Love your body and embrace your imperfections

A thematic analysis of the portrayal of body positivity
in online articles from Dutch women's magazines

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ABSTRACT

The body positivity movement is a feminist movement, originating from the Fat Acceptance movement and other movements that fought for the rights of marginalized bodies. Since the western beauty ideals are mainly skinny and white, the body positivity movement challenges these narrow beauty ideals and fights for the visibility and representation of body types different from those ideals. To get equality and acceptance, the movement calls for the representation and normalization of all kinds of (marginalized) bodies, such as bodies of color, fat bodies and bodies with disabilities. Body positivity also promotes self-love and encourages people to embrace their bodies regardless of their appearances. However, body positivity is criticized for not being radical and inclusive and therefore not helpful enough for the marginalized bodies that need visibility and representation the most. Furthermore, the movement is rather divided as there is no consensus about who should be included, nor is there clarity about the objectives of the movement and whether individual or systemic problems should be tackled. Since body positivity is quite an ambiguous concept with different aspects, which have been researched mainly on social media and blogs, this research has focused on how Dutch women's magazines portray body positivity in online articles. This was done by conducting a thematic analysis, paying attention to who is represented and which body positivity factions and aspects are highlighted in these articles. The analysis resulted in four identified themes. The first theme relates to focusing on yourself, which is about individualism, agency and having choice over your body. The second theme is about body positivity being for everybody and everybody deserving respect and acceptance, regardless of appearances. The third theme is showing a diversity of bodies with imperfections, body types and skin colors. The final theme is about self-love and body acceptance, with a focus on improving your mental health and loving your body. The results show a focus of the magazines on neoliberal and postfeminist ideas of individualism, choice and empowerment, focusing mainly on tackling personal problems. The body positivity articles were only diverse and inclusive to a certain extent, lacking a radical and political edge, since little attention was given to social, political and cultural inequalities, while marginalized bodies were represented less than non-marginalized bodies. As magazines have an influential role, magazines could learn from these findings and inform audiences better about the importance of body positivity and for whom it is specifically meant, by representing more bodies deviating from beauty ideals and focusing more on systemic problems instead of individual ones.

KEYWORDS: *Body positivity, marginalized bodies, representation, diversity, women's magazines*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Body positivity: an introduction

In recent years body positivity has become a popular topic on social media and its messages have been spreading across multiple other media platforms. The body positivity movement is a counter reaction to the narrow western beauty ideals, which are dominant in the media, consisting of mainly skinny, white and able-bodied women without bodily imperfections (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Johansson, 2020). These beauty ideals are very exclusionary with unrealistic standards which are almost impossible to physically attain, but with which women are confronted on a daily basis and to which women compare themselves (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017). The body positivity movement challenges and rejects these limited beauty ideals, because many body types that different from those ideals are invisible and underrepresented in the media (Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Limatius, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). The body positivity movement, which started as a feminist movement, therefore fights for a more diverse representation of women in the media and in society and calls for the normalization of bodies of all shapes and sizes, which includes women of color as well as women with different ages, sizes and disabilities, with the goal to get equality and acceptance of all bodies (Baer, 2016; Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Limatius, 2020; Sastre, 2014). Besides this, body positivity promotes self-love and a positive body image, encouraging people to embrace their bodies regardless of their appearances, and show their bodies with imperfections, such as cellulite, stretch marks, and (excessive) fat, on social media and feminist forums (Cohen et al., 2019b; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Morris, 2019; Streeter, 2019).

Social media, magazines and popular culture have increasingly become dominant sources of information when it comes to social norms and beauty standards, with an abundance of images of perfect skinny women (Cohen et al., 2019b; Grabe et al., 2008; Limatius, 2020). Body positivity messages and diverse body representation are therefore of great importance, since industries, like the fashion and beauty industries, create toxic beauty ideals and promote body optimization to adhere to the dominant beauty ideals (Craddock et al., 2019; Grabe et al., 2008; Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Lennon, 2019). Positioning the thin body as the ideal body is embedded in neoliberal discourses that emphasize personal responsibility, encouraging regimens of strict diets and exercise, whilst (fat) women who are not conform this ideal are looked down upon (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015). The problems with exposure to such media content is that viewers start to accept media portrayals as representations of reality, which makes the thin ideal normative and central to attractiveness,

whereas many body characteristics are seen as flaws and as less attractive, thus stigmatizing and marginalizing such bodies with imperfections (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Grabe et al., 2008).

As a result, exposure to these narrow beauty ideals leads to negative consequences such as eating disorders, depression, self-objectification, and body dissatisfaction in women (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Cohen et al., 2019a; Cohen et al., 2019b; Lazuka et al., 2020). Body positivity messages and diverse body representation are thus of great importance, as research has shown that representing a greater diversity of bodies and appearances in the media that are not conform the thin ideal, with a focus on body positivity messages, can actually positively influence the mood, body satisfaction and body image of women and can lead to greater acceptance of one's own body (Cohen et al., 2019a; Cohen et al., 2019b; Craddock et al., 2019; Grabe et al., 2008).

The body positivity movement does face criticism though. Scholars say that the body positivity movement has little effect on representation of diverse bodies in the media (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). Others argue that the body positivity movement is not radical and not as inclusive and diverse as it is supposed to be and therefore not helpful enough for the marginalized bodies that need the visibility and representation the most (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Limatius, 2020; Sastre, 2014). Besides that, there is little agreement among both scholars and body positivity advocates about who should be included in this movement and what the specific objectives and values of the body positivity movement are, because the movement lacks a collectively organized body with no solidarity around a specific cause (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). Discussions about body positivity oftentimes revolve around the purpose of the movement and whether it tackles individual problems or systemic problems (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). Body positivity is, according to Darwin and Miller (2020) an ambiguous movement and concept, which either focuses on individual psychological empowerment or on fighting structural inequalities and discriminations that different marginalized bodies experience in western societies. Darwin and Miller (2020) argue that the movement has four different and distinct factions, each with its own values and objectives, namely mainstream body positivity, fat positivity, body neutrality and radical positivity.

Since there is so much disagreement about the values and objectives of the body positivity movement, it is very interesting to examine how the media portray the movement and which aspects they highlight, whether it is individual and psychological or about systemic and structural issues. For this thesis, the focus will therefore be on the portrayal of the body positivity movement and its diverse aspects in specifically online articles from six popular Dutch women's magazines by conducting a thematic analysis. There will additionally be a focus on representation and whether the magazines portray a diversity of bodies. With this research, the following questions will be answered:

Research question: How is body positivity portrayed in online articles from Dutch women's magazines?

Sub-question 1: How are people represented in the articles?

Sub-question 2: What aspects of body positivity are highlighted in the articles?

1.2 Academic and social relevance

Researchers have focused specifically on the portrayal of body positivity and body representation in personal blogs (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Darwin & Miller, 2020), in print magazines (de Freitas et al., 2017; Murphy & Jackson, 2011), and on Instagram accounts (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Lazuka et al., 2020), with the analyzed media content mainly being from English speaking countries. This thesis is academically relevant as it seeks to make an important contribution to this scholarship by looking specifically at online body positivity articles from popular women's magazines from the Netherlands, a non-English speaking country. Additionally, the research of Darwin and Miller (2020) is still novel and their four identified body positivity factions have not been used in other research yet, which is why specific attention is paid to these factions and their specific aspects in the online magazine articles.

Because body positivity is a popular topic in the media nowadays and more diverse representation of bodies is being called for, it is socially relevant to examine this phenomenon in online magazine articles. Women's magazines talk about diverse contemporary topics which are of interest for women and are one of the most influential media outlets when it comes to the portrayal and representation of beauty ideals and women's bodies, which can influence the body image of women (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Cohen et al, 2019a; Grabe et al., 2008; Murphy & Jackson, 2011). Besides that, magazines are cultural sites which portray women's bodies, while often inviting readers to identify themselves with the content as well as creating the figure that readers should identify with (Murphy & Jackson, 2011; Sobande, 2020). It is important for women with marginalized bodies to see bodies they can identify with, as they are crucial to help those women to defy normative beauty standards (Fikkan & Rothblum, 2012; Limatius, 2020). Magazines are not known for being diverse in terms of representation of diverse body sizes and skin colors, even though representation of marginalized bodies is important for normalization and acceptance of those bodies (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Fürsich, 2010; Hall, 1997; Limatius, 2020; Sastre, 2014). Therefore, it is important to investigate how magazines pay attention to the body positivity movement and diverse body representation as a counter reaction to the perfect skinny beauty ideals that have been dominant in the media for decades. Even more so, because there are many disagreements about the movement and what it entails.

1.3 Chapter outline

The thesis is structured as follows in order to access the portrayal of body positivity in online magazine articles. Firstly, concepts and relevant theories relating to body positivity will be explained in the theoretical framework to provide a solid foundation for the research. A short synopsis will be given of the origins of the body positivity movement, the importance of representation and diversity of bodies will be explained, body positivity aspects and different body positivity factions and feminist notions will be reviewed and at last the criticisms and commercialization of body positivity will be touched upon. Secondly, in the methodology section the non-random sampling method and six-phased thematic coding process will be further explained. Thirdly, the findings of the thematic analysis will be discussed in the results section with the explanation of four identified themes. Finally, in the conclusion the research question is answered in relation to the analysis results and limitations of the research and future directions will be presented.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, concepts and perspectives from academic literature are reviewed to gain a deeper understanding of body positivity, the history of the movement, its (feminist) factions, and current criticisms by scholars. The theoretical framework will cover multiple angles of body positivity, based on relevant literature from feminist studies, body image theories and representation theories to provide a well-rounded framework which can be applied to this qualitative research about the portrayal of body positivity and the representations of people in online women's magazine articles.

Firstly, a short historical overview will be given about the body positivity movement, which originates from different (political) movements. Secondly, the importance of representation and diversity of bodies in the media will be touched upon. Thirdly, the concept of body positivity and what it entails as well as different body positivity perspectives and factions will be explained, according to the literature. Lastly, critiques from scholars, such as the lack of diversity and commercialization of body positivity, are addressed to provide a critical perspective on the current body positivity movement. The chapter will conclude with a short summary.

2.1 Origin of the body positivity movement

The body positivity movement started as a feminist movement (Baer, 2016; Cohen et al., 2019a; Limatius, 2020). Feminists have been standing up for women's rights for decades and feminist voices have been very influential in criticizing media representations and rejecting the objectification of women's bodies, while also trying to dismantle the patriarchy, challenging structural oppression and body norms, and fighting for equality (Murphy & Jackson, 2011; Sastre, 2014; Sobande, 2020). Women's bodies are more objectified and sexualized than men's bodies, women suffer more from the fat stigma and diet culture and the thin ideal in western societies disproportionately affects women, which is why the body positivity movement is mainly focused towards women (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Baer, 2016; Cohen et al., 2019a; Limatius, 2020; Simic, 2015). Since the body positivity movement originated from (civil rights) movements, it is important to highlight the history of the movement, because many of the contemporary discussions about the movement and its (feminist) factions relate back to this history and it therefore serves as important background information.

The body positivity movement stems from the 1960s feminist-grounded Fat Acceptance (FA) movement which protested against the discrimination of fat people as a reaction to oppressive beauty standards, the rise of anti-fat discourses, and the medicalization of obesity in the United States (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Cohen et al., 2019b; Johansson, 2020). The FA movement advocated for equal rights for fat people to receive fair treatments in terms of medical care,

education and employment, challenging normative societal body norms, while creating awareness about the invisibility of large (female) bodies in the media and rejecting the cultural devaluation of fat people (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Dalessandro, 2016; Donaghue & Clemitshaw, 2012; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Limatius, 2020). Fat activism was political in nature and inspired by other political and social justice movements, such as the gay liberation and African-American civil rights movements (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Dalessandro, 2016; Donaghue & Clemitshaw, 2012; Limatius, 2020). Radical fat activists from the similar Fat Liberation movement linked fat acceptance to other struggles of oppression as well, such as racism and sexism, whereas the mainstream FA movement did not use the voices of other marginalized people (Osborn, n.d.; Simic, 2015). Moreover, the current FA movement remains predominantly white, middle class and highly educated, even though issues of intersectionality and privilege in fat activism are frequently raised (Donaghue & Clemitshaw, 2012).

While the FA movement gained popularity, the 'Black is Beautiful' movement was introduced in the 1970s, protesting for the liberation and acceptance of people of color (Camp, 2015; Darwin & Miller, 2020). Black people were stigmatized based on their skin color and bodily appearances and racism was oftentimes focused specifically on the black body, ridiculing and caricaturing physical attributes of black people (Craig, 2002). Black people faced some of the same injustices as fat people did, such as being excluded by the media and beauty brands, while being looked down upon as if their bodies were unacceptable (Camp, 2015; Craig, 2002; Donaghue & Clemitshaw, 2012). Therefore, the 'Black is Beautiful' movement challenged beauty ideals and black people showed more authentic styles of self-representation, by showing natural hair and skin, being proud of their black appearances and heritage (Camp, 2015; Craig, 2002).

According to Darwin and Miller (2020), the previously mentioned movements eventually coalesced decades later with the advent of the Internet and digital technologies to become the body positivity movement as we know it today. Digital media provide a lot of potential for the dissemination of feminist ideas, such as body positivity, allowing for creative ideas of protests, and digital media has thus altered, influenced and shaped feminism by making different modes of communication possible across the globe (Baer, 2016). Body positivity has nowadays become a buzzword that is mainly popular on feminist forums and social media, especially on Instagram (Johansson, 2020; Morris, 2019). Since the body positivity movement stems from other movements fighting for marginalized people, it is important to examine whether these marginalized groups get visibility and representation in magazine articles about body positivity. The concept of representation of bodies will be described further below.

2.2 Representation and diversity of bodies

We currently live in a society where beauty ideals are linked to inequalities based on ethnicity, body size, sex and class and many kinds of bodies are therefore underrepresented in the media as well as in society (Johnston & Taylor, 2008). Social media and popular culture have increasingly become dominant sources of information when it comes to beauty ideals and body norms, with an abundance of images of women aligning with the western beauty ideal, which is about thin, white, young and able-bodied women (Cohen et al., 2019b; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Limatius, 2020). Fat women and other marginalized women, are unfortunately largely underrepresented or otherwise highly stereotyped in the media, which contributes to the marginalization of those women (Dionne, 2017; Fikkan & Rothblum, 2012). Because of this, women with marginalized bodies barely see (positive) reflections of themselves in the media, since there are few role models they can relate to or identify with, even though such role models are crucial to help marginalized women to defy normative beauty standards (Fikkan & Rothblum, 2012; Limatius, 2020). The problems with exposure to such media content is that viewers start to accept media portrayals as representations of reality, which makes the thin ideal normative and central to attractiveness, whereas many body characteristics are seen as flaws, such as excessive fat, stretch marks, skin color or cellulite, which are labeled as less attractive and are thus stigmatized and marginalized (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Grabe et al., 2008).

Representation is an important matter in the process of meaning making in a culture and how the media construct and represent fat people and other marginalized groups is therefore of great relevance (Hall, 1997). In our mediated society, media play an important role in the formation of the people they represent, so when marginalized groups are absent in the media, this is a problematic reflection of reality, because what is perceived as important is based on what narratives and people are visible in the media (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Fürsich, 2010; Gopaldas & deRoy, 2015; Hall, 1997; Molina-Guzmán, 2016). The media operate as a place for social construction of reality and normalizes what is shown and given importance, so what is invisible, like ethnic minorities or fat people, seems to be of lesser importance (Fürsich, 2010; Molina-Guzmán, 2016).

