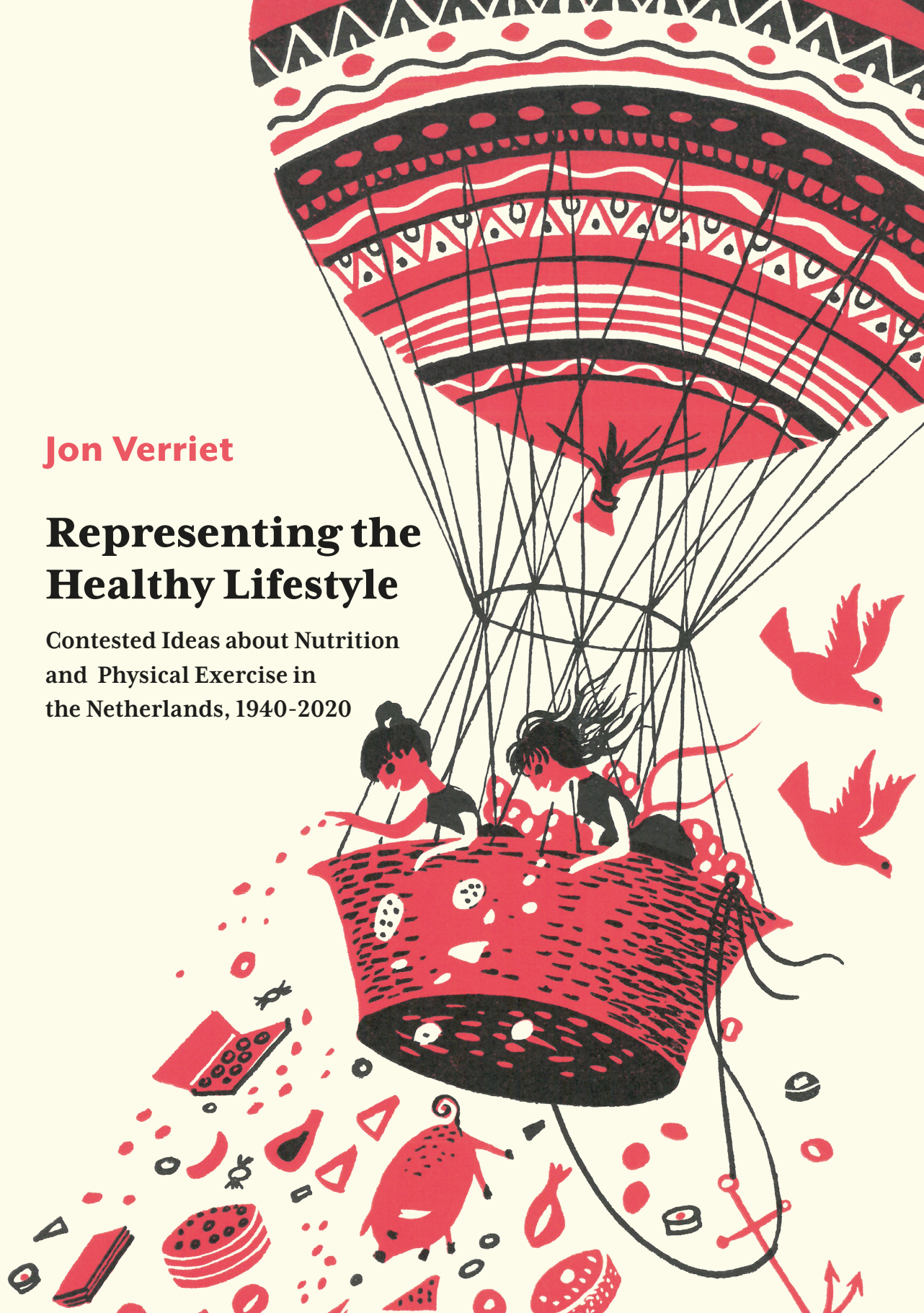
Jon Verriet

Representing the Healthy Lifestyle

Contested Ideas about Nutrition and Physical Exercise in the Netherlands, 1940-2020



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Colofon

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Introduction

In 1978, the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau and the Dutch Heart Foundation published *Eet verstandig, eet matig* ('Eat Sensibly, Eat Moderately'). Like many of its antecedents, this four-page brochure stressed the dangers of dietary fats and sugars and sang the praises of fibre and milk. However, the modestly-titled pamphlet was about much more than just nutrition: it told readers to watch their weight, to get physical exercise, to stop smoking, and to make sure to unwind every once in a while. In other words, it presented a government-funded plan for the ideal 'healthy lifestyle', including a self-test that encouraged readers to assess whether they were as relaxed as they needed to be.[1]

