subject position I dwell in spatially and timely, which subsequently will influence the research questions (Berner 2005: 40) and therefore are also the possible answers constrained through this initial point of query (Bergström & Boréus 2005: 25, 35), (Madison 2005: 6), (Mulinari 2005: 116). In terms of the reductive properties of methodology, it should be mentioned that by focusing on text, one can at the most make qualified theoretical assumptions regarding how discursive processes positions subjects (Bergström & Boréus 2005: 14). Doing an analysis of blogs raises some ethical questions. When I seek to uncover discourses in the expressions at display in the material, I am exercising a practice of authoritative interpretation. On the other hand, since the material is not based on interviews, the critical power relation between the researcher and the informant during the interaction is not present. However, a power relation of textual production is evident. Writing a blog and writing an analysis of a blog are both knowledge producing practices, yet the analysis has the form of being produced within an academic framework. Further there are ethical considerations to be acknowledged when collecting data online regarding consent and privacy of the informants (Griggs 2011), and the researcher has the possibility to stay invisible, working under 'cyberstealth' (Ebo 1998 in

O'Reilly 2009:218), but as mentioned earlier, the blogs are published openly for anyone with an Internet connection, therefore the blogs can be treated as conventional public media. At times distinctions between the private and the public may be hard to distinguish (Griggs 2011), hence, I only included material relevant to my study and I only cited the postings by the blog writers and excluded comments by other readers, as one had to be a member of the blog community in order to do this. Therefore it would be unethical to use the comments as material for this study.

In addition, another aspect to of concern when focusing on textual production through blogs is that of that which separates the virtual ethnography from the traditional ethnographic study, namely, the face-to-face interaction, which is the lack of ability to recognize emotions and stories told through body language. However, since my main focus lies within the constructional properties of the production of the healthy fitness subject through textual presentation in a virtual setting, I did not find this as a privation from analytic comprehension. In order to uncover the strategies of the construction of the fitness subject, I used Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse analysis as an analytic tool and in the following chapter I will present the theoretical framework concerning this. However, even though the empirical material consists of text and the method of analysis was discourse analysis, the blogs were productions of human beings and the discursive practices displayed within these should be seen as negotiations of the discourses that frame these actions. In order to better understand this agency in discourse I've also used the work of Pierre Bourdieu's comprehension of habitus which indicates a breaking point between structure and action (Rydstrom 2002).

Chapter 5 Theory

5.1 The constructional properties of the subject

According to Foucault: “a subject constitutes itself within history and is constantly established and reestablished through history” (Foucault 2000:3), which implicates that the subject is not a constant, but emerging. A considerable amount of Foucault’s work have been centered upon showing the historical construction of a subject through discourse, which is understood as consisting of a set of strategies which are part of social practices (Foucault 2000:4). A subject is not a substance, rather, it is a form that is variable and dependent upon context, for instance one constitute oneself in a certain way as a political subject when putting in a vote in an election, compared to the subject that is speaking in a meeting expressing one’s sexual desires (Foucault 1997: 290). In this sense, there is a vital component of agency in the constitution of the subject. Individuals are not just mere passive subjects at the mercy of discourse, but rather, “...the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual him/herself, they are models that he/she finds in his/her culture and are proposed upon him/her by culture, society, and social group.” (Foucault 1997:291). By having this in mind while investigating the practice of fitness blogs, I aim to establish an understanding of how the fitness subject is constituted through agency, and with what measures, and which conditions that enable agency, and further, which are the conditioning structures for the condition of fitness.

According to Foucault, human beings are made subjects (Foucault 2000:326), and one technology of the objectivizing of the subject is through “dividing practices”, through which the subject is divided inside him- or herself, or divided from others (Foucault 2000.326). The process of objectifying human beings into subjects is done for example, through the division of the mad and the insane, or the healthy and the unhealthy (Foucault 2000:326). Thus, the legitimatizing effect of using the cloak of health is being used to mask the language of cultural narcissism in health themed magazines (Metzl 2010:2), such as fitness magazines for instance, within critique of constructing certain bodies as desirable and thus relegating other bodies as obscene, and therefore “justifies particular corporeal types and practices, while implicitly suggesting that those who do not play by along suffer from ill health” (Metzl 2010:3), is being obscured.

Foucault identifies four major types of techniques that human beings use to understand themselves: “technologies of production” that permits us to produce, transform, or manipulate things, “technologies of sign systems” which permits us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification, “technologies of power” that determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject, and “technologies of the self” which permits individuals to the effect by their own means, or the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1997:225). These types of technologies do not function separately as each is associated with certain types of domination, and each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals.

Foucault describes the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization as an interaction between the technique of domination and techniques of the self (Foucault 1997:177). Technologies of the self is to be understood, according to Foucault, as one level in the analysis of power, where the other levels consist of power relations/strategic relations, and states of domination (Foucault 1997: 299), wherein technologies of the self are working within the analytical level of techniques of government (Foucault 1997:299). The relationship of power does not act directly, or immediately on others, but it acts on their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions (Foucault 2000:340). Power “... operates on the field of possibilities in which the behavior of active subjects is able to inscribe itself” (Foucault 2000:341). The exercise of power is a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action, a set of actions upon actions (Foucault 2000:341). Hence, the exercise of power is dependent upon agency. To conduct is to lead others and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities, so the exercise of power is a “conduct of conducts”, and a management of possibilities (Foucault 2000:341). It is this power practice that is realized through government, and not exerted in confrontational acts between adversaries. “To govern ... is to structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault 2000:341). The practice of government directs individuals or groups into certain conducts, e.g. the government of children, the communities, or families (Foucault 2000:341). Since the exercise of power in government is dependent upon action, a power relation is only present where there is freedom, as the power is only exercised over free subjects, free to navigate in a field of possibilities (Foucault 2000:342).

When aspiring to comprehend the distinction between the individual and the subject, the individual is much the same when she/he walks from one room to another, while the subject she/he becomes differs (Foucault 1997:290). Therefore the subject or subjects that I intend to grasp a wider understanding of is specific to this setting in cyberspace. However, even though this inquiry is exclusively concentrated upon fitness blogs, the comprehension of the constitution of the subject extends this particular area of analysis, as it will show just how complicated the process of our coming into being recognizable subjects in our world is, and that practices that are often overlooked as mundane and trivial are really political strategies in our own construction of ourselves.

In order to analyze fitness blogs with the intention to demarcate the constructional properties that these blogs offer the subject, or rather the individual in her/his self-construction, I've found Michel Foucault's theory regarding the political technology of individuals as a way of inquiring how we constitute identity through certain technologies of the self (Foucault 2000:403,404). We constitute ourselves through the exclusion of some others (Foucault 2000:403). Through the political technology of the self, we have been conducted to recognize ourselves as part of a social entity (Foucault 2000:404). Since the thematic locus of the blogs of investigation in this paper is fitness, blogging should be seen as a practice of taking care of oneself, and I've found Michel Foucault's theory concerning the care of the self as a constitutional practice for the individual very useful in understanding the constructional properties endowed the fitness subject. When traced back to antiquity, taking care of oneself was a privilege of the wealthy (Foucault 1997:95), those who had the time to take care of oneself. The care of the self is a domain of complex and regulated practices, and in ancient philosophy it was considered both as a duty and as a technique, and it was a practice that would be done throughout life (Foucault 1997:95), and one should treat oneself throughout one's existence as one's own object (Foucault 1997:96), in that putting the responsibility on you.

Further, the practice of the self is conceived as a permanent battle, one have to fight the whole life through, and one has to train and learn in order to be victorious in the battlefield (Foucault 1997:96). In this practice of preparing for any possible events life might bring, it was important to know true discourses and rational discourses, that is, one needs theoretical knowledge of the principles that govern the world (Foucault 1999:99), which corresponds to Frykman and Hanssen Carlsson's study regarding the prevalence of health respectively sick-leave in Sweden

as they are referring to Robert Putman's study of regional difference social capital in Italy, and Bo Rothstein, when using his term the *general* social capital (Frykman & Hansson Carlssons 2009:226). This *general* social capital is defined as having trust in people in general and at the same time having trust in yourself, in that one can influence one's own situation, which can be concluded as having the capital of having the knowledge of the rules, and trusting the rules, and then by playing by the rules, having the trust in being rewarded in the game (Bo Rothstein 2003:158 in Frykman & Hansson Carlssons 2009:226,227). In correlating this theory of social capital and health to the inquiry of the construction of the fitness subject, it seems like knowing the rules of the individualization in society is key to keep healthy, as earlier literature concerning fitness culture have shown, fitness is thriving in an era of individualization and consumption, where health and disease is located in the individual body, therefor health is an individual achievement and fitness is a means in reaching this goal of a desirable health status (Smith Maguire 2008, Hedblom 2009).