It is additionally crucial to look at the intersection aspect of representation, an intersection being a position marked by two or more identity categories, such as sex, physical ability, body type, age, sexuality and ethnicity, with intersections having social, economic and political advantages and disadvantages (Gopaldas & deRoy, 2015). Intersectional diversity of bodies needs to be represented, since intersections of multiple oppressed identities are oftentimes neglected and underrepresented (Gopaldas & deRoy, 2015; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). The media have an influential role and are responsible for reflecting the world out there, which is constituted by how it is represented, and it is therefore of great importance to represent marginalized and stigmatized groups, which are

different from white, straight, skinny, able-bodied, cisgender men and women (Fürsich, 2010; Hall, 1997; Lennon, 2019; Molina-Guzmán, 2016; Sobande, 2020). Representation is thus an important goal of the body positivity movement to make sure that more diverse bodies are represented in the media as well as in society as a counter reaction to the overrepresentation of white, skinny women. Whether there is representation of marginalized bodies within the body positivity articles will therefore be examined in this research.

2.3 Body positivity aspects and factions

But what does body positivity stand for nowadays? This appeared to be a rather difficult question as the literature shows that there are ambiguous definitions and disagreements among scholars. Despite disagreements and the lack of consensus about the values and goals body positivity which will be talked about later, scholars identify some popular aspects of the current body positivity movement, which will be elaborated on below.

Most of the current body positivity discourses are part of a transnational postfeminist culture, where the focus lies on individualism, empowerment and choice, promoting self-love and body acceptance (Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Sastre, 2016; Streeter, 2019). The focus is often on transforming the relation to and perception of your body, as body positivity promotes self-acceptance, self-love and celebrating your body regardless of its shape, gender, size, skin tone, physical abilities and imperfections such as cellulite, stretch marks, and fat which are oftentimes seen as flaws compared to the perfect beauty ideal in the media (Cohen et al., 2019b; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Sastre, 2016; Streeter, 2019). A positive body image is multifaceted and consisting of multiple components, such as body appreciation, body acceptance, adaptive investment in body care, inner positivity and body-protective filtering of information. Body appreciation is about gratitude for the health and functioning of your body and its unique features, whereas body acceptance is about accepting your body even though it is different from beauty ideals (Cohen et al., 2019b; Lazuka et al., 2020; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Adaptive investment in body care is about caring for your body with for example healthy foods, inner positivity is about feeling beautiful on the inside, being optimistic and confident about your body, whereas body-protective filtering of information relates to accepting positive body comments, while rejecting negative comments to keep a positive body image (Cohen et al., 2019b; Lazuka et al., 2020; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

The other large part of the movement, which has been previously mentioned, is about rejecting narrowly-defined unrealistic western beauty ideals of the white, young, hetero, thin, able-bodied woman, calling for a more inclusive and diverse conceptualization and representation of

bodies in mainstream media as well as in society (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Leboeuf, 2019; Limatius, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). The body positivity movement therefore fights for more visibility and acceptance of especially marginalized and stigmatized bodies, such as older bodies, fat bodies, disabled bodies, LGBTQ+ bodies as well as bodies of color (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Limatius, 2020; Streeter, 2019). Which aspects and values of the movement listed above are portrayed in the magazine articles will be thoroughly analyzed in this research. Next, the discussions and criticism by scholars and body positivity advocates about the goals and values of the movement will be further explained.

The aforementioned aspects of body positivity are frequently mentioned by scholars, but there are many disagreements among them about what the specific values, objectives and goals of the body positivity movement are or should be (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). According to Sastre (2014), it is even the question whether the movement is a movement in the classical sense, because it looks more like a loose set of philosophies, than a political movement. These ambiguous definition and goals of body positivity are mainly due to the lack of a leader or a collectively organized body, different groups making claims to body positivity, the lack of a collective identity and solidarity around a specific cause, and the commercialization of body positivity which dilutes the message of the movement (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). There is hitherto a discrepancy in the movement's objectives and values and no consensus about the purpose of the movement, whether it tackles individual problems (i.e., psychological issues) or political problems for systemic change (i.e., racism and size discrimination), nor is there agreement about the criteria for in- and exclusion of people (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). The lack of clear goals and strategies is therefore problematic for the success and progress of the body positivity movement (Darwin & Miler, 2020).

The most compelling take on body positivity is the one by Darwin and Miller (2020), who identified four different factions within the body positivity movement, each with its own goals and values, namely *mainstream body positivity*, *fat positivity is body positivity*, *body neutrality*, and *radical body positivity*. Differences between these factions arise mainly because of intersecting experiences of privilege and oppression within the movement and differences in the inclusion and exclusion of people (Darwin & Miller, 2020). These factions all look differently at body positivity, its objectives and strategies, and there is a lot of disagreement between scholars and body positivity advocates about which faction is the best to tackle the problems that marginalized and stigmatized women face. It is interesting to elaborate on these factions, as they are based on feminist waves and relate to the history of the movement, besides indicating a quite well-defined divide within the movement, as body positivity is a rather ambiguous movement and concept (Darwin & Miller, 2020). Darwin and Miller's theory will therefore be of great importance for this research, which assesses

how body positivity are portrayed and how women's magazines talk about the movement, its aspects and objectives.

The first faction, *mainstream body positivity*, is the most popular and frequent faction which focuses on the inclusion of everybody, encouraging self-love and self-empowerment, which is oftentimes done by posting selfies online with hashtags like #bodypositivity and #loveyourbody, to increase the visibility and normalization of all bodies (Cohen et al., 2019b; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020). Everybody is included in this faction, with slogans such as 'all bodies are beautiful'. Mainstream body positivity is characterized by postfeminism and neoliberalism, constructing individual choice as the primary means of personal empowerment, and embracing imperfections, beauty and sexiness as key elements of a positive body image (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Gill, 2007). Self-optimization, individualism, makeover culture, consumerism and commoditization are also emphasized in this faction in which the body functions as the site of control, identity and empowerment (Baer, 2016; Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Gill, 2007; Johansson, 2020). This faction is most prevalent on Instagram, which can be seen as problematic since this platform also contributes to the creation and reproduction of dominant beauty ideals (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017). Also, as the body positivity movement becomes more mainstream and incorporated in popular culture, it focuses more on the body and the pursuit of beauty, while it loses its political edge (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017).

The second faction, *fat positivity is body positivity*, centers more around the systemic discrimination of fat women, believing the body positivity movement to be for fat women only. The focus is on battling the fat stigma, the idea of fat as unhealthy, the exclusion of fat women in the media, and fatphobia, which fat women experience daily because of the thin ideal and diet culture (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Morris, 2019; Simic, 2015). Some scholars and advocates see the mainstream body positivity as a watered-down version of fat activism, with their 'love your body' discourses, which ignore cultural and social problems that fat women face, leaving many fat people and plus-size body positivity advocates out of the conversation (Dalessandro, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Limatius, 2020; Morris, 2019). An important criticism against this faction is that it oftentimes amplifies the concerns of relatively privileged women i.e., fat middle-class white women, while not including other marginalized groups, which was also a critique of second wave feminism (Darwin & Miller, 2020).

The third faction, *body neutrality*, concentrates mainly on body-acceptance and individual psychological well-being without the focus on physical appearances and beauty (Darwin & Miller, 2020). It is not necessarily about feeling empowered by looking and feeling sexy, but about the struggles with body image, regardless of social privilege, which is in alignment with third wave feminism (Darwin & Miller, 2020). The faction holds the belief that people would be less marginalized

within society if their bodies were not so pathologized by society and themselves, because it is difficult to love a body that is hated by society (Darwin & Miller, 2020). Proponents focus mainly on neoliberal notions of choice, agency and freedom in regards to the relationship someone has with one's body, while also encouraging being emotionally neutral towards the body (Darwin & Miller, 2020). Scholars and body positivity advocates worry that the focus of mainstream body positivity is oftentimes too much on self-love, bodily beauty and the emphasis on feeling beautiful, and therefore body neutrality advocates argue that we should not value our body for its appearance, but be neutral about it, focusing on what the body can do, acknowledging its abilities instead of its looks (Leboeuf, 2019).

The fourth and least prevalent faction, *radical body positivity*, focuses more on intersectionality, combating systemic oppressions, such as racism and ableism (Darwin & Miller, 2020). Since it is an intersectional faction, the focus is on different axes of oppression, shifting the focus away from the individual towards systemic problems by focusing on voices of multiple marginalized groups (Darwin & Miller, 2020). The faction has many aspects of third wave feminism, critiquing the racial exclusion of people of color as well as other marginalized groups within the other aforementioned factions which are too white and not inclusive, while also criticizing the predominantly white media, beauty and fashion industries (Camp, 2015; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020). Proponents of this faction argue that focusing on intersectionally marginalized groups can show the systemic forces that privilege a select few, and thus address the causes of oppression and as an ultimate goal liberate all bodies (Darwin & Miller, 2020). The focus is not on beauty, but on the oppression of bodies, keeping in mind that not all oppressions are equal and some people with intersectional characteristics are even more oppressed than others (Dalessandro, 2016).

Darwin and Miller (2020) emphasize that the body positivity movement is deeply divided and multifaceted and activists as well as scholars are not in agreement about what the purposes or criteria for inclusion and exclusion of people are. They conclude that body positivity advocates that are relatively privileged along ability, race, and size axes often see the movement as a means of promoting individual psychological empowerment, whereas people who battle structural inequalities feel like the causes of their oppression are underrepresented and trivialized within dominant movement factions (Darwin & Miller, 2020). Whether personal and individual problems (i.e., psychological liberation) or political problems (i.e., systemic change) are the main focus of the body positivity articles is therefore very interesting to analyze for this research, besides examining which aspects of the movement are highlighted and which (marginalized) bodies are represented in the articles, to examine what the women's magazines find important when it comes to body positivity.

2.4 Criticism and the commercialization of body positivity

While the body positivity movement is praised by some people for several achievements, such as the inclusion of more plus-size women in fashion, the movement is also criticized by body positivity advocates and scholars. These criticisms are important to mention as they provide important insights about the current body positivity movement, what it is lacking in terms of representation, inclusion and diversity and how commercialism deteriorates the original goals and values of the movement. These critiques are essential to keep in mind when analyzing the magazine articles for this research.

Some scholars believe that the current body positivity movement is not truly radical, nor being inclusive, as the movement lacks in intersectionality (Limatius, 2020; Sastre, 2014). The movement was originally critical and feminist in nature fighting for equality in society, while rejecting oppressive and harmful beauty ideals, yet is nowadays embedded in mainstream neoliberal culture, with less focus on power issues, social differences and problems, focusing more on the individual (Johansson, 2020; Morris, 2019; Sastre, 2014). Many (popular) body positivity advocates are white, young, able-bodied, not really fat but curvy and conventionally attractive, and therefore scholars state that the movement now encompasses only a slightly wider spectrum of women who only look 'imperfect' when they are naked showing their imperfections (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Johansson, 2020; Murphy & Jackson, 2011; Osborn, n.d.; Sastre, 2014). Some scholars argue that the body positivity movement is therefore only being helpful and empowering for some, but still dominated by white women who love their bodies and are body confident, while marginalized and stigmatized bodies with diverse ethnicities, bigger body sizes, older ages, and physical disabilities are still not represented enough within the current body positivity movement (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Dalessandro, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020). Instead of actually preventing or fighting societal marginalization and discrimination based on bodily appearance, the (online) space has been taken away from the marginalized people that need the movement the most, state scholars (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Dionne, 2017; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Limatius, 2020; Sastre, 2014).

Additionally, popular slogans of the movement such as 'all bodies are beautiful' and 'all bodies are good bodies' are problematic, because not all bodies are accepted equally, and some bodies (i.e., fat, ethnic, disabled) are still not seen as 'good' as white, thin, able-bodied bodies (Dalessandro, 2016; Dionne, 2017; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020). 'All bodies are good bodies' erases and ignores the systems of injustice, social differences and the economic, political and cultural conditions that shape marginalized bodies, and neglect the fact that marginalized bodies having to fight harder to exist, due to racism, fatphobia, sexism and other discriminations (Johansson, 2020; Dalessandro, 2016; Dionne, 2017; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020). Emphasizing that all bodies should be included and equalizing all bodies means that the way that

those marginalized bodies are disproportionately affected by stigma is completely erased from the conversation, even though those bodies need the representation and visibility the most (Dalessandro, 2016; Johansson, 2020; Osborn, n.d.; Streeter, 2019). The current movement therefore undermines many objectives and values of the original movement. Since there are arguments for the inclusion of everybody as well as arguments against including all bodies, it is difficult to decide which standpoint to choose. It is therefore very relevant to examine the way women's magazines portray the movement, and which objectives, goals and problems are important to fight for according to those magazines.

Another criticism is that body positivity has moved from an activism-driven movement to a marketing concept, which is commoditized and commercialized, by brands and contemporary media (Cohen et al., 2019b; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020; Limatius, 2020). The positive side to this is that many brands want to be a part of the movement, by including more diverse bodies in their beauty and fashion campaigns (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). However, body positivity is now intertwined with capitalism as brands and media platforms are exploiting the economic value of body positivity, instead of being a valuable part of the movement (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Sobande, 2020). According to Sastre (2014), oftentimes brands do very little more than aligning a postfeminist discourse with their corporate imperative. Scholars say that naming a capitalistic venture body positive does not make it body positive if it is not actually about protecting marginalized and stigmatized bodies (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Dionne, 2017; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020; Limatius, 2020). And as fashion, beauty and lifestyle brands are commercial in nature, they oftentimes profit from conventional beauty culture by promoting idealized beauty norms, dieting, and body optimization products, which is contradictory to the (original) values of the body positivity movement, so brands that use body positivity seem to be profiting off of the popularity of the movement, more than actually changing the status quo (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020; Morris, 2019; Murphy & Jackson, 2011; Sastre, 2014).

Brands have a huge power and influence on defining societal beauty ideals and by incorporating body positivity in their practices and using diverse bodies in campaigns, ideals of beauty have been broadened (Craddock et al., 2019; Johnston & Taylor, 2008). But while body positivity advocates oftentimes promote the acceptance of bodily flaws and reject beauty ideals, they still rely on use of photo editing, trying to adhere to the Instagram aesthetic, which shows a more perfect, filtered, sharpened, brightened version of bodies (Cwynar-Horta. 2016). Moreover, the importance of beauty is still reproduced and legitimized by brands and body positivity advocates as well as women's magazines (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Limatius, 2020). Because women's magazines often focus on beauty and fashion, they focus on appearance-based content and advertising, while reinforcing the normative societal expectations for women to engage in

beautification processes as magazines are essentially linked to the beauty ideals of capitalist societies (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Johnston & Taylor, 2008). Focusing on beauty and aesthetics undermine the original focus of the body positivity movement and many brands and magazines that supposedly promote body positivity and diversity still exclude (marginalized) bodies and only show women of a certain size or women who are partially aligning with beauty ideals, while larger fat women and other marginalized bodies are left out as their appearance is deemed unacceptable, unhealthy or not beautiful enough to promote (Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Limatius, 2020; Morris, 2019). Besides that, since magazines are commercially reliant on self-improvement products, beauty and fashion advertisements, body positivity magazine articles are still embedded in old problematic discourses in which body positivity messages conflict with the commercial beauty focused content (Murphy & Jackson, 2011). The content of women's magazines is therefore often contradictory, with articles about self-love as well as articles about feeling better after losing weight or selling beauty products suggesting that beauty can be bought (Byerly and Ross, 2006; Johnston & Taylor, 2008).

Murphy and Jackson (2011) are less pessimistic about the current body positivity movement, saying that at least the media and brands are promoting more positive messages about bodies and they show relatively more diversity of bodies. Murphy and Jackson (2011) emphasize that feminism has a role to play to tackle previously mentioned challenges creatively to see how body positivity in media and commercial settings can be done the right way. However, it is questionable if beauty ideals can be fought against with individually focused strategies or whether body positivity advocates should target the companies that support these beauty standards, since many brands and magazines are key actors in the production and reproduction of beauty ideals by continuously emphasizing the appearance of women and unattainable beauty aesthetics. It is a difficult paradox, but Murphy and Jackson (2011) make a fair point arguing that at least brands and magazines are focusing on body positivity.