The brochure represents a more general trend. From the 1950s onwards, the image of an idealised healthy lifestyle grew in significance in industrialised societies. As people's average body weight rose and coronary disease became more prevalent, balanced diets and vigorous physical exercise were increasingly presented as solutions to these societal problems. Apart from trained (medical) experts and government officials, a variety of actors joined the conversation. Their advice on healthy living was publicised in newspapers and magazines and on radio and television. These media also helped to circulate advertisements and commercials for food and sport(-related) products: commodities and regimens often propagated by celebrity athletes and other health personalities. By the 1970s, a transnational cacophony of health advice was emerging both in the Netherlands and in other industrialised countries. Although it soon became clear that there were discrepancies between these lifestyle instructions and people's everyday practices, the fixation on healthy living by experts, government officials, media, and health personalities proved difficult to ignore. Groups and individuals who actively protested against weight-loss groups or the jogging fad were a case in point.

In 2021, the idea of an optimal lifestyle, as promoted in *Eet verstandig, eet matig*, prevails. The effect of a rapid rise in health care costs, and more recently the development of a pandemic, is that the importance of proper nutrition and physical exercise are continually articulated, not just by government institutions, but also in written media, on television and on the internet. At the same time, as new societal actors continue to join popular debates about health, instructions on healthy living have become more complex and contradictory than ever. A variety of media now popularise challenges to the

1 Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau and Dutch Heart Foundation, *Eet verstandig, eet matig* ('Eat Sensibly, Eat Moderately') (The Hague, 1978).

lifestyle advice of trained (medical) experts, a significant source of worry to this particular group of professionals.[2]

This dissertation examines post-war representations of the healthy lifestyle and the changing role of expertise in this domain in the Netherlands. Here, I refer to *the* healthy lifestyle, to emphasise its status as an idealised image of a coherent set of practices. As will become clear, different historical actors held different ideas about how the healthy lifestyle should be represented. The central question is how trained experts, government officials, commercial parties, celebrity health personalities, and various formations of the public have contributed to shifting representations of the healthy lifestyle in the Netherlands between 1940 and 2020, and how this has impacted the relationship between trained experts and the public. By investigating the changing (power) relationships between these actors, it provides insight into the historical context in which ideas about healthy living developed and evolved. In particular, because they contrast the claims of trained, 'traditional' health experts with the assertions of other actors, the four chapters of this book are able to trace temporal shifts in ways of forging and maintaining authority, thereby offering a better understanding of the post-war dynamics of health expertise. This expansion and further complication of the historiography of the idealised healthy lifestyle is achieved by exploring two related themes: the changing relationship between trained health experts and their audiences, and the gradual emergence of health personalities as authorities on diet and exercise.

Points of departure

Focussing on post-war Dutch society, this dissertation builds on the work of (primarily) American, British, and Dutch scholars, mapping the complex cultural significance of lifestyle advice. Because discussions about health have always been complicated, and because a variety of actors have contributed to these debates, the work of these scholars spans the fields of food history, the history of sport and physical culture, the history of health and medicine, and cultural studies. The next two paragraphs will first explain how these four

2 See for instance the website of the Voedingscentrum ('Centre for Nutrition'), the organisation which succeeded the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau: https://www.voedingscentrum.nl/nl/service/vraag-en-antwoord/gezonde-voeding-en-voedingsstoffen/hoe-herken-je-betrouwbare-informatie-over-voeding-op-internet-.aspx (accessed: 18 October 2021).

disciplines yield important points of departure for this dissertation. Then, although this study is aimed at contributing to all four research traditions, I will explain how its overarching subject, the shifting characteristics of expertise in Dutch society, is of particular relevance to the history of health and medicine and the field of cultural studies.