Further, self-technology, through which the construction of the subject is made, implies a set of truth obligations, e.g. discovering the truth, being enlightened by truth, telling the truth (Foucault 1997:177,178). For instance, Christianity obliges everyone to explore who one is, what is happening with oneself, the fault one may have committed, the temptations one may have been exposed to, and further, these things should be told to other people, and thus bear witness to oneself (Foucault 1997:178). Christianity can thus be seen as a "confessional religion" (Foucault 1997:242). Through the duty of disclosing things about oneself, it is a practice of bearing public or private witness against oneself (Foucault 1997:242). It is hard not to make an analogy between this Christian dogma and the contemporary self-writing through blogs. In consequence the fitness professionals writing a blog gain authority and validity through displaying practices of the morals of health and fitness, a contemporary religion, through writing fitness blogs. By this, the act of writing a fitness blog is not just bearing witness to oneself in public, it is also an instrument of gaining an advantage in a consumerist culture within a capitalist system

When studying the aesthetics of existence and the government of oneself and of others during the first two centuries of the Greco-Roman empire (Foucault 1997:207), it was by writing one would capture what has already been said, collect what one had heard and read and through this, shaping oneself as a "citational practice", i.e. writing was a practice in order to make one's

recollection of fragmented knowledge, attained through teaching, listening, or reading, as a means of establishing a relationship of oneself with oneself (Foucault 1997:211). This self-writing was a way to resist scattering by fixing acquired elements, and constituting a shape of the past, and making it possible to always turn back and review it (Foucault 1997:212). By being able to look back, one could also be more confident about the future (Foucault 1997:212). Through writing one would transform the things seen or heard into “tissues and blood” (Foucault 1997:213), thus putting forth an embodiment of knowledge. It was not only the notary practice of things said and done, but also the practice of writing in correspondence with others that were considered as an important component in “the arts of oneself”, which was a way of manifesting oneself to oneself and to others (Foucault 1997:215), a way of offering oneself to another’s gaze by what one tells him about himself (Foucault 1997:216). The letter can be seen as the reciprocity of the gaze and the examination, and can also be seen as a way toward the subjection of the discourse and the objectification of the soul (Foucault 1997:216,217), which can be read as a work towards becoming a subject. In this sense, writing a blog can be seen as a way of objectifying oneself. Plato asks the question of:” How can one see oneself?” and answers that one “cannot simply look at oneself in a mirror; one has to look in another eye, that is, one in oneself, however in oneself in the shape of the eye in the other. And there, in the other pupil, one will see oneself: the pupil serves as a mirror.” (Foucault 1997:275). This could be interpreted as in order to see oneself, one has to externalize oneself in order to look at oneself from a distance. The practice of blogging could thus be seen as a way of attaining self-knowledge through externalizing and objectifying one’s own life.

Further, another similarity that can be made between ancient correspondence and the act of blogging is the presentation of the unfolding of everyday life, which is to be seen as an epistolary practice (Foucault 1997:218), which Foucault describes as: “a written account of oneself: an account of everyday banality, an account of correct or incorrect actions, of the regimen observed, of the physical or mental services in which one is engaged.” (Foucault 1997: 219). The contemporary blog can be appropriated as a matter of constituting oneself as a subject of rational action through the adoption, the unification, and the objectification of a fragmented and selected already-said, and the epistolary account of oneself a matter of bringing into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself when one measures one’s everyday actions according to the rules of a technique of living (Foucault 1997:221). As such, the practice of writing a fitness blog contains both elements of agency and subjection to

discourse, in fact one cannot be without the other, and i.e. the appropriation of discourse is made through agency.

Making the “right choice”, is discussed by Foucault in reference to practices during antiquity when the work on oneself was not seen as imposed on the individual by any religion or civil law, as “People decide for themselves whether or not to care for themselves” (Foucault 1997:271), which correlates to the present day discourse of the individual choice to be healthy infused by neoliberal discourse, emphasizing on the individuals own responsibility to attain health and fitness, and that everyone has the freedom to choose.

Foucault continues to define freedom as a practice, that is, practicing the freedom of choice, but it should be practiced in a certain way in order to be admired and honorable, and there were an extensive work to be done by the self on the self to appropriate this practice of freedom. However, being free also meant to not being a slave to oneself and one’s appetites, one should establish to oneself a certain relationship of domination, of mastery (Foucault 1997:285-287). This concept of taking care of oneself and freedom corresponds well with the fitness lifestyle, where the ethic is to take care of oneself, and in order to do so one must practice freedom, the freedom to choose the “right things” and practice the freedom of oneself, and not giving in to temptation. Therefore, by investigating the conduct of making choices, one can disclose relations of power, since according to Foucault:”...there are relations of power in every social field...because there is freedom everywhere.” (Foucault 1997: 292). This would imply that power is exerted through guiding practices of making the “right choice”, that is, through governance. However what the right choice may be is not completely straight forward, and decisions are made through negotiation, through agency, hence, choice is dependent upon agency and thus, so is also governance. In the case of fitness blogs one can further distinguish how the free choice is located within a field of possibilities.

Further, governing practices of choice is inherent in our present day, which Foucault identifies as he terms the contemporary society as a “disciplinary society” (Foucault 2000:52), which is a society that emerged in the 19th century through educational institutions, psychiatric institutions, hospitals, asylums and the police force, by no longer punishing individuals’ infractions, but correcting their potentials (Foucault 2000:57). Modern society became a state of social control (Foucault 2000:57). According to Foucault, the soul is a form of subjectivity instilled by the modern disciplines of individualized surveillance and normalization (Rabinov

2000:xxxv). This surveillance is achieved through technologies of panopticism, a type of power with an architectural structure of the panopticon, which is a ring shaped building with a yard and a tower at the center. The ring is constituted by cells that can be monitored from the central tower at all times (Foucault 2000:58). Within the social structure, each cell, depending on the purpose of the institution, had a child in school, a worker at work, or a prisoner, correcting himself (Foucault 2000:58). In terms of Foucault, the supervisor within an institution, such as a schoolteacher, a foreman, or physician, exercise power through both supervising and constituting knowledge concerning those to be supervised (Foucault 2000:59). There is a threefold aspect of panopticism; supervision, control, and correction. This is a fundamental and characteristic dimension of our society today (Foucault 2000:70). “In panopticism, the supervision of individuals is carried out not at the level of one does but of one is, not at the level of one does but what one might do” (Foucault 2000:70,71). Panopticism is found at every level, the gaze is spread downwards in daily operations of institutions, and the lives and bodies of individuals (Foucault 2000:73), and through surveillance, institutions take charge of the whole temporal dimension of individuals’ lives (Foucault 2000:80). When considering my study of fitness blogs, this practice of writing can be understood as a disciplinary practice at the level of our everyday life.

However, with the ambition of making a more exhaustive account of the becoming of the subject through fitness blogs, or rather, in order to have a more nuanced comprehension of the agency encountered within the blogosphere, I find an advantage in using the work of Pierre Bourdieu in addition to the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault, which provides for the ability to identify discourses, while Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is an aid in order to understand the ways in which discourses are utilized and how individuals engage in them in order to make sense of the world.

5.2 Habitus

In *Distinction* Pierre Bourdieu writes about how different conditions of existence produce different habitus (Bourdieu 1984:166). The habitus is a structuring structure in the way it organizes practices. Habitus is also a structured structure through the “division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world”, which is itself “the internalization of the division into social classes” (Bourdieu 1984:166). When correlating this to Foucault, as he understands the construction of the subject as a set of strategies which are part of social practices (Foucault 2000:4), and that the subject is dependent upon context (Foucault

1997:290), the way in which a subject is coming to be in a specific manner is through habitus, which then can in relation to my study, be understood as the structuring structure of the fitness field. Even more so, this correlation is validated by the result from preceding research which places the fitness field as a particular playing field for the middle class (Smith Maguire 2008). Further, the act of blogging by fitness professionals and the engagement in fitness can be seen as an effect of one's social position, since practices that are engendered by different habitus are systematically differentiated through specific perception and appreciation by individuals through habitus. The conglomeration of these practices is considered as lifestyles (Bourdieu 1984:166).

Further, the class definition is defined through its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions, which is a system of differences (Bourdieu 1984:166,167). This means that inevitably inscribed within the disposition of the habitus is the whole structure of the system of conditions, as it presents itself in the experience of a life-condition occupying a particular position within that structure (Bourdieu 1984:167). Lifestyles are systematic products of habitus, which become sign systems that are socially qualified (Bourdieu 1984:168). Conditions and habitus transform the distribution of capital into a system of perceived differences, distinctive properties, and a distribution of symbolic capital, legitimate capital (Bourdieu 1984:168). Thus, habitus frames the way in which an individual acts upon a discourse and construct possible subject positions. Subsequently, the conglomeration of actions, make up for a lifestyle, and when framed within fitness, this is symbolic capital.

Furthermore, the space of lifestyle is where the occupants of different positions differentiate themselves, with or without the intention of distinguishing themselves (Bourdieu 1984:247). Therefore the act of distinguishing one's own position is made by means of engagement in discourse, i.e., subjects are constructed through division (Foucault 2000:326), and thus different subject positions are endowed with different symbolic capital, that is, cultural goods. Hence, lifestyle is a space where the symbolic struggles over emblems of class take place over legitimate cultural goods (Bourdieu 1984:247). "Distinction", or better, 'class', only exists through the struggles for the exclusive appropriation of the distinctive signs which make 'natural distinction' (Bourdieu 1984:247). Dispositions are adjusted to class conditions as a set of possibilities and impossibilities, and also a relationally defined position, that is, a rank within

the class structure (Bourdieu 1984:243). Dispositions are therefore always related to the dispositions of other positions (Bourdieu 1984: 243, 244).