As the women's magazines which will be analyzed are commercial in nature, it will be interesting to see if they just use body positivity as a marketing strategy to generate views, or if they really want to educate their audiences about body positivity and what it stands for, besides examining which aspects of body positivity are highlighted by these magazines and with which factions these magazines align themselves. Additionally, as many of the magazines to be analyzed are fashion and beauty magazines, focusing mainly on appearances and aesthetic, the question is if they show larger women and women with imperfections as well as other marginalized bodies that deviate from the beauty ideals or if they show mainly conventionally pretty white women. Whether the magazine articles also include commercial aspects such as beauty modification practices, promotion of weight loss products or diets or if they show perfect pictures with the Instagram aesthetic will be analyzed as well.

2.5 Summary

In summary, this chapter showed the history and multi-faceted aspects and objectives of the body positivity movement. It furthermore showed that because of the different (feminist) factions of the movement, there is a lot of disagreement about which structural or individual problems should be tackled with the movement and which people should be in- and excluded as part of the movement. The faction *mainstream body positivity* focuses on including everybody, self-love and beauty, while *fat positivity* focuses exclusively on fat women, fat phobia and the fat stigma. *Body neutrality* focuses on the individual as well, but focuses on self-acceptance and bodily abilities instead of appearances, whereas *radical positivity* focuses on the intersection of multiple oppressed identities, with the focus on fat bodies, bodies of color and disabled bodies who are underrepresented. The chapter outlined critiques about the movement as well, since the body positivity movement became less political as it moved into popular culture, which also led to the commercialization of body positivity as a marketing strategy. The commercialization of body positivity in turn eradicates and contradicts many values and objectives of the original movement, while expanding the ideals of beauty.

The way body positivity is portrayed in online Dutch women's magazine articles is the focus of this research. The aforementioned four factions play an important role, as they show four distinct ways of looking at body positivity with different goals and values, giving importance to specific (marginalized) bodies. The question is how (marginalized) people are represented and what body positivity aspects are highlighted and thus given importance in those magazine articles, because by analyzing this, it can be identified how these magazines see and portray body positivity, what they find important and how they want to educate their audience about body positivity. Since previous academic research has focused mainly on the portrayal of body positivity in blogs, print magazines and Instagram, this research will fill a gap in this field as it focuses on online magazine articles and their portrayal of the movement. With this framework in mind, the following chapter will show how these online magazine articles, by using a thematic analysis, will be analyzed and how the research question will be answered.

3. Method

3.1 Methodology

In order to answer the research question and sub-questions, a qualitative analysis was conducted. Qualitative methods are used regularly for interpreting both written text as well as visual texts in-depth to look for themes, patterns, and meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2013). Qualitative research is subjective; however, it is also grounded in data and it takes contexts of the analyzed texts into account, which means that qualitative methods are more suitable than quantitative methods to understand meanings as it allows for multi-faceted understandings of phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This is why a qualitative analysis was conducted for this research.

Specifically, a thematic analysis was executed, since this is a flexible and useful method for analyzing, identifying and reporting themes within a dataset to interpret aspects of a topic, in this case body positivity (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Walters, 2016). Thematic analysis is a valuable method for analyzing rich, descriptive media texts, such as social media content and magazine articles that combine written and visual texts (Walters, 2016). Since the selected online magazine articles feature text as well as images and embedded Instagram posts, thematic analysis is the best method to examine how women's magazines portray body positivity. The six-phase thematic coding process by Braun and Clarke (2006) was utilized, since their method has been used successfully in previous body positivity research and other academic research using thematic analyses. Walters' (2016) coding process for visual features of magazine articles has also been utilized, since Braun and Clarke (2006) focus on written texts only. Intertextuality between written and visual features of the articles has additionally been taken into account to facilitate a good interpretation of meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Walters, 2016). A detailed explanation of the sampling process, sensitizing concepts and coding process is described in detail below.

3.2 Sampling process

A few decisions were made to find a suitable sample of online magazine articles from Dutch women's magazines. For this research non-random purposive sampling was applied to find interesting articles for the dataset. First, it was decided which websites of the largest Dutch women's magazines were to be selected, based on overall popularity and number of monthly website visitors. Secondly, with the use of the search button, available articles about body positivity were looked for, by using keywords such as "body positivity", "body positive" and the Dutch equivalent to see whether these websites

contained body positivity articles. While searching for these articles, five criteria were used to decide which online magazine articles were suitable for the research sample.

The first criterion was that the articles should be recent and therefore had to be written from 2018 till 2021. The second criterion was that the articles should at least contain the word "body positivity" once, and additionally body positivity and related aspects should be an important facet of the articles. Some articles only used body positivity once, but did not further talk about body positivity, the movement or other aspects, so these were not selected for the sample. The third criterion was that the articles should contain at least 300 words or 200 words with the inclusion of embedded Instagram posts with captions within the articles to make up for the word count minimum of 300. The fourth criterion was that each magazine should have published at least six articles about body positivity that met the three previous criteria on their website to make up for a good sample size. This meant that some magazines, such as *Vogue* and *Women's Health*, were not included in the sample, because they had no or few available online body positivity articles. The fifth criterion was that if a magazine had written more than six articles about body positivity, the most relevant articles were selected on the basis of the topics or persons of interest to make sure that the sample was as diverse as possible. Eventually six Dutch women's magazines were selected: Cosmopolitan, Flair, Glamour, Happinez, LINDA and VIVA. The final sample included 36 online body positivity articles (see Appendix B), ranging from 200 words up to 2200 words, with a total of 138 images and Instagram posts. The sample is varied, with articles from magazines which target different groups of women focusing on different topics. Below you will find a short description of each of the selected magazines.

Cosmopolitan is a magazine specifically targeting millennials and gen-Z women and they sell themselves as your guide to beauty, love and life. They inspire millions of people and motivate them to get the most out of life in a fun and approachable way. Their pillars are beauty, love, friendship, personal development, sustainability, career, astrology and inclusivity. The age of their readers ranges from 16 till circa 35 years old (Hearst, n.d.[a]).

Flair magazine inspires its readers in the field of fashion, finance, living, kids and human interest. The Flair woman is between 25 and 45 years old and knows the latest fashion and beauty trends. She likes to be inspired by the magazine with lifestyle, spirituality and food tips and trends (DPG Media, n.d.[a]).

Glamour inspires and entertains women with the latest fashion and beauty trends, while additionally informing the readers about money, career, empowerment, body positivity and feminism. The Glamour reader loves topics such as body, mind, going out, festivals, sex, shopping, travelling and celebrities. The largest reader group is between 20 and 30 years old, with a mix of millennials and Gen-Z (Hearst, n.d.[b]).

Happinez is a magazine for people who look for inspiration and insights in life with topics such as psychology, mental health, wisdom and spirituality. The magazine inspires readers to live a more meaningful life by providing interviews, background articles, photography and design. The Happinez reader is mostly female, working, highly educated, and interested in topics such as travelling, art, self-development, and psychology (Value Zipper, n.d.).

LINDA is the biggest Dutch women's magazine and is known for being controversial and innovative, providing impressive interviews, interesting stories, recognizable columns, fashion and beauty. LINDA has a strong and recognizable DNA, an optimistic tone of voice and is known for being courageous, humorous and without any taboos. The LINDA reader is between 20 and 45 years old, highly educated, curious, and is busy with love, work and friends (LINDA, n.d.).

VIVA is a magazine for young women and is always looking for a challenge, inspiring and motivating its readers. VIVA offers personal stories, interesting interviews, delicious recipes, and tips in the field of beauty, love, sports, sex, work, travel and money. The VIVA woman is between 20 and 45 years old, is caring, funny, smart, fashion-conscious and dares to speak up (DPG media, n.d.[b]).

3.3 Sensitizing concepts

The thematic analysis was done in an inductive way, meaning that the identified themes were linked to the data, more so than to strict concepts and coding frames from the academic literature, meaning the analysis was data-driven in nature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, the literature was taken into account by using four sensitizing concepts, since data cannot be coded in an epistemological vacuum (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Walters, 2016). Sensitizing concepts are ideas that inform the overall research problem, based on the theoretical framework, providing guidance as a starting point for data analysis, while the researcher keeps an open mind for data-driven themes that do not fit these sensitizing concepts (Bowen, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Cohen et al. (2019), Darwin and Miller (2020), and Lazuka et al. (2020) have used interesting body positivity concepts for their quantitative and qualitative analyses and are frequently mentioned by other scholars, therefore the four sensitizing concepts for this research, which are described below, were inspired by their conceptualizations.

Mainstream body positivity: The idea of including everybody, encouraging self-love and self-empowerment, oftentimes on social media. Loving yourself by appreciating your imperfections such as stretch marks and cellulite, and loving other bodies that are not conform the beauty ideals. Themes and aspects such as individualism, beauty products, feeling sexy, commercialism, appearances, beauty modification, makeovers, and love your body mottos are also part of mainstream body positivity (Cohen et al., 2019; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Lazuka et al., 2020).

Fat positivity: Focusing on the systemic discrimination of fat women, battling the fat stigma and fatphobia. Not everybody should be included, as more attention should go to the negative experiences and social and economic problems that fat women face. The focus is fat people, the roots of the body positivity movement and the exclusion of bodies that are not experiencing similar stigmas and social problems (Cohen et al., 2019; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Lazuka et al., 2020).

Radical body positivity: The focus lies on intersectionality, meaning that diversity, inclusion and the representation of multiple intersectional axes, such as body size, age, skin color, disabilities, are important aspects. The focus is not on the individual, but on multiple marginalized and stigmatized groups, with activist goals aimed towards addressing causes of oppression and liberating all kinds of bodies (Cohen et al., 2019; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Lazuka et al., 2020).

Body neutrality: Focusing on psychological transformation, accepting your body as it is and to become emotionally neutral towards the body. Physical appearances and beauty are of lesser concern. Inner beauty and the abilities that the body has are important themes, with a focus on mental health and body care (Cohen et al., 2019; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Lazuka et al., 2020).

When coding the texts and visuals in the articles, attention was paid to the aspects of the sensitizing concepts as well as to inclusivity and the representation of a variety of people both mentioned as well as visually portrayed, focusing on skin colors, non-conforming body characteristics, such as cellulite, stretch marks and fat rolls, age, and disabilities of the people mentioned or portrayed in the articles. A detailed description of the coding phases is described below.

3.4 Thematic analysis and coding phases

During the analysis, four themes were identified by executing an extensive six-phase coding analysis to answer the sub-questions and the main research question about how magazines portray body positivity. These identified themes capture something meaningful about the data relating to the research question, and accurately reflect the data sample (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes were identified at an interpretative level, where the assumptions and underlying ideas of these body positivity themes were interpreted to look for meanings, while also connecting it to the theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

During *phase one*, I had familiarized myself with the data by repeatedly reading the online articles, while writing down notes about remarkable things and initial ideas, to become fully acquainted with the content and its depth. The content was actively read, while searching for meanings and patterns across the whole data set.

After repeatedly reading the data, *phase two* involved reading the entire sample and writing down open codes from the data that related to body positivity, the movement and its aspects. These open codes pointed out a feature of the data that was of interest to the research and were small elements of information. The coding was done with software program ATLAS.ti, with which as many codes as possible were written down. The whole data set of online articles has been given equal attention and was fully coded twice, with each data extract given at least one or more codes. By reading and re-reading the texts numerous times, new insights were established and this ensured that as many codes as possible were identified in the analysis, and a certain point saturation was reached, with approximately 1200 initial open codes.

After the initial coding, *phase three* was about sorting and merging the 1200 initial open codes into overarching codes that were used to form potential themes and sub-themes. Relationships between codes were identified and codes were combined to form approximately 700 codes. The way these codes were used in the data and how many times they were identified was taken into consideration as well to then form over-arching themes and sub-themes. These potential themes, sub-themes and corresponding codes were visualized by making a mind map to structure the themes, sub-themes and codes.

During *phase four* the set of potential themes was further established, by reviewing and refining the themes, making sure that the themes were clear and had identifiable distinctions between them. Additionally, during this phase attention was paid to similarities, differences, contradictions and discrepancies between the online articles and images as well. Some themes were taken together to form one main theme, whereas others were separated to make other distinct themes, taking internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity into account. Attention was also paid to whether the themes accurately reflected the full data set and its meanings, by reading the data set again and looking for good examples to support the identified themes.

During *phase five*, themes were renamed and redefined to capture the essence of every theme and its distinct aspects, in combination with the academic literature from the theoretical framework. Main themes were fully established with corresponding sub-themes and examples from the data to illustrate and to create a well-rounded story around those themes. For each theme a detailed analysis was written in order to answer the research question.

Phase six was the final phase in which the results and discussion chapter were written to explain and exemplify the identified themes with links to the body positivity theories by comparing and contrasting with previous academic literature. Four themes were eventually established, namely 'focusing on yourself', 'body positivity is for everybody', 'showing a diversity of bodies' and 'body positivity is the act of self-love and body acceptance'. A coding tree with the four themes and sub-themes, and some exemplary open codes was created to illustrate the results of the coding process

(see Appendix A). Attention was paid to not only summarizing the themes, but also embed them in a narrative that illustrates the story about the data, going beyond just a description, but making an actual argument in relation to the research question. The results provide an interesting account of the data within and across themes with enough data extracts that demonstrate the prevalence of each theme. Striking examples from the magazines, quotes and images were added to exemplify the themes, with references to the authors of the magazine articles, which can be found in the reference list. Since the magazine articles were written in Dutch, the quotes used in the results chapter were freely translated to English.

3.5 Credibility and ethical considerations

For this research, reflexivity has to be taken into consideration to create transparency. It is therefore important that my active role as the researcher is taken into account during the analysis while also reflecting on my positionality in relation to the body positivity articles (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Morris, 2019; Tracy, 2010). Since I am a white woman with a slim body size, I am rather privileged among different axes, which means I cannot relate to the oppressions and discriminations have been written about, whilst my positionality also affects my understanding of the world as well as of the articles that were analyzed in this research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Morris, 2019). The results of this research will therefore be affected and biased by my positionality and subjectivity.

To ensure validity and reliability, the sampling process and six-phased coding process of this research are extensively described in the previous paragraphs. By explaining the sampling process and analysis process thoroughly step-by-step and in a detailed manner, I have tried to make the data analysis as transparent, comprehensive and reliable as possible, so that the research process can be replicated through these six phases to gain similar results (Silverman, 2011; Tracy, 2010). My positionality could have affected the analysis; however, the data has been analyzed repeatedly with the use of sensitizing concepts and by comparing the results with the academic literature comprehensively to establish that the results are valid and reliable (Silverman, 2011; Tracy, 2010).

4. Results and discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the results of the thematic analysis, which resulted in four identified themes that answer the sub-questions about how people are represented and what body positivity aspects are highlighted in the online articles in order to answer the main research question how body positivity is portrayed in online articles of Dutch women's magazines. The first theme 'focusing on yourself' is a theme about the focus being on individual bodies and individuals having control and choice over their bodies. The second theme that was identified is 'body positivity is for everybody', which elaborates on the inclusion of everyone within the movement regardless of their appearance. The third theme is 'showing a diversity of bodies', which addresses the representation of diverse bodies with imperfections who differ from the skinny and flawless beauty ideal. The fourth and last theme is 'the act of self-love and body acceptance', relating to loving your body and changing your mindset to become more body positive and happy. The table below illustrates the themes and sub-themes that will be further elaborated on in this chapter.

| Themes	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3	Sub-theme 4
Theme 1. Body positivity is about focusing on yourself	Individualism	Focus on you	Do not listen to others	-
Theme 2. Body positivity is for everybody	Everybody should be included in the movement	Everybody deserves respect and acceptance	Everybody is beautiful	-
Theme 3. Body positivity is showing a diversity of bodies	Representing real bodies with imperfections	Different body types and skin colors	Posing in skin-revealing clothing	-
Theme 4. Body positivity is the act of self-love and body acceptance	Loving your body	Improve mental health	Acceptance of body	Tips to become body positive

4.1 Theme 1: Body positivity is about focusing on yourself

The first theme relates to body positivity being about focusing on yourself as an individual, with the focus on individual choices and having agency over your own body. This theme resonates with neoliberalist and postfeminist notions of individualism, empowerment and choice that are characteristic for both mainstream body positivity and body neutrality (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Sastre, 2014).

