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Content Analysis of *Men's Health* Magazine:

Masculinity and Health

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August 28, 2009

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Introduction

How men's health has become an individual project in early 21st century Western society is an area that needs more research. My research looks at analyzing constructions of masculinity in popular media, specifically in *Men's Health,* a men's magazine. Issues I examine include body ideals and discourses of men's health in the social context, including a look at how neo-liberal discourses of individualism impact on the construction of male identities. In the following section, I introduce some of the concepts, theorists, and writings that I will be working with. These materials are necessary for examining men's health as an individual project, particularly how ideologies of hegemonic masculinity are reproduced in *Men's Health*, the magazine that my research project examines.

Since the 1980s, decreasing dependence on social institutions by making people responsible for their own health became central to the neo-liberal ideologies that shape many of the policies today that impact on health. Kerry Chamberlain (2004) writes: "With the rise of neo-liberalism, the creation of the health consumer and the promotion of personal responsibility for health have characterized contemporary health concerns" (p. 471). Health has increasingly become an individual consumer issue, not a social welfare issue. Neo-liberal ideologies affect many aspects of everyday life for neo-liberalism is not just reduced to economics. Henri Giroux, one of many contemporary scholars looking at the effects of neo-liberalism on people's everyday lives, states: "Neo-liberalism is not simply an economic policy designed to cut government spending, pursue free trade policies, and free market forces from government regulations; it is also a political philosophy and ideology that affects every dimension of social life" (2004, p.52).

The media plays an active role in constructing this trend towards individualism and people taking personal responsibility for their health. Also, the media has become an

increasingly important source of health information for consumers, who are encouraged to seek out new information and choices. As an example, 56 percent of adults listed magazines as a key source of gaining information about healthy eating (Goode et al., 1995, p.7). Magazines and other media, through the discourses of science, health, beauty and morality that are encoded in them, appeal to and position the consumer in potentially multiple ways (Madden & Chamberlain, 2004), and reader/consumers are encouraged to individualize and be agents in control of their choices.

Magazines marketed to men, especially men's health, are a growing consumer market. These magazines, as Crawshaw notes, typically reflect "neo-liberal models of health, (w)here men are constructed as active and entrepreneurial citizens able to maintain their own health and well-being through the judicious management of risk in contexts appropriate to dominant discourses of hegemonic masculinity" (Crawshaw, 2007, p. 1606). As Crawshaw makes clear, the intended audience and primary male ideal of the magazines is linked to "hegemonic masculinity," that is, young, white, able-bodied, educated, middle-to-upper class, heterosexual men. The magazines present health as an individual responsibility and de-emphasize the profit-making motives and underlying social issues that should be addressed through better public health policies. Crawshaw (2007) writes: "This popular media text constructs an individual subject who is interested in managing their own health and engaging in an ongoing body project (Shilling, 1993) of lifestyle improvement that is not only beneficial to the self but serves the dual role of shifting responsibility from health and welfare services" (p. 1616). Through reading the cultural texts that are presented in media, fashioning one's health and one's body becomes the work that men should do. Men who are unable to manage their own health, are overweight/obese, or unable to achieve the masculine body ideal may be seen in a poor light,

both to themselves and to others, as an ideal male is constructed as dominant, strong, able-bodied, ambitious and self-reliant. Body work brings rewards for those who succeed, but scorn for those who fail:

> men are implored to optimise their corporeality (Rose, 2001) as part of the adoption of appropriate masculine identities which have come to encompass both ascetic and aesthetic health as core values. Failure to do so may mean men finding themselves in a weaker position as men, and unable to reap the benefits of patriarchal systems which continue to position them as dominant" (Crawshaw, 2007, p. 1616).

Men are hence disciplined through reward/failure discourses to take up the bodywork of achieving the healthy, strong masculine ideal. Magazines, such as *Men's Health* (which makes its intended audience and subject matter clear), display images of ideal masculine bodies, along with articles containing nutritional information and exercise routines written by science, health and sports "experts" for readers to consume in order to achieve the healthy male body. However, often times the ideal bodies shown are impossible to achieve, require much work, maintenance, time and finances, and are not necessarily either healthy to look at nor physically healthy; indeed, the bodywork may result in decreasing one's health (for example, through over-exercising, consuming dangerous drugs or taking unregulated supplements), yet there is a psychological compulsion to try and achieve the ideal.

Little is known about male body image issues (Drewnowski, Kurth, & Krahn, 1996) although interest in this area has increased (Edwards & Launder, 1999). Media today are filled with images of muscular lean men, whether in movies, magazines and even children's toys. The ideal masculine body today is constructed as muscular and lean with "6 pack" abdominals. The cultural ideals of masculinity, like those of femininity, constantly change. Morgan (2000) writes:

> The covers of men's magazines now resemble the worst excesses of female-body objectification from the 1970s. Fighting fat, building muscle, and tightening the abdomen are linked to sexual prowess through an advertising industry that exploits male body-image insecurities while laughing all the way to the bank. (p. 1372)

Pope et al. (2001) conducted a study that examined male body-image misperception among college-age men in Austria, France, and the USA. The study found that most men believed they would be more attractive to women if they were 14kg more muscular than they were. However, women rejected the idea, and preferred a fairly average male body image. Pope et al. (1998; 1999) also conducted studies on male action figure toys and centerfold models and concluded that the ideal male body is growing increasingly muscular and lean. Ten years later, the ideal male bodies exhibited in magazines and movies reiterate the research of Pope et al. Often times the images we see in the media are of male bodies made unnaturally muscular by means of steroid abuse, those of steroid-using models, actors, rap artists and sport trainers, to name a few—who have become the "experts" and ideals male readers/consumers turn to for advice and inspiration.

The ultra-lean, muscular male ideal influence men's psyches in various ways as identities are constituted through available social and cultural meanings. The media ideals are portrayed as healthy male bodies to strive for. Readers of the cultural texts on ideal masculinity compare themselves to the available images. Underlying the images and the articles is the belief that by eating healthily and working out you too can achieve this attractive body. Although diet and exercise are important in achieving these body constructs, what is often missing from the portrayals is the time commitment and money needed to attempt the look. When these are considered, they are presented as the price one must pay; that is, this ideal body demands that a

man withstand some pain to achieve it. Also, the cultural texts and images falsely promote the ideal body for all males regardless of physiology, genetics, age or class background. Most males will find that it is impossible to achieve this body, no matter how clean they eat or how much they train. They might then feel as if they have failed in managing their own health and possibly feel they are less of a man since they cannot achieve this desirable muscular and lean male body. Those who are unable to achieve this desired look are not only viewed as unsuccessful in managing their own health, but also with the implication that they are perhaps weak and even immoral for they have been seduced by the temptations of junk foods and other foods constructed as "bad". Also, some males might resort to steroid use in order to achieve this contemporary male body and a small number may also develop muscle dysmorphia (reverse of anorexia).

These social discourses can be found in the popular American men's magazine *Men's Health*, where men are encouraged to take their health and bodies into their own hands. Crawshaw (2007), citing Featherstone (1992), explains that individuals are "constructed as active consumers of health advice; as responsible citizens with an interest in, and a duty to maintain, their own well-being both to improve health and fight disease, yet also to construct a socially appropriate and acceptable body form, the demands for which are ever increasing under the conditions of late modern consumer culture (p. 1607). Doing the bodywork of constructing the body becomes a "signifier of success and masculine identity and as a source of 'capital' in interpersonal interaction" (Crawshaw, 2007, p. 1607). What that means is that those men who best succeed in disciplining their bodies to fit the ideal will reap rewards in society, as they will be looked upon as healthy, sexually attractive, in control of their lives, and as role models and ideal citizens.

By undertaking a content analysis of *Men's Health* magazine, I hope to examine some of the ways that the ideal male body is constructed and presented, some of the cultural meanings that can be read from the images and the articles, and what might be some of the effects on men. The discourses found in *Men's Health* are suggestive of more recent conceptualizations of health as a complex social phenomenon that is intricately linked to factors such as identity, lifestyle and gender (Crawshaw, 2007), and hence the magazine is a pertinent cultural site to examine. These discourses of male identity and lifestyle work to construct, as Crawshaw (2007) has written, a 'healthy male citizen' in neo-liberal, risk-oriented cultures which encourage individualism, appearance, and people taking personal responsibility for their health and well-being.

Literature Review

Men's Health, published by Rodale, has become a popular men's lifestyle magazine with a monthly circulation of 1.86 million in the United States; like many other magazines, it also has an online version available on its website. From an industry perspective, the magazine is dedicated to presenting men the practical and positive actions that enrich their lives, with articles covering fitness, nutrition, relationships, careers, travel, grooming and health issues (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2008). From a critical perspective, although the magazine gives ample health advice, it does so in a way that promotes a type of hegemonic masculinity that is associated not with health but with negative health behaviours (Stibbe, 2004).

What is hegemonic masculinity?

My study of the ideal masculine identities constructed in *Men's Health* begins with defining masculinity and particularly the concept of hegemonic masculinity. One cannot

undertake a study on masculinity without first referring to the work of R.W. Connell (2000) who is one of the first theorists to write about the social construction of masculinity:

> Masculinity... is necessarily a social construction. Masculinity *refers* to male bodies (sometimes directly, sometimes symbolically and indirectly), but is not determined by male biology. Masculinities are configurations of practice within gender relations, a structure that includes large-scale institutions and economic relations as well as face-to-face relationships and sexuality. Masculinity is institutionalized in this structure, as well as being an aspect of individual character or personality. (p.29)

By first explaining what hegemony means, Stibbe (2004) then explains what that means in relation to masculinity;

> power that 'makes people act as if it were natural, normal or simply a consensus' (van Dijk 1997, 19). In the case of masculinity, 'traditional characteristics of masculinity are made to seem so correct and natural that men find...domination...not just expected, but actually demanded' (Craig 1992, 3). Hegemonic masculinity is reproduced through discourses that make it seem natural, inevitable, and morally right that men behave in particular ways. (p. 33)

Hegemonic masculinity is therefore used to express the privilege men have in society over women, as well as the privilege some men have over other men. Hegemonic masculinity is the least likely to change, mostly in those aspects that exploit biological factors (Stibbe, 2004). Further, hegemonic masculinity, or traditional masculinity, is also associated with a large number of negative health behaviours, such as excessive alcohol consumption and risky behaviour (Stibbe, 2004).

Stibbe (2004) argues that "*Men's Health* magazine is steeped in traditional masculine ideology and fails to challenge the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in the interest of health" (p. 34). He also explains that *Men's Health* magazine is aimed at upper-class heterosexual white men, who are the class most exposed to and with the most to gain from the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and the reproduction of male domination (Stibbe, 2004). Stibbe (2004) writes that *Men's Health* has "an openly admitted agenda of promoting 'the traditional male view'" (p. 35). Stibbe (2004) analyzed six issues of the U.S. edition of *Men's Health* from the year 2000 using a critical discourse analysis. He focused on the interaction of three aspects: "(1) the discursive construction of masculinity in the magazine through the creation of images of the ideal man, (2) the magazine's role in reproducing male power, and (3) men's health behaviour, particularly the negative behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity listed by Courtenay (2000a)" (p. 35-36). Stibbe found that there were two main discourses throughout the magazine, "the discourse of medical science and the discourse of the 'buddy'" (Stibbe, 2004, p. 36). Due to men's unwillingness to see a doctor, and lack of health care utilization, the author explains that the voice of the buddy plays an important role in terms of power relations (Stibbe, 2004). By taking the advice from someone who is perceived as a buddy, or friend, they are not giving in to a more powerful expert, the "pompous know-it-all" (Stibbe, 2004, 36). As an example, the regular feature "Ask Men's Health" allows men to ask questions about their health and might serve as a substitute for seeking medical help in person (Alexander, 2003). By not seeking help in person, men can maintain their hegemonic masculinity since, according to the literature, the male body is constructed as tough and impregnable and seeking help would imply vulnerability and dependence (Gough, 2006).

Stibbe (2004) identifies various themes in the magazine that construct the image of the ideal man. The first theme identified is "The Ideal Man: A Bodybuilder" (Stibbe, 2004, p. 37). Stibbe (2004) writes that the "primary goal of the magazine, established through imperatives, is increasing muscle size:

> Add 2 inches to your chest. (October 2000, cover)
>
> Build ABS THAT SHOW. (July/August, cover)
>
> Build this body! [arrow points to a huge muscular torso, expanded so large that most of the head and right shoulder cannot be seen] (December, 2000, cover)
>
> Look like a Men's Health cover model. [with picture of four muscular men](December 2000, 110)" (p. 37).

The author also finds that while these models have huge torsos, necks and arms, they have surprisingly thin legs in order to model trousers (Stibbe, 2004). Although doing anaerobic exercise and having sufficient muscle mass is a health goal, developing huge bulky muscles is not. Not only are the models well muscled, they also exhibit very low body fat levels. A content analysis by Labre (2005) found that the "vast majority of male images in Men's Health and Men's Fitness magazine published from 1999 to 2003 were characterized by low body fat (96%) and high muscularity (82%)" (p. 197). The author concluded that the magazines represented one type of man as healthy and fit: "the lean, cut, fitness model" and that "other types of healthy male bodies (e.g., without six-pack abdominals or extremely low levels of body fat) were not commonly represented in these magazines" (Labre, 2005, p. 198). When images of males with medium or high body fat levels and low muscularity were depicted in these magazines, they were usually shown in a negative way (Labre, 2005). These images were often found in advertisements showing "before" (high body fat and low muscularity) and "after" (low body fat

and high muscularity) photos (Labre, 2005). This suggests that there is one central male body type that is healthy, attractive, and desirable. One of the problems with this, as was mentioned earlier, is that the muscular body with six-pack abdominals is not synonymous with health. This body does not result from following a healthy balanced diet and moderate exercise routine. It is a "constructed look" that requires a strict nutritional and fitness regimen designed to build muscle while at the same time keeping body fat at minimum levels (Labre, 2005). For many men this is an almost impossible task as the two goals are contradictory to one another. To build muscle one must eat more calories than one expends, while to lose fat one has to do the opposite. This physique goal is thus very difficult to achieve. Labre (2005) writes that "the pursuit of this extreme appearance-related goal could lead to body image preoccupation as well as disordered eating behaviours, the use of steroids and performance-enhancing supplements, over-exercising, cosmetic surgery, and other related behaviours among men" (p. 198). Thus, contrary to what the title may imply, *Men's Health* has more to do with appearance related goals than giving men health advice.

The goal of building muscle is also related to male social power. Stibbe (2004), citing Klein, explains that:

> bodybuilding... represents 'the most extreme view of masculinity our society has' (Klein, 1993, 18). If men compete with each other for power according to muscle size, men as a group win over women. Because 'bodybuilding fetishizes muscles, it further exaggerates gender-based characteristics...that are...loaded with cultural meaning' (Klein (1992, 106). The construction of the ideal man as hugely muscular therefore serves the ideological goal of reproducing male power. (p. 38)

Men's Health magazine's portrayal of the ideal male body as lean and muscular has more to do with promoting a traditional masculinity that reproduces male power and domination and little to do with health. In order to achieve this almost impossible ideal male body, men must spend vast amounts of time over-exercising along with extreme dieting and possibly even steroid use, certainly not behaviours associated with health. *Men's Health* magazine provides nutritional and exercise recommendations that give the illusion that this type of body is attainable providing men follow their advice. However, this is false and some men may feel like failures and blame themselves once they discover they are unable to construct such a muscular lean body with "six pack" abdominals. However, this elusive goal is good for commercial success as men who are unable to build this body will keep buying the magazine for tips on how to achieve this desirable physique. Stibbe (2004) writes, "Most readers do not look like cover models, and without a huge amount of effort, they never will. This has the potential to create anxiety, which keeps readers buying the magazine for the promise of shortcuts to the far-off goal" (p. 38).