The fitness professional conducting online fitness practices could be understood as *petit bourgeois*, or middle class, as culture intermediaries (Smith Maguire 2008), which are terms used by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984:327). Legitimate culture is not made for the *petite bourgeois*, the *petite bourgeois* is not made for legitimate culture, and legitimate culture ceases to be legitimate as soon as it is appropriated by the *petite bourgeois* (Bourdieu 1984:328), which would imply a constant work for distinction by the cultural intermediary, which would relate to the way in which the fitness lifestyle is seen as an ongoing project and that the blogs exposing this, are making this struggle known for social distinction.

Within fitness, it is evident how the body is constructed as cultural capital and cultural capital can be a means to gain access to economic capital (Bourdieu 1984:113), and thus the body becomes a means for an upward mobility of social disposition. However, Bourdieu emphasizes that the system of dispositions takes on as many modalities as there are ways of attaining, staying in or passing through a middle position in the social structure, and that this position itself may be steady, rising or declining (Bourdieu 1984:33). Further there is an intermediate zone of an intermediate region, that is, the proximity with the cultural pole of the middle class. The positions within this zone are hard to determine and open. Some of these positions are the effect of recent changes in the economy, particularly the increasing role of the symbolic work of producing needs. In order to be able to sell the symbolic products they have to offer, they have to produce the need for them in potential consumers by a symbolic action, and through this impose norm and needs, especially in areas of lifestyle and material or cultural consumption (Bourdieu 1984:345).

A factor which would suggest that the fitness fields is an exemplary harbor for the middle class, in addition to the *petite bourgeoisie* act of pretension, is the dominant class' act of disinterest and ease, thus, asserting oneself through the practice of blogging would be therefore seen as trying too hard to achieve the legitimacy given by self-assurance. In addition, according to Bourdieu, one of the most powerful social markers is one's own relation towards one's own body, which is expressed in self-confidence, ease and authority by someone who feels authorized, while someone who tries too hard to assert this 'natural' self-confidence is treated

with suspicion, which means that self-assurance is the surest thing of legitimacy (Bourdieu 1984:250).

Further, objects of the most distinctive power are those which require a long investment of time, such as musical or pictorial culture which cannot be appropriated in haste. Time is key in the pursuit of distinction, time devoted to consumption or time devoted to the cultural acquisition which adequate consumption presupposes (Bourdieu 1984:278). By this, the fit body is an object of distinction par excellence, since it requires constant work, throughout a lifetime. But when it comes to bodies with similar 'fit' features, the acquisition of it separates the dispositions. The market value of time, which is more or less directly experienced increases as one rises in the social hierarchy, in order to understand the value of the giving and distribution of time. This corresponds to the fact that all leisure activities' symbolic value lies partly in the capacity to dominate time and money that is affirmed in 'taking one's time', and in Bourdieu's words; "expending such valuable time to no purpose." (Bourdieu 1984: 279). This means attaining capital at the same time as destroying it, that is, by having the capacity to have leisure time to do leisure practices such as sports, time is taken from time that could have been used for the accumulation of wealth, i.e. working.

Those who, like the fitness professionals, live on the sale of cultural services to a clientele, the accumulation of economic capital merges with the accumulation of symbolic capital, that is, with the acquisition of a reputation for competence and are easily converted into positions where they are likely to identify with the established moral order to which they make daily contributions (Bourdieu 1984:285,289). Thus, fitness blogs contain exhibitions of negotiations of the morals of health and fitness as well as the very redistribution of these morals.

This is in accordance to the *logic of homologies*, where works or cultural products are being adjusted to the expectations of the public (Bourdieu 1984:237), this should be taken to account even though the producer of the cultural good is self-manifesting his or her own objectivity by means of only serving their own interests. The logic of homology is expressed through "the right tone of speaking to the readers of the paper" (Bourdieu 1984:238), thus there is a homology between the producers' position and their consumers, and each position correspond to presuppositions.

Bourdieu's extensive work concerning habitus and how this establishes individuals' destinies may seem as we are all determined to a specific way of living, and that we unconsciously accept this, but Bourdieu argues that: "The reality of the social world is in fact partly determined by the struggles between the agents over the representation over their position in the social world, and consequently, of that world." (Bourdieu 1984:250). Hence, agency is a prerequisite for a perception of reality, and thus, by the act of writing a fitness blog as a means of self-construction and as legitimizing practice within a social struggle, a struggle for an upward-moving social disposition, is in fact a process of reality-making. Also, it is just this that it is through perception we retrieve reality. Through analyzing fitness blogs an explanatory force can be utilized as an instrument in order to attain understandings of particular edifices of perceptions, the enabling factors and the agential practices according to these conditions, which will evoke particular positions, and thus the becoming of an subject, which is as it is being acknowledged and recognized and therefore objectivized, being perceived. Consequently our very understanding of existence is preconditioned by perception.

5.3 Critical health

As mentioned, for the fitness professionals who live on the sale of cultural services to a clientele, competence is converted into positions where they are likely to identify with the established moral order to which they make daily contributions (Bourdieu 1984:285,289). Thus, fitness blogs contain exhibitions of negotiations of the morals of health and fitness as well as the very redistribution of these morals. In the world of today, the media is a strategic tool in cementing the discourse of health (Lock 1998). Taking care of your body is not just about managing your health, health management is also subjected to the workings of "anatomopolitics of the human body" (Foucault 1972, 1975,1976, 1977: 139), which is a power-politics focusing on the individual body and constrain how the body is at work in our everyday life, through practices that we don't take much notice of. These practices involve for instance, going to the gym, taking a shower after the workout and using shampoo when washing the hair and conditioner to make the hair soft and shower gel to make sure the body is clean enough. These are practices on the individual level and they seem harmless and undergone by individual choice, but these practices are really measured against a discourse that dictates self-control to attain health and this discourse is expressed in media. When comparing your daily activities to those that are recounted in media and thinking "Am I doing this right?", you are actually acting

out a sort of self-surveillance. Anato-mo-politics is about managing life at the everyday level. The idealized body is seen to be healthy and productive (Suisa 2008), and through self-surveillance and anato-mo-politics, a productive laborer is being produced to ensure economic growth.

Even though the concept of anato-mo-politics is a useful instrument in trying to understand the practice of blogging within fitness culture and the construction of the fit subject as such in the imperative of being fit and healthy for production to ensure economic growth in the capitalist system, the agency of the individual cannot be left out. The individuals writing the blogs are real humans that dwell in the world and negotiate the different strategies that surround the construction of the fit subject. In the light of agency, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the habitus, taste and distinction, gives a perspective that make room for agency (Bourdieu 1984). "...agents are, in their ordinary practice, the subjects of acts of construction of the social world..." (Bourdieu 1984:469,470). The academic inquire should thus try to describe the principles of construction in the social world (Bourdieu 1984:470). "...between conditions of existence and practices or representations there intervenes the structuring activity of the agents, who, far from reacting mechanically to mechanical stimulations, responds to the invitations or threats of a world whose meaning they have helped to produce." (Bourdieu 1984:469). However, agency of the subject and the human being is recognized by Foucault as well, as he explains just how the human being becomes a subject, and that this becoming is contingent upon agency (Foucault 2000:341).

In this chapter the theoretical frameworks of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, in the ways these relate to my study of fitness blogs, in terms of the construction of the subject and habitus, have been presented. Correspondingly, I've also briefed a critical perspective regarding the morals of health. These theoretical concepts have thus been used as instruments in the analysis, which I will account for in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 Analysis –Appropriating fitness

As the fitness field can be seen as a field of possibilities, the trajectories found within it are differentiated and so is the construction of the fit and healthy subject by the diverging practices of appropriation towards positioning oneself within this field. As follows, I will account for these altering epistolary constructions of subjects according to themes, through examples presented in the material of selected Swedish fitness blogs. Also, when referring to the different excerpts from the blogs, instead of referring to a certain page, I've stated the particular dates they were published.

6.1 Production and reproduction

There are differing ways of appropriating a fit subject position, as it is shown in the blog *Kick in the butt* ("Spark I baken") with the headliner; "Inspire to a healthy life without compulsory pointers or must do" (Inspirera till ett hälsosmat liv utan pekpinna eller måsten), written by Therese Alvéen (Alvéen 2013), living in Stockholm with her husband and two children. Alvéen's blog was declared by Twingly as being the most influential fitness blog in 2012 (Twingly 2012, Alvéen), in addition to other nominations and prizes for being the "Exercise blog of the year", and "Role model of the year" (Alvéen 2013), signifying the impact and reach of her blog. In one blog post published in November 2013 Alvéen answers the question asked by her readers, whether having children has changed her view on exercise; "I have to answer YES [sic]", and continues to tell how it is primarily time that makes the difference: "or rather the lack of it" (Alvéen 2013: Nov 30). Now she exercises in accordance to family life, "when the children are playing there's suddenly time to do ten pushups or a few repetitions of a pelvic exercise. If Tilde is too tired I can take a brisk walk with her in the stroller so she falls asleep." (Alvéen 2013: Nov 30). Alvéen continues to tell how she's gotten better at enjoying exercise and appreciate it, as time is limited, and she sees exercise as a "...chance to reload...and become a stronger happier mom" (Alvéen 2013: Nov). The imperative of being productive and reproductive through exercise and time management is at display, and also the moral of the good mother shines its light through the blog post. So the appropriation of a healthy and fit subject position is entangled with morals of production and reproduction, thus, the human being dwelling within these negotiate these into a specific position.