In the majority of the magazine articles the focus is placed on the individual instead of a collective or group of people. Many articles emphasize that the focus should be on you and the relationship with your body and that you should aim your attention at embracing your body, instead of comparing it to bodies you think are prettier or more beautiful. This means that you should not compare your body to other people's bodies you see in the media, because it will only make you feel bad about your body, state many articles. Cosmopolitan and Flair for example state that everybody is unique and beautiful in their own way and that we should therefore stop looking at our differences and imperfections as flaws and stop comparing with others so we can fully embrace our own bodies (Groen, 2019; Harvey-Jenner, 2020; van der Klift, 2020). Plus-size model and body positivity advocate Joann van den Herik is oftentimes used as an example by magazines when it comes to embracing your body (see Figure 4.1) and in a Cosmopolitan article she emphasizes that "comparing yourself and being negative only has a bad influence on yourself" (van den Herik, as cited in Groen, 2019, para. 13).

Figure 4.1

Example of focusing on yourself and embracing imperfections
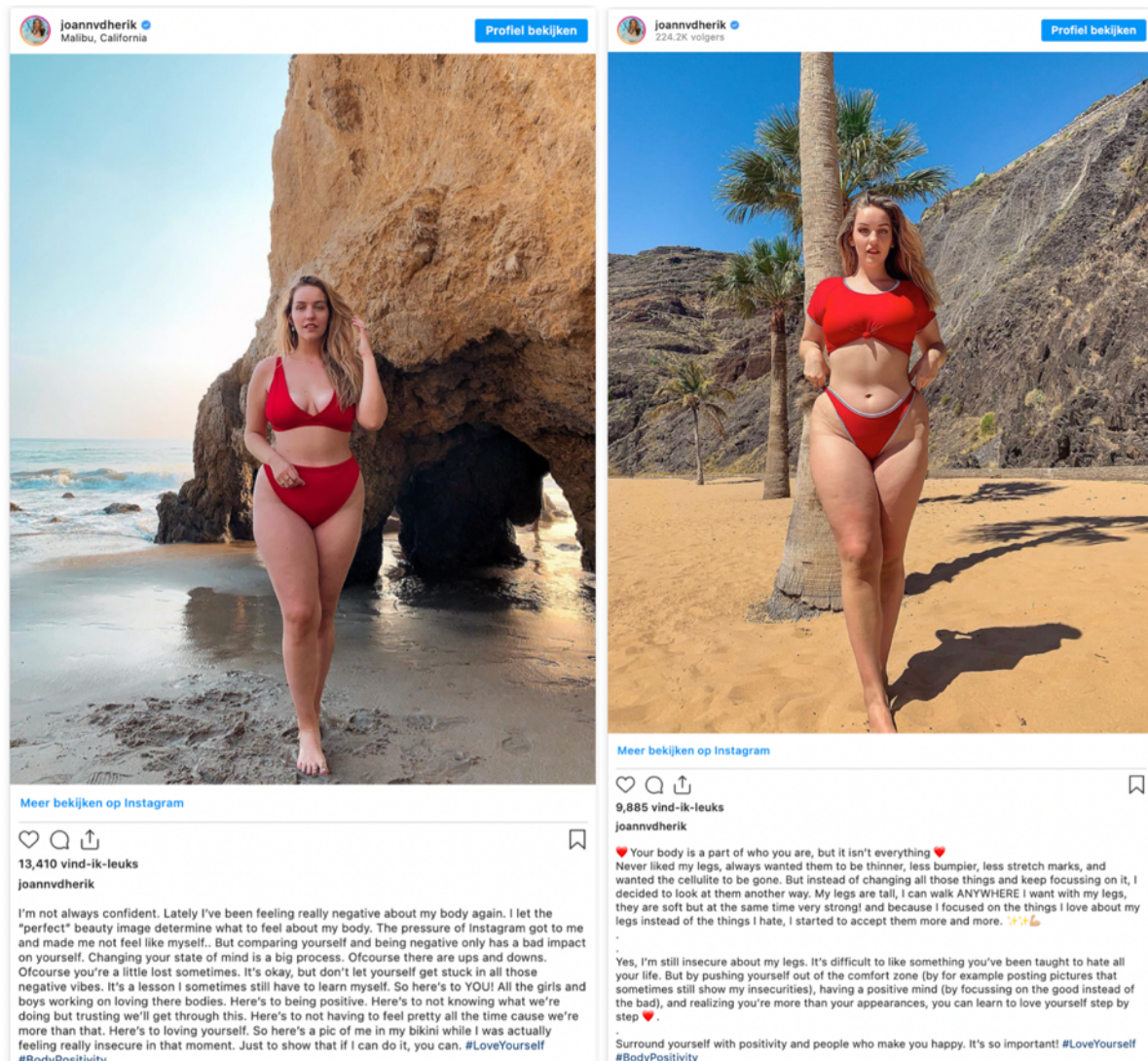
Note. Posts retrieved from Groen (2019).

Another part of focusing on yourself, as mentioned by the majority of the articles, is to not listen to other people's opinions or criticisms they have about your body, because those criticisms do not matter. Nobody should tell you what you should or should not do with your body, because your own opinion is what matters, and therefore many body positivity tips are given by all magazines about surrounding yourself with positive people and steering away from negativity. According to Cosmopolitan, it helps to get rid of negative people, because people's opinion can really influence your well-being negatively and will make you think more negative as well (Harvey-Jenner, 2020). In a VIVA article, body positivity advocate Saskia Olivieira states that "if you accept yourself and love yourself, the outside world cannot bother you" (Olivieira, as cited in Muller, 2020, para. 6), because if you love yourself, you can be comfortable with your imperfections which are a part of you. Social

media can also influence how you see yourself and the world, so follow people that positively influence your mind and body image and unfollow accounts that make you feel bad, state Flair, Glamour and LINDA (Lontanga, 2019; ten Hoor, 2020; van der Klift, 2020). Furthermore, people should stop criticizing other bodies negatively, says Flair, because "the more positive you look at yourself and others, the more positive your *overall* view will be" (van der Klift, 2020, para. 8).

Another aspect that was frequently mentioned in the articles was that everybody has the right to do anything they want to with their bodies, as people are perfectly capable of thinking for themselves and make decisions regarding their body. Since your body is yours, you are allowed to change or not change your body if you want to, but only change it because you yourself feel better by doing it, not because other people tell you to, states VIVA (Gerritsen, 2020). In a Glamour article, Nsimba Lontanga states "if you want to lose weight for health reasons, then you should really do that! And if you want to lose some to feel more comfortable in your skin, you should do that. The same goes for wanting to be curvier" (Lontanga, 2019, para. 6). Doing whatever you want with your body is also emphasized in Instagram posts from body positivity advocate Megan Crabbe and singer Lizzo in Cosmopolitan and Glamour articles (see Figure 4.2). However, states Cosmopolitan, people should not believe that they are less valuable or not good enough just because they do not measure up to society's limited beauty ideals and that they should therefore change their bodies, because everybody is good just the way they are (Harvey-Jenner, 2020).

Figure 4.2

Examples of doing what you want with your body
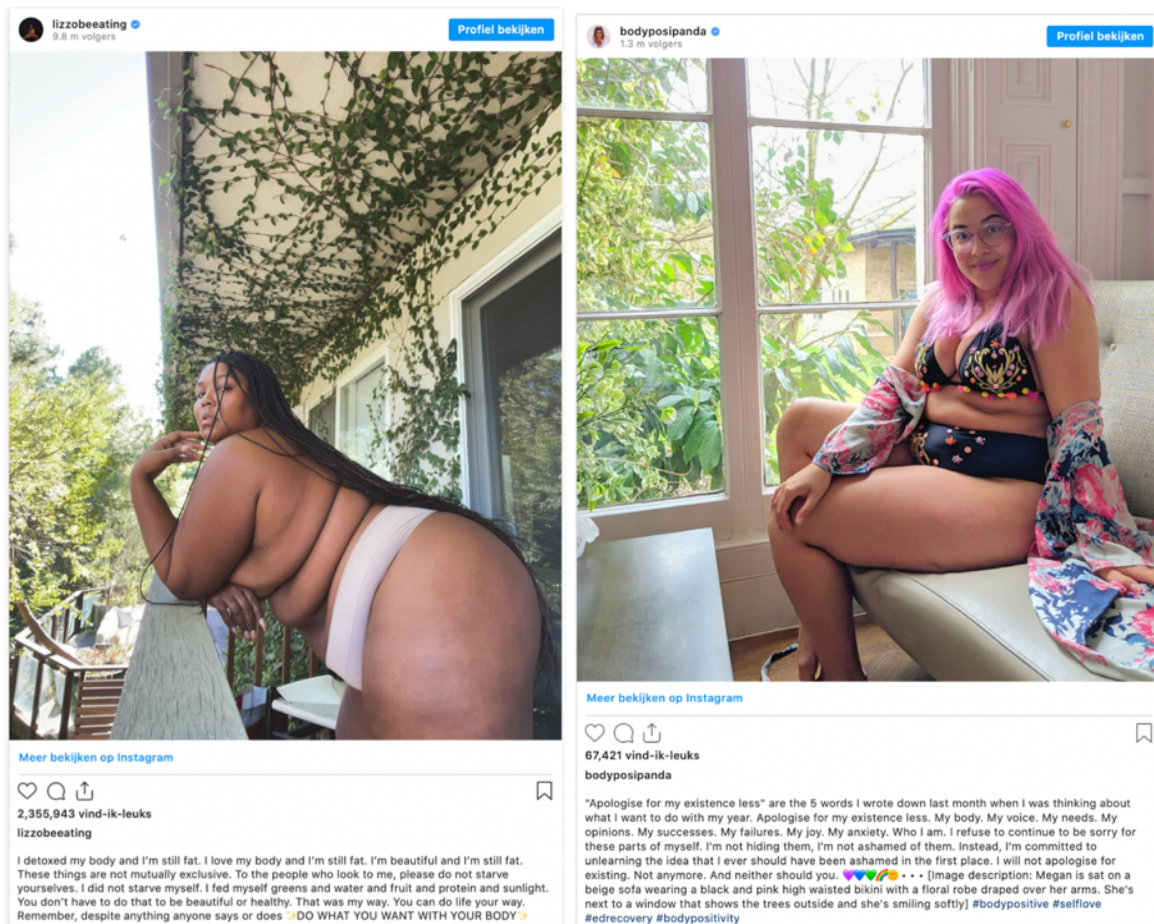
Note. Posts retrieved from respectively Leatemia and Gommans (2020) and Harvey-Jenner (2020).

Many articles talk about the neoliberal and postfeminist ideas of seeing the body as a way of empowerment and control, focusing on individual empowerment, agency, individual choices and taking control over your body (Baer, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Morris, 2019). The magazines state that people can decide for themselves what to do with their body, and view the individual choices that people make to lose (or not lose) weight as empowerment and taking charge over your own body. However, the magazines sometimes implicitly praise weight loss as body positivity, for example Flair talks about the success story of a celebrity who has lost over 30 kilos (Tsao, 2021), while VIVA applauds how another celebrity boasts about her skinny body which aligns with conventional beauty ideals and has no imperfections at all (Heinhuis, 2020). Additionally, a Cosmopolitan article talks about body imperfections, specifically hip dips, but then only shows skinny, fit bodies of people who spend hours in the gym every day (Savin, 2020). These articles are labeled as body positive, with diet culture and exercising as ways to self-improvement being (implicitly) seen as positive, showing bodies that align with beauty ideals. This can be problematic as women believe they have individual

choice and freedom to look and treat their bodies a certain way, which scholars contest, as women are still heavily influenced by society to align themselves with heteronormative beauty ideals and ideas of what the female body should look and act like (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Morris, 2019). So, when the magazines praise bodies that align with those ideals and praise weight loss implicitly, this is contradictory to the idea that body positivity is about denouncing diet culture society's influence on body ideals and challenging these dominant body ideals (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Sastre, 2014).

Additionally, with focusing only on the individual and individual problems, the focus is taken away from systemic and structural problems that groups of marginalized bodies face, such as racism, ableism and discrimination, which is also emphasized by scholars (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020). By framing body positivity as individual empowerment, the focus is on people who are relatively privileged based on their ethnicity, ability and size, and less focus is on the structural inequalities and problems that marginalized bodies have to deal with, hence with focusing on individuals and personal well-being, structural differences and inequalities are made invisible and do not seem important by those magazine articles (Baer, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Gill, 2007; Johansson, 2020). Scholars suggest that because of this, the once political stance of the body positivity movement fighting for equality in society has faded (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Johansson, 2020; Morris, 2019; Sastre, 2014). Marginalized bodies, structural and systemic problems, representation and the lack thereof in the magazine articles will be further elaborated on within the next two themes.