Although some, such as Stibbe, believe these magazines "stabilize the traditional relationship between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities", others believe there is a "trend towards men's changing gender relations and bodily and self identities (the so-called 'new man')" (Boni, 2002, p. 466). In other words, the masculinities that the magazines promote are complex and multiple; the new man, being one of the identities. Boni (2002) explains that *Men's Health* is "the most representative title for a study concerning the social and media construction of the 'new man'—a man who retains several characteristics of the traditional, 'hegemonic' masculinity and yet is concerned with new, more 'feminine' issues such as body care and health" (p. 469). Further, Boni (2002) explains that *Men's Health* magazine encourages men to assume "self-responsibility" for the way they look and feel, with their "display of the male body as a

vehicle of care and pleasure" (p. 468). The 'new man' is obsessed with bodily health and fitness, and *Men's Health* encourages this obsession and links it to issues as diverse as diet, illness, cosmetic surgery, beauty care and so on (Boni, 2002).

Boni (2002) looks at the medicalization of the male body in *Men's Health* and explains that the magazine frames the male body as a risky body that needs to be protected from illness and disease. However, the medicalization of the male body, as it is framed by the magazine, also incorporates the 'fit body', the "ideal lithe, slim and mesomorphic body" that was mentioned previously (Boni, 2002, p. 470). Boni (2002) writes that "the body as it is represented by the images of the magazine is the traditional young, lean, muscular male body" (p. 470) and that the "cover of *Men's Health* is always the picture of perfect health and fitness" (p. 471).

In an analysis on *Men's Health,* Alexander (2003) found that all the covers in his sample "featured white men estimated to be the ages twenty-five and thirty-five" and that "most of the models were shirtless... all have well-developed muscles... Arms, pectorals, and 'six-pack' abdomen muscles are well defined" (p. 541). Clearly, the most important of the visual representations of masculinity featured on all covers, as shown in Alexander's sample (2003), is that men need to build and maintain a hard body. Also, the themes of fat loss, weight, food and diet appear in nine of the ten issues Alexander (2003) analyzed. As an example, one issue depicts an image of a Greek god with boxes telling the reader his body measurements and what exercises men need to do to achieve this body. For instance, "the statue's chest measures 52 inches; bench presses with a dumbbell are recommended to achieve this physique" (Alexander, 2003, p. 545). Alexander (2003) explains that "if a similar article featuring Barbie as the centerfold were to appear in a women's magazine, it would undoubtedly draw criticism from some readers..... similarly, men are told, '[I]n time, you too might be up on a pedestal [just like a Greek god]'

(July-August 2000)" (p.545). However, as was mentioned by Stibbe and others, this body type is extremely difficult to achieve and is an elusive construct rather than a healthy role model.

As part of his research, Boni (2002) asked readers of the magazine how they view and make sense of these "ideal" male images. He noted that there were two main audience frames: the "negotiated body" and the "sick body" (Boni, 2002). The "negotiated body" refers to the different approaches men develop in order to negotiate the meanings of their bodies with respect to cultural and media ideals of male physiques (Wienke, 1998) (Boni, 2002). Three individual coping methods were found. Boni (2002) writes:

> The embodied masculinity celebrated by *Men's Health* is that of fitness and mesomorphism, but we can have at least three individual coping strategies in view of this media frame: the reliance strategy (i.e. relying on the 'healthy' image as a standard for how a man's body should look), the reformulation strategy (i.e. modifying the masculine ideal in a way that conforms to the individual's abilities, perceptions and strengths) and the rejection strategy, by which the reader expresses opposition to the male body ideal (Wienke, 1998). (p. 471)

As was mentioned, readers who have adopted the reliance strategy might go to extremes to achieve this 'healthy' male body and thus will suffer negative health effects from this; while others who are unable to achieve this body type might develop body image problems. Boni (2002) also found that in the focus groups some women encouraged their boyfriends to follow the magazine's advice to meet these physical standards.

However, not all focus group participants looked at these images from this perspective. While the main magazine frame was that these images are 'healthy bodies', some had the

completely opposite reading, where this male body ideal is "everything but the image of health" (Boni, 2002, p. 471). These focus group members viewed this body (muscular with six-pack abdominals) as a "sick body"; "in the words of Jules, a 'thirty something' student, 'These physiques are unreal, and they are...unnatural'; and Oscar, a professional in his thirties, says: 'These bodies are not clean... I think they must be the result of a massive use of drugs, steroids..." (Boni, 2002, p. 471). *Men's Health,* as the name would suggest, contains many articles about health and bodily welfare for men, however as Boni (2002) points out, "what should be stressed here is the particular quality of this concern—a concern focused on insecurity, fear and self-discipline: to be healthy is to be safe and normal; to be unhealthy is to be out of control and pathological" (p. 472).

Ideal male physiques are also frequently found in the magazine's advertisements. *Men's Health* dedicates more than 41 percent of its magazine content to advertising (Boni, 2002). Along with the magazine's discursive strategy, the advertising found within *Men's Health* "tell its readers how men must present themselves, how men must take care of themselves, how they must live, what they must smell like and what their physiques must look like" (Boni, 2002, p. 474). Although the magazine reinforces traditional masculinities, Diane Barthel argues that the advertisements objectify men and play on their insecurities to sell products, a tactic that is typically found in female magazines: "Advertising has encouraged a 'feminization' of culture, as it puts all potential consumers in the classic role of the female: manipulable, submissive, seeing themselves as objects" (1992, p. 148-9) (cited in Boni, 2002, 474). Advertisers use images of the "ideal" male body which exploit male body image insecurities to sell more products. The male body is objectified in gender specific ways. Boni (2002) writes, "advertisers must legitimate these products for masculine use, one strategy being that of using stereotypical images of the

male body. Cologne and underwear ads, for example, display pictures of muscular male torsos and assertive faces with penetrating eyes staring out at the reader" (p. 474). Drawing on the work of Susan Bordo, Boni explains that the advertisements found in *Men's Health* display images of men that are more in line with hegemonic masculinities, much different than the images of "the new man" that one would find in a women's magazine: "Far from the androgynous, somehow subordinated male models that can be seen in many women's magazines, *Men's Health's* ads display a wide set of 'powerful, armoured, emotionally impenetrable (Bordo, 1999: 186) male bodies" (Boni, 2002, p. 474). Male readers consume the ideal images, and in so doing become embedded in consumption. Alexander (2003) writes that as men "consume popular culture and advertisements, they also consume the masculine gender ideals associated with specific products" (p. 540). Alexander (2003) explains that the goal of *Men's Health* is "explicitly to shape the reader's views of masculinity so as to transform modern men into postmodern consumers. In other words, male gender role resocialization is the product" (p.540).

Men's Health gives advice on etiquette, manners, and morals suggesting that the readers of this magazine are insecure (Alexander, 2003). The features and cover stories also provide advice on consumer products. Alexander (2003) explains that "presumably, these products help men to put into practice the lessons they learned about etiquette, manners, and morals" (p. 546). Not only does the magazine give advice on what products men need to buy to "improve" themselves and attain optimum health, it also provides suggestions on purchasing for others. By providing consumer advice, *Men's Health* gives the illusion that it is helping men relieve their anxieties by offering them direction on which products to purchase. Alexander (2003) writes, "Enhancing men's ability to discern the right consumer products—from home gym equipment to formal dinner service—is a key function of *Men's Health* as an agent of masculine gender

socialization. *Men's Health* offers a vision of masculinity to relieve male anxiety" (p. 547). Yet, looking out for the health of its readers and relieving anxiety, is not the primary goal of the magazine—male health is the commodity being marketed to sell magazines and products. The magazine creates insecurities in men by showing them that in order to be a desired, healthy man one needs to have a lean muscular physique, dress a certain way and drive a certain car. The magazine's advertisements then provide the necessary products that educated, middle-class men require in order to achieve social power. Most advertisements in *Men's Health* are for automobiles and designer clothing (Alexander, 2003). These two products shape contemporary masculine socialization; provided they are the correct brands, they are status symbols to financial success and thus power. Alexander (2003) explains that *Men's Health* brands products in men's minds and that "men's bodies become the walking billboards for brand-name products. Today, branded masculinity shapes men's understanding of themselves and others" (p. 550). What is disconcerting about *Men's Health* is that many of its articles actually function as covert advertising, and men who read the magazine for health advice might not realize they are also being influenced and solicited to consume products—or believe themselves to be immune to the messages. McCracken (1993, p. 38) defines covert advertising as "promotions disguised as editorial material or hidden in some other form so that they appear to be non-advertising" (cited in Alexander, 2003, p. 546). No longer is masculinity defined by what a man produces, instead it is by what a man consumes (Alexander, 2003). Alexander (2003) explains that the "ability to consume any number of styles allows for the construction of multiple masculinities.... *Men's Health* presents but one construct of masculinity, as a stylish hard body, which is targeted at educated, middle-class men" (p. 551).

Men's Health does not promote hegemonic masculinity and the associated unhealthy behaviours simply by its portrayal of the ideal man as lean and muscular. The magazine also promotes nutritional advice that is contrary to health guidelines. Another recurrent theme Stibbe (2004) found in in *Men's Health* is that of encouraging men to eat meat, particularly red meat:

> *Men's Health* magazine, on the other hand, while sometimes promoting the health properties of specific vegetables, never, in the sample analyzed, suggests a reduction in meat. Even in articles dealing with heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or haemorrhoids, the magazine fails to link red meat with disease or any other negative consequences. Instead, meat, and particularly beef, is consistently associated with positive images of masculinity. The primary connection is via muscle... (p. 39)

Not only does the magazine promote the consumption of red meat as masculine, but also it portrays vegetables as effeminate: "Vegetables are for girls... If your instincts tell you a vegetarian diet isn't manly, you're right. One British study found that vegetarian women give birth to girls more often than meat eating women (December 2000, 66)" (Stibbe, 2004, p. 40). This type of humour is full of gender ideology and can be found throughout the magazine (Stibbe, 2004). Clearly minimizing the importance of vegetables and promoting the consumption of red meat cannot be considered healthy. Instead, the magazine's agenda is more in line with the reproduction of traditional masculinities. Adams (1990) explains that meat is "a symbol and celebration of male dominance, 'Real' men eat meat... Failure of men to eat meat announces that they are not masculine" (p.34) (cited in Stibbe, 2004, p. 41). The consumption of meat is related to power and the ability to control animals. Fiddles (1991) explains that "meat is almost ubiquitously put to use as a medium through which men express their 'natural' control, of women as well as animals" (p.146) (cited in Stibbe, 2004, p. 41). The consumption of beef is

especially symbolic of power as it comes from the largest and most muscular of farm animals (Stibbe, 2004). However, meat is also symbolic of class. Stibbe (2004) writes, "Adam's (1990, 26) theory is that meat, which consumes far more resources in its production than vegetables, is a luxury food that symbolizes class. If men are encouraged to eat a lot of meat, that places men collectively in a higher class than women" (p. 41).

Another theme identified by Stibbe is that the ideal man should be a beer drinker: "If beef is raised to almost legendary status among foods in *Men's Health,* then it is beer that is given this position among drinks" (p. 42-43). *Men's Health* promotes beer as the ideal drink for men and minimizes the dangers of alcohol. Stibbe (2004) found that not only did the magazine presume that its readers enjoy beer, but also *Men's Health* encouraged even greater consumption by emphasizing the positive health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption and understating the health hazards of overindulgence. Stibbe (2004) writes:

> While already presuming the reader loves beer, the magazine encourages even more consumption by extolling the medical benefits of moderate alcohol more than the dangers of excess alcohol:
>
> > Drink more beer—the hops may help keep calcium from accumulating in your kidneys. (December 2000, contents)
> >
> > Why you need more pizza and beer. (November 2000, contents)
> >
> > How beer may save your life. (July/August 2000, 92)
> >
> > Booze that heals. (June 2000, cover)
> >
> > Drink for your health. (June 2000, contents)
> >
> > Drink to your health. (June 2000, 112, red emphasis in original). (p. 43)

Beer drinking, and alcohol in general, is associated with masculinity as men can prove their power by how well they can tolerate alcohol; "drinking alcohol is 'predominantly a male activity, where power and masculinity are directly related to an individual's capacity for alcohol consumption.' (Henry-Edwards and Pols, 1991, p. 26)" (cited in Stibbe, 2004, p. 43). By associating alcohol tolerance with power, men will have privilege over women as, for biological reasons, such as greater average weight, they are able to tolerate more alcohol than women (Stibbe, 2004). Also, beer is often advertized as an ideal male drink. Strate (1992) explains that beer commercials provide men with a "manual on masculinity" (cited in Stibbe, 2004, p. 43). *Men's Health* magazine's promotion of beer drinking is problematic since the magazine is supposed to promote men's health and not reinforce existing gender behaviour, which includes overindulgence and binge-drinking, to name two unhealthy and all too common male practices.

Stibbe (2004) also found that *Men's Health* promoted the ideal man to be a "convenience food eater" (p. 44). The magazine portrayed cooking as a female activity and if men cooked they are seen as less of a man. Stibbe (2004) explains that "hegemonic masculinity works to create an image of cooking as an inferior activity carried out by women and men who cook as effeminate" (p. 44). The magazine provides a solution by promoting simple, convenient food choices that require little to no cooking or effort. Certainly the promotion of convenience food is not a health goal (Stibbe, 2004). In an analysis of contemporary newspaper representations of men, food and health, Gough (2006) found a:

> persistent adherence to hegemonic masculinities predicated on health-defeating diets, special occasion cooking of hearty meals, and a general distancing from the feminised realm of dieting.... men are constructed as naive and vulnerable when it comes to diet and health, while woman are viewed as experts." (p. 326)

In the media men are portrayed as knowing little about health and nutrition and thus the promotion of convenient foods allows men to eat without having to venture into and learn about the "feminine" territory of cooking or healthy nutrition. Clearly, eating convenience foods, such as canned food or T.V. dinners, is not healthy as they often contain high fat and sodium contents, not to mention most convenience foods are highly processed. Stibbe (2004) gives examples of articles found in *Men's Health* magazine that promotes canned food: "'A Man, a can, a plan,' used in several issues, provides a particularly memorable rhyme connecting masculinity and convenience food. The equation is simple:
You + a can opener = 12 manly meals (June 2000, contents)" (p. 44). Using humour to present ideas on health and nutrition is a standard of *Men's Health.* Humour is part of the discourse of, what Stibbe calls, the discourse of the buddy.