Hence, incitements for health and healthy eating do not focus on cultivating better health, but rather about having more energy to be more productive (Berlant 2010) and not for health in the sense of enabling the individual to flourish, but in order to keep the individual productive under

the auspices of capitalism. The discourse of health is a strategic apparatus to manage life, through medical diagnosis of everyday events, and unproductiveness is a state of being unhealthy. An example of this is lies in title of the blog called *Cope more* (“Orka mera”), written by Anna (2013) at piggelina.se. The author of this blog is a 39 year old mother of two, living in southern Sweden and working as a group exercise instructor and offers coaching in running, biking and nutrition through her own business. It is written that the purpose of the blog is to:”...try to share my joy for exercise and inspire to an active and healthy life!” (Anna 2013). Even though it is stated that the ambition is to inspire to activity and a healthy life as such, the title signifies an imperative of productiveness, or rather endurance, to “cope” life. Here the subject that is being created is active and healthy in order to be able to endure the marathon of life. By publishing facts about her life such as having two children indicates that exercise and health are not just for enduring production but also reproduction, you can do it all, and this blog will inspire you to it. As such, the family is frequently at display in the blogs, telling the story of being healthy, productive and sufficiently reproductive. It’s a narrative of the ideal capitalist citizen. But there are also diverging stories to this heterosexual healthy family, as it is told by Em Löfgren in her blog *Emliscious* about her and her wife and their daughter (Löfgren 2013), within which she is critical to categorizing and labelling people according to ethnicity, gender, age, work, and she goes on to write:;” Say like a good friend of mine when asked if she plays for “the other team”: The team? No! I’m the judge!” (Löfgren 2013: Oct 1)

6.2 Fitness conductors and health advice

In our contemporary world within which consumer fitness culture is a global phenomenon (Smith Maguire 2008: 3), fitness, health, and capitalism are inseparable, these concepts are contingent upon each other. The commitment in fitness practices is driven by the economic rationalization of health care, where disease prevention is key and thus locating risk management within the individual body (Smith Maguire 2008:47). This implies encouraging individuals to be their own health experts, making health another sphere of consumer choice, while expert medical authority are constructed as assistance of advice in the process of choice making (Smith Maguire 2008:48). In correlation to my study of fitness blogs, I would argue that these blogs should be seen as a part of this advisory field within health and fitness culture, and therefore important locations of inquiry in order to widen the understanding of the construction of the fit body and the fitness subject, especially since therapeutic and educative

experts mobilize the individuals to examine, know and act upon themselves in certain ways (Smith Maguire 2008:48). This was especially evident in the blog post “Get out of the depression and build during winter”, written by Peter Blaha as a response to readers that have written to him concerning the lack of motivation and depression, and Blaha writes:

“It’s quite common that people suffer from winter depression and 15-25% of the population experience depression sometime during their lives. Yes, it is apparently a disease but is difficult to diagnose and I think that many can prevent themselves from falling into depression with easy tricks.”...“I think that often it’s not a real depression many experience, but rather a mental drop that they name as depression, however it is important to acknowledge, do something about it in order for not to turn into a depression. If my tricks don’t help one should visit a doctor who can test blood sugar levels and other tests”. (Blaha 2013: Dec 12).

Further Blaha gives the advice to eat some more carbohydrates, as there is a correlation between low blood sugar levels and depression, and also make sure to take omega-3 supplements, as this fatty acid is also shown to have positive effects to control depression (Blaha 2013). As for his own tricks that he deploys, Blaha writes:

“But in order to not fall into a slump during winter I think like this, “good that it’s dark outside, then I don’t have to worry about missing a sunny day at the beach or some barbeque with friends, and I can spend more time at the gym and train harder”. Winter is building, go hard and eat a lot and well.” (Blaha 2013: Dec 12).

Accordingly, the weaponry in the fight against depression and mental plummeting during the dark months of winter is spelled; carbohydrates, omega-3 and pure motivation. Subsequently, the blog functions as a cultural product to be consumed in aiding self-managing health and deferring risks of disease, which is a practice recited in several other blogs, for instance:

“...30 minutes of exercise per day can decrease the risk of cancer...besides contributing money to enhance the research, it is evidently also important to decrease your own risk of cancer. A way to do that is to exercise.” (Alvén 2013: Oct 13).

Still, both the pathology and the cure are being constructed as found solely within the skin of one's own determination. Discursive strategies of economic rationalization of health care reach as far as the individuals' responsible choice and it is being told through mundane practices of fitness blogs. This is congruent with how the seller of a cultural good exploits current morals and redistributes them in a position of competence (Bourdieu 1984). Additionally, by the means of the re-distributional properties of morals of health, fitness bloggers can be seen as fitness conductors, and bloggers also work as critics that review the fitness field, i.e. emphasizing particular practices of fitness at the expense of other practices and giving advice about these, thus conducting, governing fitness, directing fitness participants towards specific possibilities of the fitness field. As such, the practice of the fitness blog corresponds the words of Foucault, namely, "To govern ... is to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault 2000:341). The practice of government directs individuals or groups into certain conducts, e.g. the government of children, the communities, or families (Foucault 2000:341). Since the exercise of power in government is dependent upon action, agency, a power relation is only present where there is freedom, as the power is only exercised over free subjects, free to navigate in a field of possibilities (Foucault 2000:342), the government of fitness is dependent upon choice. Thus, the popular fitness blogs that has been analyzed can be comprehended as nodes of cultural (re)production, reinforcing the marketization of health.

6.3 Management of time

Time is essential in acquiring a beneficial disposition within fitness, that is, time management is a requirement for positional enhancement. A strategy to managing the interval of life is to divide it up into small increments, minute by minute, as Alvéen says she does when describing her morning routine:

"I don't want to start my day with stress. It may seem that I have a lot of things going on early in the day, but what works for me is to plan and wake up at a proper time"..."Three times per week I instruct morning classes. So I set the clock in order to allow me to sit down for 10 minutes with my bowl of yoghurt and some magazines to skim through. This is my "own-time" before working out, work and family, where I get my focus. A small but important breathing hole for me."..."The rest of the family is sleeping and I get an easy start of the day. These ten minutes do so much." (Alvéen 2013: Sept 24)

In organizing time, life as such is being managed, and it is by one's own agency. However it is done for the sake of productiveness, corresponding to Foucault's theory concerning the capitalist system's power of life, of existence (Foucault 1978:139). Meticulously organizing one's life is undergone in order to fit into the line of production. But not any production line, as recounted earlier, capital is not just the accumulation of economic profit, it is also cultural, the managing of time is also time taken for the "stylization of life" (Bourdieu 1984), which was made clear in the blog post "Design your life" ("Designa ditt liv"). This was a post about Alvéen meeting Josephine who was promoting her own company at the book fair. The company was named "I design life", with products that simplify and design each and everyone's lives with the help of folders with different contents. Alvéen writes how she likes these products, since she likes to have a good overview over the weeks, and likes to create lists and check things off that she has done. Alvéen got a folder with an exercise diary in order to reflect and evaluate things, and an "I-am-good"-calendar. By this, time is taken to make time, to make life and divide it into manageable compartments. Nonetheless, one question that arises is; who has the time to make time? It seems that the opportunity for this stylization of life lies within the field of a certain economic disposition, or as Bourdieu would have put it; within the field of possibilities of the middle class. The ability to take hold of time signifies distinction, it is a symbolic capital. Even though through the act of capitalizing upon this ability is made through agency, it is not made through a complete free choice, as nothing ever is, it is made within the sphere of managing time. This is illuminated through the pages of the folders from "I design life", which in a sense are "ready made" coloring books for one to color with one's life, and make sure to keep within the lines.

Thus, the content of fitness blogs recounts mundane practices that when they are put under an investigating eye, are seen as the realization of strategically "imposed" anatomo-politics, by dividing the day into small increments of time and practices. Further, just as the textual representation give witness to such practices that are seemingly inherently present in a fitness lifestyle, the very act of blogging, may also be seen as a self-constitutive practice of the subject.

Time is a recurrent theme within the blogs, for instance in Sofia Sjöström's blog, a part of her presentation is her philosophy of life; "The one who doesn't make time for exercise will sooner or later make time for disease." (Sjöström 2013). In a sense she is encouraging to make time

today to have time tomorrow. Again, it is important to keep in mind who has the instruments to “make time”. Sjöström is a fitness professional as certified personal trainer, nutritional coach, gym instructor, health consultant, and an entrepreneur with two own companies. Entangled with the possibility to make time is the belief of creating change, that is, investment in time for future gains. This is linked to the harboring of general capital (Frykman & Hansen Carlssons 2009), that is, having the knowledge of the game and having trust in that by playing by the rules one will enhance one’s position in the playing field. Hence, the words of the blogs are written on a surface of the trust of a positive progression of trajectory of one’s own making. The textual and pictorial representations in the blogs are part of the making of “The self-made man”.

Embedded in this is the perspective that everyone can, it’s only about choosing the right way of living, no excuse is valid for not taking the time to invest in yourself and in your body through exercise and healthy eating. However these actions are made under the premise of the feeling of having control over one’s own destiny. By controlling time and your body, you control your future (Bourdieu 1984). Nevertheless, controlling life is not straightforward and unproblematic. Owning time is not equally distributed, as mentioned earlier, controlling time, takes time and to take time, one has to have time at one’s disposal. Having time to take time to take care of oneself is a privilege (Foucault 1999:95). Hence, by exhibiting a lifestyle within which one has the control of time, the healthy fitness subject is one of distinction, since time devoted to consumption or time devoted to cultural acquisition is key in the pursuit of distinction (Bourdieu 1984:278). Thus, managing time is a way of life that is a technology of the self (Foucault 1999:225), as it is an operation on the fitness professional’s own life in order to attain distinction.