4.2 Theme 2: Body positivity is for everybody

The second theme, body positivity is for everybody, was one of the most frequently mentioned aspects of body positivity in the magazine articles. Most articles and body positivity advocates emphasize that everybody should be included in the movement and that everybody, no matter what they look like, deserves respect and acceptance. This theme aligns mainly with mainstream body positivity, but also includes some aspects of fat positivity (Darwin & Miller, 2020).
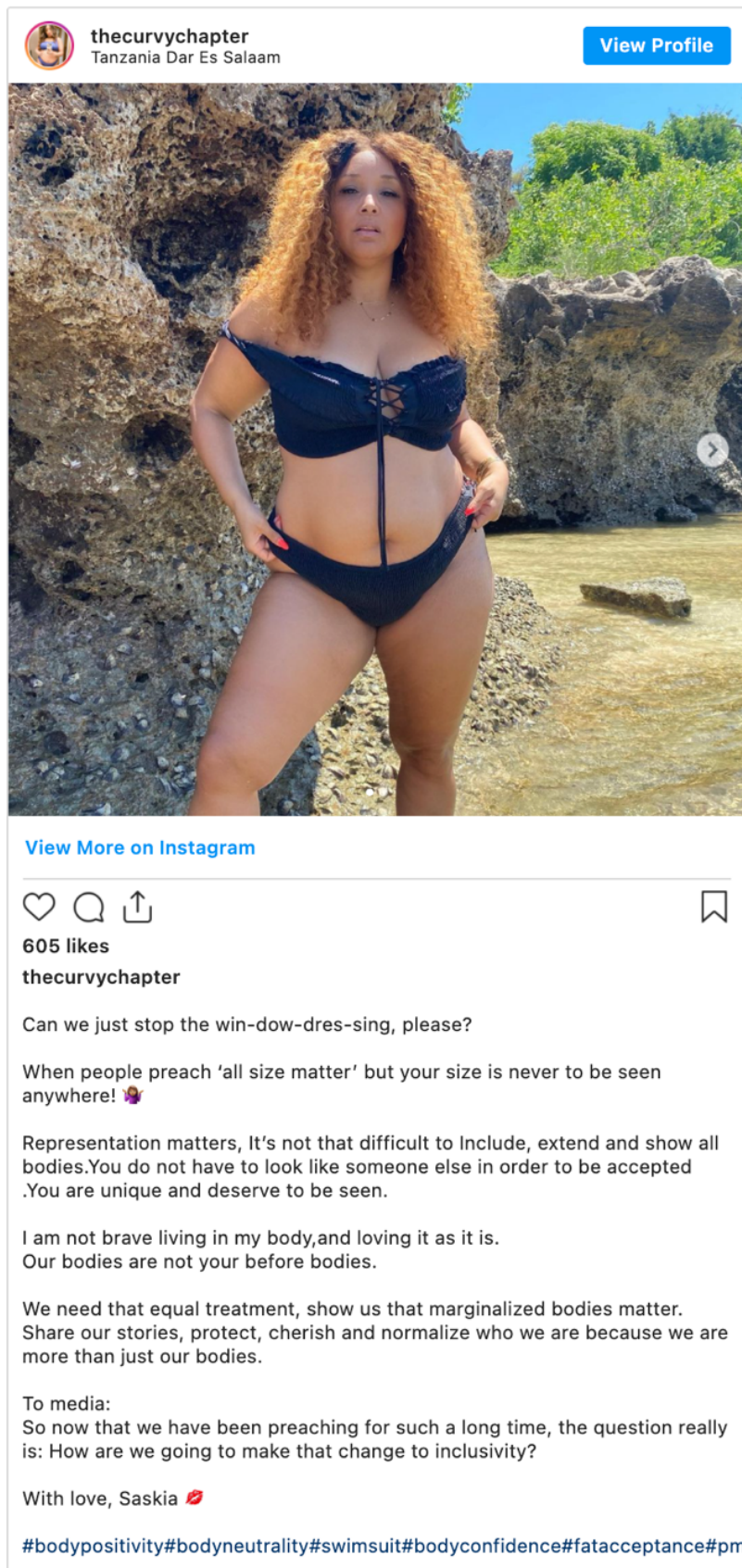
Society learns people to hate their bodies when they do not align with beauty ideals, because they are too fat or because they have imperfections, and because skinny people are overrepresented in the media, pictures are being photoshopped and weight loss advertisements are everywhere, which results in the idea that you are only worthy of respect when you have a slim body or when your body has no imperfections, state Cosmopolitan, Happinez and VIVA (Harvey-Jenner, 2020; Muller, 2020; Wienen, 2019). This is in line with body positivity research, which suggested that thin bodies in society are oftentimes seen as healthier, prettier and better and therefore get more

respect or better treatments than fat bodies or bodies with imperfections (Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Streeter, 2019). To challenge these beauty ideals, Cosmopolitan, LINDA, and VIVA preach for including everybody in the body positivity movement and demand respect and acceptance of all kinds of bodies, with all shapes and sizes, even though they look different from beauty ideals (de Vries, 2020a; Groen, 2019; Muller, 2020; ten Hoor, 2020).

As the focus should mainly be on yourself, the magazines state that you should therefore not criticize other bodies for their appearances, whether they deviate from the beauty ideals or not. Body shaming, body discrimination, the use of negative stereotypes and making fun of bodies should be put to an end and bodies that are different from beauty ideals should be normalized. "It is time to really accept all bodies, both skinny and fat people, and that they get the same chances" (Olivieira, as cited in Muller, 2020, para. 5), which is illustrated by VIVA with an Instagram post from body positivity advocate Saskia Olivieira (see Figure 4.3). Furthermore, it is emphasized by LINDA and Glamour that there is no shame in being fat, because it is completely normal, and that people should stop criticizing other bodies and just let them be (Hensbergen, 2020; Leatemia & Gommans, 2020). But, as was emphasized by Joann van den Herik, "many people do not know what it [body positivity] really entails and that it is mainly for curvy girls. But it is meant for everybody" (van den Herik, as cited in Groen, 2019, para. 17), which is exemplified by another Instagram post from her (see Figure 4.4). Another matter that was frequently mentioned is that people should not be judged and valued based on their size, weight or appearance. Due to the fat stigma, oftentimes fat bodies are judged for being unhealthy, but fat people can have healthy lifestyles, and skinny bodies can be unhealthy as well. Happinez, LINDA and VIVA emphasize that there is no way of knowing how healthy somebody is, based on their appearance, so do not criticize others because of their size (Muller, 2020; ten Hoor, 2020; Wienen, 2019).

Figure 4.3

Example of post about acceptance and respect

Note. Post retrieved from Muller (2020)

Figure 4.4

Another example of a post about acceptance and respect

❤️ALL BODIES DESERVE THE SAME RESPECT. ❤️You all know that I'm a body positivity advocate and that I love to spread the message that all bodies are beautiful, even if those bodies are not portrayed by the media. By doing this, I often get told "Your body is so much prettier than those anorexic models" "Curves are so much better than being flat". And I just want to make something clear: that's NOT a compliment. Lifting my body type up, by putting someone else's down, is just wrong. ❌❌❌❌❌Some people may not understand it, but body positivity is for all body types. Not only for fat people or people with curves. My messages, my love, is meant for all people, every age, all genders, all bodies, all shapes, all skincolors. Trying to put other people down to compliment me is something that hurts my feelings and will never ever be something I will thank you for. Yes, fat people aren't portrayed in the media as much. Yes, fat people get shamed a lot. Yes, fatshaming is a bigger problem. But to fight that, you shouldn't hurt people and spread negativity. You should support each other and spread positive vibes. ❤️🥰Positive is the way to go! I know skinny people who are told every day that they "should just gain weight", "just go to the mcdonalds and eat a hamburger",,"look anorexic". This is NOT okay. 😫 Same with people that are really FAT, and not just the "acceptable fat". They are told every day to just "lose weight", "go to the gym", "get off their lazy ass". LET PEOPLE LIVE. Every body deserves the same respect. Not only the ones you like. If you hear comments like this, I hope you know that you are beautiful, loved, and deserve respect. And that you can stand up for yourself, because comments like these aren't acceptable and we shouldn't make other people feel bad about their bodies.. I always say: Treat people like you want to be treated ❤️ #AllBodiesAreBeautiful

Note. Post retrieved from Groen (2019).

Some articles from LINDA, Flair and VIVA highlighted the criticism from body positivity advocates that certain bodies should be excluded from the movement, such as certain curvy celebrities who are frequently seen as important people within the movement, or they highlighted the criticism that some people say only fat people should be included (Hensbergen, 2020; Muller, 2020; van Woerden, 2021; Zitvast, 2020). However, the articles deliberately conclude that body positivity is a movement for everybody, whereas the academic literature showed disagreements about the in- and exclusion of people within the movement (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). According to Flair, non-fat, semi-fat or curvy bodies are just as much allowed to join the movement as women who are obese or heavy weight, and that people should not criticize others nor question whether someone is allowed to be body positive or not (Zitvast, 2020). This is in line with the mainstream body positivity faction, with normalization, acceptance and celebrating all bodies as important values (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Johansson, 2020; Lazuka et al., 2020; Leboeuf, 2019).

Two well-known Dutch body positivity advocates, Mayra de Wilde and Saskia Olivieira put a sidenote to the 'body positivity is for everybody' motto. Olivieira tells LINDA that everybody can be a part of body positivity, but people need to know what it means, where the movement came from and therefore share the stories of women for whom the movement is especially meant (Olivieira, as cited in Hensbergen, 2020), which is illustrated in Figure 4.5. To LINDA magazine de Wilde talks about the importance of knowing the origin of the movement, which was started by black women and other marginalized groups, which has become less important as the movement became popular (de Vries, 2020a). "It is a shame that people who need recognition and acceptance the most, are less visible" (de Wilde, as cited in de Vries, 2020a, para. 6). It is therefore important to know that body positivity is a crucial movement for marginalized women who fight for visibility, equality and respect and that body positivity is not just a social media trend, say the advocates in interviews with both LINDA and VIVA (de Vries, 2020a; Hensbergen, 2020; Muller, 2020). Olivieira additionally mentions in a LINDA interview that mainstream body positivity is often misinterpreted, as it looks more like body confidence with all kinds of women loving their bodies, without focusing on original goals and values of the movement (Hensbergen, 2020). Body positivity is, according to Olivieira, "a movement which at the core revolves around women who are fatter than the sizes that are visible in de mainstream: a size 48 and bigger" (Olivieira, as cited in Hensbergen, 2020, para. 7). So, everybody can be a part of body positivity, on the condition that they know about the origins and goals of body positivity and furthermore share the stories of those bigger women, who get unequal chances in areas such as fashion, work and the media, states LINDA (de Vries, 2020a; Hensbergen, 2020).

Figure 4.5

Example of importance history of the movement

History:
Don't forget where it all started. Black women started the Body Positive movement as their bodies were never accepted and seen as beautiful. The #bodypositivity movement was created as a safe space to be free from all the phobia's and stereotyping.

This space was so much needed that it turned into a community for all fat women. A space where we were seen in all our glory, a movement that fought for equality and respect a community that didn't judge fat women and their bodies or sizes.It's a positive space often taken out of context and misused.

The Body Positivity movement was created as safe place in a world that tells fat women that they have to look a certain way to feel beautiful and confident.

Never forget the history. Don't take our body positivity space as a trend or hype, don't get mad, do your research, give credits and pass the mic to keep the conversation real.
#beautycomesinallshapesandsizes#inclusivity#diversityandinclusion

Note. Post retrieved from Hensbergen (2020).

Even though it is mentioned a few times that marginalized bodies are not getting enough visibility and that society should be more inclusive, the majority of the articles do not talk about marginalized bodies which are discriminated by society's standards, and when they do it is almost exclusively from a fat perspective, whereas the radical and intersectional aspect of the movement are barely mentioned. The articles focus mainly on the beauty ideal being skinny and without imperfections, but they do not pay attention to the fact that the beauty ideal oftentimes only includes white, able-bodied women. Since radical body positivity is the least prevalent faction, according to Darwin and Miller (2020), it is unsurprising that the magazine articles do not pay attention to the radical aspects. Streeter (2019) says that our society is mainly obsessed with thinness and the dislike for fatness, which could be a reason the articles only contain aspects of the slightly more prevalent fat positivity perspective. Nevertheless, it is problematic that few marginalized groups and radical aspects are mentioned, since the body positivity movement originated from (political) movements that fought for equality and acceptance of those marginalized bodies (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Dalessandro, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020). The problems those marginalized bodies face on a daily basis are not mentioned by the magazines enough, even though those bodies have to fight harder to exist, because of racism, fatphobia, and other discriminations (Dalessandro, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020).

Additional to body positivity being for everybody, all magazines emphasize that everybody is beautiful and perfect and that everybody has a good body no matter their appearances, so beauty ideals should be broadened, since they are very limited with the focus on only skinny women without imperfections. The idea that everybody has a good body equalizes all bodies as being the same. And herein lies the problem, which was also highlighted by scholars, because not all bodies are treated equally and the equalization of all bodies ignores the fact that marginalized bodies are disproportionately affected by stigmas, and experience economic, political and social problems (Dalessandro, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Limatius, 2020; Streeter, 2019). Even when the magazines state that all bodies are beautiful and good as they are, there is no special attention given by the magazines to the fact that certain bodies are not deemed as such by society, because they deviate from the western beauty ideal and body norms. Despite body positivity, certain bodies are treated worse than privileged bodies, due to bullying, oppressions and discriminations, which is something that was also emphasized by scholars (Dionne, 2017; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020; Limatius, 2020). This does not only go for fat bodies, but also for black bodies, trans bodies, bodies of age and disabled bodies. And as all bodies become part of the movement, that also means that bodies which are rather privileged and not discriminated against are included, meaning that white, able-bodied, thin, young women take up the space within the

movement (Dalessandro, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Limatius, 2020; Streeter, 2019).

Unfortunately, oppressions, inequalities and discriminations are rarely talked about by the magazines, because the focus is on individual problems and the once radical aspects of body positivity are left out of the conversation, which is a critique that Darwin and Miller (2020) give to mainstream body positivity as well. There is a lack of efforts by the magazines to raise awareness about these matters and to show how people can fight for a more body positive society, or to actually disrupt the status quo (Dalessandro, 2016; Leboeuf, 2019). Therefore, the lack of focus on these matters undermines the original objectives and values of the movement which was about fighting social and political inequalities and focusing on marginalized and stigmatized bodies. And, if all bodies are good bodies, even the marginalized ones, and all bodies are equal, then all bodies should be represented equally in body positivity articles as well. The next theme will further elaborate on this, discussing representation, diversity and inclusivity of bodies in the magazine articles.

### 4.3 Theme 3: Showing a diversity of bodies

In line with 'body positivity is for everyone' and 'everybody is beautiful', body positivity is also about showing all kinds of bodies, which are different from the standard beauty ideals, according to the magazines. This means showing more diversity in bodies, such as fat bodies and bodies with bodily flaws and imperfections. This theme resembles mostly mainstream body positivity, but also has some aspects of fat positivity and radical body positivity, albeit the latter only a little (Darwin & Miller, 2020).

Almost all articles pay attention to women who proudly show their real bodies with different body types, showing imperfections and flaws, which are normally invisible in the media. These women portrayed in the articles show the beauty of imperfections, embracing their bodies, wanting to normalize these imperfections which are part of almost every woman's body, but which are normally edited or made invisible in the media to uphold the unrealistic beauty ideal of skinny, toned bodies with perfect skin. The women showing their bodies pose in oftentimes skin-revealing clothing to show the so-called 'naked truth', with a range of imperfections from cellulite, hip dips and stretch marks, to belly fat, scars and postpartum bellies (see Figure 4.6 and 4.7). This way, these women become role models for their followers by showing that it is perfectly normal to have a body that resembles theirs. This is in line with what the literature suggests about popular body positivity aspects (Cohen et al., 2019b; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020; Sastre, 2014). Articles from Cosmopolitan and Flair talk about how they love seeing more bodies that

women can identify with, to see real bodies with cellulite, curves, stretch marks and fat rolls (de Bruin, 2019; Groen, 2019; Zitvast, 2020). Cosmopolitan also states that imperfections should be embraced, therefore people should not change their imperfections, nor should they hide them, because everybody is beautiful (Harvey-Jenner, 2020; Savin, 2020), and people should stop worrying about imperfections, because "life is too short to feel bad about yourself" (Savin, 2020, para. 2).