The promotion of convenience foods also fits into the demographic of *Men's Health* readers. The average reader of the magazine is a middle-to upper-class white male. Gough (2006) writes, "the group of men cited are presented as having little time (their careers are demanding?) or desire (they do not deign to consult food labels) for healthy eating" (p. 330). The magazine gives the illusion that by eating convenience foods, little time will be spent on preparing foods while at the same time men will be able to work on their goal of becoming lean and muscular. Since women have traditionally purchased, prepared and provided food, it is of little surprise that men know less about the health benefits of particular foods (Nutrition Forum, UK 2003) or that men report eating less fruit and vegetables and more high-calorie items than women (Baker & Wardle, 2003) (cited in Gough, 2006). Gough (2006) writes:

> Because food and health generally have been associated with femininity and hegemonic notions of masculinity are in part defined by disinterest in the ailing body, previous

> research has suggested a widespread cultural assumption that men tend to rely on women for advice and support on food and health when required (see Blaxter, 1990; Courtenay, 2000). (p. 326)

While the magazine does provide men with some healthy nutritional advice and has articles on how to cook, *Men's Health* provides unhealthy solutions, such as eating processed convenience foods. The magazine genders diet in a "masculine" way that will do little to help change men's nutritional habits. This is concerning, as stated previously, men often eat in an unhealthy fashion, (too much red meat, little fruits and vegetables, high fat) and are the gender most in need of dietary changes if their health is to improve. Gough (2006) writes:

> ...it is argued that the realm of diet as feminine is reinforced and that when men enter this realm they do so in 'masculine' ways. So, men whose diet is poor are presented as unlikely to change, while those men who have made changes have done so only superficially. As a consequence, hegemonic masculinities are reinforced by the media and the prognosis for changing men's dietary habits remains poor. (p. 329)

Men's Health reinforces the idea that men are incapable of making large dietary changes with their promotion of simple, convenience foods that require no preparation and little knowledge about cooking. Health advice is dispensed with sensitivity and only "'simple', 'small' and 'everyday' dietary changes are mooted (not 'extreme diets'), as if men are incapable of major transformations and/or are unwilling to compromise their traditional diets. Here masculinity is defined—and upheld—as indolent, unhealthy and diet-adverse" (Gough, 2006, p. 330).

However, although the magazine promotes convenience foods, there is one area of cooking that is an exception to the rule and not seen as feminine: men cooking meat on the

barbecue. Stibbe (2004) provides an extract of *Men's Health* that promotes barbecue cooking while simultaneously dismisses ordinary cooking:

> Cooking should be fun. And not fun in a seven-new-tips-for-baking-with tarragon way. It should be fun in a dangerous way. Meaning it should require the starting of large, scary fires...abandon your self-cleaning oven...[and] watch your dinner go up in flames. (July/August 2000, 86). (p. 44)

Barbecuing is constructed as masculine as it combines the cooking of meat, a traditionally masculine food, as well as the aspect of risk (starting large, scary fires). Hegemonic masculinity celebrates risk and that "real" men are risk takers. However, barbecuing is not a healthy way to cook. Not only is the overindulgence in meat unhealthy, but also barbecuing creates carcinogens. Barbecuing is also sexualized: "'No woman can deny a man who knows how to serve a flaming meal. Once you light her fire, she's going to light yours' (December 2000, 86)" (Stibbe, 2004, p. 44).

In fact, sex is the subject of much discussion in *Men's Health* leading Stibbe (2004) to name another theme found throughout the magazine: "the ideal man: a sexual champion" (p. 46). However, as Haines (1998) points out, *Men's Health,* "as with all men's magazines... is written as if all its readers were heterosexual" (cited in Stibbe, 2004, p. 46). Boni (2002) explains that "the kind of sexuality framed by *Men's Health* is strictly 'normal' and heterosexual..." (p. 472). Stibbe (2004) writes:

> if you want 'gold medal sex,' the September issue advises, 'grab a teammate (a wife or girlfriend will do)' and 'display your strength in the most important of all human arenas: the sexual one' (September 2000, 81). Good quality heterosexual sex is another of the goals set up by the magazine. (p. 46)

However, although every issue of *Men's Health* provided techniques for having "great sex" (December 2000, 122), "sex so good the neighbours will complain" (July/August 2000, contents) or "gold-medal performance" sex (September 2000, contents) the magazine never (in the sample analyzed) gave advice on how to have "safer sex" (Stibbe, 2004, p. 46). Stibbe (2004) found that in all the stories and descriptions of great sex and in all the information on the best ways to have sex, condoms were never mentioned, creating a positive image of unsafe sex.

Promoting unsafe sex goes hand in hand with the hegemonic ideal of men being risk takers. However, unsafe sex is obviously hazardous to men's health. Also, Stibbe (2004) explains that the majority of articles on sex do not establish a sexual health goal but rather seem to participate in what Ostermann and Keller-Cohen (1998) call "heterosexist socialization," which is a central feature of hegemonic masculinity. The sexual goals of the magazine are high, such as "reducing your partner to a quivering mass of sexual goo, using only your hands" (September 2000, 81), and have the potential for creating performance anxiety, which keeps men coming back to the magazine for more tips (Stibbe, 2004, p. 46). The magazine also uses a biomedical approach to sexuality that blames sexual failure on one's physiology rather than on the man:

> *Men's Health's* biomedical approach to sexuality gives a medicalized explanation of 'impotence' which removes control, and thus a sense of responsibility and blame for sexual failure from the man and places it on his physiology, thus allowing the male reader to maintain an embodied masculine self-identity" (Boni, 2002, p. 473)

By blaming physiology, the solution to a problem such as impotence is simple and would probably involve taking drugs, such as Viagra, to cure the problem rather than looking for possible underlying causes of the problem (i.e. too much stress, poor nutrition, anxiety, steroid

use and so on). Although medications are sometimes necessary, they are often over prescribed and sometimes other healthier solutions are overlooked.

The final theme that Stibbe (2004) identified in *Men's Health* is that the magazine promotes the ideal man to be a television watcher. Certainly, sitting down and watching television is not associated with health, especially in North America where physical activity continues to diminish. However, Stibbe (2004) found that the magazine encouraged men to watch television. He gives the example of an article, "Why TV is Good for You" (June 2000, 83), that states "TV is a great, great thing—a glowing fountain of endless possibilities" (p. 47). Also, another example he provides: "sitting inside and watching TV for hours on a beautiful day" is something a man "should never apologize for" (September 2000, 90) (Stibbe, 2004, p. 47). In the article "Why TV is Good for You" thirty different programs are recommended, only three of which (ER, Diagnosis Murder, and Chicago Hope) have some sort of relation to health topics (Stibbe, 2004). Stibbe (2004) explains that television often contains stereotypical images and messages for men, such as encouraging them to like violence. As an example, one extract recommends watching hockey, and by doing so, it links violence with increases of testosterone and the repression of feelings:

> Hockey: When men watch violent programs, their testosterone levels go up... Testosterone makes men feel good... That is why we fall silent when the hockey-brawl highlights come on... if we didn't have them we'd resort to more destructive behaviour, like sharing our feelings. (June 2000, 86). (Stibbe, 2004, p. 48)

As Stibbe concludes, encouraging men to enjoy violence and increase aggression serves the goal of increasing male power but does little in improving men's health (Stibbe, 2004).

Overall, the literature I examined looks at the ways that magazines directed to a male audience, such as *Men's Health,* construct their subject, or ideal reader, using the discourse of traditional masculinity. Although *Men's Health* provides men with an abundance of health information, they often approach these topics using ideologies linked with the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity and the various unhealthy behaviours related to it. The magazine appeals to male readers by utilizing familiar, yet unhealthy, notions of masculinity that encourage men to enjoy beer drinking, meat eating, unsafe sex and violence to name a few. At the same time, men are told to be consumers and encouraged to be concerned with their appearance and to construct a muscular lean body. Although appearing healthy, the building of a lean body with large muscles serves the goal of reproducing male power.

In the next section, I turn to an analysis of some of the discourses I found in my study on *Men's Health* magazine.

Methods

Because it is a popular magazine that many men turn to for health and lifestyle advice, *Men's Health* was identified as the subject of this study. *Men's Health* also has an online presence, but this study focuses on the hard copy issues from 2008. *Men's Health* is a magazine that I sometimes pick up to read, and as a young, able-bodied, heterosexual male, who works out in a gym, I am part of its intended audience.[1] I was interested in exploring some of the messages that the photos and text of *Men's Health* reveal. What sorts of bodies and identities does the magazine construct? Does the content of the magazine live up to its name? What do men learn

[1] The question of identity is, of course, complex. I am of Finnish and Arabic descent; my mother is from northern Europe and my father from the Middle East. I "pass" as white (that is, I have white skin privilege) but my name marks me as "other."

from reading *Men's* Health? And finally, is the masculinity that is constructed the same or different than earlier constructs of maleness?

Men's Health is currently a top priority on research and policy agendas, with an associated interest in more popular domains (such as popular media) (Crawshaw, 2007). *Men's Health* magazine constructs discourses of men, health and masculinity and, due to the magazine's popularity, has the possibility of effecting significant cultural impact. In this study, a yearlong sample of the US/Canadian issues of *Men's Health* was analyzed using a critical discourse perspective. This consists of 10 issues from 2008 as, although *Men's Health* is published on a monthly basis, January and February were combined into one issue, as were July and August.

Each issue was analysed in its entirety, including all articles, front covers as well as key advertisements. To develop its analysis, this study follows some of the categories used in a previous study by Stibbe (2004). Stibbe (2004) undertook an analysis of *Men's Health* from the publication year 2000 and discovered various themes in the magazine that "reproduced a type of hegemonic masculinity associated not with health but with a variety of negative health behaviours" (p.31). The goal of my study is to see if these themes still exist in recent issues of *Men's Health* from 2008 and whether some of Stibbe's findings about masculinity are applicable to the masculinity constructed in the 2008 issues. In other words, what has changed in the construction of the ideal male and what is the same today? Stibbe (2004) identifies and names six themes in his study of *Men's Health* issues from 2000: "The Ideal Man: A Bodybuilder", "The Ideal Man: A Meat Eater, "The Ideal Man: A Beer Drinker", "The Ideal Man: A Convenience Food Eater", "The Ideal Man: A Sexual Champion" and "The Ideal Man: A Television

Watcher." In the following Analysis section, I take these 6 themes and examine how relevant they are to my findings of the masculinities depicted in the 2008 issues.

Along with these themes I also examine key advertisements. I look at advertisements because of the pivotal role corporations play in creating the desires that shape identities. McCraken (1993:96) explains that the most important and costly advertisement spaces are the inside front cover, the back cover, and the inside back cover (Alexander, 2003). This study examines these prime advertisements as well as advertisements for supplements found within the magazines. My decision to look at advertisements selling supplements was to see whether or not these advertisements displayed photos of "ideal" male bodies to sell these products. Finally, along with advertisements, I also analyzed front covers using categories adapted from previous research (Alexander, 2003; Boni 2002). I look at the front covers both for what the text and the visuals reveal.

Analysis

The Ideal Man: A Bodybuilder

The visual text of the front cover of *Men's Health* is a reader's window into the magazine, and as such it plays a powerful role in attracting a male reader to identify with the magazine and buy it. Stibbe (2004) explains that the ideal male body is "reflected by the 'cover models,' a group of identically shaped men—hugely muscular, lean, tanned, body hair shaved" (p. 37). Contrary to what Stibbe (2004) found in his study, the 2008 issues of *Men's Health* magazine that I examined do not promote a typical muscular bodybuilder's physique as the ideal male body to strive for. The changing masculine ideal is evident by examining the covers of *Men's Health.* Although the covers that Stibbe (2004) analyzed from the year 2000 depicted topless, heavily muscular, lean male torsos, this was not the case in this study. None of the

covers from 2008 displayed overly muscular physiques. Also, on all ten covers the models were wearing shirts, usually a t-shirt, and thus abdominal musculature could not be seen, nor was it visible whether body hair was missing. Further, the men featured on the covers are no longer topless fitness models as in the past, but instead are recognizable celebrities, indicative of the rise of celebrity culture. Seven of the ten covers featured popular Hollywood actors. Of the remaining three covers, two featured professional athletes and Barack Obama, President of The United States, also graced one cover. Although all of the celebrities were lean and athletic looking to various degrees, none of them had anywhere near enough musculature to be classified as having a bodybuilder's physique.

However, although the cover models are no longer displayed topless with huge muscles, this is not to say that the magazine no longer promotes body building or a hard lean body with "six-pack" abdominals. Building a hard body was mentioned on 90% of the covers of the 2008 issues, with captions such as:

> 50 ways to muscle up your diet. (*Men's Health,* April 2008, cover)[1]
>
> Muscle Beach! Build the body you want in just weeks. (July/August 2008, cover)
>
> No gym? No problem! Build more muscle anytime, anywhere! (September 2008, cover)

Although the magazine provides many articles on how to build muscle, the ideal male body that is promoted is more of a lean athletic look, and not the hyper muscular male physique found in conventional bodybuilding magazines. However, this is not to say that building the less bulky body that is now promoted by *Men's Health* is an easy task. Not only does the magazine suggest the ideal male body needs to be sufficiently muscular, it also needs to be very low in body fat, so low that "six-pack" abs can be seen. Indeed, washboard abs are a central focus.

Building "six-pack" abdominals is heavily promoted in the 2008 issues of *Men's Health* with many articles, exercises and nutritional advice on how to achieve this goal:

> Lose fat, build muscle: the best combination for chiseling your abs: dumbbells and a fork (January/February, p. 42)
>
> Pull here for abs. Sculpt a chiseled midsection without a single crunch. The cable core press...[will] make your midsection feel rock solid... (June 2008, p. 70)
>
> What Men's Health has printed about abs could fill a book. (Actually, it has filled several.) Now we've gathered all of the advice on blasting fat and uncovering abdominal muscles in one place. If you're planning to take your shirt off this summer, stop first at the Men's Health Abs Center. Men'sHealth.com/abscenter. (July/August 2008, p. 10)
>
> For high-def abs, use cable. (July/August 2008, p. 60)
>
> Train your abs—fast. (October 2008, p. 60)
>
> Inside the ABS LAB... his workouts guarantee a six-pack and the chiseled body of your dreams. (November 2008, p. 202)

Most men will find it very difficult to achieve this "ideal" body, that is rock solid and chiseled like a marble statue. Lowering body fat to the levels necessary to make one's abdominal muscles visible, while at the same time building muscle, is almost an impossible task—perhaps a Herculean task, that is, mythic or illusory. As was mentioned previously, the two goals are contradictory to one another since building muscle requires one to eat more calories than one expends while losing fat requires one to do the opposite. Although it is possible for a small number to achieve this sort of physique, it will, no doubt, take years of effort in the gym while at the same time maintaining a very strict diet that is not necessarily healthy. Also, some men may simply not have the genetics to achieve such a physique no matter how much effort they put towards constructing this particular body. As an example, even if one disciplined the body to make it lean enough to expose abdominal muscles, not all men have the necessary genetics that

would allow their tendons to split the abdominal muscle into six separate sections, and thus some might be only able to achieve a "4-pack", regardless of how lean they are. However, the language that *Men's Health* uses makes it seem that achieving such a body is easily attainable and that all it takes is a little time or effort on your part. The magazine provides many tips on how to build this physique in record time:

> Your instant beach body. Blast fat, build muscle, and sculpt your entire body with this fast, no-rest regimen. (May 2008, p. 56)
>
> The fast way to hard muscle. Pack on size and boost your strength—without spending all your time in the gym. (October 2008, p. 196)
>
> Huge in a hurry. These 5 muscle rules will make you bigger, leaner, and stronger—in less time than ever before. (November 2008, p. 126)
>
> Get lean in no time. Start by doing fewer reps, not more. (November, 2008, contents)
>
> Speed your six-pack. Try this trick for faster results. (October 2008, contents)

Although *Men's Health* gives the impression that a hard, lean body can be constructed with little time, nothing could be further from the truth. The ideal male body is an illusive construct. Since most men will be unable to achieve this goal, some may keep buying *Men's Health* in order to get more tips on what they should do differently, how they should perfect their regimen. Also, the difficulty of achieving such a body has driven some men to resort to steroid use to achieve this masculine ideal. Contradictorily, in one issue *Men's Health* makes reference to men who use steroids for appearance related goals, yet simultaneously their magazine is promoting and contributing to the unrealistic body ideals that exist in society today: "Who's juicing. The overwhelming majority of steroid users are 30 something males who are educated, earn almost six figures, and are just trying to enhance their attractiveness. That's the conclusion of a new

multiuniversity study" (March 2008, p. 60). Just like the males who use steroids to enhance their attractiveness at the expense of their health, *Men's Health* also plays on the vanity and insecurity of men by promoting the appearance related benefits of their advice above health.

