

# Hard Body 2.0 – The Construction of the Fitness Subject

## *An Analysis of Swedish Fitness Blogs*

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**B**logging is an endeavor that is often taken for granted in our everyday lives. In this article Greta Bladh critically examines the constructiveness of the concepts of health and fitness in the blogosphere. 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 developed by Pierre Bourdieu, as well as a critical perspective concerning the morals of health discourse, Bladh investigates how human beings engage and negotiate discourse and social structure using writing practices mediated through cyberspace. The results indicate that the fitness field is a field of possibilities and that the blogs display various technologies of the self, sometimes in a contradictory way. This shows that it is by agency that discourse

and social structure come into play, and thus it is through agency that different practices of appropriating fitness and health are displayed, signifying that the fitness subject is heterogeneously constructed.

Even though the fitness subject is located within a field of possibilities Bladh also emphasizes the gendered aspect of fitness and health by problematizing the strained relationships between femininity and muscle development and exercise and womanhood. This demonstrates that the construction of the fitness subject is constrained within gendered social structures.

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Our contemporary world is enmeshed with technology; we are interconnected 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). Also, the rationalization of health care, leading to the imperative of health as the new moral (Metzl et al 2010), implies encouraging individuals to be their own health experts, making health another sphere of consumer choice (Smith Maguire 2008:48). Thus, resources of advisory assistance are increasingly found through commercial talk shows, news programs and self-help books (Smith Maguire 2008:48), and corresponding with the technological development of the internet, advisory elements are prevalent in cybernetic mediums such as in fitness blogs.

With the diffusion of blogging, considered as a mundane practice, analyzing blogs has become a useful instrument in order to comprehend how humans make sense of their social reality and 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 archaeological reconstruction of the “I” (Serfaty 2004:465). Hence, by analyzing fitness blogs, one can attempt to 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.

The concepts of fitness and health can be found at different locations, carrying different meanings. Within the scientific field, fitness can be seen as quantifiable and measurable, displaying data of the human body regarding cardiovascular endurance, strength and flexibility; but fitness can also be understood as 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 understood as a formation of social structures that are integral parts in the the makeup of a subject within the social world in which we live (Dworkin 2001, Eriksson 2009). Thus, the scientific data measuring fitness can't be assumed as pure facts of a person's fitness status, since the meaning and the reason for these variable values 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, but rather, social structures are enabling factors for agency. Hence, this paper explores the social conditions for the positioning of subjects by a narrative unfolding

through social media. Consequently, my main research question is: *How and through which strategies is the fitness subject constructed within and through discourses of fitness and health?*

Additionally, by using a theoretical framework given by Pierre Bourdieu (1984), 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 life and lifestyle of the writer. In congruence with the theoretical work of Michel Foucault regarding the *technologies of the self* (Foucault 2000) one can comprehend 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.

## Previous research

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, which today has developed into a primarily commercial enterprise (Smith Maguire 2008:4f), located as a cultural field which Jennifer Smith Maguire explains it in her book *Fit for consumption: sociology and the business of fitness* (2008). Both Smith Maguire and Christina 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 2009:14f). By understanding fitness as a cultural field, it 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).

As for the fit body in Sweden, research has mainly been directed towards the physical body in “real life”, such as in *The Body is Made to Move* (2009), where Christina Hedblom is exploring gym and fitness culture in Sweden by conducting a field study at gyms and fitness centers in Sweden, in order to deconstruct moving bodies, and investigate why they move in specific

intentional manners (2009:181). As such, 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).

The body is usually seen through the lens of health or disease, and these bodily states are matters of individual will or fail, obscuring social factors that enable or disable health and fitness practices (Smith Maguire 2008:40). Further, the form or health of the body is usually associated with the ocular perception of the body, and thus, 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). In *Against Health: How health became the new morality* (Metzl & Kirkland 2010), the authors are investigating what new selves and citizens, and what non-selves and non-citizens, are being constructed through the current health rhetoric (Metzl 2010:6f). It is stated that in the US, “health has become a commodity and an industry” (Klein 2010:16). Richard Klein is concerned about 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 people, Klein concludes that “[t]he more we diet, the fatter we seem to become” (Klein 2010:15). A similar paradoxical relationship can be found in a Swedish context as the Swedish population hit the European record of number of sick leave days in the beginning of the 21st century, while at the same time there was a story told of Swedes being “obsessed with their own health” (Frykman & Hansen 2009:12f). There are also surveys indicating an increased participation of Swedes in exercise practices (Riksidrottsförbundet 2004).