Figure 4.6

Examples of showing bodily imperfections
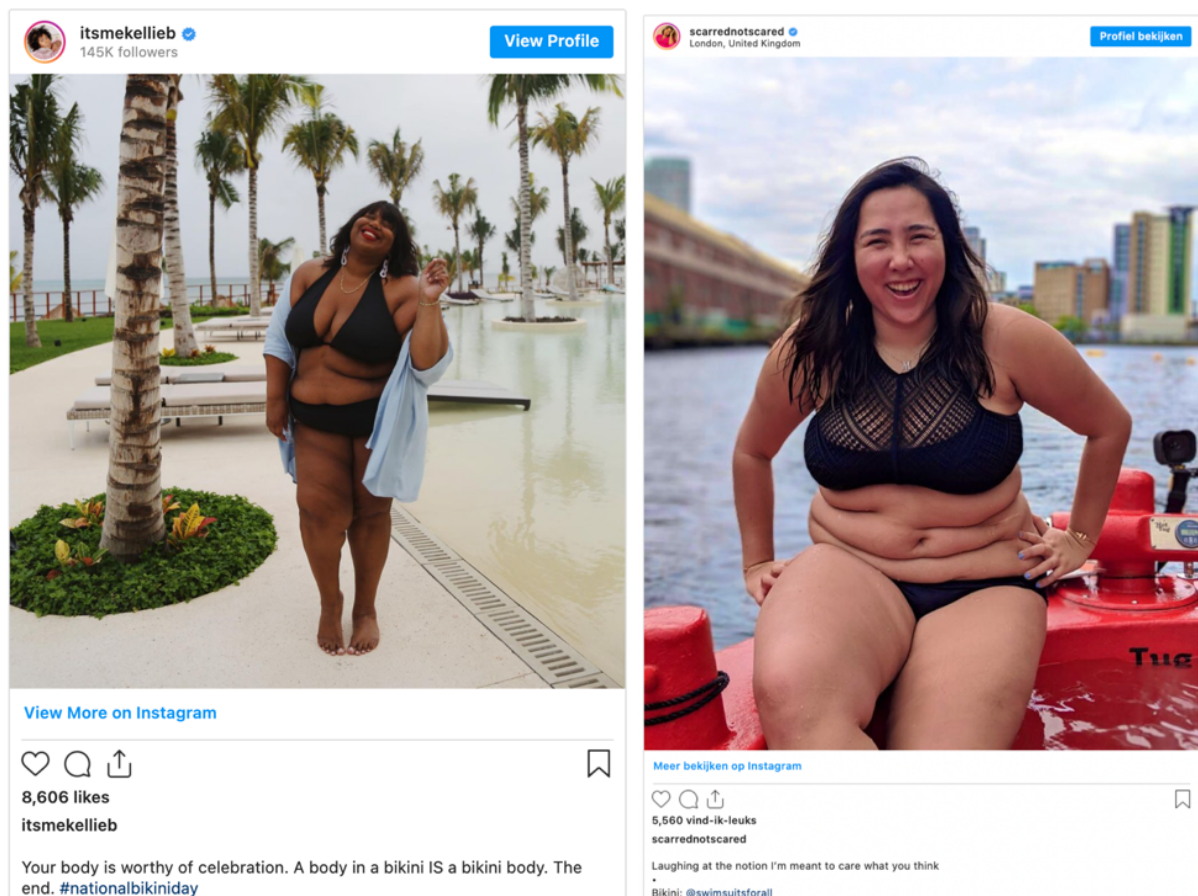
Note. Posts retrieved from respectively de Bruin (2020) and Harvey-Jenner (2020).

Figure 4.7

Other examples of showing bodily imperfections

Note. Posts retrieved from Koster (2020).

Different body types are represented in the articles, both semi-fat and fat women, both black and white, with numerous imperfections. Nonetheless, the majority of the bodies is not really fat, but rather slim or curvy with fat in some places. These bodies do show imperfections, but they would probably not be labeled as fat by society, nor would they be disadvantaged in society because of their appearances. The majority of the articles preaches for body positivity including everybody, but include very often the bodies that align with beauty ideals, who are only slightly differing from the beauty standards (see Figure 4.8). So, despite the goals of the body positivity movement to challenge these beauty ideals, visibility is still given to a certain type of body that mostly resembles beauty ideals but with more curves, which was also highlighted by scholars (Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Limatius, 2020; Streeter, 2019). Or like Frazier and Mehdi (2021) describe, mainly pretty fat and acceptably fat women with a certain size are represented, whereas larger fat women are a minority in the articles. Just as Osborn (n.d.) stated, many real bodies are represented that only look 'imperfect' when they are naked, but not necessarily when they wear clothes, while fat women and women with disabilities for example cannot just hide their imperfections with clothing as their imperfections are visible no matter what they wear. As a result, many marginalized bodies are still underrepresented in these body positivity articles.

Figure 4.8

Examples of bodies aligning with beauty ideals

Note. Posts retrieved from respectively Koster (2020) and de Bruin (2020).

In addition to representing bodies which are pretty fat or socially acceptable, women are often represented posing in skin revealing clothing such as bikinis and lingerie to show their bodily imperfections, while looking and posing sexy, feeling empowered and confident (see Figure 4.8 and 4.9). According to scholars, feeling sexy and beautiful and reclaiming your sexuality by embracing your naked body is also part of mainstream body positivity and self-empowerment (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Gill, 2007; Morris, 2019). This can certainly be seen in the body positivity articles as many women show all (naked) sides of their bodies with imperfections, which are clearly visible and do not seem to be edited and smoothened too much with the use of (color) filters. However, many of the pictures are staged and posed, featuring nice clothing, make-up and pretty hairstyles, so while showing real bodies, the pictures still try to adhere to a certain Instagram aesthetic that blends in with the popular pretty pictures on Instagram, which is in line with what scholars stated about body positivity selfies (Caldeira & de Ridder, 2017; Cohen et al., 2019; Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Limatius, 2020).

Figure 4.9

*Examples of Instagram aesthetic*

Note. Posts retrieved from respectively Harvey-Jenner (2020) and Heinhuis (2020).

Whereas multiple magazines represent women of color in their articles, they do not talk about the fact that the western beauty ideal is very white. As a result, white women take up space of marginalized bodies as they are represented considerably more times than women of color, with black women being represented many times, but Arabic, Asian and other ethnic women being represented scarcely. Women with disabilities, larger fat women or trans bodies are also rarely being represented, the latter not even once. Only in one article we see a woman in a wheelchair and another woman with a colostomy bag (see Figure 4.10), but that article was originally from Cosmopolitan UK and hence not written by a Dutch author (Harvey-Jenner, 2020). Furthermore, almost all of the women who are represented are young, approximately between the ages of 20 and 35. Just like scholars argued, those bodies that align more with the beauty ideals than deviate from the ideals are represented more, taking the place of bodies that need more visibility, mainly because the magazines believe that body positivity is for everybody. As Johansson (2020) describes, as everybody can be a part of the body positivity movement, white able-bodied curvy women become more visible again, whereas bodies that are non-white, disabled or just fat are placed in the background. The underrepresentation of those bodies is in contrast with the idea that body positivity is for everybody and that everybody therefore should be represented equally.

Figure 4.10

*Examples of bodies with disabilities*
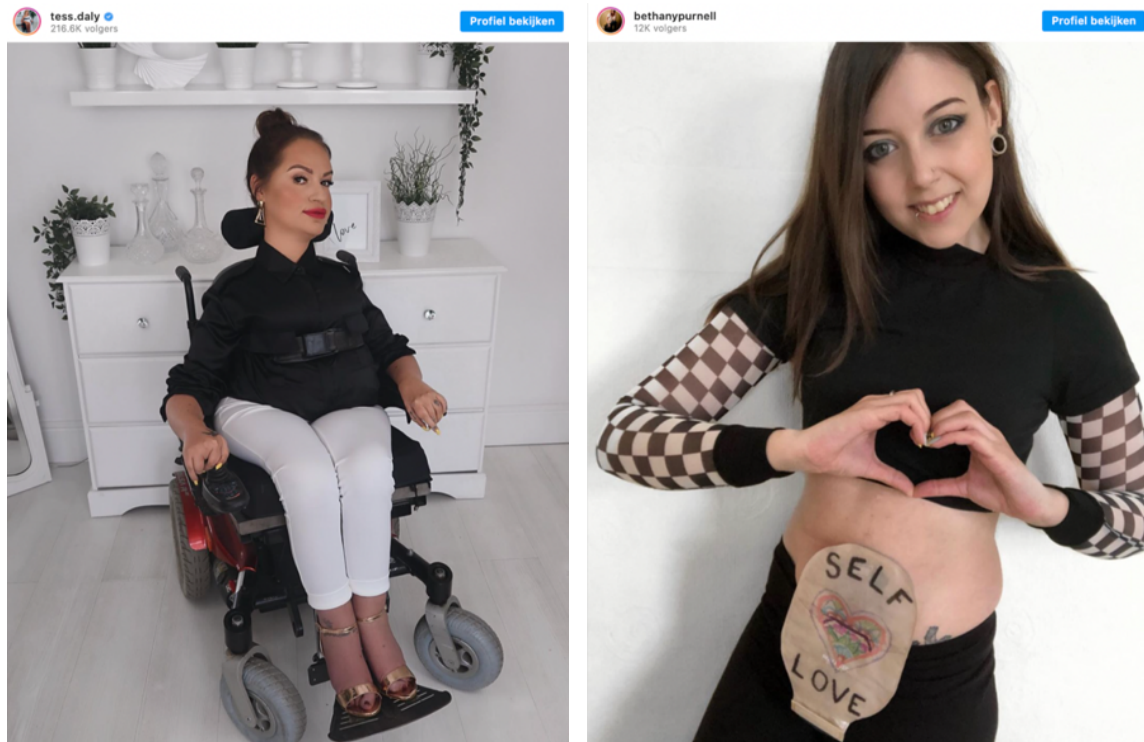
Note. Posts retrieved from Harvey-Jenner (2020).

Another striking thing is that the magazines talk repeatedly about the same celebrities and their weight, which is characteristic for celebrity content, state Fikkan and Rothblum (2012). Miljuschka Witzenhausen, a television cook, is more than once praised for her honest body pictures and her body positivity documentary, while television presenter Linda de Mol is praised and criticized for posing on the cover of LINDA magazine in bikini (Redactie Glamour, 2019; Zitvast, 2020). Both women are middle-aged, white and not skinny, but they are rather curvy and not really fat (see Figure 4.11). As they are both quite famous and visible in the media, they are not in the category of marginalized and stigmatized bodies, but they are oftentimes mentioned as important figures for the body positivity movement. The celebrity articles are actually rather contradictory when it comes to body positivity. Flair talks about the criticism regarding Linda de Mol, who is being accused of editing her cover for her magazine's body positivity issue and is judged for being too slim to be a body positivity advocate (Zitvast, 2020). On the other hand, Glamour and LINDA wrote about fat and black singer Lizzo, who is a famous body positivity advocate who celebrates her body, which does not align with the white skinny beauty ideals in the slightest. However, Lizzo was being both criticized and applauded by the magazines for doing a detox cleanse, which she did not do to lose weight, but to care for her body (Leatemia & Gommans, 2020; van Woerden, 2021). While body positivity is

portrayed as being about not criticizing and body shaming other bodies, letting people live their own lives, and not judging people based on their appearances, body criticism is precisely what is given attention in these body positivity articles.

Figure 4.11

Examples of celebrity body positivity advocates
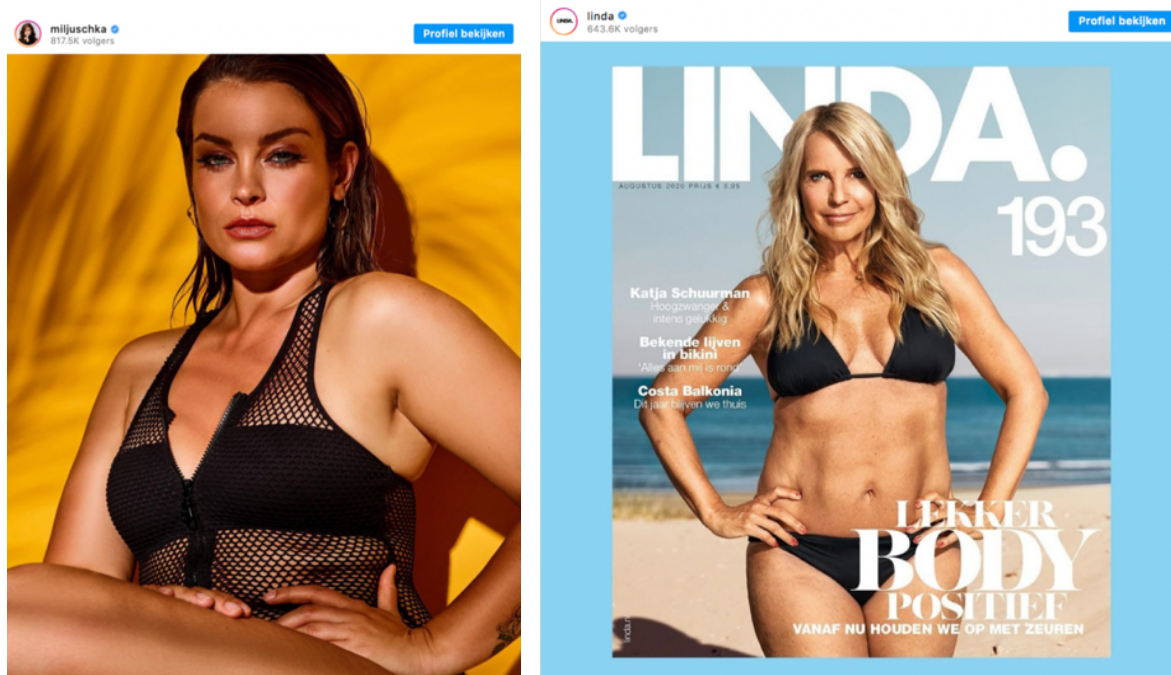
Note. Posts retrieved from respectively Redactie Glamour (2019) and Zitvast (2020).

Another celebrity who was being criticized was Miljuschka Witzenhausen, because she is being applauded as a body positivity advocate, but at the same time she is an ambassador for weight loss brand Weight Watchers, which is rather contradictory states Flair, as she earns money by promoting weight loss, while she also made a (commercial) documentary about body positivity (Wouterson, 2020). Furthermore, the successful weight loss story of black singer Berget Lewis who lost 30 kilos is praised by Flair (Tsao, 2021), giving the idea that losing weight and being slimmer is still more desirable than staying fat. An Instagram post from Berget is used in the article in which she even commercializes her weight loss journey by promoting her community Lifestyle Divas which helps people with weight loss and lifestyle tips (Tsao, 2021). While there is nothing wrong with doing whatever you want to do with your life and body from a neoliberal and postfeminist perspective, it is questionable that such acts by celebrities are promoted as body positive by the magazines, whilst they are not in line with the (original) goals and values of the movement. However, contradictory women's magazine articles about body positivity are commonplace, according to scholars, which can be problematic for readers as they read conflicting and confusing messages about body positivity,

weight loss, diet products, and body shaming, all at the same time (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Murphy & Jackson, 2011).

All things considered, the articles represent more diversity of bodies that are different from the beauty ideal, but there is still room for growth. While there is diversity and inclusivity when it comes to different body types, bodies with imperfections and to a certain extent bodies of color, the articles are not really inclusive as many women with older ages, other skin colors than white or black, disabilities and really fat bodies are either excluded or rarely represented. Also, when taking intersectionality into account, only black fat women are shown few times, whereas other intersections, such as fat bodies with disabilities or older fat bodies are not present, nor are trans bodies or other LGBTQ+ bodies represented in these body positivity articles. Taking into account that the body positivity movement originates from movements, like the FA movement and other movements fighting for the rights of marginalized bodies (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Dalessandro, 2016; Donague & Clemitshaw, 2012), it is problematic that those bodies and their stories are not given enough attention in these articles, while non-marginalized bodies use the movement to show their bodies and body confidence as a way of empowerment.

Just as Frazier and Mehdi (2021) argued, body positivity has become socially acceptable body positivity in which bodies that are already accepted are the center of the movement, meaning that body positivity is not actually for all bodies. These non-marginalized bodies are not necessarily attacked by society while marginalized bodies are left out or underrepresented, which is in line with scholars who criticize the movement for the lack of inclusivity and intersectionality, even though it is of great importance that those marginalized bodies get represented so that their bodies are normalized and therefore more respected and accepted in society, which after all was the very reason the body positivity movement started decades ago (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Dalessandro, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020; Limatius, 2020; Osborn, n.d.; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019). It is rather worrying that the magazine articles do not pay attention to these matters. Their articles about acceptance and representation of all bodies and slogans such as 'all bodies are good bodies' seem to therefore be just unachieved, idle and meaningless statements.