In the free choice of time, what is being obscured, is those who feel that time is out of control, when the demands of productiveness and reproduction are pushing the individual into exhaustion (Berlant 2010), leading to self-medication through food, diet and exercise. Sometimes the want for control goes into hyperbole, as Sofia writes:

“If one is going through a hard time in life and lose control it is easy to start controlling other things such as diet and exercise. It is a way of dampening anxiety.”
(Sjöström 2013).

Sjöström feels it is important to acknowledge this as she feels she has a responsibility in writing her blog (Sjöström 2013), following in the blog post “Valuable”, she is publishing an excerpt from another blog written by Mohamed Touzani, who writes about “the forbidden” (Touzani 2013), about how living healthy and exercising becomes an exaggerated obsession, as he could workout 20 times per week, having a low carbohydrate diet, losing weight, and drinking no alcohol:

“I thought I knew everything about health and nutrition, but I didn’t know anything”... “Orthorexia it is called. A kind of fixation of a “healthy lifestyle”...It has some correspondence to anorexia, but it is far from the same thing. It isn’t just youth and girls that suffer from eating disorders, even though society wants to tell you so. Like girls are the weaker and easy manipulated sex. Both sexes are. Everybody just can’t admit it...I refuse to be a part of the exercise mania that is going on...Life is too short to live under restriction. Of course one should be healthy and exercise – as long as one does it for the right reasons. It is taboo in Sweden to express that you’re not well. Especially on the internet. Everything has to be perfect and one only exhibit the best parts of oneself” (Touzani 2013)

Through Touzani’s blog, which was reached through a hyperlink in Sjöström’s blog and also through another blog, namely PT-Philip’s, thus giving an example of the interconnectedness of the internet and through the different fitness blogs, an alternative view is being narrated, that is, critically self-assessing the perfect lifestyles being especially displayed in fitness blogs. Through this a negotiation of the moral imperative of health and fitness is being told. Even though these posts are written in order to recognize the despair the “health mania” may inflict, the process of normalization and pathology should also be accounted for. By coopting a behavior into medical discourse, a process of medicalization², referring to the diagnosis of orthorexia³, shines its light on what is normal and what is not, that is in this case, it is not healthy to be too healthy. This demonstrates the constructive character of health, how it is not

² “Medicalization is the process by which non-medical (or social) problems become defined and treated as medical problems, usually as illnesses and disorders. “ (Waggoner and Stults 2010:1).

³ Orthorexia nervosa is a disorder which concerns the pathologic obsession for healthy nutrition (Brytek-Matera 2012:5)

a static entity to acquire, but rather a strategy tool in conducting subjects, or rather, an instrument to conduct human beings into subject positions.

6.4 The construction of gender

Another point that should not be overlooked from the passage in Touzani's blog is the critical aspect of the construction of gender through social expectation of eating disorders as a female trait. However this is not just a phenomenon of the public. A history of scientific research and medical pathology has contributed to a gender construction of female physicality. An example is the recent research concerning the "Female Athlete Triad", consisting of the heightened risk of eating disorders, premature osteoporosis, and amenorrhea among active girls and women (Verbrugge 2002:60). But in Taouzani's blog, a critique against the general opinion of the bifurcation of feminine and masculine is being made. This critical narrative towards a common attitude of a constrained femininity is also being expressed elsewhere in the material, especially concerning the tension between the accumulation of muscles and femininity. For instance Philip Lailani writes about the myth about that women shouldn't work as hard as men in the gym in order to prevent gaining too much muscle;

"There is no risk that one will become a bodybuilder just because one push extra hard during two times of training per week." (Lailani 2013: Nov 27)

Even though the blog post is meant to be critical towards the myth that women shouldn't be afraid to hit the weightlifting room and push it, another myth is being cemented, that is, that women don't gain muscle easily and naturally so. But women do gain muscle (Dworkin 2001: 334) and what is really being told is that it is hard to gain too much muscle as a woman, that is, acquiring the morphology of a bodybuilder. As such, the concept of a muscular "glass ceiling" for women (Dworkin 2001) is being concreted. It is further being implied that most women do not workout hard more than two times per week. More so, Em Löfgren is critical against the tension between femininity and muscles as she writes:

"Recently saw a blog post with a picture of a particularly well-trained woman's arm and under it the comment "Healthy?" (Löfgren 2013:Dec 10)

Löfgren is putting forth a critique of the conception of health, more specifically the general public's appreciation of the strain between bodybuilding and health, about how bodybuilders

and fitness athletes are being labeled as unhealthy, while elite athletes in other sports are never being questioned concerning their health. The blog post is a critical assessment of the normalization of health, that the position of the healthy subject travels within the fitness field depending on disposition, that is, what health is, is contingent upon the position of the subject assessing it. Further, when denouncing the expression of a muscular women's arm as unhealthy, the narrative of the conflation between health and naturalness is illuminated, as too much muscle on a woman is unnatural and hence, unhealthy, which also corresponds to earlier scientific research aimed at mapping the dysfunctional side-effects of too hard physical activity by women and girls, threatening the most sacred of womanhood, that is, the ability to become a mother, i.e. fertility (Verbrugge 2002). However, by the framing of this in the way of Löfgren, she engages in the discourse of gender construction, a negotiation is made where gender is bent to acquire a position outside reproduction. Therefore a subject of fitness with an agency of transgressing gender norms is being constructed.

Gender is further being problematized by Löfgren when she writes about the small proportion of women at her gym when compared to men, as the gym has a reputation of being a building gym and old school, and that those who train there train really hard, and that might frighten girls, which would confirm the conclusion made by Craig and Liberti, that the notion of the gym as a masculine institution, is still very evident (Craig and Liberti 2007). However, Löfgren goes on by confessing a prejudice against women:

“When many girls gather there always seem to be a certain degree of “you shouldn't think you're anything”. That's why girls' gyms are my nightmare. It would never suit me. I'm comfortable with the big guys. But also with the girls who still workout at my gym. It's the kind of girls that push it hard, really hard. I've understood that girls' gyms are successful, so apparently there's a demand, which is in a way a shame. Girls that don't dare to take up space at the general gyms. Shame.” (Löfgren 2013: Oct 26)

Even though Löfgren is lamenting the gender division between the general gyms, builder gyms and girls' gyms, she is putting an individual blame on girls, it is they who are “afraid to take up space”, and this is the reason why girls tend not to enter these general gyms, but obfuscating the perception of builder gyms and general gyms as masculine spaces.

The tension between femininity is again being problematized in Bea Malecki's blog, through the blog post "Throw out the scale and start to exercise", as she writes:

"The thing that we girls have a problem with is that when we're been training like hell and stand on the scale to see if we've lost anything but encounter the horrific discovery that WE'VE GAINED 1 KG! Omggimgg we think then. No but the thing is that you will gain weight if you train, that is what you should do. Because muscles weigh more than fat then it is nothing strange with that? But that depends whether if you from the start are overweight, then you should rather lose weight." (Malecki 2013: Dec 13)

The excerpt from Malecki's blog is stating what "we girls" do, that girls are afraid of gaining weight and is as such expressing a prejudice internalized by girls, but wrongfully so, since muscles weigh more than fat. By this, the misconception about weight and exercise is being individualized within the female body, and the social expectation of this relation is taken for granted and as such being cemented. Subsequently, the cultural product of the blog is being adjusted to the expectations of the public, which is in congruence with Bourdieu's concept of the *logic of homologies* (Bourdieu 1984:37).

In addition, not being afraid to gain weight is conditioned upon not being overweight, as such cementing the ideal of being "normal weight". Subsequently the feminine fitness subject is being constructed as being inherently frightened of gaining weight, but oblivious about the relation between muscle mass and weight gain, a position she identifies with as she writes "we girls", but for the overweight girl, this is not valid, and also the overweight subject is identified as "you", demarcating clear borders of different female fitness subjects, normal weight versus overweight and in this reconstructing the moral fright of obesity. Muscle acquisition is condoned for those of normal weight, but should remain as a scare for those carrying too much weight already. Thus, even though a transgression of the slender ideal of femininity is displayed, it is done under the premise of the normalcy of a proper weight range. What is being established is who are allowed to gain muscle weight and who is not. Hence, the bifurcation between masculine and feminine regarding the accumulation of muscle is transcended to the division between those of normal weight and those who are overweight. Therefore different subject positions are being constructed through which fitness practices one should be conducting according to the advise given in the blog, that is, either gaining or losing weight.

The theme of girls being afraid to gain weight is fairly recurrent in the fitness blogs, Malecki writes:

“...I can promise that one doesn’t get fat from lifting a little bit of weights and fat muscles from just strength training! One should really not be afraid of lifting! I mean we girls actually have a hard time building muscles compared to guys, and for guys it doesn’t happen just like that either.” (Malecki 2013: Dec 3)

Again the scare of too big muscles and its subsequent weight gain is being labeled the female body and additionally a “natural” *glass ceiling* (Dworkin 2001) of female muscular development is being cemented, thus the female fitness subject is being delineated by the social construction of the expectation of weight anxiety in congruence or, rather entangled with a construction of a natural biological base of the factual borders of female physicality.