Although *Men's Health* gives vast amounts of information and advice on exercise and nutrition, they often encourage men to adopt these habits not because their health will improve, but rather because their looks will improve. As an example, the following describes eating more fruits and vegetables to protect your muscle mass:

> Muscle food. Don't wither away—Eating potassium could help protect your biceps for life... Potassium rich foods, such as fruits and vegetables, help to neutralize the acid that can cause muscle to break down as you age, say the scientists. While more research is needed to confirm this finding, consider it another reason to eat more produce. (June 2008, p. 52)

Instead of explaining some of the health reasons for maintaining muscle mass as you age, such as protection from bone loss, the reason given to eat fruits and vegetables is to "protect your biceps" so you can still look attractive. There are many articles and captions found within *Men's Health* that promote foods, not for their health and nutritional value, but for their ability to make the body look a certain way:

> Muscle Made Fast. We turn the cheesesteak into health food. (September 2008, contents)
>
> Lean For Life. This food + this exercise = the body you always wanted. (September 2008, contents)
>
> Speed Your Muscle Gains. The protein-packed fish you can cook in minutes. (October 2008, contents)

> 15 Flat-Belly Powerfoods. Eat by this list and a six-pack is yours. (November 2008, contents)
>
> Fast Muscle Meals. Gauge your cooking with a stopwatch. (November 2008, contents)
>
> Power Up Your Diet. These 12 perfect foods equal one killer six-pack. (March 2008, contents)

The magazine also promotes cardiovascular exercise in a similar way. Although at times *Men's Health* explains the health benefits of cardiovascular exercise, often times the exercise is promoted as a way to lose fat, and thus achieve an ideal look:

> Lose Your Gut! Try the cutting-edge cardio plan that will make you faster in no time. (June 2008, contents)
>
> Banish Fat For Good. The ultimate weight-training and cardio plan. (May 2008, contents)

Men's Health clearly promotes resistance training over cardiovascular exercise, while sometimes employing a type of "buddy" humor that reinforces traditional gender ideals and ridicules other forms of exercise as being un-masculine. Take, for example, the following passage:

> Juan Carlos Santana, M.Ed., C.S.C.S., stands in his gym—the Institute of Human Performance in Boca Raton Florida... At 5'10" and 212 pounds, he's as solid and looming as that hunk of limestone in Gibraltar: 'I ain't no long-distance-running, yoga-posing, Pilates-training, VO2-pumping, aquatics-floating, 150-pound sissy boy,' he snarls. 'I train like a beast and have competed in Olympic weight lifting, wrestling, judo, and kickboxing all my life. Bring me the biggest guy you can get your hands on. I will put him in a fetal position, with him sucking his thumb, in less than 30 minutes—with nothing but these elastic bands.... Skeptical? So was I. 'I came to Boca Raton as a 170-pound aerobic-training 'sissy boy.' With achy knees and flagging enthusiasm for my life

> sports of running and bicycling, I was looking for new ways to become fit and become stronger. (September 2008, p. 102)

The discourse repeats simplistic gender stereotypes—hunk, beast, sissy—under the cloak of humour. Males who take part in exercise other than resistance training are labeled "sissy boys" and are dismissed as effeminate in humorous, yet, demeaning ways. The exercise men do is made into a binary of hard/masculine or soft/feminine.

The promotion of resistance training over other forms of exercise is also evident by the workout posters that are usually included with the issues. Eight of the ten issues analyzed contained workout posters. All had to do with losing weight, building a "six-pack" or building muscle and none were on alternative forms of exercise, such as yoga or Pilates. These posters show men how to achieve a certain body rather than how to improve their health and fitness. Titles include "Get Back in Shape"(x2), "Six-Pack Abs!"(x2), "Lose Your Gut", "Strong & Fit: Torch lard in six simple moves", "Gain Muscle Lose Pounds" and "Strength & Calm: The ultimate blueprint for building military-size muscle and steely focus". While having adequate muscle mass is certainly a health goal, selectively developing large muscles and becoming so lean that abdominal muscles are visible are certainly not related to health. Also, the text and visuals of *Men's Health* encourage all men to build this one type of body when there are other healthier bodies to strive for.

The Ideal Man: A Meat Eater

Another theme Stibbe (2004) found in his analysis of *Men's Health* was that the magazine promoted the consumption of meat, particularly beef, while never explaining the negative health effects of overconsumption. He also found that the magazine linked the

consumption of red meat with masculinity, at times even portraying vegetables as effeminate. However, contrary to what Stibbe found, I found that the more recent 2008 issues of *Men's Health* do not promote red meat to the same extent. Only rarely was eating red meat linked to manliness; indeed, the magazine was recommending a reduction in red meat and publishing some of the problems of overconsumption:

> Eat Less Beef. Thanks to feed, slaughter, and transportation, a 2.2-pound hunk of beef consumes as much energy as a 100-watt bulb lit for 20 days. (July/August 2008, p. 104)
>
> Why Our Burgers Still Aren't Safe—The agency charged with safeguarding our food supply has a dirty little secret: It tests just 0.05 percent of the nation's ground beef for bacteria that could kill you. Sure you want to eat that burger? (March 2008, p. 124)
>
> 70 percent of cattle in America are slaughtered by just four companies, and... those companies may have managed to intimidate the USDA into inaction. (March 2008, p. 129)

Also, when the magazine did recommend eating beef, healthy, more humane choices were suggested, appealing perhaps to its more environmentally conscious readers:

> 'My suggestion would be for people to buy their beef from a small, local, inspected, meat-slaughtering facility' Munsell says. (March 2008, p. 128)
>
> The inside of an industrial slaughter house. Your burger-to-be endures 6 weeks of feedlot torture before being put out of its misery...We have nothing against protein, but try grass-fed beef. It's better for all concerned. (September 2008, p. 92)

However, although the magazine did recommend a reduction of red meat, or provided healthier meat choices, it did sometimes publish material that linked meat eating with masculinity. The following examples show how ideal masculinity is constructed in the magazine through humour. The following quotation recommends reading a book about meat eating: "Read. The Shameless

Carnivore: A Manifesto for Meat Lovers by Scott Gold. With this on your kitchen shelf, you can prep a daring dinner of rattlesnake or perfectly sear the traditional 12-ouncer" (March 2008, p. 88). Another quotation suggests that a man who cooks meat will be attractive to women: "It'll also remind you just how masterful a guy with a meat cleaver can look. Go ahead: Inspire awe in her eyes (in your kitchen)" (September 2008, p. 92). In one issue, a professional athlete shares his personal choices on where to order the best beef: "Dwight Freeney, the Indianapolis Colts star defensive end, shares his top restaurants for prime cuts of beef" (January/February 2008, p. 139). Encouraging readers to identify with this sports celebrity, the discourse implies that to be like this professional athlete, and thus a real masculine—not "sissy boy"—man, one should go out to fine restaurants and enjoy top quality beef. The underlying message is that one is worth it. If one were to re-write the same article, however, with the professional athlete suggesting what are his favorite restaurants to order salads, the connotations of the message would be different. Finally, another brief article titled "Meat for your mind" states "A healthy dose of protein isn't all a steak's good for. Vitamin B12, an essential nutrient found in meat, milk, and fish, may help protect you against brain loss, say British scientists" (December 2008, p. 46). This article assumes that all men eat steak. Although red meat contains a significant amount of vitamin B12, the article could also have been written about fish: 'Fish for your mind. A healthy dose of protein isn't all fish is good for,' especially considering that certain fish contain significantly more vitamin B12 than red meat. As an example, 3 oz of sardines contain 127% of the Daily Values (DV) of vitamin B12 compared to only 40% DV for 3 oz of sirloin steak (Sizer & Whitney 2003, p. 233). Yet the metaphor of "fish," like vegetables, does not have the same connotations as the metaphor of meat. Meat certainly does have important nutritional value, but recent research argues that it should only be consumed in moderation as overindulgence in red meat has been

associated with a variety of negative health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer (Sizer & Whitney p. 203, p. 206-207). As well, heavy meat consumption contributes to a host of environmental and social concerns, from factory farming to animal waste, to name a few. Also, the typical North American diet is already too high in saturated fats from meats, and too low in vegetables and fruits.

However, although *Men's Health* does sometimes promote the consumption of red meat, they also promote the eating of fruits and vegetables. Unlike Stibbe's (2004) analysis of issues from 2000, this study found that *Men's Health* heavily promoted vegetables and fruit and not once did they suggest men who eat vegetables/fruits are effeminate. As the construction of masculinity changes, the new masculinity allows for a diet that better corresponds with North America's changing research on health and in its food guides. The new man is seen as more flexible, as more apt to change, rather than rigid in his beliefs or habits. Every issue from 2008 contained information on the positive health benefits of fruits and vegetables and recipes to encourage their consumption. Some examples include:

> Next time you're asked 'soup or salad?' Order the salad... Italian researchers found that eating as little as 1 cup of raw vegetables daily can add 2 years to your life. (January/February 2008, p. 141)

> Eat This Now! Blood Oranges...[because they contain] anthocyanin, a powerful antioxidant shown to defend against inflammation, cancer, and diabetes. (March 2008, p. 78)

> Fresh-picked cancer prevention...eating fruit may prevent colorectal polyps, growths that often precede cancer. (April 2008, p. 46)

> Beet juice can lower your blood pressure by 10 points. (May 2008, p. 44)

> Go green, stay healthy. Produce is powerfull stuff. Case in point. Regularly eating broccoli may lower your risk of prostate cancer and heart disease. (October 2008, p. 50)

Men's Health contains an abundance of information on healthy food choices and, other than the few examples with red meat, contrary to what others have found in earlier issues, the magazine does not reproduce hegemonic masculine ideals where food is concerned in the same way that it has in the past. Masculinity is a fluid concept, and today's male can include fruits and vegetables in his diet—especially if he continues to work on strength and perfecting musculature in accordance to contemporary ideals. Indeed, fruit and vegetable consumption is presented as necessary to sculpt the lean fat free body. However, when it comes to what a man should drink, less change is apparent.

The Ideal Man: A Beer Drinker

Stibbe (2004) reports that although the magazine did sometimes give warnings about the negative health effects of excess alcohol, more frequently drinking was praised and positive images of alcohol, particularly beer, were evident. This same theme of alcohol consumption can be found in the 2008 issues of *Men's Health.* Seven of the ten issues provide information on the positive health benefits of moderate alcohol, while only five issues provide information on negative health effects of excess alcohol and talk about limiting consumption. The following examples promote beer, while also making the assumption that all men enjoy drinking beer:

> Drink beer from bottles. It takes about twice as much energy to make an aluminum can as it does to produce a glass bottle of equal size...[and] bottled beer always tastes better. (January/February 2008, p. 142)
>
> Beer, with benefits. The best brews pack more than a heady buzz—they improve your health, too. (March 2008, p. 146)
>
> Best Summer Brews. (July/August 2008, p. 84)

> Broke students have exactly 3 months to scrape together beer money for the year. Tip generously and that barista or bartender may even have enough left over for books. (July/August 2008, p. 94)
>
> There's a one-man-per-grill quota, and unless you're delivering a stack of cheese singles, a fresh beer, or a bag of buns, the cooler needs refilling. (July/August 2008, p.94)
>
> Arriving empty-handed at a gathering is as classy as leaving with a Hefty bag full of leftovers. Bring something you're proud to claim and willing to leave behind (like a microbrew summer ale). (July/August 2008, p.94)
>
> The best beer for your bowl. Joe Tucker, president of RateBeer.com, recommends brew for your stew. (October 2008, p. 81)
>
> Staying home alone on a Saturday night. This could mean a beer at the kitchen table, a long mopey bath, and an early bedtime... Go out on a Tuesday, when crowds are scarce and the beer is heavily discounted. (October 2008, p. 98)

From beer consumption protocol, especially in summer, to students' economical choices and making environmental concerns (buy bottles instead of cans) part of one's beer-drinking identity, the examples above normalize beer consumption. However, although beer has been traditionally linked with masculinity, particularly working-class men, *Men's Health* also heavily promotes the drinking of wine, a drink traditionally gendered female:

> Drink wine, stay lean. Polyphenols, the compounds found in red wine, help your body block fat absorption. (April 2008, p. 72)
>
> Fight cavities with cabernet...when they exposed tooth-decaying bacteria to grape skins and seeds...polyphenols, found in wine grapes, prevent the bad bacteria from damaging teeth...see 'Grape Expectations' on the next page for cheap but tasty wine pics. (May 2008, p. 42)
>
> Drink red wine. Researchers found that drinking 4 to 7 glasses of red wine a week cuts your prostate-cancer risk by 48 percent. (July/August 2008, p. 104)

From these excerpts, drinking wine keeps you lean, cavity-free and cancer-free, thus is a healthy choice for the male health consumer. The magazine even has a regular column titled "The MH Wine Guy. Gary Vaynerchuck" where readers can ask questions about wine. The promotion of wine by *Men's Health* suggests that the magazine has changed as the construct of masculinity changes and is shifting towards the "new man" or "metrosexual man" who is encouraged to be concerned with fashion, eating healthy and drinking alcohol like wine that has been marketed with upper-class connotations rather than only promoting traditional hegemonic masculinity of beer drinking or meat eating. Through wine drinking, a man can identify with more refined tastes and vicariously imagine better status for himself. However, whether the magazine promotes beer or wine, it still over-emphasizes the positive aspects of alcohol consumption and does not provide enough information on the negative health effects of too much alcohol, nor does it promote abstinence from alcohol. This is unfortunate since "national survey data indicate that drinking, especially heavy drinking, has been more common among males than females, and this gender difference increased during the 1980's" (Waldon 1995, p. 30-31). Also, Robert Staples (1995) explains that

> Although alcohol is legally sold, it is hardly a benign beverage when used in excess. Indeed, considering the alcohol related deaths from drunken driving, cirrhosis of the liver, homicides, some suicides, and family violence, alcohol is probably a more destructive drug than heroin and cocaine combined." (p. 132)

The magazine evades the social health costs of alcohol promoting instead a man's rational ability to choose for himself and make 'wise decisions'.

In addition to the negative effects listed by Staples, heavy alcohol consumption increases the risk for heart disease, raises blood pressure, attacks brain cells, is toxic to cardiac and skeletal

muscle, is associated with various types of cancer as well as has many other negative health effects (Sizer & Whitney 2003, p. 96). Also, when *Men's Health* suggests a reduction of alcohol, sometimes the reason is not linked to the various negative health effects, but rather to the idea that it will make your physical body look better. Stressing the fact—inducing qualities of alcohol, one article states:

> The old saying, 'You can get too much of a good thing,' is right on the money. Moderate alcohol consumption—one to two drinks a day—has been shown to reduce your risk of heart disease. The downside, of course, is that alcohol contains liquid calories and may even boost your appetite. Plus unlike fat, carbohydrates, and protein, the calories in alcohol can't be stored in your body—so they have to be used immediately. As a result, your body stops burning fat until the alcohol is processed. This takes about an hour for every drink. So think about that at the next happy hour. (July/August 2008, p. 13)

This passage suggests that to make the "right" choice for themselves, men should think about alcohol's fat-increasing potential. Limiting alcohol consumption for fear of getting fat or not obtaining the "six-pack" abs so desired overrides drinking less because it would benefit one's health.