4.4 Theme 4: Body positivity is the act of self-love and body acceptance

Another frequently mentioned aspect of body positivity according to the magazines was self-love and love for your body, which can be achieved by improving your mental health and changing your mindset to get a more positive or neutral body image. The articles talk about tackling individual problems, such as insecurities and eating disorders, and many women share their body positivity journeys. This theme is an extension of the 'focus on yourself' theme with a focus on mental health
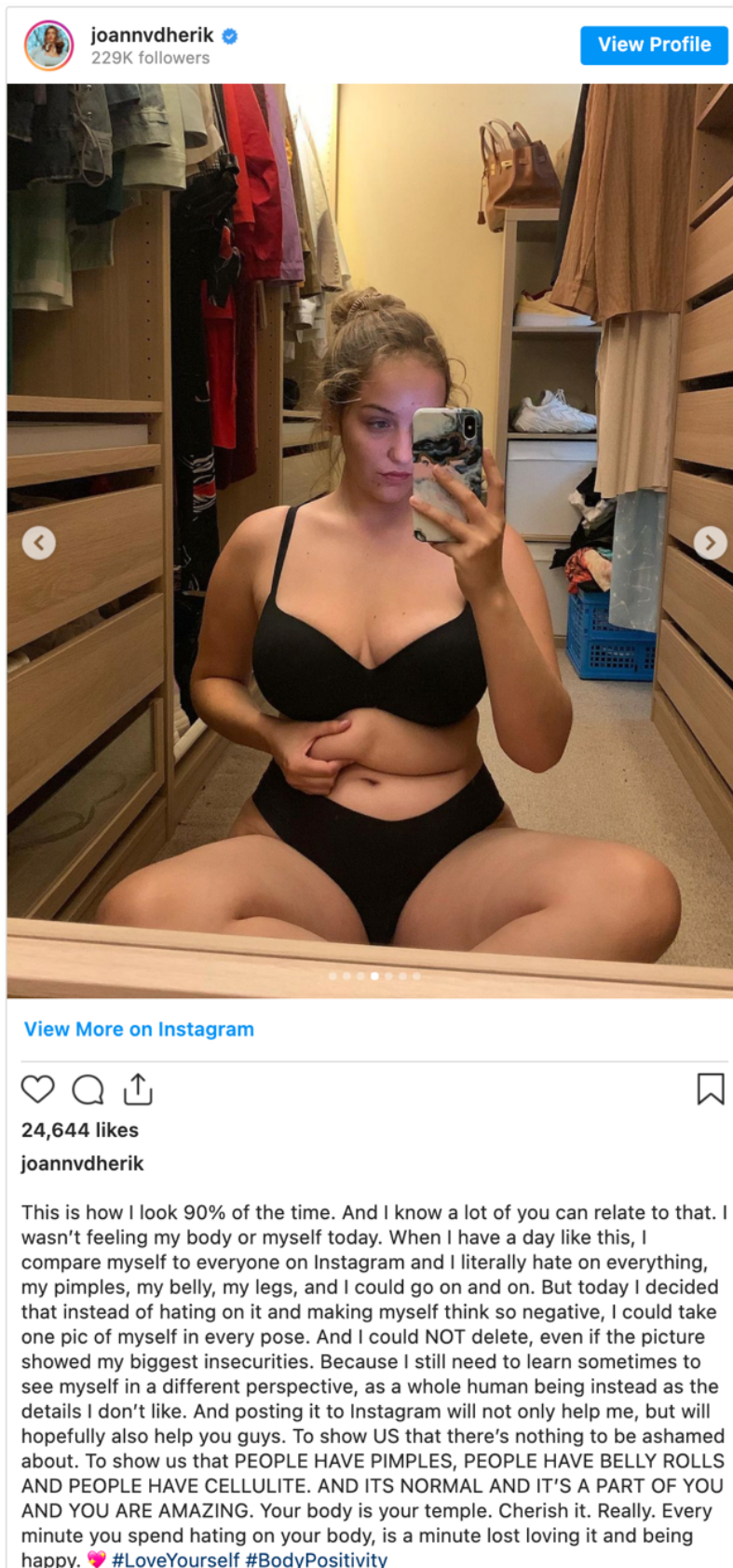
and resembles the mainstream body positivity and body neutrality factions the most (Darwin & Miller, 2020).

As the fat stigma and diet culture are embedded in our society, the beauty ideal is thin and therefore thin bodies are often represented as good, desirable and successful while fat people are often portrayed as desperate and unsuccessful in the media, state Cosmopolitan, LINDA, and VIVA. By for example seeing fit girls on social media, advertisements for diets, and heavily edited pictures in magazines, the implicit message is given that you are only good enough when your body is slim and smooth, making yourself feel like a failure because your body is different, state these three magazines (de Vries, 2020a; Harvey-Jenner, 2020; Muller, 2020; ten Hoor, 2020). According to Cosmopolitan, LINDA and VIVA, the unrealistic beauty ideals influence many people to have negative feelings and connotations of fat and the fear of becoming fat, as fat bodies are stigmatized and women develop negative body images resulting in eating disorders, obsessive exercising and dieting, having a difficult relationship with both food and their bodies (de Vries, 2020b; Harvey-Jenner, 2020; Muller, 2020; ten Hoor, 2020). It can therefore be a struggle for women to feel good about their bodies and to love it even though it does not align with beauty ideals.

Many personal experiences and Instagram posts from women and body positivity advocates are therefore shared by the magazines to support and empower other women, who struggle with their body image, by being real, talking about their own problems, insecurities and self-doubts, showing their (naked) bodies with imperfections (see Figure 4.12 and 4.13). Changing your mental health and improving the relationship with your body and loving your body more is an important aspect of body positivity and by not paying attention to beauty ideals and not changing your body because of those ideals, you can become more self-loving, according to all magazines. Body positivity advocate Megan Crabbe is mentioned few times regarding this topic, who says: "I refuse to think for one second that I'm not good enough, just because I don't live up to that bullsh*t patriarchal idea of beauty" (Crabbe, as cited in Harvey-Jenner, 2020, para. 2).

Figure 4.12

Example of sharing body insecurities and personal struggles

This is how I look 90% of the time. And I know a lot of you can relate to that. I wasn't feeling my body or myself today. When I have a day like this, I compare myself to everyone on Instagram and I literally hate on everything, my pimples, my belly, my legs, and I could go on and on. But today I decided that instead of hating on it and making myself think so negative, I could take one pic of myself in every pose. And I could NOT delete, even if the picture showed my biggest insecurities. Because I still need to learn sometimes to see myself in a different perspective, as a whole human being instead as the details I don't like. And posting it to Instagram will not only help me, but will hopefully also help you guys. To show US that there's nothing to be ashamed about. To show us that PEOPLE HAVE PIMPLES, PEOPLE HAVE BELLY ROLLS AND PEOPLE HAVE CELLULITE. AND ITS NORMAL AND IT'S A PART OF YOU AND YOU ARE AMAZING. Your body is your temple. Cherish it. Really. Every minute you spend hating on your body, is a minute lost loving it and being happy. 💖 #LoveYourself #BodyPositivity

Note. Post retrieved from de Bruin (2020).

Figure 4.13

Example of sharing body insecurities and personal struggles

I will not be ashamed of who I was before. It's easy to close a door and shut down our feelings from the past and walk away.

And yes, part of me wants to do that. I want to skip past the pain and hurry up to the better bits.

But I am not ashamed.

Because each phase of life has always (always!) been teaching me something. For parts of those phases all I wanted was answers and results. Answers to my problems. Results to my body. I wanted to feel content.

But what's going on behind the photos other than some glaringly obvious transformations?

I can tell you that the first picture was a woman in her early stages of adulthood and child bearing years. She struggled with health and with understanding. It was hard, it was a blessing.

I can tell you that second photo was a woman who was experiencing "just look happy on the outside" while crumbling on the inside. Just days after that photo, her 11 year marriage ended. She didn't feel like the success story she was online. It was hard, it was a blessing.

I can tell you about third photo too, because it is a woman who is grasping her past and embracing her present. She's actually anxiously excited about the future. She let go of a lot of shame and guilt, committed herself to a new marriage, found love in things she didn't expect (like her body) and found a balance where she feels content. It was hard, it was a blessing.

To be ashamed of who I was brings no honour to what it all taught me to be.

There is no need to hurry up and get it all right. It can be as simple as embracing the today and a willingness to learn and grow.

The ebbs and flows.

The hardships and the blessings.
A journey not in shedding our former selves, but becoming more our true selves as we go.

Note. Post retrieved from de Bruin (2020).

Cosmopolitan, Glamour and LINDA state that there is the common notion that if you lose weight, you will feel better about yourself both mentally and physically, which is why many women struggle with their bodies, but these magazines emphasize that losing weight is not the cure for a negative body image and might even make you feel worse because you feel like a failure when losing weight is difficult (de Vries, 2020a; de Vries, 2020b; Groen, 2019; Harvey-Jenner, 2020). Body image expert Danielle Heemskerk says that "quitting diets and accepting how your body is formed is the key to 'body positivity'" (Heemskerk, as cited in ten Hoor, 2020, para. 7). The message of Cosmopolitan, Glamour and LINDA is that everyone is worthy no matter their size or appearances and that your weight and appearance do not define you as a person, and we should therefore put less value on the appearance of bodies. Part of loving your body is thus embracing your imperfections, whatever they are, because you will become more comfortable in your own skin and feel more confident, state all magazines. Also, achieving happiness, self-love and feeling sexy is not related to your size, appearance or weight, because you can be happy and fat, and you can love your body and be fat, and you can feel sexy while looking different from the beauty ideals, as is shown by Cosmopolitan, Glamour and Happinez (Happinez, 2019; Groen, 2019; Leatemia & Gommans, 2020). Being fat or having a body that is different from the beauty ideal and being happy are not mutually exclusive, states singer Lizzo (see Figure 4.14). Or as Mayra de Wilde says: "Happy is not a dress size" (de Wilde, as cited in Koster, 2020, para. 7). Losing weight and obsessively exercising to achieve self-love and to become happy is therefore not the right way to become more body positive, according to all magazines.

As it can be very difficult to love your body, different self-love tips are mentioned in the articles to become more body positive. Flair, Glamour and VIVA emphasize that it is okay to not always like your body the way it is, nor do you have to love every part of your body, because self-love is a process and it takes time to change the relationship with your body and go from a negative body image to a positive one, but it is okay to not feel okay sometimes and have insecurities (de Vries, 2020b; Muller, 2020; van der Klift, 2020). Steering the focus away from body parts that you hate or dislike can help with a more positive body image, by for example by making a list of things you love about yourself, which can be about your appearance, but skills and qualities of your body are important too, state VIVA and Flair (Muller, 2020; van der Klift, 2020). Or just "stand in front of a mirror, preferably naked, and sum up everything you see and find beautiful" (van der Klift, 2020, para. 4). Happinez states that if you love your body more, you can take better care of it and not starve yourself just because you hate your body, but choose healthy options and exercise for the sake of a healthy body (Wienen, 2019). By being less critical towards your body, by doing positive affirmations and appreciating the smaller parts of your body, you can become more body confident and resilient to critiques from other people, according to Glamour, Flair and VIVA (van der Klift, 2020;

de Vries, 2020b; Muller, 2020). Ignoring negativity from people is what Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015) call body protective filtering of information, by accepting information that is good for a positive body image and ignoring comments that can negatively affect your body image.

Figure 4.14

Examples of happiness and self-love not being related to size
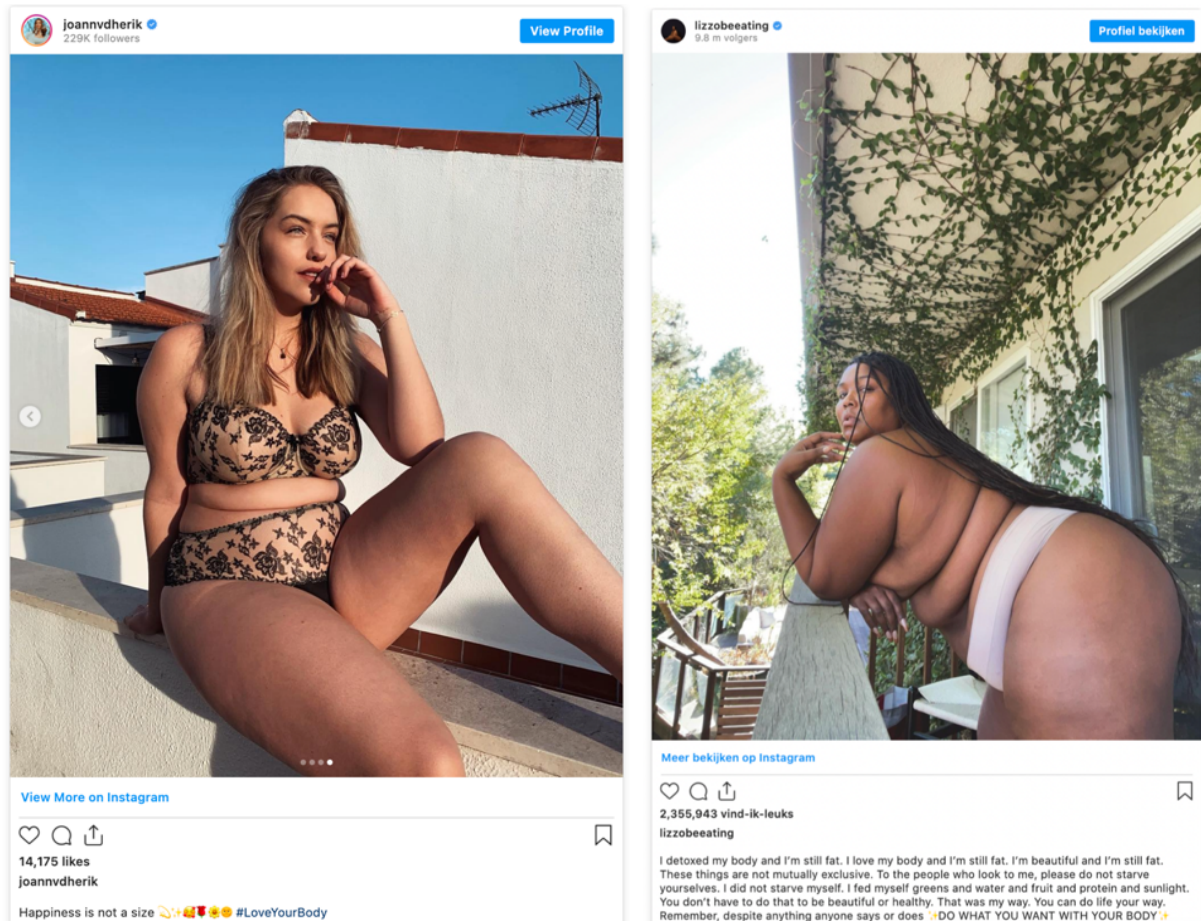
Note. Posts retrieved from respectively Groen (2019) and Leatemia and Gommans (2020).

Other frequent tips and tricks for individuals to love their bodies were given by all magazines, like getting rid of diet books, scales, diet products and ill-fitting clothes, changing your relation with food and feeding yourself with healthy foods, reading books about body positivity, meditating, listening to body positivity podcasts, unfollowing people that make you feel bad and following inspiring body positivity accounts on social media. These topics are very much in line with what the literature states about a positive body image and mainstream body positivity and its focus on empowerment, individual problem-solving, self-help tips for going from self-hate to self-love, the celebration of your body no matter its appearance, self-care and proudly showing your body with stretch marks, stomach rolls, cellulite and other imperfections through the use of social media

(Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Sastre, 2014; Streeter, 2019; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

If loving your body is one step too far and too difficult to achieve, then just focus on accepting your body as it is, meaning that you should value your body not based on appearance or beauty, but for its qualities, is the message Happinez shares (Vrieling, 2018a; Vrieling, 2018b). Cosmopolitan mentions that "our bodies are not existing only to look good. They are our vehicle to live, breathe and experience everything the world has to offer" (Harvey-Jenner, 2020, para. 1). Body positivity oftentimes has a lot of emphasis on feeling and looking beautiful, but articles from Cosmopolitan, Flair, Happinez and VIVA talk about the importance of going beyond beautiful, focusing less on appearances and self-love, to focus more on body acceptance and on valuing and appreciating your bodily abilities, such as walking, hugging others and dancing, but also to focus on personal characteristics and skills, like singing or being kind to others (Muller, 2020; van der Klift, 2020; Vrieling, 2018a; Vrieling, 2018b). This is in line with the literature, which calls body acceptance, valuing body abilities and body appreciation important aspects of body neutrality (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). These four magazines do mention focusing on bodily abilities and personal characteristics, however this is often tied to loving your body and what you can do with it, while the literature suggests that body neutrality has nothing to do with loving and positivity, but more with accepting the body as it is and being neutral about it (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019). And despite some mentioned body neutrality aspects, the magazines still pay more attention to feeling beautiful, self-love, being positive and everybody being beautiful, which is not what body neutrality stands for (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019). The line between mainstream body positivity and body neutrality therefore seems to blur in these articles, which makes sense as both factions revolve around postfeminist and neoliberal notions of individual choices, agency and empowerment (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Gill, 2007; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019).