Trained health experts and their audiences

The historiography of food is particularly relevant to this dissertation's first theme: the changing historical relationship between trained health experts and their audiences. Scholars in nutrition studies, fat studies, and food history have charted and problematised the cultural resonance of idealised notions of healthy eating in industrialised societies. They show how after World War II, a scientific consensus emerged that people's health was increasingly determined by lifestyle choices. By the early 1950s, medical experts fixated on people's rising body weight, which many of them saw as the result of 'bad' individual decisions around diet and exercise.[3] Previous research has established that in the post-war decades, these concerns were gradually picked up by politicians and government officials. In industrialised societies such as the U.S. and the Netherlands, these professionals, worried about the growth of public health expenditures, sought to effectuate broad changes in people's dietary choices.[4]

The role played by popular media in translating and broadcasting the views of trained experts and policymakers on body weight and healthy eating is an important theme in the literature. Thinness, as fat studies scholar Natalie Boero explains, was presented as an urgent, desirable goal in 'newspapers, television shows, and magazines'.[5] Journalists and editors turned *en masse* to the topic of healthy eating, with disciplined nutritional choices often presented as the path to getting 'in shape'. Boero, like others, also touches upon the increasingly powerful food industry, which produced its own commercialised

3 Annemarie de Knecht-van Eekelen, 'Het denken over vetten en cholesterol in de twintigste eeuw', in: Adel P. den Hartog (ed.), *De voeding van Nederland in de twintigste eeuw* (Wageningen: Wageningen Pers, 2001) 61-70, 63; Charlotte Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health* (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2013) 114.

4 Roel Pieterman, *Gewicht zit niet tussen je oren: Beleid en wetenschap in perspectief* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017) 44-45; Adele H. Hite, 'Nutritional Epidemiology of Chronic Disease and Defining "Healthy Diet"', *Global Food History* 4:2 (2018) 207-225, 212-213. DOI: 10.1080/20549547.2018.1498256.

5 Natalie Boero, *Killer Fat: Media, Medicine and Morals in the American "Obesity Epidemic"* (New Brunswick, NJ [Etc.]: Rutgers University Press, 2012) 3. In the Netherlands, such media also played a significant role. Anneke H. van Otterloo and Babette Sluijter, 'Naar variatie en gemak 1960-1990', in: Johan W. Schot et al. (eds.), *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. Volume III: Landbouw, voeding* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003), 280-295, 284.

narratives of healthy living. Making use of the ambiguity of the term 'health', multinationals developed and marketed new types of products, presenting their low-fat alternatives as the key to a healthier lifestyle.[6] Focusing on this pervasive promotion of ideas about nutrition in advertisements, commercials and in popular media, the scholarship on post-war advice on healthy eating tends to emphasise its inescapability.

Since the end of World War II, dietary recommendations and advice regarding physical exercise have often gone hand in hand. This explains why, although they form two separate historical subdisciplines, scholarship on the popularisation of physical exercise after 1945 displays similarities to the work of historians of nutrition. Several sport historians have shown how in the second half of the twentieth century medical experts and policymakers came to see the promotion of jogging, 'trimming', aerobics and fitness as a form of preventative health care.[7] Scholarly work on the history of fitness also puts a similar emphasis on the role of the mass media, in which sports and physical exercise were generally presented as important, 'healthy' practices.[8] Consequently, historians of the post-war fitness boom, like their colleagues in food history and nutrition studies, often focus on the discursive patterns and the (negative) effects of the historical appeals of medical experts and policymakers to increase people's fitness. Therefore, sport historians such as Stefan Scholl and Jürgen Martschukat treat the recent history of fitness as (partially) a story about 'values and norms'.[9]

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6 G.J. Bos et al., '85 jaar voedingsmiddelenadvertenties in Nederlandse tijdschriften', in: Annemarie de Knecht-van Eekelen and Marianne Stasse-Wolthuis (eds.), *Voeding in onze samenleving in cultuurhistorisch perspectief* (Alphen aan de Rijn/Brussels: Samsom Stafleu, 1987) 135-160, 153; Jessica Mudry, 'Nutrition, Health, and Food: "What Should I Eat?"', in: Kathleen Lebesco and Peter Naccarato (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Food and Popular Culture* (London/New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2018) 274-285, 280.

7 On the post-war political interest in sport and physical exercise in the U.S. and the Netherlands, see: John Hoberman, 'Sport and Political Doctrine in a Post-Ideological Age', in: Robert Edelman and Wayne Wilson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sport History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017) 29-44, 34; Harm Kaal, 'A Friendly Match: Sport and Political Culture in the Netherlands between the 1950s and 1970s', in: Paul Puschmann and Tim Riswick (eds.), *Building Bridges: Scholars, History and Historical Demography* (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2018) 216-236, 231.

8 Ruud Stokvis and Ivo Martijn van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier: De onweerstaanbare opkomst van de fitnesscultuur* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: De Arbeiderspers/Het Sporthuis, 2008) 221; Shelly McKenzie, *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013).