6.5 The ease of fitness

In some cases the cultural intermediate of the fitness professional is aspiring to have a relation to health in congruence to the bourgeois’ ease, which corresponds to the subtitle of Alvéns’ blog, as treating health as natural and easy as opposed to the logic of hard work of pushing oneself through pain to the limit. As such, through the workings of publishing one’s own fitness practices, a unifying process is undergone to construct the healthy subject, and through spelling out these practices, the life of the blogger becomes a cultural product in itself. Thus, the different ways of appropriating fitness, are means of distinguishing oneself. Cultural capital is being accumulated through the very way of appropriating health, that is, through ease, a bourgeois way, signifying the aspiration of the middleclass. Simultaneously, the new wholesome woman (Verbrugge 2002), is being (re)constructed, through the narrative of the exercising woman in order to acquire strength to be a good mother, which was amplified through the blog post “Event: Stronger Mom 2013”, which was about an event Alvéns held for fifty pregnant and new moms and some babies, and was centered upon “...information and inspiration about the best way that moms can come back after delivery when it comes to the mummy-tummy, the pelvic floor and all other training!!” (Alvéns 2013: Oct 6).

The relation between ease and health is being narrated elsewhere in the material as well, for example in the blog post about the “All or nothing”-thinking, by Sjöström. The post concerns how people feel like failures after eating a piece of chocolate and then one can just keep on eating since one has already eaten something sweet and forbidden so that day’s diet is ruined

either way and by this, giving sweets a power position and thus punishing ourselves in a destructive way. Sjöström writes:

“Don’t give sweets power in your life, over your person and joy. Do active choices. When you chose buns or party, make sure to fully enjoy it, otherwise it is just nuts and a waste. And what does a bun or two mean in one day, a whole week or a month when you exercise regularly, eat good food and take care of yourself.” (Sjöström 2013: Nov 29)

Ease is conditioned by regular exercise and an otherwise good diet and it is also an instruction of how to appropriate health in a “healthy” way, a kind of a moralizing of the moral of health. Still the maxim of exercise prevails as the cure for that occasional “sweet”. Also, here, the care of the self as taking care of oneself is through exercising the independence from the external world (Foucault 1997:285-287), through making the choice of not letting sweets regulate one’s life. Subsequently healthy ease is achieved through active choices, thus one has to work for ease, and thus freedom is being exercised through governance under the supervision of the moral of health.

Nevertheless, sometimes the hard work seems to have a value in itself as Ako Rahim writes in a post about always having to defend himself for training as hard as he does:

“...it doesn’t get easier, it gets harder! The better you become, the harder it will get to get better than last month. Then one has to have something to motivate you. Why should one fight so hard and push so much?”...”For me it is easy. I like to torment myself because every time I set new personal records I get a kick! I love it”...”punish myself with hard training if I’m doing bad. One has to like to torment oneself a little => that’s love...I give my body what it deserves and I have been training hard for over 10 years and I don’t regret a day of hard training, on the contrary, I regret those days when I fell behind and gave up. But I haven’t had any of those days for several years now so I push on. And that’s what I think you should do too.”...”Find the joy and drive within you...everyone has it!” (Rahim 2013: Nov 20).

In “giving the body what it deserves”, the body is also being externalized through language. In another blog post Rahim writes:

“When it comes to training and I know many that complain over pain and that it is not possible to train because they suffer from a slipped disc, joint pain or lack of time. It is pure bullshit! To have a slipped disc and still be in pain is because you don’t do anything about it through exercise and treatments. I had a slipped disc myself and it’s good as long as I exercise, but as soon as I stop it hurts.” (Rahim 2013: Nov 12)

The affective relationship to pain is being reiterated by Joakim Linder in the blog post “Love it kill it”, as he writes about the experience after a hard workout:

“Such crazy muscle soreness in my legs that I couldn’t help being a little satisfied when I got down to tie my shoelaces. “ (Linder 2013: Nov 8)

Additionally, in another blog post Linder writes:

“I’ve always loved to push myself and somewhere it has become a lifestyle and it defines you, push yourself towards new goals and press the bar upwards all the time, compete with oneself. Never trained to be a real builder with bulky muscles, I like to push myself and compete with oneself and thereof build a good-looking physique that I like.” ...”Love to train but that isn’t the life but a part of it. Life is more than pumping iron. It’s food, travels, family, friends. Many think I take control over food all the time or force myself to the gym. That’s not it. I don’t sacrifice anything to be at the gym but I rather exercise until I break at the gym than to sit an extra hour in front of the TV. Eat what I want and train when I want to.” ...”What would I do with a lot of muscles if the life is rigid, isolated and boring to live?” (Linder 2013: Oct 27)

A story of appropriating fitness in a position of ease, as well as, hard work, pushing oneself to the limit is being constructed as the natural way to live. However at the same time the disciplinary efforts required to achieve this ethic of hard work is only being naturalized to a certain extent. Too much control is not a good way of life. As such, the way in which fitness is being appropriated is in itself a distinction of the subject, as well as what is being appropriated is being assessed in terms of what is being desired, such as being good-looking in comparison to having bulky muscles like a real bodybuilder. This is re-establishing the practice of bodybuilding as a “grotesque subculture” (Andreasson & Johansson 2013: 2).

6.6 Externalizing the body and oneself

To conquer pain is thus an expression of omnipotence of one's own being, body, life, existence, the self-made in the flesh, a climax of self-agency, autonomy. The atomistic individual is being embodied through bodily gym practices. Power becomes a feeling as much as an individual action. This correlates to Foucault's description of how the care of the self in ancient times incorporated the exercise of being independent of the external world and thus asserting independence (Foucault 1997). However it is one's own body that is acted upon. The pain is self-inflicted, and through this simultaneously externalizing the flesh and its appending senses to be dominated by the mind and thus achieving absolute rule over oneself and subsequently internalizing the idea of making oneself, an ethos strong enough to wander into ordinary language and acts, as it is expressed in the front page picture of Lailani's blog: "I create myself, day by day" (Lailani 2013).

Further, as the body is at the center of attention throughout the material, a discourse which is externalizing the body is often used. For instance a blog post is even titled "To the body" (Sjöström 2013: Nov 6), and in it she writes:

"To treat the body with respect should be a self-evident choice. To fuel it with the absolute best energy and nutrition"... "To see our body , get to know it and above all listen to its needs and what shape it is in."..."...your body wants what is best for you. It wants to carry you, you to be healthy and strong."..."Challenge it every day. It wants us well." (Sjöström 2013: Nov 6)

The body's value is being elevated to such heights that it becomes an entity of its own, something that is in a reciprocal relationship to oneself, rather than an inherent part of oneself. As such, the citation above expresses traces of the Christian denunciation of the flesh, but the writing of the blog also becomes a way to shape oneself as a citational practice and thus establishing a relationship with oneself (Foucault 1997:211). Simultaneously with the denunciations of the flesh, there were instances of celebrating it, articulated through the motivational meme posted by Löfgren: "Embrace and love your body, it is the most amazing thing you will ever own." (Löfgren 2013: Dec 13). Löfgren also titles one of her blog posts as: "Come on body. Work with me!" (Löfgren 2013:Dec 4), within which she writes about her body not responding to her wants as she is ill and is desperate to get well. Additionally, the

same writer is offering a citation from a famous Swedish fitness professional concerning the act of comparing:

“I just detest comparing. Don’t! Compare yourself to YOU. YOU and nobody else is the most important person in your life. So keep your focus where it should be; on YOU.” (Nordin in Löfgren 2013: Nov 4)

The preceding citation is an imperative to externalize oneself in order to get a measurable value of oneself, and through the factual representation of these words the blog becomes a documentation of you, as an instrument of the measurement of you. Consequently, this leads to the practice of writing a blog as being a self-disciplinary practice, which is illuminated through Löfgren’s presentation within which she expresses her foremost motivation for writing her blog:

“I want to in an honest way mediate what I experience in my exercise-world. But the blog is foremost a way to *document* my journey, my goals, my training and to give me an overview and a possibility to follow my steps. Last but not least I hope that the blog will inspire others. I know myself how some blogs can function as a real kick in the ass! Blogs that are filled with joy to exercise, that smells like sweat and endorphins (in a positive way) makes me long for next training session!”...”It’s about my ambitions and my will to evolve within fitness and compete in Body Fitness.” (Löfgren 2013).

As such, part of the practice of self-monitoring through blogs is the confession, a technology of the self (Foucault 1997: 177, 178), through which the fitness subject is being constructed.

One of the more exposing expressions of the confession is displayed in Lailani’s blog post about his first week of “cutting”, which means dieting in order to “cut” the fat off the body:

“I had as you know my cheat-day yesterday and I ate everything I wanted to. Believe that my cheat-day looked like my last six months. Same thinking, same type of food and snacks. It feels good to have that only one day per week and not seven. Tomorrow week number two starts and it is just to keep on fighting. I will retrieve the shape I was in half a year ago so I know what’s waiting and it’s worth fighting for.” (Lailani 2013: Nov 17)

In conjunction with the written post are two pictures attached, both showing a shirtless Lailani, and he writes:

“I don’t feel particularly comfortable in publishing the pictures below (day 1 vs day 7) but it’s my own doing. I want you to follow my weight gain and weight loss when it’s time.” (Lailani 2013: Nov 17)

The documentation becomes a sort of self-corrective procedure through confession of sins committed towards the body, especially the visual character of it. But the reflective properties of the skin are also felt:

“Seventh day of my diet today” ...”Of course I still feel bloated, fat and far from my goal.” (Lailani 2013: Nov 17).