Concerning fitness and gender, recent studies show a significant increase of participation in fitness activities, especially among women (Dworkin 2001, Verbrugge 2002). Even though there has been an historical progression of women’s participation in sports, recent scientific studies are being pursued along gender lines, 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 on an understanding of difference, whereby research reproduces concepts of gender difference within the area of sports and body science. Thus, research about women’s exercise has played a contributing part in constructing the nature of womanhood (Verbrugge 2002).

This inequality is further discussed in the article “Holding Back”: Negotiating a Glass Ceiling on Women’s Muscular Strength” by Shari L. Dworkin.

kin (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 muscles. 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* do" (2001:334). In addition, the gender division within and of gyms is further problematized in the article "'Cause that's what girls do' The Making of a Feminized Gym", where Maxine Leeds Craig and Rita Liberti (2007) describe structural sex segregation at the gym, where men were predominantly found in the weight rooms and the women preferred to occupy themselves with cardiovascular activities. The authors' conclusion was that conformity to an idealized female appearance mattered little, but social expectations for feminized interactions were prevalent (Craig and Liberti 2007). Their study concluded that the notion of the gym as a masculine institution is still very evident (Craig and Liberti 2007). All-female gyms were not considered as "real" gyms, but rather as a "pseudo-gyms" (Craig and Liberti 2007), by means of the equipment that was offered.

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 printed media. Nonetheless, my research 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).

## Method

There are 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 selected blogs are acces-

sible to anyone with an Internet connection, the persons who express themselves through this medium must be aware of this (Andreasson & Johansson 2013:4). Following that thought, I have treated the blogs as published print-media and not used any pseudonyms.

The material selected consisted of 9 different blogs written by four male and five female authors. This selection was mainly based on 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 by using search engines online with keywords such as 'Swedish fitness blogs' (svenska fitnessbloggar), 'best Swedish fitness blogs' (bästa svenska fitnessbloggar), and 'body fitness blogs' (bodyfitness-bloggar). Through interlinking, I was directed towards the report made by Twingly. By the ranking of interconnectedness, these top blogs could be seen as particular nodes within fitness culture present in the blogosphere. In Twingly's report there were several blogs that were quite similar both in content and demography, which is why 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, My Fit Body at myshowroom.se and shape-meup.se. The empirical material from the blogs comprised blog posts published during the timeframe September 15 2013 to December 15 2013.

## Discourse analysis, technologies of the self and habitus

In order to uncover the strategies of the construction of the fitness subject, I've used Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse analysis as an analytic tool (Foucault 2000, Eldén 2005, Berström & Boréus 2005). Michel Foucault's theory concerning the care of the self as a *technology of the self* (Foucault 2000:403f), as a constitutional practice for the individual, was very useful in understanding the constructional properties of the fitness subject. The narration through fitness blogs can be understood as an epistolary practice, 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 care of the self is a domain of complex and regulated practices and one should treat oneself throughout one's existence as one's own object (Foucault 1997:95, 96), and in that putting

the responsibility on oneself. Thus one also has the responsibility to practice freedom the right way (Foucault 1997). Therefore, by investigating the conduct of making choices, one can disclose relations of power, since "... 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" through governance. However what the right choice may be is not completely straightforward, and decisions are made through negotiation, through agency, hence, choice is dependent upon agency and thus, so is governance. In the case of fitness blogs one can further distinguish how the free choice is located within a field of possibilities.

In order better to understand this agency in discourse the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his comprehension of habitus has also been used, which indicates a breaking point between structure and action (Rydstrom 2002). 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, in relation to my study, can be understood as the structuring structure of the fitness field.

## Production and reproduction and time management

There are differing ways of appropriating a fit subject position, as 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 hälsosamt liv utan pekpinna eller måste), written by Therese Alvé (Alvé 2013). She lives in Stockholm with her husband and two children. In one blog post, published in November 2013, Alvé answers the question asked by her readers if having children has changed her view on exercise; "I have to answer YES [sic]", she writes, and goes on to tell how it is primarily time that makes the difference – "or rather the lack of it" (Alvé 2013:Nov

30). Now she exercises in accordance to family life, “when the children are playing there’s suddenly time to do ten push-ups 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” (Alvén 2013:Nov 30). Alvén continues to tell how she’s become better at enjoying exercise and appreciating it, as time is limited, and she sees exercise as a “...chance to reload ...and become a stronger happier mom” (Alvén 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. 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 Alvén 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!!” (Alvén 2013:Oct 6).