9 Stefan Scholl, 'Einleitung: Biopolitik und Sport in historischer Perspektive', in: Stefan Scholl (ed.), *Körperführung: Historische Perspektiven auf das Verhältnis von Biopolitik und Sport* (Frankfurt/New York, NY: Campus Verlag, 2018) 7-39, 8. Martschukat calls the history of fitness 'eine Geschichte der Werte und Normen, der Wissens- und Diskursordnungen, der Repräsentationen und Figurationen, der Technologien und Praktiken des Körpers'. Jürgen Martschukat, *Das Zeitalter der Fitness: Wie der Körper zum Zeichen für Erfolg und Leistung wurde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2020) Ch. 1.

The foundation for many of these critical studies by food historians and by historians of sport was laid in the late 1970s by political economist Robert Crawford. Building on (among others) the work of Michel Foucault,[10] Crawford critiqued the increasing representation of people's health as the logical outcome of 'good' and 'bad' individual lifestyle choices. In a landmark article from 1980, he posited that this belief, which he called healthism, was becoming a 'dominant ideology' in the U.S.[11] More recent critical studies of ideas about health, both from Anglophone and Dutch scholars, build on Crawford's insights, suggesting that the historical emergence of these individualist 'lifestyle politics' should be seen against a broader neoliberal turn against the welfare state.[12] Additionally, American fat studies scholars such as Sabrina Strings and Amy Farrell have shown how the healthist scrutiny of lifestyle and body weight can intersect with classist, sexist, racist, and ableist ideas.[13] Because people's habits regarding diet and exercise are to a large extent determined by structural inequalities,[14] their studies demonstrate, moralising norms about diet and exercise are often aimed at marginalised societal groups.[15] In these instances, idealised notions about lifestyle have often been employed for validating a punitive stance toward the Other: to draw a line between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor', or to explain the economic position of certain communities of colour.[16]

Because the historiography of dietary advice and that of physical exercise highlight the potential (negative) effects of the healthist ideology as well as its

10 Much of Foucault's work touches on these topics, but scholars often cite his work on bio-power and bio-politics: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1978) 140-141; Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège De France 1977-1978* (Basingstoke [Etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 16.

11 Robert Crawford, 'Healthism and the Medicalization of Everyday Life', *International Journal of Health Services* 10:3 (1980) 365-388, 369. DOI: 10.2190/3H2H-3xjn-3kay-G9ny.

12 Two Anglophone and two Dutch examples are: Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America*, 125-126; Christopher R. Mayes, *The Biopolitics of Lifestyle: Foucault, Ethics and Healthy Choices* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2015); Trudy Dehue, *Betere mensen: Over gezondheid als keuze en koopwaar* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Augustus, 2014) 233; Pieterman, *Gewicht zit niet*, 31.

13 Amy Erdman Farrell, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture* (New York, NY/London: New York University Press, 2011); Sabrina Strings, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2019).

14 David R. Williams, Jourdyn A. Lawrence and Brigette A. Davis, 'Racism and Health: Evidence and Needed Research', *Annual Review of Public Health* 40 (2019) 105-125, 108. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040218-043750;

15 Colleagues of the scholars in footnote 14 draw similar conclusions about Western European countries. See: Peter N. Stearns, *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2002) 194; Noortje van Amsterdam, 'Big Fat Inequalities, Thin Privilege: An Intersectional Perspective on "Body Size"', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 20:2 (2013) 155-169, 160-162. DOI: 10.1177/1350506812456461.

16 Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America*, 139-144.

broad dissemination, both evoke an image of a transnational discourse on living healthily and maintaining a thin body as an inescapable element of daily life. However, the continued focus on the dominance of the healthy lifestyle debate by food historians, fat studies scholars, and sport historians limits our awareness of the contingency of this changing debate and our understanding of the historical actors involved. Although it is understandable that some authors present the societal fixation on body weight as a 'cult of thinness', such characterisations can too easily give off the impression of a single, straightforward narrative, delivered by resolute medical experts and picked up by eager journalists and editors.[17] Such a narrative, however, does little to explain why, despite its perceived dominance in industrialised societies, the advice of lifestyle educators for staying fit and slim seems to have had only a modest impact on the everyday practices of populations.[18] Ultimately, therefore, it leaves us wondering about the historical relationship between trained experts and their public.

