HOW IS GENDER REPRESENTED IN MALE CONSUMER MAGAZINES?

BACKGROUND
Various research agrees that gender stereotypes are reinforced by societal institutions such as schooling and family. And with the rising influential stance the media are taking in everyday life it is becoming more important to assess the affect media can have on gender stereotyping. Usually, gender focused research into the media exclusively explores women’s magazines. For this reason, it would be both interesting and relevant to investigate the other side of gender targeted media outlets (male consumer magazines) to get a more representative perspective of the entire platform.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
✓ Much research into representation of gender is targeted at magazines with a female readership
✓ Analysis of wider societal themes through discourse analysis
✓ Content analysis will be easy and practical, produces reliable and hard numerical data- strengthens discourse analysis
✓ Male consumer magazines targeted to Western society- what about other cultures?
✓ There has also been a decline in readership of male consumer magazines in the recent years (Steigrad, 2016), compromising the relevance of the research.

METHODOLOGY
The methodology used to conduct the research for this project will be in the form of both a content and a discourse analysis. These are appropriate research methods to use for the chosen topic since the study of the text and language used in the magazines will allow an indepth analysis of gender representation in male consumer magazines.

• Strauss and Fiez (2013) suggest that to understand the complexities of our social world we must also try to understand how these complexities are referred to in language, this can be done through discourse analysis.
• Phillips and Hardy (2002) propose a “three-dimensional approach” should be used in discourse analysis to connect texts to discourse, relating them to social and historical context and referring to the relationships and audiences underlie the specific topics that are being researched.
• Jørgensen (2002) describes discourse analysis as a “complete package”, meaning that any method of discourse analysis will allow a complete analysis of anything that shapes the language or text as well.

• In relation to gender representation in magazines, discourse analysis would be particularly useful in understanding how the media can affect the norms and values we internalize as well as the representations they encourage and reproduce through stereotypical language or themes in media. Furthermore, it can be used to analyse the effects of the media on discourses, themes and social ideas into numerical data.
• One aim of a content analysis is to describe “trends in communication content” (Weber, 2002), such as the content found in magazines.
• Due to its replicable and systematic nature, content analysis can not only identify current trends but also “provides an empirical basis for monitoring shifts in public opinion” (Stemler 2001).
• Furthermore reason it provokes a great research method for uncovering current and changing trends in gender representation in male consumer magazines.

LIT REVIEW
• Connell (1995) formalises the term hegemonic masculinity, suggesting Hegemonic masculinity is constituted and formed in relation to subordinated and marginalized masculinities as well as in relation to women.
• Bosson and Michniewicz (2013) suggest that men and women form their gender identities in different ways. They claim the antifemininity manifest discourse theory that suggests men distance themselves and avoid behaviours typically associated with the feminine.
• Smith et al (2013) found that men’s adherence to antifemininity theory can be so strong that men who adhere to hegemonic masculine norms may feel compelled to be sexually violent to maintain dominance.
• Trujillo (1991) argues that the way male athletes are represented in the media encourages an idolised image of the male body to be incorporated into hegemonic ideas about masculinity.
• Giaccardi et al (2016) site cultivation theory of gender, and suggest that media tends to endorse a hegemonic masculinity that is centred on power, financial status, aggression, virility, and the objectification of women.
• Wagner (2016) found that within body improvement culture the male body was represented by the media in terms of hegemonic masculinity such as dominance, violence, social capital, sexual dominance and intimidation.

• Susan M. Alexander (2003) found that masculinity in Men’s Health was presented as a branded masculinity that could be bought, altered and improved.
• Deana A. Rohlinger (2002) explains that the representation of gender in male consumer magazines should also be discussed in terms of cultural phenomena such as influence from the gay liberation movement.
• Federico Boni (2002) suggested magazines represent gender in a way that reflects the changing male gender relations and identities but still stabilizes “the traditional relationship between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities”.
• Vigorito and Curry (1998) found that in magazines with a high male audience, men were portrayed primarily in occupational roles (e.g. as the provider), yet in magazines with a high female readership, men were generally portrayed in more nurturing roles, reflecting hegemonic gender norms.
• Kenon Breaux (1994) examined Esquire, finding that the majority of the content was refined to stereotypical desires of the heterosexual man, to do this, women are fantasized sexually and trafficked socially.
• Cieply (2010) found that Esquire magazine legitimised the male consumer through images of hegemonic masculinity as to distance the male reader from the traditionally female role as ‘consumer’.
• Deana Atwood (2005) examined the representation of male homosexuality in a sample of British soft-core pornographic and men’s lifestyle magazines. She found that men were represented as a work in progress and women were represented in rigid and stereotypical categories such as ‘the girl next door’.
• Coulter (2014) argues that Playboy magazine had huge success by aligning consumer desires with these desires as innate components of modern masculinity (enforcing hegemonic norms of masculinity).

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS
Due to the nature of the research methods being used there are no relevant ethical implications to consider as both discourse and content analysis require no participants other than the researcher to be used.

REFERENCES
• Phillips, and Hardy, L. (2012). What is Discourse Analysis?: Discourse Analysis, pp.3-17.