Stibbe (2004) concludes that *Men's Health* magazine's "glorification of beer [and wine] beyond its health benefits (in moderation) and despite its dangers (in excess), again, goes beyond straightforward health goals and relates to the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity" (p.43). My study concurs with the linking of masculinity with alcohol and its continuous reproduction as traditional male gender identity, yet with a shift towards encouraging wine drinking along with the masculine standard of beer.

The Ideal Man: A Convenience Food Eater

Stibbe's analysis also found that *Men's Health* magazine promoted convenience food, such as canned food, and disparaged cooking for men. He writes that "Hegemonic masculinity works to create an image of cooking as an inferior activity carried out by women and of men who cook as effeminate" (Stibbe, 2004, p. 44). My analysis, however, reveals that this is no longer the case. The only time convenience foods were mentioned was in the magazine's regular column, "Eat This, Not That." In this feature the magazine gave the nutritional breakdown of a high fat, high sugar, popular fast food choice and provided a healthier option from the same fast food restaurant. Convenience foods have increasingly come under scrutiny with exposés such as Fast Food Nation.

Despite the assumption that every male is going to eat at a fast food joint once in a while, every issue of *Men's Health* from 2008 actually promoted cooking and there was no evidence to be found suggesting a man who cooks is somehow less of a man; indeed, the new male masculinity takes charge of the cooking of his own food to ensure control over his own optimum health. As an example, each issue contained healthy, and sometimes complicated and time-consuming, recipes to prepare. Also, the magazine began a regular column called "Ask A Four-Star Chef. Erick Ripert" which allows readers to ask specific questions on how to prepare various dishes. Men are now encouraged to cook like a chef (to identify with culinary expertise) rather than eat cheap convenience foods. *Men's Health* writes:

> Why settle for lack-luster takeout when you can cook one of 50 amazing meals in less time than it takes to have a pizza delivered. These dishes are protein powerhouses, fuelled

> by everything from bacon to beans, so they're primed to beef up your metabolism. (April 2008, p. 144)

The metaphors in this statement—"powerhouses" + "beef up" reproduce masculine strength at the same time as promoting men's increasing foray into food production, which has generally been gendered as female.

Although encouraging men to cook, the recipes given are often described using 'masculine' language such as "protein powerhouses," which implies that by eating such meals you will be able to build muscle. Also, similar to what Stibbe (2004) found in his analysis, *Men's Health* still promotes barbequing as a male activity:

> ...the MensHealth.com BBQ pit is ready to walk you through what you need to know about quintessential Man cooking. (September 2008, p. 16)

> You can cook four-course meals—from hot Caesar salads to grilled fruit desserts—with the fire on high, beer in hand, and admiring guests clustered around. (September 2008, p. 126)

> This is the beauty of the backyard grill, the technique against which all others must be measured. It's low stress. It's familiar. You throw the meat on, hang out, drink a beer, pull the meat off again. Plus, it makes sense. It speaks to some primal instinct to touch meat with fire and chow on the result. Wok cooking, on the other hand, entails the adroit combination of diverse flavors in a tight time frame under clamorous conditions. There's nothing laid back about it. (September 2008, p. 154)

In the last example, BBQ cooking is depicted as familiar to men, while simultaneously combining other hegemonic notions of masculinity, such as meat eating and beer drinking. The article then goes on to talk about wok cooking, giving the impression that it is an unfamiliar activity for men, followed by instructions and recipes on how to cook with a wok. The assumption is that the reader is not of Asian descent, but white North American. This example of

what sorts of cooking men should engage in illustrates the contradictory masculine ideals found throughout the magazine. Men are told to become more like the "new man/metrosexual man," while balancing hegemonic notions of masculinity at the same time. This suggests that in order to appeal to its male audience, *Men's Health* describes cooking through such discourses that will limit traditional views that men who cook are effeminate. The new man practices "diversity."

Despite utilizing hegemonic notions to masculinize cooking, *Men's Health* also provides numerous recipes for men, suggesting that it is indeed an acceptable activity. As an example, one article provides many different recipes for soup, all containing vegetables and other healthy items, such as miso. The magazine explains that:

> Soup has a PR problem. Too many men write it off as food that belongs only in restaurants or, even worse, nursing homes. The way guys ought to think of soup: as a ridiculously easy meal, open to a huge range of explosive flavors, incorporating some of the healthiest stuff on the planet. (March 2008, p. 110)

In the above excerpt, soup is taken out of its "geriatric identity" and becomes "easy and explosive" in its new healthy guise with the discourse having sexual connotations. *Men's Health* encourages men to cook by explaining that their recipes, and most cooking, is easy and doesn't take much time, as can be noted in the previous two examples. Promoting the meals as easy and fast to prepare speaks to the efficiency of food preparation for today's fast-paced multi-tasking men. It fits in with the readers of the magazine, who are assumed to be middle to upper class males who, due to their demanding careers, may have little leisure time and hence need to maximize its potential.

Some articles on cooking even involved the authors going on trips to discover the proper authentic way to make cultural dishes. One example is the article "Italian food like grandma used

to make. Grandma was right, of course: you should eat, eat! More Italian food. But make sure it's real Italian which is fast, flavorful, and incredibly good for you" (November 2008, p. 196). In this article, the author travels to Italy to discover the proper way to make Italian dishes, then provides the readers of *Men's Health* with "authentic" and efficient recipes. The article states:

> How can you bring the simplicity into your own kitchen? To find out, I headed over to Liguria and Tuscany to spend time with the people who actually do the cooking—and not just chefs, but the teachers, grandmas, moms, and pops. In these two provinces, as in much of Italy, the best cooking is a quick operation performed on the best ingredients. Meat and red sauce is rare. Mostly, people rely on vegetables, pasta and other grains, beans, bread, fish and olive oil. Seasonings are lemons (the trees are everywhere), basil (often in the form of pesto) for 6 to 8 months a year, and the parsley and other greens that grow year-round. What more do you need? Come along as I wander from town to town, harvesting the cooking techniques and important lessons that never make it to your local pizzeria, but that could be in your kitchen in a matter of minutes. (November 2008, p. 197)

Through this narrative evoking familiarity, the reader is encouraged to think of traditional foods in new ways, and in this fashion re-define his masculinity. The fact that *Men's Health* is telling men to cook shows once again how the magazine has shifted away from traditional hegemonic notions of masculinity and more towards the "new man/metrosexual" man. Metrosexual man is a particular masculinity, a "heterosexual male who partakes in traditionally feminine activities including new diets and cooking"and who "is concerned about a 'washboard' stomach as well as protecting his health" (Gough 2007, p. 329, p. 332).

The magazine does not only promote cooking as a way for 'metrosexual' man to achieve the ideal body or improve his health. *Men's Health* also promotes cooking as a tool for one's heterosexual toolbox, that is, as a way to impress women:

> Padma Lakshmi, The Top Chef temptress, has wandered the world collecting flavors, savors, and cooking techniques. Here, we serve up this exotic dish in 4 courses...The way to this woman's heart—maybe any woman's heart—is through the sensual red zone known as the kitchen. (March 2008, p. 140, p. 143)

Using the sexualized trope of the exotic woman, this article provides recipes on how to cook non-standard dishes in order to impress woman like Padma. In this discourse, food is both gendered, racialized, and "made sexy." As noted earlier, traditionally, the kitchen was seen as female space and men were perceived as incapable of cooking (a woman's skill) and thus when men did cook, they were encouraged to make simple foods and eat convenience foods, or then depend on women to cook for them and supply them with health and nutritional advice. The above excerpt's encouraging of men to cook "exotic" dishes, relies on traditional gender and race constructs. Cooking "exotic" foods as well as cooking extravagant meals, for women or guests, move into a masculine activity since men are encouraged to impress others with their multiple talents. Gough (2007) writes, "men are inveterate exhibitionists who enjoy impressing others with their culinary talents on occasion. Implicitly, the 'day-to-day stuff' is the business of women and special occasion cooking is for men" (p. 333). Men, hence, are to take up cooking for special occasions, not everyday. Men are to enjoy unique cooking experiences, not bother themselves with mundane, boring tasks, those are still left for women to do. However, *Men's Health* also encourages men to cook healthy meals on a daily basis in order to take control of their health and their bodies. The cultural ideals of what it means to be a man today, as shown

through the changing discourses found in *Men's Health,* has indeed changed the relationship of men and cooking, yet has not completely left traditional notions behind.

The Ideal Man: A Sexual Champion

One of the underlying reasons for all the cooking, nutrition and exercise advice is to help build a lean hard body with 'six-pack' abs, the current body ideal. By building such a physique, the heterosexual readers of the magazine are told that they will be more attractive to the opposite sex. Thus, it is of no surprise that *Men's Health* still glorifies the idea that men should be womanizers and have as much casual sex as possible. The magazine portrays a traditional gender divide that 'women are from Venus and men are from Mars'; hence, men have a constant task to try to figure out what women want. The magazine, thus, contains an abundance of advice on how to get more women and have more sex by becoming more amenable to women. Readers can also ask questions about these matters in many of the regular columns, such as "Ask The Girl Next Door," or ask "Jimmy The Bartender." These two standard non-threatening tropes, the girl next door and the bartender, are where men can turn to for friendly advice. The columns are not necessary written by either, but by who employ the tropes which have a long cultural history, and evoke nostalgia.

This theme of question and answer has been found in previous research on *Men's Health* magazine. As an example, Toerien & Durrheim (2001) write:

> Our analysis of *Men's Health* revealed a question-answer strategy as a rhetorical device for producing discourses of masculinity. Men were portrayed as ignorant with regard to matters of love and femininity, providing Men's Health with a forum to raise and answer

> questions about what women want/like/think/do/feel, and provide men with practical advice about how to be ideal partners and still remain 'real men'(p. 43).

Overwhelmingly, *Men's Health* constructs a heterosexual audience, a theme that Stibbe (2004) noted: "Good quality heterosexual sex is another of the goals set up by the magazine" (p. 46). The theme of sex is still heavily present in the 2008 issues of the magazine with many articles/columns devoted to this subject. Some examples include:

> Make her fantasies come true... On the following pages, you'll learn what she wants, why she wants it, and how to make it happen—for both of you. (March 2008, p. 64)
>
> Fulfill Your Ultimate Sexual Fantasy. (May 2008, contents)
>
> Lower Her Inhibitions. What you can learn from raunchy bachelorette parties. (October 2008, contents)
>
> Be Her Best Ever. Curl her toes with these secret techniques. (November 2008, contents)
>
> Strip Her Inhibitions. Five ways to have hotter sex...tonight! (September 2008, contents)
>
> 25 Red-Hot Sex Secrets. College, you outgrow. College sex, you don't. Here's how to turn back the clock. (April 2008, contents)
>
> Make Her Want More. Six ways to better sex, starting tonight. (July/August 2008, contents)

The above examples show that being completely self-focused is no longer the only route to male sexual satisfaction; indeed, one should seek out and learn women's preferences to be sexually fulfilled.

Although every issue contains abundant information and regular columns on sex and relationships, *Men's Health* rarely provides information on how to have safe sex. Out of the ten issues in this analysis, only six issues make some mention of safe sex. Also, out of all the

information dealing with sex, condoms are only mentioned seven times and only in five of the issues. When information on safe sex is mentioned it is usually only referred to briefly in a small caption and is not usually the topic of articles. As an example, a caption found in the regular column "Sex Bulletin," explains that "women are more receptive to sex at the same fertile point in their cycles. If she seems irresistible, make sure you have a condom" (September 2008, p. 44). The minimal information on safe sex, among the abundance of articles on how to have better and more sex, creates a desirable image of unsafe sex practices. This is in accordance to what Stibbe (2004) found in his analysis of *Men's Health*: "In all the instructions on the best ways to have sex and in all the stories and descriptions of great sex, condoms are never mentioned, creating a positive image of unsafe sex" (p. 47). This lack of attention to safe sex is troubling since men's sexual practices warrant safe sex as "men are more likely to be sexually active, to have more sexual partners, and to have sex under the influence of alcohol than women and that the 'percentage of men at high risk for STDs is double that of women' (Courtenay 2000a, p. 101)" (Stibbe 2004, p. 47). However, *Men's Health* ignores this; it even suggests that men are not at great risk for suffering the consequences of unsafe sex and that the only reason to concern one's self with safe sex is to protect the women they have sex with:

> According to research published by the British Medical Journal, the net result of these anatomical differences is that STD transmission rates from penis to vagina are at least twice as high as they are in the other direction. And once infected, as indicated above, women are much more likely to suffer consequences. So why should men even care about STDs? 'Though the odds are not zero,' says Dr. Handsfield, 'the truth is that for many STDs, most guys would 'get away with it,' so to speak. The reason men should care is really a sense of altruism for their female partners.'(October 2008, p. 193)

Minimizing the importance of safe sex only helps to encourage men's sexual risk-taking which would result in greater negative health consequences for men, as well as their partners. The focus on sexual enjoyment and multiple sexual partners at the expense of safe sex practices shows that *Men's Health* is less concerned with men's sexual health and more with reproducing standard male sexual desires.

The Ideal Man: A Television Watcher

The final theme Stibbe (2004) identified was that *Men's Health* encouraged men to watch television. This was not the case in the new issues from 2008. Today's explosion of media forms has shifted the multiple kinds of media men are engaged with. The only time the magazine suggested watching television was in a regular column called "Malegrams Time Off". In this column *Men's Health* gives suggestions on what men can do in their leisure time. The suggestions include what books to read, music to listen to, video games to play and television or movies to watch. Some of the media promotes violence that reinforces the idea that men are inherently aggressive and enjoy violence. For example, using a humorous tone, the magazine suggests watching the movie *Wanted* because "Angelina Jolie makes killing look good" (June 2008, p. 98). Violent video games such as *Metal Gear Solid* are also written up in language that reproduces traditional gender behavior and war imagery:

> this game doles out adrenaline like milk money. Squaring off against a behemoth private military-contractor regime, you mix subtler fighting tactics—stealth movement, camouflage, and interrogation—with calculated gunplay that builds toward big-boss payoffs." (June 2008, p. 98)

This example uses "hard" military metaphors that reproduce traditional hegemonic masculinities. This ultra militaristic fighter stands in conflict, however, with the man-in-the-kitchen cooking organic vegetables, exposing the contradictions of masculine identities apparent in the magazine.