One way to explore this relationship further is through the history of people's ambivalence about, and resistance to, mainstream ideas about lifestyle. As described, there is an extensive academic tradition in critiquing health advice, going back at least fifty years. Yet much of this work does not touch upon the history of *popular* resistance against idealised notions of healthy living and against the ambiguous effects of these ideals.[19] Certainly, there is a modest historiography on the rise of feminist activists' protest against the ideals of health professionals in the 1970s and 1980s, a product of (mainly) American scholarship.[20] But while studies on 'healthy lifestyle' debates often emphasise the vital role of mass media, these works of feminist history have

17 Sharlene Hesse-Biber, *Am I Thin Enough Yet? The Cult of Thinness and the Commercialization of Identity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996). Abigail Saguy is among the authors who borrows Sharlene Hesse-Biber's phrase. Abigail C. Saguy, *What's Wrong with Fat?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 23.

18 NCD Risk Factor Collaboration, 'Worldwide Trends in Body-Mass Index, Underweight, Overweight, and Obesity from 1975 to 2016: A Pooled Analysis of 2416 Population-Based Measurement Studies in 128.9 Million Children, Adolescents, and Adults', *The Lancet* 390:10113 (2017) 2627-2642, 2629. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(17)32129-3.

19 With regards to the field of fat studies, Elena Levy-Navarro has called for more histories of the experiences of the 'defiantly and happily fat'. Elena Levy-Navarro, 'Fattening Queer History: Where Does Fat History Go from Here?', in: Esther Rothblum and Sondra Solovay (eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader* (New York, NY/London: New York University Press, 2009) 15-22, 16.

20 E.g. Zora Simic, 'Fat as a Feminist Issue: A History', in: Helen Hester and Caroline Walters (eds.), *Fat Sex: New Directions in Theory and Activism* (London: Routledge, 2015) 15-35; Greta Rensenbrink, 'Fat's No Four-Letter Word: Fat Feminism and Identity Politics in the 1970s and 1980s', in: Elena Levy-Navarro (ed.), *Historicizing Fat in Anglo-American Culture* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2010) 213-243. While historical scholarship on fat (feminist) activism outside of the U.S. does exist, it is sparser. One notable example is: Charlotte Cooper, *Fat Activism: A Radical Social Movement* (Bristol: HammerOn Press, 2016) 140-161.

little to say about the publicity given to the divergent activist movements they identify. The effect is that little has been written about media coverage of historical forms of resistance against the idealised healthy lifestyle.[21] This is regretful, as such an approach would enhance awareness of the cultural resonance of these forms of resistance and thereby help to understand the ostensibly modest impact of health educators on the practices of their audiences. Hence, the existing literature could – and should – be deepened by a further exploration of interactions between trained experts and the public.

It should be noted that this fraught relationship between (medical) experts and the public has been addressed in the academic literature, not in the least in scholarship on the history of public health from the Low Countries. Historian Klasien Horstman has noted a growing distrust between experts and the Dutch public, a development she places in the final decades of the twentieth century, which corresponds with trends in Britain and the U.S.[22] The scholarly consensus is that in this era, the authority granted to traditional experts became more complex and more conditional.[23] But while many authors problematise the historical interactions between trained health experts and the public, their relationship remains underexplored. This dissertation aims to provide a clearer picture of this relationship, helping to elevate our understanding of the way trained experts have historically attempted to forge and maintain a position of authority.[24] Because the changing role of expertise is relevant to the relationship between trained experts and the public as well as to the growing prominence of health personalities, I will return to this subject at the end of the following paragraph.

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21 The monographs of Jessica Mudry and Natalie Boero are exceptions, both devoting a chapter to resistance to dominant health narratives covered by popular American media in the 1990s. Jessica Mudry, *Measured Meals: Nutrition in America* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009) Ch. 4; Boero, *Killer Fat*, Ch. 2.

22 Klasien Horstman, 'Struggling with Science and Democracy: Public Health and Citizenship in the Netherlands', in: Frank Huisman and Harry Oosterhuis (eds.), *Health and Citizenship: Political Cultures of Health in Modern Europe* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014) 191-208, 202. On British and American trends, respectively: Alex Mold et al., *Placing the Public in Public Health in Post-War Britain, 1948-2012* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019) 9; Nicolas Rasmussen, *Fat in the Fifties: America's First Obesity Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019) 127.