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 diagnoses of everyday events, and unproductiveness is a state of being unhealthy. An example of this lies in title of the blog called *Manage more* (“Orka mera”), written by Anna (2013) at [piggelina.se](http://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 she states that her ambition is to inspire to activity and a healthy life as such, the title signifies an imperative of productiveness, or rather endurance, to “manage” 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 on display in her blog posts, telling the story of being healthy, productive and sufficiently reproductive. It’s a narrative of the ideal citizen of contemporary capitalist society.

Time is an essential requirement for positional enhancement within the fitness field. A strategy for managing the intervals of life is to divide it all up into small increments, minute by minute. 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 about the capitalist system's power of life, of existence (Foucault 1978:139). Meticulously organizing one's life is done in order to fit into the line of production. But not into any production line; capital is not just the accumulation of economic profit, it is also cultural, the managing of time is time taken for the "stylization of life" (Bourdieu 1984). For instance, in Sofia Sjöström's blog a part of her presentation is her philosophy of life: "Those who don't make time for exercise will sooner or later make time for disease" (Sjöström 2013). In a sense she is encouraging making time today in order to have time tomorrow. Again, it is important to keep in mind who has the instruments to "make time". Sjöström is a fitness professional – a certified personal trainer, nutritional coach, gym instructor, health consultant, and an entrepreneur with two companies of her own. Entwined with the possibility to make time is the belief in creating change, that is, investment in time for future gains. This is linked to the harboring of general capital (Frykman & Hansen 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 blogs are based on trust in a positive trajectory of one's own making. The textual and pictorial representations in the blogs are part of the making of "the self-made (wo)man".

Nevertheless, controlling life is not straightforward and unproblematic. Time of one's own is not equally distributed, as mentioned earlier, controlling time takes time, and to spend time, one has to have time at one's disposal. Having time to take time to take care of oneself is a privilege (Foucault 1997:95). 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 1997:225), as it is an operation within the fitness professional's own life in order to attain distinction.

However, sometimes the wish for control goes into hyperbole, as Sofia describes how controlling diet and exercise can be a way of dampening anxiety (Sjöström 2013). For instance, she writes about "the forbidden", about when living healthy and exercising becomes an exaggerated obsession. Here, an alternative view is being narrated that is critically self-assessing

the perfect lifestyles at display 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 that “health mania” may inflict, the process of normalization and pathology should also be accounted for. By co-opting a behavior into medical discourse, a process of medicalization<sup>1</sup>, referring to the diagnosis of orthorexia<sup>2</sup>, 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 a static entity to acquire, but rather a strategic tool or an instrument to conduct human beings into subject positions.

## Governing fitness

Based on this study, I would argue that fitness blogs should be seen as a part of an 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. It was a response to readers that have written to him concerning the lack of motivation and depression. Blaha advises them to eat some more carbohydrates, as there is a correlation between low blood sugar levels and depression, and also to make sure they take omega-3 supplements, as this fatty acid is also shown to have positive effects to control depression (Blaha 2013). 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. Still, both the pathology and the cure are being constructed as found solely under the skin of one’s own determination. Discursive strate-

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1 “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).

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

gies 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 means of the re-distributional properties of morals of health, fitness bloggers can be seen as fitness conductors. They also work as critics that review the fitness field, i.e. emphasizing particular practices of fitness at the expense of others. In fact, they give advice about various practices, thus directing fitness participants towards specific possibilities of the fitness field. As such, the practice of the fitness blog corresponds to the words of Foucault, “[t]o govern... is to structure the possible field of action of others” (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 that are free to navigate in a field of possibilities (Foucault 2000:342). The governance 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.