Advertisements in Men's Health

An analysis of *Men's Health* would not be complete without examining the advertisements in the magazine and what they disclose about masculinity today. In this study, advertisements found inside the front cover, the back cover and the inside back cover were analyzed as these are the most important and costly advertisement spaces in magazines (Alexander, 2003). These pages provide the visual appeal for the reader, signaling key areas of interest to men. Since *Men's Health* is concerned with promoting a hard body with 'six-pack' abdominals, one would assume that these advertisements would be for nutritional supplements or exercise equipment/products to help construct this body. However, this was not the case. The top product advertised are automobiles, taking up 43% of these prime spaces, followed by designer clothing (23%). This is similar to the results Alexander (2003) discovered in her analysis of *Men's Health* issues from 1997 to 2001. She discovered that taken together, designer clothing and automobile advertisements represented 80% of prime advertisement spaces (Alexander 2003). The idea that men would be interested in automobiles is nothing new. Alexander (2003) writes, "Although the masculine role has undergone change since the 1950's, men's connection to automobiles has not, although today it is trucks and SUVs and not cars that real men drive" (p. 550). However, in this study the automobile advertisements tell a slightly different story. In the prime spaces there were an almost equal amount of car (7) advertisements as there were for trucks/SUVs (6). This would suggest that the "new man" of today is allowed to drive a car and still remain masculine. However, it is important to note, that many of the cars advertised in these

spaces were for luxury performance cars such as BMW, Cadillac, Acura or Mercedes-Benz. Consumer culture today promotes upscale lifestyles, not keeping up with the Joneses. Along with the designer clothing advertisements, the magazine constructs images of masculinity based on upscale consumption. Above all, the "new/metrosexual" man concerns himself with appearance, and by wearing designer clothing and driving luxury sports cars, he exhibits status. These status symbols display financial success and thus male power, for measuring masculinity through men's financial success is, like automobiles, nothing new. Alexander (2003) writes:

> The advertisements in *Men's Health* suggest that both clothes and cars serve as status symbols of male success—but only if they are the correct brands. *Men's Health* serves as an agent of masculine socialization by branding products in men's minds; and men's bodies become walking billboards for brand name products. Today, branded masculinity shapes men's understanding of themselves and others. (p. 550)

However, products are not only advertised on the covers of *Men's Health,* the pages of the magazine are full of advertised consumer items. Also, three of the issues contained special reverse covers (by flipping the issue over another magazine is present): the "Guide to Style", "The Ultimate Denim Guide" and the "Tech Guide." For example, the "Guide to Style" contains advice on what to wear, including clothing, shoes, watches and glasses to grooming products such as moisturizers, shaving products and perfume. These guides basically function as advertisements since *Men's Health* provides specific brand name examples of what to wear, with prices and where to purchase these items.

The cover models, mostly white celebrities in their 30's-early 40's, are also usually displayed wearing brand name designer clothing. The implicit message is that readers should try

to look like them. Indeed, the issues always contain features on the celebrity cover models, providing men with advice on how to emulate their success. The fact that the magazine devotes a considerable amount of pages to advertising designer fashions and luxury automobiles, points to the demographic of *Men's Health* readers, for it is middle to upper class males who would be able to afford such luxuries. Toerien & Durrheim (2001) have noted that, "*Men's Health* is predominantly aimed at white, heterosexual, (mostly) young men, of middle-to upper-middle class status" (p. 39), and the products advertised and the lifestyles depicted appeal to that demographic.

However, advertising is not always explicitly displayed in the magazine. Like the reverse covers, sometimes articles function as covert advertising, with specific products hidden in the magazine content. For example one caption in *Men's Health* states: "A cocktail of protein, carbs, and creatine can help you build brawn faster...The magic formula is 40 grams each of carbs and protein, plus 5 grams of creatine. (Optimum Nutrition's After Max has that combo" (September 2008, p. 56). In this caption they explain exactly how much to eat in order to build muscle faster, then name a specific nutritional supplement brand that one needs to buy in order to achieve this goal.

Since *Men's Health* is devoted to promoting a lean and muscular physique, this study briefly examined the nutritional supplements found within the magazine. It was found that in the 10 issues 75 advertisements were for nutritional supplements. Of these 75 advertisements, 39% displayed models with their shirts off. The physiques of the topless models were very lean and all had "six-pack" abs. The majority (66%) of the topless models were well muscled but not overly muscled, while 33% of the models looked extremely muscular with un-natural looking bodies. The un-natural models looked like bodybuilders and most likely constructed their bodies

with the use of steroids or other drugs as is common with most bodybuilders today. The advertisements featuring the 'natural' looking models corresponds with the current male body ideals that *Men's Health* promotes. However, as was discussed previously, this ultra-lean body with 'six-pack abs' is a very difficult look to achieve and is not natural at all, but body work. Advertisements are particularly enticing and appeal to the psyches of readers, as they "commonly construct and project their image of a model consumer of the product in question" and "invite readers to recognize themselves in these images" (McQuail, 1994, p.242). Madden and Chamberlain (2004) explain that "abstract associations are forged whereby, in using the product, people can believe that they will become imbued with the attributes of the image projected (e.g. health, youth, beauty)" (2004, p. 585).

The growing supplement industry is quick to exploit the insecurities of male psyches. Often times, advertisements for supplements that are supposed to decrease fat and/or build muscle will be accompanied by an image of a steroid using model/athlete who has devoted years disciplining his body in the gym and who has the genetics for building muscle. Some men may believe that by taking these supplements they too can look lean and muscular. This is problematic not only because the supplements don't tend to work, but also because the supplement industry is highly unregulated. A man might possibly risk his health since he cannot be sure what he is getting or how safe the products are. Regardless of these problems, supplements have become big business. Ervin et al. (1999) reported that 35-55% of US adults aged 30 or older said they used supplements within the last month, which suggests that psychological desire for achieving an ideal, such as the muscular body with six-pack abs, supersedes facts of risks to health.

Discussion and Implications for Public Health

Cultural ideals of masculinity and the male body constantly change. There is also the notion of multiple masculinities, in which "multiple and conflicting 'voices' make[ing] up men's identities. Two of the clearest 'voices' that 'speak' in *Men's Health* are the familiar 'new man' [metrosexual] and 'retributive man [macho]" (Toerien & Durrheim 2001, p. 40). In *Men's Health* the 'new man' is constructed to be concerned with fashion, cooking, eating well, exercising, taking supplements, and striving towards a lean body. However, the magazine also devotes a good deal of focus on the leisure and sexual aspects of men's lives. Thus, while the magazine portrays the health conscious 'new man,' still evident among the pages is "the 'macho man' [real man] [who] is predominantly interested in sport, beer, flashy cars, 'hanging out with the boys' and 'getting a woman'" (Toerien & Durrheim 2001, p. 40). The magazine's discourse of the 'real man' ideology functions to reproduce a "softer" type of hegemonic masculinity that continues to reinforce negative health behaviours. As was discovered in this study, the magazine continues to encourage men to drink alcohol, have lots of [un-safe] casual sex, and build a muscular, extremely lean body (with the aid of supplements) while at the same time sending contradictory messages by telling men to cook, eat well, pay attention to the needs of women, exercise and look after their health. Toerien & Durrheim (2001) sum up the way that "an essential masculinity remains intact" while new forms of masculinity emerge:

> Assuming a specific political stance in our analysis—in this case the feminist goal of opposing patriarchal power structures—we can develop political implications from our analyses. We have argued that the 'real man' discourse represents one 'solution' to the conflict between the 'new man' and the 'macho man'. The incorporation of 'macho' elements into the 'real man' ensures that an essential masculinity remains intact. (p. 50)

By combining aspects of traditional masculine identities with other forms, *Men's Health* can appeal to contemporary men allowing them to take up activities like cooking without making them feel effeminate.

However, the persistent adherence to hegemonic masculinities is not the only way the magazine fails to improve men's health. *Men's Health* magazine's relentless focus on promoting a particular male body ideal can be equally health defeating.

The dominant male image in contemporary magazines like *Men's Health* is lean and muscular with 'six-pack' abdominals. Media portrayals equate male muscularity and leanness with health and desirability. As a result, in North American culture, males with this body type are seen as attractive and healthy and thus the connotative meaning underlying the message is that by following *Men's Health* magazine's advice on eating healthy and exercising anyone can achieve this societal ideal. Men who are unable to achieve this desired look are then viewed as unsuccessful in managing their own health. The implication is that they are perhaps immoral and have been seduced by the temptations of junk foods or are lazy and not exercising enough. They are seen as failing to take control of their own health, failing to follow the steps to reach the body ideal. Studies have focused on how unrealistic images cause problems with body image, eating disorders, compulsive exercising, and medical "solutions" such as plastic surgery and self-administered drugs like steroids (McCreary & Sasse, 2000; Morgan, 2000; Pope et al, 1999).

The ideal of being muscular and lean fits into ideologies of the consumer culture for it equates the owner/manager of this type of male body as successful, powerful and in control of their health. Hence, men shop for new bodies in a similar fashion as they would look over and buy a suit. One can make a connection between a muscular body and a powersuit. Business suits

are a social code; they have traditionally been a way for men to garner respect and symbolize power and financial success. An online article states that a "man wearing a suit means business. Business suits are powerful. They're strong. They're driven. They're awe-inspiring" (Business Suits for Men, 2008). Just as the right suit exhibits financial success and power (or its illusion), the right body also conveys power and success. Both convey control over one's life, with the lean body representing one's mastery over one's health. Dziuban (2007) provides a good explanation of how the body becomes objectified through its management and is used to portray particular messages, not only for lookers, but also to the self:

> the body is reflexively mobilized in the vaster project of the self, understood as a psychosomatic entity, an 'object' of choices and options. The appearance and self-presentation of the body serve as the focal points for this reflexivity. The surface of the body, being the part of the body most available to the view of others, is seen to manifest one's own personality and originality .... Through its presentation, emphasizing style, appearance, and sexual preferences, the body is turned into an attractive 'commodity' in the field of interpersonal relationships (p. 482).

To present their "commodities for show" some men only work out muscle groups that are easily visible. This is especially true for the abdominal muscles. Once broken down into parts, such as abs, biceps or chest, the body becomes viewed as an object, rather than embodied. One's body and health becomes a project to work on, that one views from the perspective of how others would see them.

Men's Health provides plenty of exercise advice on how to build these individual muscles. More importantly, the magazine provides an abundance of nutritional health

information and recipes that the 'new man' can cook in order to achieve this physical body objective, while at the same time improving their health. Food is intricately related to health and what one eats or does not eat can prevent or predispose one to diseases. However, lifestyle magazines such as *Men's Health* tend to reduce the complexity of the issue to a poor diet that can be fixed through simple education and the changing of individual nutritional habits.

Research often concludes that people require "education" on making healthy food choices or on how to change individual health behaviours (Chamberlain, 2004). These initiatives "operate to shift attention from ill-health, conceptualized as resulting from factors such as socio-structural inequalities, to ill-health conceptualized as a function of individual behaviour" (Madden & Chamberlain, 2004, p. 585). In other words, people become responsible for their own health, for making the right choices, which shifts focus away from social and historical factors that circumscribe one's choices. Read through a critical perspective, magazines like *Men's Health* essentially blame the victims for their health problems. Coveney (2003) explains:

> the problem of poor diet is seen mainly as consumers' failure to make healthy food choices. By situating the problem as one of ill-informed demand, the logical path to reducing diet-related illness is enlightenment through public nutrition campaigns [as well as nutritional education from magazines]. The role of the food supply—production, marketing and distribution—and quality of food available are left largely untouched. (p. 100)

One difficulty with viewing the problem of poor nutritional health as something that can be solved by education and behaviour change alone is that these health activities are "often conducted in the absence of any overall coherent policy framework that strives to make 'healthy choices easy choices' through easier access to better and more affordable food" (Coveney, 2003,

p. 100). Access and affordability constitute the parameters of possibility for healthy choices; rather than bring to light public health policies, individual consumers are focused on.

Also, although magazines like *Men's Health* portray the ideal male body as one with extremely low levels of body fat, it is debatable if health risks incur just because someone carries what is considered an extra amount of body fat. As an example, many individuals who are considered overweight by today's standards and who are supposedly at greater risk for coronary heart disease will remain well for many years, possibly for their entire lifetime. Yet, on the other hand, a considerable amount of "ideal" weight individuals will experience some form of coronary heart disease (Tong, 2004 p. 47). This point is illustrated by the following revelation:

> I have long congratulated myself on my low levels of coronary risk factors, and I joked to my friends that if I were to die suddenly, I should be very surprised...The painful truth is that for [a man in the lowest group of cardiovascular risk] the commonest cause of death—by far—is coronary heart disease! Everyone, in fact, is a highrisk individual for this uniquely mass disease. (Rose, 1999 p.35)

One could then make the argument like Tong (2004) does that "overweight is not a sufficient condition for developing certain disease any more than ideal weight is a sufficient condition for not developing them" (p.47). Also, it is important to note that being underweight has also been associated with health problems. Thus, the extremely low-fat bodies promoted in *Men's Health* are not necessarily healthy ideals to strive for. Further, the washboard abs and ripped bodies evident in the photos often require water deprivation that leads to dehydration, and even photo editing for the optimum "looks" for the photo shoot. Finally, to build such a physique requires a great deal of effort, time, and funds, whether purchasing the healthy foods required, buying gym memberships, buying supplements/drugs, or following a strict exercise regime.

Although *Men's Health* is targeted at the middle-to upper-class white male, eating healthily may still be a struggle. For example, availability of processed, highly refined and convenience foods is much more handy, whereas healthier options take more time and effort to find and access. Further, some readers of less status may aspire to middle or upper class lifestyles, yet cannot afford to eat healthily even if they know the literature on health and nutrition and wish to make change. Buying fruits and vegetables, particularly organic or locally-grown, is expensive and the corporate control of the food market makes junk food, processed foods, factory farmed meat, and agribusiness crops the easy and more affordable choice for consumers. Thus, although many men may turn to lifestyle magazines for health and nutrition advice, topics like food are actually public health issues. As a society, we need to make healthy, fresh, nutritious foods more affordable and more easily available to all citizens, not only those with the means to pay. Chamberlain (2004) explains that:

> Most promotion activities do not address the fundamental concerns relating to food as a public health issue: the availability of fresh nutritious foods; the fact that 'food costs represent a higher proportion of household expenditure in disadvantaged families'; and 'diet disparity, not necessarily in terms of amounts to eat but more through the monotony of choice and a resulting inability of some groups to take part in appropriate and taken-for-granted cultural and social culinary activities' (Coveney, 2003, p.101). (p.477)

This problem is very complex and requires thorough examination about the social factors that affect poverty, one's ability to choose healthier options, and thus the inability to afford healthy foods. Class, race, ethnicity, gender, geographic location and other social relations are all involved and need to be considered in analyses.

Policies need to be put in place that work towards making healthy food choices more accessible and affordable while making unhealthy choices, such as processed foods, less available. Obviously this is a difficult goal in our corporate driven economy, especially since there are large profits to be made in the mass production and processing of foods, rather than selling them whole, local (or regional) and fresh. For one, besides being less expensive to buy, highly refined foods, such as white floor, processed foods, simple sugars and so on, are habit forming and addictive. Further, corporations spend considerable amounts on advertising and branding their processed products to create and maintain consumer desires. Corporations exploit food science and consumer yearnings for financial gains, with the health of consumers less of a consideration than profits.

People who "choose" to indulge in sugary, processed and fatty treats are seen as lacking self control because of the dominant discourse of willpower and personal choice. The problem of unhealthy eating and obesity then becomes one of morality, of weak character. Food has been constructed as either "good" or "bad". Good foods (such as fruits and vegetables) are considered to be nutritionally healthy and thus eating these foods signifies care for one's health, while bad foods (fats, sugars, salt) are considered to be detrimental to one's health and have connotations of moral weakness (Lupton, 1996). *Men's Health,* which promotes individuals taking personal control over their health, attempts to help readers with nutritional choices, and gives many examples of good foods to eat and bad foods that men need to resist. The lean strong body ideal the magazine constructs signifies strong character. Readers then judge themselves in accordance to how well they can manage to fit this ideal, and if they fail to acquire the washboard abs then they are weak, flabby men.