Following, the visual is translated into feelings, the feeling of fat. Thus, fitness is being appropriated as feeling as well (Smith Maguire 2008: 1, 2). As such the punishment for departing from an earlier diet is both being put on the surface of the body as well as within inner senses. An important aspect of this practice is that the punishment is self-inflicted, just as the sin “it’s my own doing”. Therefore by exposing one’s sins to the public, one is coming out as a sinner, the faulty measures cannot be undone, but by acknowledging them they can be redeemed. The paradox of Christian self-punishment is acted out through the obligation to disclose oneself, not as an excuse for the sins conducted, but to represent himself as a sinner (Foucault 1997:244), and by this the confession becomes a self-corrective practice.

Except for redemption through a strict diet, exercise is also an instrument to ask for forgiveness as one of Lailani’s clients writes in Lailani’s blog:

“I must confess that I HAVE been cheating, I HAVE been drinking alcohol, I HAVE been eating chocolate when I had the cravings.”...”But I’ve also been pushing the training, which is important.” (Hanna in Lailani 2013: Oct 11).

Exercise is thus being constructed as something that takes the edge of the “cheating”. Cheating is not as bad as long as you exercise, creating a somewhat blurred spectrum of the severity of cheating, which is further complicated through the notion of a little bit of cheating is good, but just a little too much is just too much. Ako Rahim expresses this in the blog post “Good and bad”:

“Yesterday I refilled with carbohydrates. That’s not good. Eat more food and get a slow body. Carbohydrates are good in a proper amount. But I even ate bread yesterday and I’m a bit sensitive towards gluten.”...”When it was time for bed I had a stomach ache, tired and pain in my body...”...”Twisted and turned all night”.
(Rahim 2013: Oct 10)

Here cheating is constructed as a self-punishing practice, that is, alongside cheating comes repercussions consisting of pain and uneasiness. However, even though cheating is constructed as self-punishment, pain is also an experience that is being sought after through exercise, more specifically the feeling of being in control over pain.

6.7 Practicing free choice and self-investment

Even though the confessions are instances when the right choice may not have been made, making the right choice is an imperative for the healthy and fit lifestyle, which is included in the motivational meme posted by Löfgren:

“The 3 C’s of life: Choices, Chances, Changes. You must make a Choice to take a Chance or your life will never Change.” (Löfgren 2013: Nov 4)

By laying emphasis on choice, the responsibility is also found with the individual. It is you who make the choice to be healthy and Malecki writes:

“Will start this day with a post that I think many want to read – namely how to get rid of the fat on the body!....Come on now, you have to decide! Your will for a healthy life or your will for that chocolate?...You really have to decide! I know you can, otherwise I wouldn’t have made this post. It’s just YOU who will reach your goals and it’s you who should be proud of managing to get into better shape! It’s YOU who will become healthier, find it fun with exercise, get your friends to workout, eat right, healthy, feel good, and enjoy your life with a healthy lifestyle.!”
(Malecki 2013: Dec 2)

Choices seem to be omnipresent within the material, choices to make time, to eat right, to exercise, and to be happy. However, the premise of making that choice lies within the hope for the future, that this choice will make a change for the better. Thereby choices are constructed through the access to general capital (Frykman & Hansen Carlssons 2009), that is, having the

confidence that one can make one's own future and trusting that the means to achieve this will work and that the social environment is homogenous in this, that is, everyone can, just make a choice. In other terms, making the right choices, are made through knowledge of the game, and trusting that by following the rules, one will gain an advantage in the playing field. This sort of game is played in excellence by the fitness subjects engaged in the fitness field through fitness blogs.

The discourse of choice commonly deployed when describing the fitness lifestyle is in terms of "self-investment", which Lailani writes an example of in a blog post about the benefits of supplements, and more specifically a vitamin shot he himself sells and promotes:

"By a supplement of healthy substances each day we can in the long run increase the immune defense, get more energy, and by that not get sick as often..." "Diabetes, devolving, blood levels among other things takes years to develop, so one cannot eat vitamins during one week and hope for results, one should do it during a longer period. It works as insurance for the body." (Lailani 2013: Dec 07)

Thus, by making a good choice today, the effect won't be felt immediately, but it will benefit you in the future, which is in much congruent with the notion of living healthy is done by managing the risk of disease (Lock 1998). This is expressed in a blog post by Sjöström in collaboration with a medical company. Sjöström writes:

"This thing with health is big and wide and sometimes hard to understand. Many times we make healthy choices without really knowing what good it actually does...we become healthier and happier, but sometimes we need concrete facts in order to get that real result." (Sjöström 2013: Oct 14)

The blog post offered a description of how Sjöström was tested by SciLife Clinics in order to "map out" her health and to see if she was facing any health risk factors to prevent. She did blood tests, saliva tests and gene testing in order to "see how my body really feels." (Sjöström 2013: Oct 14). Accordingly, what is real is what can be measured as facts, as one cannot merely feel what the body "really feels". In addition, health is being measured against a chart of degrees of risks for disease. The test didn't consider factors such as where she lived and socioeconomic disposition. When analyzing the moral of health and the individual

responsibility of taking care of oneself today, there is no excuse; social structure is obscured by the imperative of individual choice. The discourse of health is that anyone can be fit and healthy in the contemporary world.

6.8 Producing cultural goods

Time and pain, seem to be possessions for the dedicated fitness subject to govern, as there seem to exist no excuses for not living the fitness lifestyle and by pointing this out, a want for the ability to control time and pain is being constructed. Through the practice of writing blogs, the fitness professionals are producers of cultural goods, but also by writing their existence into the words of the blog, they themselves becomes goods to be consumed. A symbolic work of producing needs is undergone and hence, to be able to sell the symbolic goods they have to offer, they have to produce the need for them in potential consumers by a symbolic action, and through this impose norms and needs (Bourdieu 1984: 345). For instance Rahim writes:

“To have joint pain can be caused by much, wearing out, osteoarthritis, cartilage formation, or poor mobility and stability. Then one should really exercise the surrounding muscles in order to strengthen the joint. Now I mean rehabilitation.”...”That one doesn’t have time to exercise, that’s a matter of prioritizing. I see people at the gym that have their infants with them in a stroller on the side while they do some sets of each exercise and then they go. It’s no harder than that!”...”The best is of course to contact a good personal trainer that can help you do a nutritional –and exercise plan that will suit you.” (Rahim 2013: Nov 12)

Rahim is expressing a lifestyle which takes charge over time and bodily restraints and locating the absence of this self-control in the excuses not to exercise and eating healthy, and through this a want is created through constructing the lack of time and suffering from pain, not as much as something to have, but rather something that is absent, that is, a notion of a privation of control over one’s life is being constructed. Successively, by establishing a want, a solution is being offered, that is the services of the personal trainer, a profession of Rahim. As such, a fitness subject is put forth as simultaneously being a consumer of fitness practices and a cultural producer through offering the lifestyle as such to be consumed through the blog as well as selling himself as a product to be bought through the services as a personal trainer.

The fitness blog is in itself a cultural good to be consumed. Hence, the fitness professional is a producer of this and the blogosphere is considered as a space for marketing oneself. For

instance, this summer Alvéen met with the “youtube”-star Cassey Ho, who also gave the lecture “How to become a social media star” at IDEA⁴ World fitness convention. One of the tips Ho gave Alvéen was:

“...keep the visitors satisfied by giving them more than what they might have been expecting. The more you give the readers, the more you get back.”

Just by this advice, both the blog and the writer are being produced as products for consumption. It is the (re)presentation of a lifestyle, of one’s existence that is being formulated to fit into a textual form for subscription. At the same time the blog is also used in order to create a demand for the services of the fitness professional, which is shown in a post by Alvéen:

“Become who you want to be!”...”Do you like your everyday life? Are you comfortable with your body? Do you want to have access to more energy and lust in your life? Do you want a sustainable enhancement?”

“Is this you? Then it’s time to invest in you. During our course you’ll get personal support both in your physical and psychological change.” (Alvéen 2013: Sept 24)

By posting these questions a need for change is being constructed by placing the reader in position of self-evaluation and thus realizing a want for a product and thus Alvéen is offering the answer through: 16 weeks of coaching, exercise classes, lectures in behavioral change, nutrition meetings, and individual consultation. Further in the blog post Alvéen writes:

“...start a change for a better lifestyle”...”get a deeper insight of how you function.”...”increase your self-worth and wellbeing.” (Alvéen 2013: Sept 24)

Hence, a better lifestyle and well-being is up for sale. However, the cost of the course is nearly 20 000 SEK, signaling how this is a product by and for the middle class, and thus re-inscribing the perspective of how the fitness field is predominately a space for the petite bourgeois as it is also recounted by Smith-Maguire (2008).