## The construction of gender

A critical narrative towards a common attitude of a constrained femininity is prevalent in the material, especially in the tension between the accumulation of muscles and femininity. For instance Philip Lailani writes about the myth that women shouldn't work as hard as men in the gym in order to prevent gaining too much muscle. 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, which is that women don't gain muscle easily and naturally so. But women do gain muscles (Dworkin 2001:334), and the concept of a muscular “glass ceiling” for women (Dworkin 2001) is being concretized. Em Löfgren is critical towards the tension between femininity and muscles when she writes about how particularly visually well-trained women are considered as unhealthy (Löfgren 2013:Dec 10). By this, 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 labeled as unhealthy, while elite athletes in other sports

are never questioned concerning their health. The blog post is a critical assessment of the normalization of health. 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 woman'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. This notion also corresponds to earlier scientific research aimed at mapping the dysfunctional side-effects of too intense physical activity by women and girls, threatening that most sacred component of womanhood, that is, fertility, the ability to become a mother (Verbrugge 2002). However, as Löfgren engages in the discourse of gender construction, a negotiation is made where gender is bent to acquire a position outside reproduction. Therefor 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, that has a reputation of being a building gym and old school, and those who train there train really hard. This 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, 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”, which 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 and muscles is again being problematized in Bea Malecki's blog, through the blog post “Throw out the scales and start to exercise”, as she is stating what “us girls” do, that girls are afraid of gaining weight and is as such expressing a prejudice internalized by girls, albeit 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 expectations of this relation is taken for granted and as such cemented. In addition, not being afraid to gain weight is conditioned upon not being overweight, thereby cementing the ideal of being of “normal weight”. Subsequently, the feminine fitness subject is being constructed as inherently frightened of gaining weight, but oblivious to the relation between muscle mass and weight gain, a position she identifies with as she writes “us girls”, but for the overweight girl this is not valid. The overweight subject is identified as “you”, demarcating clear borders of dif-

ferent female fitness subjects, normal weight versus overweight and in this reconstructing the moral fear of obesity. Muscle acquisition is accepted 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.

## Appropriating fitness

In some cases the cultural intermediate of the fitness professional is aspiring to have a relation to health in congruence with the bourgeois' ease. According to Bourdieu, one of the most powerful social markers is one's relation to 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). The subtitle of Alvén's blog treats health as natural and easy as opposed to the logic of hard work by pushing oneself through pain to the limit. As such, through the workings of publishing one's own fitness practices a unifying process is undertaken to construct the healthy subject, and by spelling out these practices, the life of the blogger becomes a cultural product in itself. Thus, the different ways of assuming 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.

The relation between ease and health is further being narrated 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 they've already eaten something sweet and forbidden so that day's diet is ruined anyway and by this they give sweets a power position and thus punish themselves in a destructive way. Hence, 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, one takes care of oneself 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, one has to work for ease, and therefore 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: “One has to like to torment oneself a little => that’s love...I give my body what it deserves...” (Rahim 2013:Nov 20). 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. 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. This is 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), as 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 inherit part of oneself. As such, traces of the Christian denunciation of the flesh are found, 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). Löfgren writes about the act of comparing oneself to oneself (Löfgren 2013:Nov 4). Thus an imperative to externalize oneself in order to get a measurable value of oneself is expressed 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 illustrated by Löfgren’s presentation within which she expresses her motivation for writing her blog as “...a way to document my journey, my goals, my training and to give me an overview and a possibility to follow my steps” (Löfgren 2013).

Part of the practice of self-monitoring through blogs is the confession, a technology of the self (Foucault 1997:177f), through which the fitness subject is being constructed. For instance, one of the more exposing expressions of a 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. In conjunction with the written post are two pictures attached, both showing a shirtless Lailani, one "before" and one "after" picture. 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, as Lailani expresses: "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. As such, the punishment for departing from an earlier diet is both being put on the surface of the body and 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" (Lailani 2013:Nov 17). 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.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the contemporary blog can be comprehended 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. This is done through the adoption, the unification, and the subjection of a fragmented and selected already-said. Also, the epistolary account of oneself is 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 thus the mediation of discourse is made through agency. Through examining the empirical material from a selection of Swedish fitness blogs, several tech-

nologies of the self were identified. These technologies were negotiations of discourses and structures of the moral of health, gender, and capitalism through the imperative of production and reproduction.

From the onset, and underlying my research question, the preconception of how the healthy fitness subject was created through narrative social construction, and as the empirical material unfolded through discourse analysis, I found that 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. However, this field of possibilities within fitness culture can also be construed as a cultural battle field, where humans become subjects. In this process human subjects are fighting for the right way to define what health is and delineate its borders as well as its appearance upon the body. Simultaneously the right way to achieve this health and that appearance of health is described through advising the “right choice” of a fitness lifestyle. Thus, by agency of the human being in its becoming a subject of fitness and health, the delineation of the body’s contours are caught in a constant phase of (re)construction through practice, becoming a Hard Body 2.0.

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