Tong (2004) writes that "On one extreme, anorexia becomes a metaphor for 'an extreme development of the capacity for self-denial and repression of desire (the work ethic in absolute control);' on the other extreme, obesity becomes a metaphor for 'an extreme capacity to capitulate to desire (consumerism in control)'" (p. 43). This binary of self denial/capitulation favors muscular lean bodies as desirable. Those who comply are seen as healthy and in control of their lives by achieving the societal ideal of a healthy body in appearance. This is problematic on a number of levels. For example, the men seen as overweight might end up with psychological difficulties, such as depression or body image problems, as they are judged to have moral failings for they have placed themselves into this condition by failing to control their bodies.

However, although images of muscular lean bodies are constantly displayed in popular media like *Men's Health*, many people are unmotivated to lose weight. Tong (2004) writes of conflicting realities:

> if the diet, fitness, and fashion industries have not been able to motivate the bulky Americans to get thin, it is probably unrealistic to think that health educators will succeed where advertising magnets have failed. Americans cannot quite decide just how much (or how little) they really want to be thin and/or healthy. They continue to spend 129 billion dollars per annum to consume super-sized fast food, while simultaneously spending 35-50 billion dollars per annum on diet foods, diet drugs, exercise aides, and the like. (p. 49)

Contradictory social forces create conflicts. Perhaps only serious risk of a feared disease provokes change in individual people. Unless economic forces, social norms, and policies on health and food change, most health and nutritional behaviour will remain in place.

Public health policies need to address the underlying issues related to healthy nutrition including the availability of fresh nutritious foods, how class impacts on food choices, the

popular media's influence on health through magazine medicine, the changing norms of body image and healthy eating, the rise of neo-liberal ideologies, and the focus on the individual, to name a few. However, these issues do not only apply to healthy eating. Similarly, many of these underlying issues prevent men from following the advice, which is also found in *Men's Health,* of how to have an active, healthy lifestyle. For example, many people will not have sufficient leisure time from work to exercise (whether because of working long hours or two or more jobs), or have the money to buy expensive supplements or a gym membership which are often costly.

Finally, due to the popularity of magazines like *Men's Health,* it is obvious that men turn to such magazines for entertainment and for health information. It is thus imperative for public health research to critically examine these media resources and understand the cultural compulsions that are evident in the media. Lifestyle magazines such as *Men's Health* are especially important to examine, since as this study and other research has discovered, although the magazines and the messages they contain have changed with the times, they recreate traditional gendered ideas in new forms. The masculine ideals that are presented have less to do with health than with a variety of harmful health behaviours, unattainable goals, individual culpability, and conflicting messages.

Note

1. All references to *Men's Health* magazine refer to the U.S./Canadian edition of *Men's Health* in the year 2008. After the first citation only month, year, and page number are provided for *Men's Health* citations.

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Appendix

Appendix A
Men's Health Covers

Table1
Men's Health Cover Models 2008
Description

Month	*Name*	*Profession*	*Age*	*Race*	*Body Type*
Jan/Feb	Mike Vogel	Actor	30	White	Lean/Athletic Not overly muscular
March	Matthew McConaughey	Actor	39	White	Lean Athletic, Toned, not overly muscular
April	Derek Jeter	Athlete MLB	35	Black	Lean/Athletic, Not muscular
May	Matthew Fox	Actor	43	White	Lean Not muscular
June	Mark Wahlberg	Actor	38	White	Lean/Athletic Not overly muscular
July/Aug	Aaron Eckhart	Actor	41	White	Lean Not muscular
Sept.	David Beckham	Athlete	34	White	Lean/Athletic Not overly muscular
Oct.	Gerard Butler	Actor	39	White	Lean Not muscular
Nov.	Barack Obama	Current U.S. President	48	Black	Skinny Not muscular
Dec.	Cam Gigandet	Actor	27	White	Lean/Athletic Not overly muscular

Most of the cover models are white celebrities between their 30's or early 40's. All the models are lean and most have athletic looking physiques. However, although some of the models display muscularity, none of them display bulky overly-muscular physiques such as one would find on the cover of a bodybuilding publication.

Table 2
Men's Health Cover Models 2008
Photography

Month	*Apparel*	*Pose*	*Facial Expression*	*Colour/ black white*
Jan/Feb	Black t-shirt and jeans	-Standing -Just below the waist up -Hands in pockets	-Smiling -Direct eye contact	Black & white
March	Grey t-shirt, sweat pants	-Standing -Just below the waist up -Hands in pockets	-Smiling -Direct eye contact	Black & white
April	Black t-shirt and jeans	-Standing -Just below the waist up -Arms crossed	-Smiling -Direct eye contact	Black & white
May	Black t-shirt and jeans	-Standing -Just below the waist up -Thumbs in pockets	-Stern look -Direct eye contact	Black & white
June	Dark t-shirt with collar	-Standing -Waist up -Crossing arms	-Smiling (no teeth) -Direct eye contact	Black & white
July/Aug	White t-shirt and jeans	-Standing -Waist up -Hands in pockets	-Not smiling, serious look -Direct eye contact	Black & white
Sept.	Black tank top, jeans	-Standing -Arms to his side -Hands wrapped	-Stern look -Direct eye contact	Colour
Oct.	Black long sleeve shirt, sweat pants	-Standing -Sleeves rolled up, -Just below the waist up -One hand in pocket	-Serious look -Direct eye contact	Black & white
Nov.	White dress shirt, tie, black dress pants	-Sitting -Holding hands in lap	-Smiling -Direct eye contact	Colour
Dec.	Black long sleeve shirt, dark jeans	-Standing -Just below the waist up -Hands in pockets	-Stern look -Direct eye contact	Colour

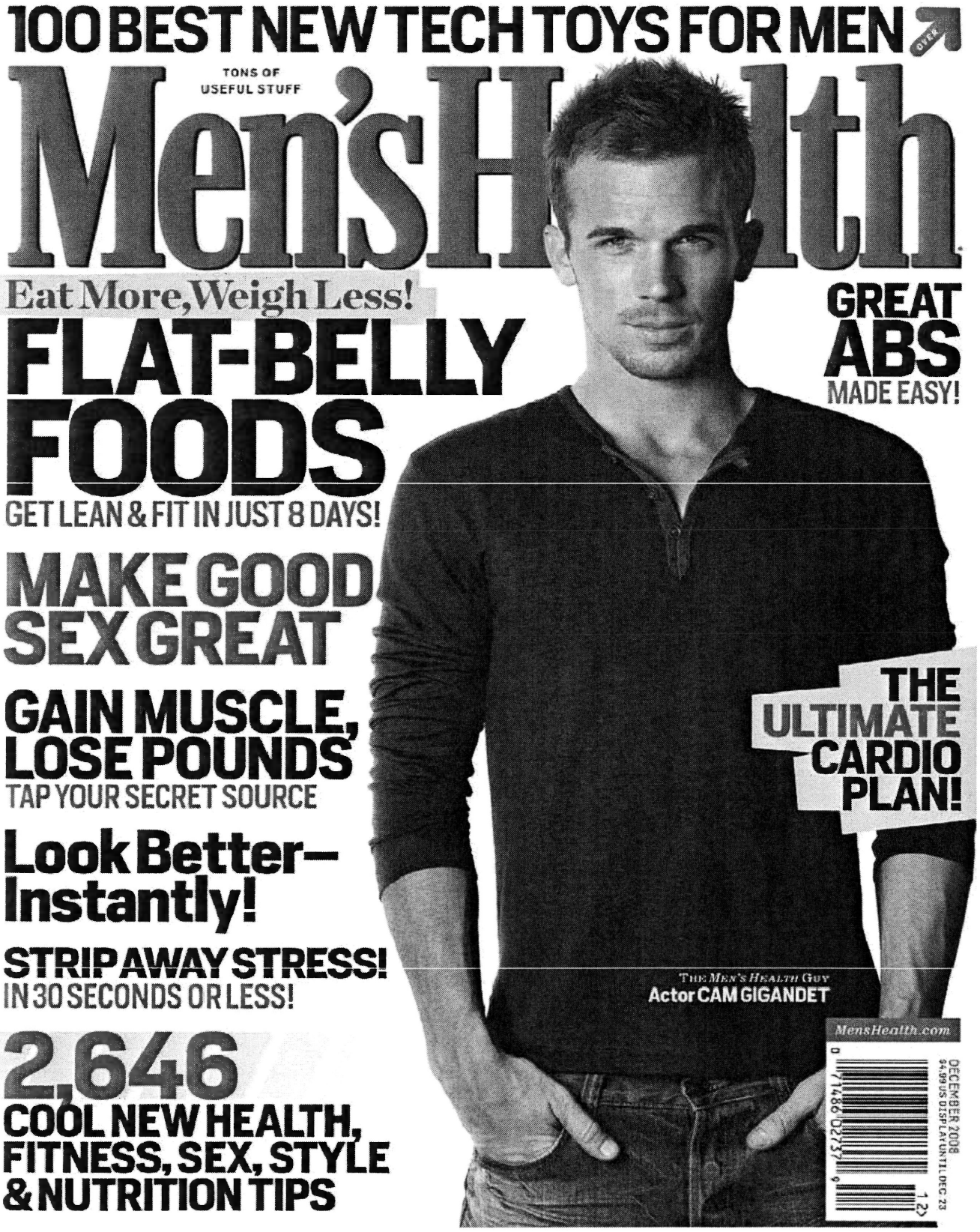
None of the models are displayed topless; most are wearing a dark t-shirt and jeans. The exception is Barak Obama, who, to reinforce the image of status and power that his office requires (Presidency) is wearing suit pants and a dress shirt. Most of the photographs are taken in black and white from just below the waist up. The models are usually standing with hands in pockets making direct eye contact with the readers.

Table 3
Men`s Health Magazine Cover Themes

Themes	*% Of Covers With Each Theme*	*Examples*
Hard body (muscle, getting in shape)	90%	"50 ways to muscle up your diet" "Muscle Beach! Build the body you want in just weeks" "No gym? No problem! Build more muscle anytime, anywhere!"
Diet/food	60%	"Eat like a man! The complete instructions" "You can grill that? 4 courses, 7 cuisines, one hot fire" "The guy-meal matrix. Delicious, nutritious, simple, and fast"
Health	50%	"5 Symptoms You Can't Afford to Ignore" "10-second health fixes" "Do-or-die health test for men. Here's how to ace it"
Sex	40%	"Sex Adventures: You Lead, She follows" "Your summer of love. Beach conquests made easy" "Sex on the beach! The scientifically approved perfect vacation"
Fat/weight reduction	10%	"Strong & Fit. Trim the fat in just days!"

The top theme displayed on 90% of the covers of *Men's Health* is building a muscular hard body or getting in shape. Other popular themes are diet/food (60%), health (50%), sex (40%) and weight loss/fat reduction (10%).

Example of a Cover from *Men's Health* (December, 2008)



Appendix B
Men's Health Features and Cover Stories

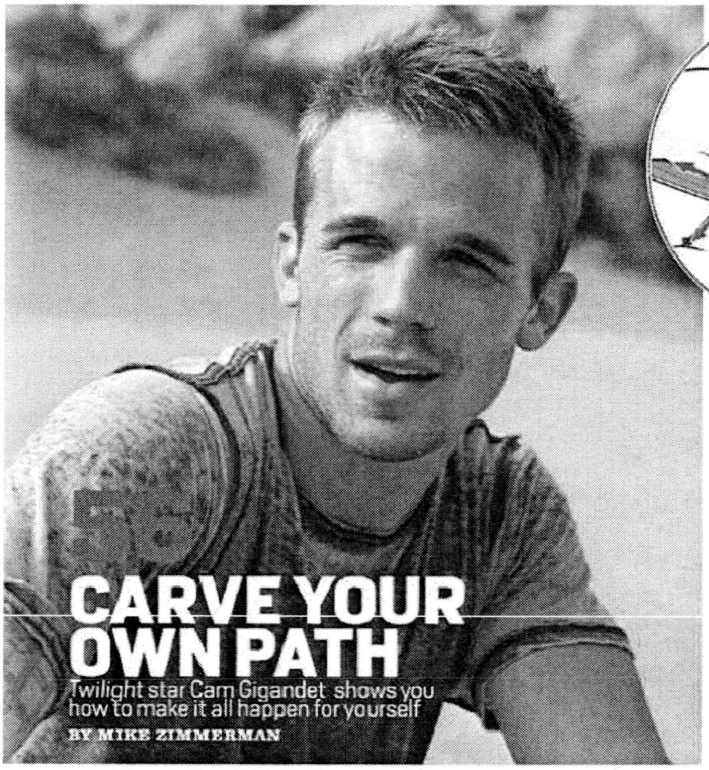
Table 4
Topics of Features and Cover Stories

Topics	*Examples*
Diet/nutrition 17/115 (15%)	"Power Up Your Diet!"
Advice for men by men 16/115 (14%)	"Raise A Tough Kid" "Carve Your Own Path"
Sex/relationships 15/115 (13%)	"30 Red-Hot Sex Secrets" "More Sex, Hotter Sex" "Intoxicate Her With Food"
Weight loss/fat reduction 10/115 (9%)	"3 Simple Rules For Eating Lean" "15 Powerfoods That Fight Fat" "Lose Your Gut"
General tips 10/115 (9%)	"Strip Away Stress" "Never Forget"
Health and medical advice 9/115 (8%)	"5 Ways to Add Years To Your Life" "Best 60-Second Health Fixes"
General Fitness/Cardio 9/115 (8%)	"Your Ultimate Cardio Plan!"
Hard body exercise/weight lifting 8/115 (7%)	"The 15-Minute Home Workout. Ignite muscle growth in record time"
Financial Advice 8/115 (7%)	"Build Wealth And Power" "Beat Stress, Build Wealth" "Build Wealth Fast!" "Special Wealth and Power Issue"
Fashion/Grooming 8/115 (7%)	"Look Better-Instantly!" "100 Ways to Look Great"
Other 5/115 (4%)	"Green Guide: Healthy Body, Healthy Planet" "Run Faster And Farther: Pick the perfect running shoe with these easy steps" "Better Sleep, Bigger Muscles" "Tech Guide"

The top 3 topics of features and cover stories were diet/nutrition (15%), advice for men by men (14%) and sex and relationships (13%). Although hard body exercise/weight lifting was not one of the top 3, many of the articles on diet/nutrition also inferred that eating these meals would result in more muscle or "six-pack" abs. Similarly, articles dealing with general fitness/cardio, often played up the benefits that would result to the body's appearance as opposed to the general health benefits that would result from the cardiovascular exercise.

Along with the cover stories and features, there are also standard categories that appear in every issue: "Sex & Relationships," "Nutrition," "Fitness," "Health" and "Guy Knowledge." Every issue also contained several standard features: "From the editor," "Ask the docs," "Ask Men's Health," "Tell Men's Health," "On the minds of men," "Malegrams" and "The average guy".

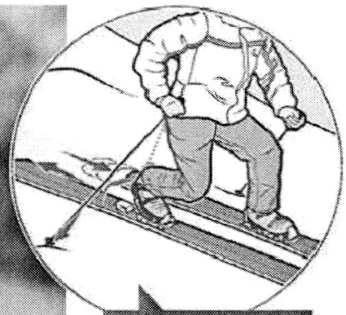
Example of Table of Contents found in *Men's Health* (December 2008)



CARVE YOUR OWN PATH

Twilight star Cam Gigandet shows you how to make it all happen for yourself

BY MIKE ZIMMERMAN



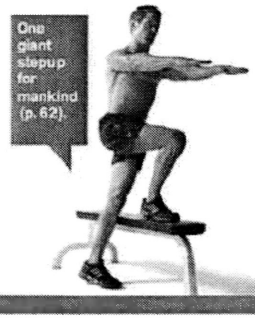
The slippery slope to your best body ever (p. 52).