⁴ Organized by IDEA Health and Fitness Association, a leading organization of fitness and wellness, founded in 1982 (www.ideafit.com 2013)

6.9 Form and function and the unification of the subject

As such we are responsible for our health, and conflated with the notion of health is the appearance of the body. Thus the legitimizing effect of health is used to mask the language of cultural narcissism (Metzl 2010:2). Form and function are entangled within the healthy lifestyle. In a post by Malecki, she writes about her own goals, which she divides up into one regarding her body and one concerning her training. A differentiation between form and function has been made (Smith Maguire 2008). When it comes to Malecki's body, she wants more visible muscles and a defined body:

“I would like to have my abs back but with a ‘bigger volume’.” (Malecki 2013: Nov 16).

Regarding her training she wants to:

“...become like a robot. You know someone says ‘50 pushups’ or ‘50 high jumps’ or ‘100 kicks’ or ‘200 strikes’, then you should be able to do it quickly and not get tired but just ready for next command.”...”So that’s a little bit about my goal, to become a tank just destroying when I’m fighting, never backing down, never have pain, just going forward and such and kicking. That is what it takes to win the national championships.” (Malecki 2013: Nov 16).

Again, fitness is being assumed through feeling, in this case, the feeling of being capable of destruction. Also, by dividing the goals of fitness into bodily appearance and one into bodily performance, the individual is exhibiting a negotiation between a demanding visual ideal and athletic action. Thus, the conciliation between form and function is a way of making sense of these demands and also construction oneself at the intersection of these strains.

The contemporary blog can be appropriated as a conglomeration of the practice of the ancient concept of self-writing as a matter of constituting oneself as a subject of rational action through the adoption, the unification, and the subjection of a fragmented and selected already-said, and the epistolary account of oneself a matter of bringing into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself when one measures one's everyday actions according to the rules of a technique of living (Foucault 1997:221), or in other words, according to habitus (Bourdieu 1984). As such, the practice of writing a fitness blog contains both elements of agency and subjection to discourse, in fact one cannot be without the other, and i.e. the

appropriation of discourse is made through agency. An example of this is how the constitution of the blog often contains an index of the different compartments of life. For instance the blog *Kick in the Butt* (Alvén 2013) presents a catalogue which categorizes life under titles such as; Eating disorders, children/family, Blog/web, Blog readers, Wedding, Bike/Spinning, Outfit of the day, Exercise of the day, Event/Convent, Questions and answers, Golf, Pregnant, Athletes, Inspiration, Instructor/gym work, Work, Get-in-shape, Nutrition/receipts, Running, Food, Music, Uncategorized, Planning, Vacation, Shopping, Beauty, Training clothes, Well-being etc.. In respect of this, the blog presents a catalogue of fragmented experiences of techniques of living and when mediated through the blog these experiences are being objectified into a unified practice of a fitness lifestyle exposed to a private as well as to a public gaze, and subsequently constructing the individual into a fitness and health subject.

Thereby, in this chapter I've thematically given examples of how different technologies of the self have been utilized in order to negotiate discourse and social structure regarding the fitness field, and thus construction different possible subject positions therein. In the final chapter that is subsequent to this, a conclusion of my study will be presented.

Chapter 7 Conclusion and discussion

7.1 Conclusion

Through examining the empirical material of a selection of Swedish fitness blogs, several technologies of the self were identified. These technologies were expressed through the agential appropriation of discourses and structures of the moral of health, gender, and capitalism through the imperative of production and reproduction. The latter, were negotiated and enacted through practices of fitness in order to be productive, in terms of attaining enough strength to ‘cope’ with both work and family. Concerning the family, a fitness subject was constructed which correlated to the bourgeois wholesome heterosexual woman, but another position was also accounted for, which was critical towards the categorization according to sexual orientation. Further, the fitness blogs were also constructed as a part of the advisory field within health and fitness culture, driven by the rationalization of health care and the discourse of individualization. Thus, the fitness subject was constructed through agency, that is, as a conductor conducting fitness and health. Thereof, the fitness blogs are made as products for consumer choice in the market for self-management of health, and as such reconstructing the individualization of health, locating both disease and cure within the individual body.

The management of time was another technology of the self, which was essentially a practice of managing life, again for the sake of productiveness. Time was taken to make time for the “stylization of life” (Bourdieu 1984), where life was managed through dividing it up into manageable compartments. However, while time to make time is enabled by socioeconomic positioning, which reestablished the fitness professional as middle class, this was obscured by the discourse of “everybody can”, and “you just have to choose”. By this, individual shame was created and applied to those who don’t have time to take time to make time. As such a good fitness subject was created, one that take care of time and thus life, as opposed to the one that wastes time and life away. Thereby, the making of time becomes a distinguishing mark, i.e. symbolic capital. Still, time as a mark of distinction is dependent upon the scarcity of it, thus it is acquired through being able to step outside the line of production in order to be more productive while in it. As such, time is a commodity within a capitalist structure. Making time is also an act that is enabled by the means of having general capital, which is, having trust in that management of time is an investment for the future.

Nevertheless, the material also displayed a narrative concerning the issue of when the control of time and life goes into hyperbole in terms of being too healthy, and working out too much. Thus constructing the borders of a healthy way of managing time and health, evidencing the constructive character of health, how it is not a static entity to acquire, but rather an instrument in conducting subjects, or rather, an instrument to conduct human beings into subject positions by their own agency.

The fitness subject was also constructed through structures of gender. Even though the general opinion throughout the material was that there is no reason why a woman should be afraid to work hard in the weightlifting room, the statements were conditioned by the idea that it is extremely hard for a woman to gain muscle, and that a woman would only gain muscle if she was to workout like a bodybuilder. This implied that the fitness subject was gendered in terms of muscularity, and that femininity was constrained within a muscular “glass ceiling”. Yet, there was also a critical voice against the very tension between muscularity and femininity, when the notion of muscular women as unhealthy was put into question. Thus the gendered fitness subject was constructed heterogeneously, taking up different possible positions within the fitness field.

Another mark of distinction was found in the very way of achieving fitness, which was exhibited through either ease or hard work and a love for pain, and where the ease of fitness was approximating a bourgeois way of conducting a fitness lifestyle. Still, ease was conditioned by good food and exercise, thus moralizing the moral of health through the incitement of conducting health and fitness in a healthy way. As far as hard work and pain were of concern, the conquering of pain was an expression of the omnipotence of one’s own body and existence, and this was textually expressed through externalizing the body and oneself, and consequently internalizing the idea of being one’s own creator and celebrating the body by making it an entity of its own. Thus, the practice of writing a fitness blog becomes a way of shaping oneself through a citational practice and thereof establishing a relationship to oneself. Furthermore, by externalizing the body, one gets a measurable value of oneself. Subsequently, writing becomes a self-disciplining practice, which is emphasized through the confessional blogs posts of departures from particular diets and training regimens, times when the “right” choice wasn’t chosen. Yet, the practice of making the “right” choice was ubiquitous throughout the material. Still, the better choice was premised upon by having general capital, that is, making a better

choice is enabled by trust in future benefits of that choice. As such, the free choice was embedded within the discourse of self-investment.

As time and pain were possessions to be governed by the fitness subject, and by emphasizing that there is no excuse not to take control of time and pain, a symbolic work of producing need was undergone in order to sell the products of the fitness professional, such as personal training and health consultations, and thus, imposing norms and needs. In addition to selling a fitness service, the blogs and the writers became products for consumption in themselves. The (re)presentation of a lifestyle, of one's existence was formulated to fit into a textual form of subscription.

Additionally, the material also displayed a tension between form and function, and how this was negotiated and made sense of. For instance constructing different goals, one, concerning the appearance of the body and one, in regards to its performance.

As such, the fitness blogs contained a threefold aspect of panopticism (Foucault 2000:70), which were correction through confession, supervision through documentation, and by unifying the fragmented practices of oneself through writing; one was in control of one's own self-construction.

Further, the technologies that have been recounted in this study weren't equally evident among the blogs, but rather, it was a differentiated diffusion of diverse self-technologies, which indicated how human beings engaged in discourse in different ways, by the way they interpreted and negotiated them through action according to the imperative of health and fitness. As such, through human agency, discourse was transmitted by words and presented as different subject positions within the fitness field. Thereby, this study has shown how the subject comes into being through the act of making sense of the world, and thus presenting itself as a recognizable and sensible subject. It makes 'sense' to acquire health in order to be productive, the ancient care of the self has thus been coopted by discursive measures of capitalism, cloaked with the moral imperative of health. Imbedded with healthy moral was also the construction of gender, with regards of reproduction.

7.2 Discussion and future research

Analyzing an empirical material consisting of blogs was a novel experience, which was also an appealing aspect of this study. Of course, by incorporating interviews the results might have

been different and the analysis more nuanced, but since my ambition was to investigate the very representational qualities of the practice of writing fitness blogs, in terms of the construction a subject of health and fitness, solely focusing on the blogs themselves was validated. However, for future research, including interviews regarding the practice of blogging within the borders of fitness culture, would contribute to a richer knowledge within this area of study.

Finally, from onset, and underlying my research question, was the preconception of how the healthy fitness subject would be constructed, that is, through discursive divisionary strategies into good or bad, or normal or abnormal. However as the empirical material unfolded through discourse analysis, I found that, yes, subjects or subject positions were constructed through practices of bifurcation, but the possible subject, became less and less unitary and homogenous, indicating that the cultural field of fitness is indeed a field of possibilities. Even though meta-discourses, were apparent, the human beings engaged within these constructed themselves into subjects through negotiating discourse, and thus reproducing discourse through agency in culture.

Chapter 8 References

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