Furthermore, by focusing on self-love, empowerment and showing your (naked) body, the magazines give the idea that the problems and discriminations that bodies, which are different from the beauty ideal, experience in their daily life can simply be solved by being confident and feeling beautiful, empowered and sexy by embracing your naked body. However, Johansson (2020) criticizes this neoliberal idea that people should go through a process from a negative to a positive body image, as it proposes that everybody should overcome their inner demons and negative feelings towards their bodies to become a positive person who fully accepts and loves their body. This suggests that you are successful if you love yourself and have a positive mindset, as if you are a failure or a loser if you don't love yourself fully. Besides that, feeling sexy and beautiful is not that easy if society and your surroundings criticize your body for looking a certain way. Self-love can be

hindered by social and political oppressions and discrimination, which can be the reasons we hate our body because it does not adhere to society's beauty ideals, and therefore self-hate is not easily resolved (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019). The dislike of certain bodies due to their appearances is embedded within society and representations in the media, which is why it is crucial to not focus on self-love and appearances and instead opt for body neutrality and radical body positivity. Because society has thin as the norm, you will still be judged and critiqued as a fat person and as long as the status quo stays the same, fat people and other bodies deviating from the beauty ideals will be stigmatized. Unfortunately, the magazine articles do not pay attention to this more radical viewpoint, systemic oppression and body discrimination, which has already been mentioned in the previous themes. The magazines are more under the assumption that problems can be solved by focusing on the individual and tackling individual and psychological problems, but it is questionable whether not looking at the bigger picture will help solve those structural and systemic problems, which is also questioned by scholars (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020; Morris, 2019; Murphy & Jackson, 2011).

In the next chapter all findings from the analysis will be concluded and its implications for the broader theoretical discussion about body positivity will be discussed, as well as limitations of this research and suggestions for future research.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of findings

The main focus of this study was to answer the research question how body positivity is portrayed in online articles from Dutch women's magazines. In this chapter an answer will be provided within the context of the research's findings. Furthermore, academic and social implications of this research will be presented. Lastly, some limitations of this research will be discussed and suggestions for future research will be presented.

Analyzing the way body positivity is portrayed by the online magazine articles resulted in four main themes, which all resonate mostly with the mainstream body positivity faction that Darwin and Miller (2020) describe. The first theme is about focusing on yourself, with the neoliberalist and postfeminist focus on individualism and not on the collective. Furthermore, it is about individuals making their own choices and having agency over their own bodies, meaning everyone is allowed to treat their body a certain way, whether you follow a diet or exercise to lose weight or whether you decide to not change your body. This idea of body positivity is partially contradictory to the idea that body positivity is about denouncing diet culture and challenging the thin ideal as it implicitly encourages to change your body to align with beauty ideals (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Morris, 2019; Sastre, 2014).

The second theme focuses on body positivity being for everybody, which shows that body positivity is not about excluding people from the movement, but allowing everybody to participate, regardless of their size and appearance. The magazines preach for acceptance and respect for all bodies, but as all bodies become part of the movement, also the non-marginalized bodies are included, taking up space from marginalized bodies that need more visibility and representation (Dalessandro, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Leboeuf, 2019; Limatius, 2020; Streeter, 2019). Furthermore, the social differences and inequalities that marginalized bodies experience are not part of the conversation, and little attention is paid to radical and intersectional aspects of the movement as all bodies are equalized within the movement. While body positivity originated from movements fighting against fatphobia, racism, ableism and other discriminations (Dalessandro, 2016; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020), these social, cultural and political differences and inequalities are not part of the magazine's body positivity messages.

The third theme relates to body positivity being about showing a diversity of bodies, representing real (naked) bodies that are imperfect and relatable, and different from the skinny and smooth beauty ideals. A variety of body types is shown, but even though body positivity is for everybody, the representation of all kinds of bodies is lacking. The majority of the represented

bodies is white, not fat but rather curvy, and despite showing imperfections, there is low possibility that those bodies are stigmatized or marginalized by society. Moreover, non-black ethnic women, larger fat women, trans bodies and disabled bodies are rarely represented. Visibility is mostly given to a certain 'socially acceptable' body type with curves, instead of bodies that really deviate from beauty ideals, which was a frequently mentioned critique from scholars as well (Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Limatius, 2020; Streeter, 2019). This is problematic, because body positivity cannot have a focus on tackling discrimination against marginalized bodies while there is at the same a focus on skinny, white women and the inclusion of everybody (Dionne, 2017). Overall, talking about everybody being beautiful and equal, it is rather contradictory that marginalized bodies are still underrepresented, with magazine articles being neither really inclusive nor intersectional, which is what scholars argued as well (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Limatius, 2020; Sastre, 2014).

The fourth theme is about the act of self-love and body acceptance, in which body positivity is seen as changing your mindset and going from self-hate to loving and accepting your body. The articles focus on empowerment and self-love journeys, celebrating the body no matter its appearance. Self-love is exhibited by women who show their (naked) bodies proudly with selfies and by talking about their body insecurities and difficult relationships with their bodies. Some magazines state that if self-love is hard to achieve, then just be accepting and appreciative of your bodily abilities. The focus of the magazines on individualism, self-love and empowerment gives the idea that problems and discriminations can be fixed by changing your mindset, feeling beautiful and loving your body. However, self-love is often hindered by social and political oppressions and discriminations and these systemic and structural problems are not easily fixed by loving yourself, which the academic literature also suggests (Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019), however the articles pay little attention to this matter.

Altogether, the results highlight the focus of the body positivity articles on neoliberal and postfeminist ideas of individualism, empowerment and choice, with women sharing their individual body positivity journeys, embracing and showing their imperfections and by giving tips to become more body positive. This research has shown that Dutch women's magazines have a mainstream body positivity focus with the belief that everybody should be a part of the movement and that body struggles can be solved by working on your mindset to become more body positive. While body positivity started out as a movement by marginalized people deviating from the norms, body positivity nowadays seems to mainly encompass body confident non-marginalized women who flaunt their (naked) bodies and imperfections on social media. Besides that, with the focus on individual bodies, there was little attention for the structural and systemic problems and inequalities that marginalized bodies face, and if there was it was only from a fat perspective. More so, the

experiences and stories of relatively privileged bodies are told, while certain women of color, disabled women and trans women do not get to voice their experiences as a marginalized group. This is in line with critiques from scholars about the mainstream body positivity movement (Dalessandro, 2016; Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020; Streeter, 2019). The 'body positivity is for everybody and 'everybody is beautiful' messages that the magazines portray are not in sync with the bodies they represent and these statements therefore become rather meaningless.

5.2 Implications

With this research, valuable insights have been provided into the portrayal of body positivity by Dutch online magazine articles, and it has thus filled a gap within the body positivity research paradigm by specifically looking at online magazine articles from a non-English speaking country with a focus on the four factions of Darwin & Miller (2020), which have not been used in any other research yet. This research has illustrated that Dutch women's magazines talk about body positivity in a mainstream body positivity manner, with a focus on the individual, self-love and the representation of diverse bodies and imperfections.

Whereas body positivity started as a political and more radical movement that fought for the rights of marginalized and stigmatized bodies, the magazines do not pay attention to these matters, nor do they give these bodies equal representation. Ways of dealing with discriminations are given on an individual and psychological level, whereas social, cultural and political inequalities are not taken into consideration, which is also a critique that scholars had for other body positivity media content (Darwin & Miller, 2020; Johansson, 2020; Limatius, 2020; Morris, 2019; Murphy & Jackson, 2011; Sastre, 2014). The assumption that tackling individual psychological problems can solve structural problems seems naïve, and neglecting systemic and structural issues means that such problematic issues cannot be battled, nor will this kind of body positivity support the bodies that are marginalized and stigmatized by society, argue scholars (Dalessandro, 2016; Dionne, 2017; Frazier & Mehdi, 2021; Johansson, 2020).

Just like Limatius (2020) and Sastre (2014) state, the movement as it is described and portrayed by the magazines, is not really radical, because it is neither helpful nor empowering for marginalized bodies and there is no call for (radical) action. There is certainly a lack of effort to create awareness and to pay attention to those body oppressions, disrespect, fatphobia, racism and ableism and structural inequalities, nor are any ideas given about how these issues can be fought to establish a more body positive society or to disrupt the status quo, since the focus is very much on the individual and not on the collective (Dalessandro, 2016; Johansson, 2020; Leboeuf, 2019; Morris, 2019; Sastre, 2014). So, while it is great that body positivity gets more attention and that magazines

pay attention to mental health and representing a diversity of bodies, this does not mean that the body positivity movement's goals and objectives of tackling body discrimination, racism, ageism and other discriminations regarding bodily appearances are solved at all.

This research has shown that the women's magazines talk a lot about body positivity, but that the important more radical goals and objectives of the movement are blurred by focusing specifically on individual struggles of relatively privileged bodies. Body positivity has become a concept that encompasses everything and everyone and is therefore losing its meaning. The current body positivity movement does not fight for equality, acceptance and respect like it used to, and as the movement has become mainstream, it has perhaps become too all-embracing that it has lost its focus to actually make a change. The body positivity movement cannot fight for everybody because of its contradicting values and goals and lack of diversity, which is why the movement seems to be losing its touch, as there is no collectively organized body or identity, no shared cause and too many advocates who want to fight for different rights, goals and bodies. Perhaps the only way to fight for the rights of marginalized bodies is to go back to the roots of the body positivity movement. This would mean focusing again on the Fat Acceptance movement, disability movements, the Black Lives Matter movement and other movements representing bodies of color, with each movement having well-defined objectives and values, and a focus on specific groups of people to battle certain inequalities and oppressions. Those specific movements might be more successful and able to make a lasting change than the body positivity movement that tries to fight for everybody. As body positivity has become so all-encompassing, it might be better off as just a popular social media trend.

As magazines play an important influential role as cultural sites representing bodies and sharing important stories that can influence women (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Cohen et al., 2019a; de Freitas et al., 2017; Murphy & Jackson, 2011), magazines could learn from these findings and make sure that they educate their audiences better about what the body positivity movement means and for whom it is meant specifically and therefore represent more role models with marginalized bodies that really deviate from the persisting beauty ideals. Especially because magazines claim body positivity to be diverse and inclusive of everybody, but their body positivity content lacks in intersectionality and does not include enough variety of marginalized bodies. Magazines should, in my opinion, stay critical and inform their readers better of the different aspects of the body positivity movement, and not name every article about body confident women body positivity, because it takes the focus away from what is really important. Magazines should additionally be more critical towards brands and organizations that play a role in the discrimination of certain bodies, while also addressing more ways to actively make a change as part of a collective instead of focusing on the individual. This way readers could learn more about how to be a valuable support so that

marginalized bodies get the visibility, representation, normalization and respect that they deserve in society.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although this research has contributed valuable insights to the body positivity literature, there are some limitations that should be addressed. Firstly, the sample of magazine articles was relatively small due to the scope of this research, which meant that non-random selection had to be applied with five criteria to make the sample concise and as diverse as possible. Because of this, short articles with few words and less depth, articles that had similar topics, or articles written before 2018 were left out of the analysis. However, these articles are still interesting to analyze because they show more insights into how magazines use the term body positivity, whether it is to just generate attention and buzz, while not providing much information about body positivity and what it entails, or to actually inform their audience. Secondly, the sample only consists of articles that used the word body positivity multiple times. Articles that specifically addressed aspects of body positivity such as representation, diversity, self-confidence or body image, but did not include the term body positivity, were not used for this research, but they could however be very valuable for future research about body positivity and its aspects, because such topics are important elements of body positivity and would make the sample more diverse and inclusive. Lastly, my positionality as a white skinny woman might have influenced the analysis and might have affected the results, as my perception of body appearances and how the magazines portray body positivity and body representation might be biased. However, being rather familiar with body representation and body positivity in the media, as I consume fashion magazines and follow numerous body positivity accounts myself, I have tried to be very critical when it comes to analyzing body positivity and the representation and diversity of bodies in these articles. Despite these limitations, this research has provided proper additions to body positivity literature.

A suggestion for future research would be to also focus on the context in which these body positivity articles were written online. Just as scholars have written (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Murphy & Jackson, 2011), magazine articles are often embedded within old problematic discourses and that magazines oftentimes publish (commercial) articles and advertisements that contradict body positivity values and objectives. Examining what kind of messages are conveyed in other articles and advertisements surrounding body positivity articles and what bodies are represented in other articles that do not focus on body positivity is therefore very interesting to examine, as magazines might be writing about body positivity but at the same time still write about ways to improve your appearance to lose weight and maybe still represent white, skinny

bodies aligning with beauty ideals frequently more times than bodies that deviate from beauty norms. The question then becomes if women's magazines actually practice what they preach when it comes to body positivity.

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Appendix A

Coding tree with four themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes	Open codes
Body positivity is about focusing on yourself	Individualism	Empowerment
		Individual choices
		You are in charge
		Change your body if you want to
		Think for yourself
	Focus on you	Stop comparing yourself with others
		Stop looking at differences between bodies
		Be at peace with your body
		Look positively at your own body
		Embrace your body and imperfections
	Do not listen to others	Your own opinion matters
		Get rid of negative people
		Nobody can tell you what to do
		Follow positive people on social media
		Protect yourself
Body positivity is for everybody	Everybody should be included in the movement	Body positivity is not only for fat people
		Everybody is allowed to feel good about body
		Everybody should be visible
		Normal bodies can also be part of body positivity

		Do not criticize others for wanting to be a part of the movement
	Everybody deserves respect and acceptance	Do not make jokes about fat people
		No body discrimination
		Normalize all bodies
		Fight for equality
		Do not judge people because of their size
	Everybody is beautiful	Everybody is unique
		You are perfect the way you are
		Everybody has a bikini body
		Beauty of imperfections
		Your flaws are a part of you
Body positivity is showing a diversity of bodies	Representing real bodies with imperfections	Cellulite
		Stretch marks
		Belly fat
		Postpartum bellies
		Hip dips
	Different body types and skin colors	Curvy women
		Fat women
		Black women
		Skinny women
		Muscular women
	Posing in skin-revealing clothing	Instagram aesthetic
		Sexy posing
		Bikinis
		Lingerie
		Naked

Body positivity is the act of self-love and body acceptance	Loving your body	Love your body regardless of size
		Stop hating your body
		Cherish your body and be proud
		Look at body parts you find beautiful
		You are worthy
	Improve mental health	Stop dieting
		Let go of beauty ideals
		Losing weight will not make you happy
		Happiness is not a dress size
		Talk about insecurities
	Acceptance of body	Focus on bodily abilities
		Go beyond beauty
		Focus on personal characteristics
		Your body gets you to places
		You don't have to love your body every day
	Tips to become body positive.	Get rid of diet books
		Read body positivity books
		Self-care
		Listen to body positivity podcasts
		Meditate

Appendix B

Overview of the sample of magazine articles

Cosmopolitan

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