FITNESS

52 BOOST YOUR LUNGS AND BUILD YOUR QUADS
With this emerging winter sport, you'll do both at the same time. What's more, it's amazing fun

54 STRONG-ARM FATHER TIME INTO SUBMISSION
Learn how muscular strength can raise your life expectancy

62 RISE ABOVE THE REST OF THE FIELD
Become a better athlete with one simple step. You can do this move at home, too

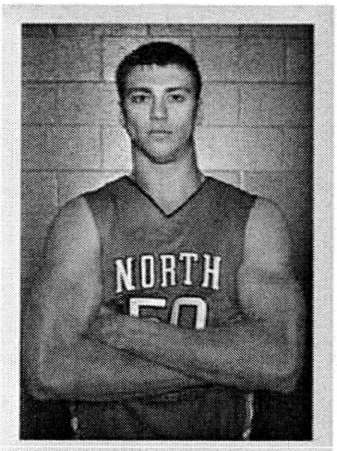


One giant stepup for mankind (p. 62).

64 GREAT ABS MADE EASY
The 15-minute workout that torches flab by making your body burn calories all day long

92 SKYROCKET YOUR MOTIVATION
Add fuel to the fire with these books, movies, and discs

96 CITIES THAT NEVER SLEEP
You snooze, you win in this month's *MetroGrades*



129

FREE WORKOUT POSTER

GAIN MUSCLE, LOSE POUNDS!

Shape up in no time with this technique

BY DAN WIEDERER

NUTRITION

50 QUASH HUNGER FOR GOOD
Eat this for breakfast and feel satisfied all day

78 DRINK TO YOUR HEALTH
Try these 4 twists on the Bloody Mary

76 MUSCLE MEALS MADE FAST
Our short-order cook speeds up herb-roasted chicken

104 MELT BODY FAT LIKE BUTTER
Learn the weight-loss secrets of TV's biggest losers. BY JEFF CSATARI

Learn our guy-meal matrix (p. 108).

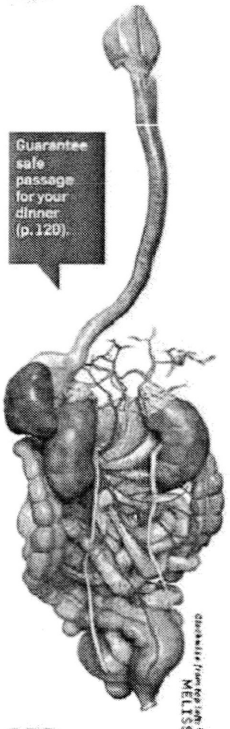
HEALTH

40 CAN'T SLEEP?
Take this simple test

46 SEE CLEARLY
By eating this food once a week

80 DON'T BE EATEN ALIVE
Banish body bugs

100 TIME FOR A SECOND OPINION?
Learn when to ask
BY T.R. HOLT, M.D.

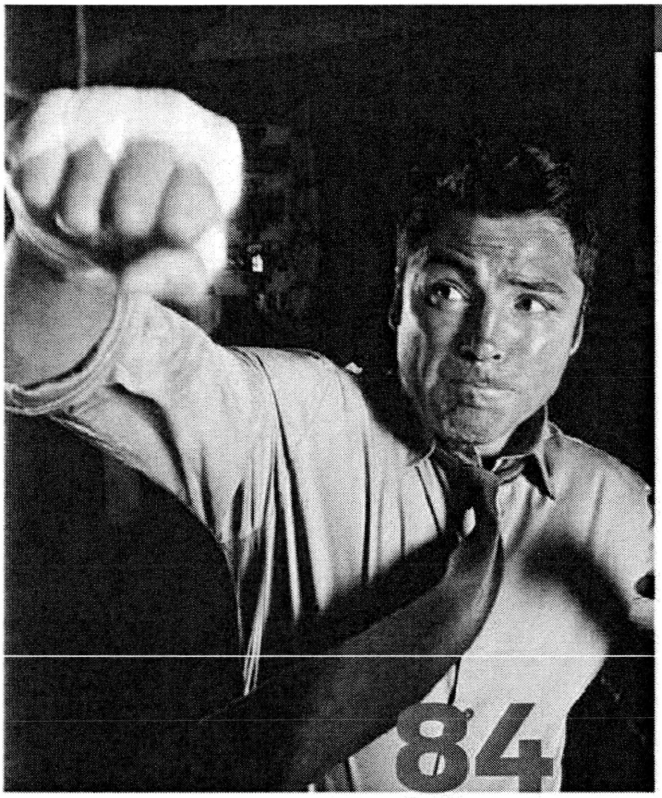


Guarantee safe passage for your dinner (p. 120).

120 DEVELOP A STRONG STOMACH
Crunches aren't enough. Worry about what's going on inside, too. BY JENNA BERGEN

138 WILL DIALING 911 SAVE YOU?
The next man who dies waiting for an ambulance to arrive could be you
BY STEVE VOLK

Illustrations from CLIFF WATTS, DAN MARSTOLTO, MELISSA PUJICH, JOHN LOOMIS, BETH BISCHOFF



TONS OF USEFUL STUFF...

GUY KNOWLEDGE

82 JIMMY THE BARTENDER
"There's a hot older woman who hangs out at my local bar. What's my best move to strike up a conversation?"

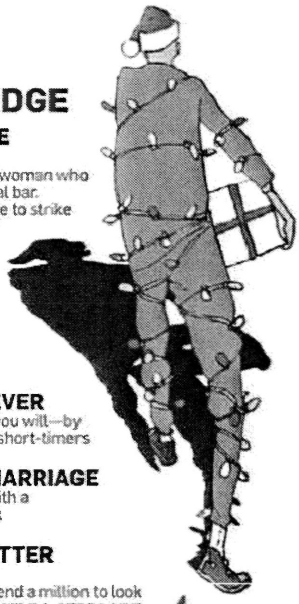
86 WORK LESS, ACHIEVE MORE
Ease your way into the corner office

94 LIVE FOREVER
Or at least *feel* like you will—by outlasting these 14 short-timers

116 WIN AT MARRIAGE
Happiness begins with a balanced checkbook

135 LOOK BETTER INSTANTLY
You don't need to spend a million to look like a million. BY SANDRA NYGAARD

160 RETIRE RICH, NOT BROKE
Smart strategies for rocky times
BY RICHARD SINE



The best Xmas present ever: less stress (p. 89).

Learn the 411 on 911 (p. 138).

84

MAKE THE RIGHT MOVE

Oscar de la Hoya reveals how you, too, can go the distance

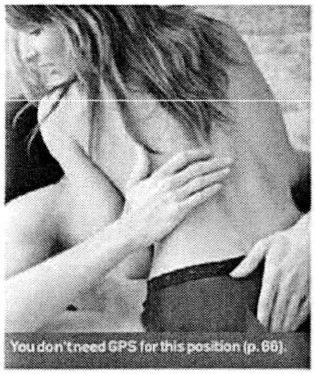
SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

32 ASK THE GIRL NEXT DOOR
"Why do women intentionally flirt with men who have girlfriends?"

44 REV HER SEX DRIVE
Believe it or not, you can do it by revving your own engine first

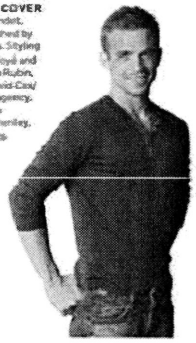
66 SATISFY HER LUST
The Kama Sutra has nothing on these amazing sex moves

68 SAY THE PERFECT THING
What to tell her when every word—no, every syllable—counts



You don't need GPS for this position (p. 80).

ON THE COVER
Cam Gigandet, photographed by Cliff Watts. Styling by Brian Boyd and Samantha Rubin, hair by David Cruz/celebrityagency.com; John Varvatos henley, PRPS jeans



MEN'S HEALTH Vol. 23 No. 10 (ISSN 1054-4836) is published 10 times per year (monthly except for January and July) by Rodale, Inc., 33 E. Minor St., Emmaus, PA 18098, (610) 967-5171. Copyright 2008 by Rodale, Inc. All rights reserved. In U.S., Periodicals postage paid at Emmaus, PA, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster (U.S.): Send address changes to Men's Health magazine, Customer Service, P.O. Box 7138, Red Oak, Iowa, 51591-0138. IN CANADA: Postage paid at Gateway, Mississauga, Ontario. Canada Post International Publication Mail (Canadian Distribution) Sales Agreement No. 40063732. Postmaster (Canada): Send returns and address changes to Men's Health magazine, 2998 14th Avenue, Markham, Ontario, L3R 5Z8. GST# R122088811. Subscribers: If the postal authorities don't let us mail your magazine in undelivered, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within 18 months. The reporting in Men's Health is meant to expand your knowledge of current developments in health. Because everyone is different, the ideas expressed by researchers cannot be used to diagnose or treat individual health problems. A health-care professional can best guide you.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY ISTVAN BANYAI

Appendix C
Advertisements

Table 5
Advertisements in *Men's Health* Magazine 2008

Product	*Inside Front Cover*	*Back Cover*	*Inside Back Cover*
Automobile 13/30 (43%)	Honda Accord Range Rover Sport Chevy Traverse Crossover Acura TL Hummer H3	Chevy Malibu BMW 1 series coupe Toyota Sequoia GMC Sierra Mercedes-Bens C-Class	BMW M3 Cadillac CTS-V Cadillac Escalade
Designer clothing 7/30 (23%)	Nike Emporio Armani (3)		BVD underwear Hugo Boss DKNY Jeans
Electronic equipment 3/30 (10%)	Sony DSLR Camera		Sony HD devices LG cellphone
Special feature (reverse cover) 3/30 (10%)		*-Guide to Style* *-The Ultimate Guide to Denim* *-Tech Guide*	
Beer 2/30 (7%)			Budweizer Select MGD *light*
Cologne 2/30 (7%)	D&G *the one*	Diesel *Fuel for Life*	

Automobile ads (43%) were found the most often on prime advertisement spaces. Most were for luxury automobile brands, such as BMW, Range Rover, Cadillac, Mercedes-Bens or Acura. The second most popular consumer product featured on these spaces was brand name designer clothing (23%).

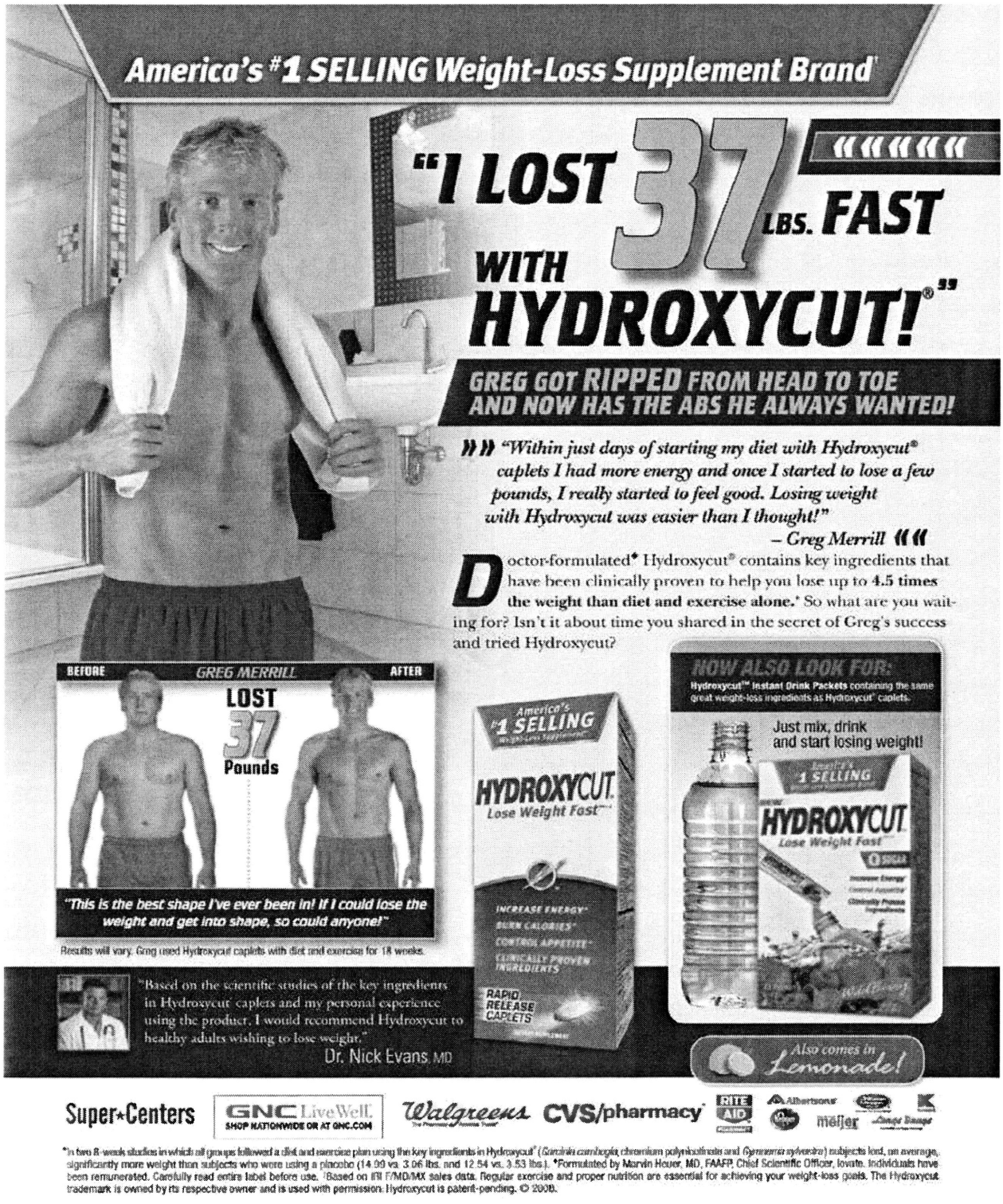
Table 6
Advertisements in *Men's Health* Featuring Supplements

Month (2008)	Number of Advertisements for Supplements	Supplement Advertisements Featuring Models with Shirts Off	
		Lean with "6-pack" Abs (Not overly Muscular)	"Un-naturally" Muscular with "6-pack" Abs
January-February	9	8	1
March	7	-	2
April	7	2	-
May	9	1	1
June	6	1	1
July-August	12	1	1
September	6	2	-
October	7	1	-
November	7	2	2
December	5	1	2
Total	75	19 19/29 (66%)	10 10/29 (34%)
		29/75 (39%)	

In all the *Men's Health* issues, 75 advertisements were for nutritional supplement products. Of these 75 advertisements, 39% displayed topless male models. All these topless models had low body fat levels and 'six-pack' abs. 34% of these topless models displayed 'un-natural' looking bodies with overly muscular physiques resembling professional bodybuilders. The 'un-natural' looking models were often displayed modeling bodybuilding supplements by the company BSN (the product BSN Atro-phex appeared in many issues).

Example of Supplement Advertisement Featuring "Natural" Looking Model

(Men's Health, November 2008)



Example of Supplement Advertisement Featuring "Un-natural" Looking Model

(Men's Health, November 2008)

Caption reads: "Look That Way. Look at the athlete here and study his physique. How long have you wanted to look that way? Any answer is too long. If you don't look that way, it's because you haven't pushed yourself to that critical physiological threshold where your appearance starts to change dramatically... ATRO-PHEX was designed to push you through the tipping point...."