23 Wiebe E. Bijker, Roland Bal and Ruud Hendriks, *The Paradox of Scientific Authority: The Role of Scientific Advice in Democracies* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 2009) 163-164; Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters and Kaat Wils, 'Introduction: Performing Expertise', in: Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters and Kaat Wils (eds.), *Scientists' Expertise as Performance: Between State and Society, 1860-1960* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015) 1-13, 2.

24 An approach coinciding with a (renewed) interest in patient experiences in medical historiography. Frank Huisman, Joris Vandendriessche and Kaat Wils, 'Blurring Boundaries: Towards a Medical History of the Twentieth Century', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132:1 (2017) 3-15, 10. DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10306.

Health personalities

The second theme of this dissertation is the gradual emergence of what I conceptualise as health personalities: famous individuals who became prominent cultural authorities on lifestyle. An important point of departure for this study's discussion of these health personalities is the central role of the body in both dieting and exercise, which I will now briefly explain.

The emergence of healthism in countries like the U.S. and the Netherlands has made the belief that bodies are predominantly shaped by lifestyle choices more commonplace.[25] Although ideas about the perfect physique and (representations of) the bodily practices of eating and physical exercise have long been linked, the post-war perception that lifestyle was one of the fundamental determinants for health, meant that more and more people in industrialised societies came to see beauty as the product of individual choices. One consequence was that representations of healthy living – for example an image of a slender individual engaged in physical exercise – almost always carried implications of health *and* beauty, in particular for women.[26] Correspondingly, people's complex motivations for what they see as healthy lifestyle choices are often influenced by beauty ideals.

The promise that a body can be (re)constructed through disciplined lifestyle choices is a cultural narrative that has seen widespread scholarly critique. Sociologists and philosophers have connected this promise to the logic of capitalism, underscoring the influence of commercial parties in debates around healthy living. Sociologist Jean Baudrillard, for instance, shed light on the ostensible commodification of the human body, claiming that it has become the 'finest consumer object'.[27] Certainly, the lifestyle products of commercial parties have encouraged people (now and in the past) to continuously invest into constructing and reconstructing their physique. As Roberta Sassatelli, a sociologist specialised in food consumption and bodily practices, explains, many people appear to hope for a return on these *somatic investments* beyond the purely physical.[28] As such, it is the promise

25 Samantha Kwan and Jennifer Graves, *Framing Fat: Competing Constructions in Contemporary Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ [Etc.]: Rutgers University Press, 2013) 47; Van Amsterdam, 'Big Fat Inequalities', 161.

26 Some scholars separate people's motivations for bodily practices such as physical exercise or dieting. Stokvis and Van Hilvoorde, for instance, categorise people's motivations for engaging in physical exercise as either appearance-based (because they want to 'lose weight') or health-based ('their doctor told them to'). However, in my opinion, the aforementioned studies clearly indicate that people often conflate aesthetic and health-based reasons. Stokvis and Van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier*, 212-213.

27 Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London, 1998) 148.

28 Roberta Sassatelli, 'Self and Body', in: Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 634-652, 643.

of a transformation of both the body and the self which is being 'sold' by popular representations of healthy living. In this way, sociologists such as Sassatelli appear to move away from the more pessimistic interpretations of scholars in the 1970s and 1980s, which tended to represent people's desire for healthy, 'fit' bodies as resulting in merely ascetic regimens. Instead, she explains, a health product (and I would say representations of the idealised healthy lifestyle in general) often hints at an equilibrium between freedom and discipline:

> It is through the appropriation of otherwise fairly standardized, distant services and goods that consumers may cope with, and thus effectively come to terms with and reframe, ideals of the body and self. Rather than removing ideologies of asceticism and self-negation and replace them with ideologies of liberation and hedonism, commercial culture has promoted the combination of hedonism and asceticism through commodities that promise balance.[29]

Correspondingly, in an article titled 'Foucault goes to Weight Watchers', philosopher Cressida Heyes claims that the popularisation of healthy lifestyles both 'cultivates docile bodies' while at the same time granting new affordances. In the context of this dissertation's second theme, it is relevant that she, too, focuses on a commercial organisation instead of trained experts and policymakers. On the one hand, Heyes finds, the Weight Watchers program is a 'particularly extreme version of panoptic culture'.[30] However at the same time, she explains, looking at people's attempts at healthier living through this cynical lens fails to account for potential *positive* effects of self-care that focuses on the body.[31] The 'process of transformation itself', she posits, 'invents new capacities and invites reflection [...]'.[32] When analysing (historical) representations of healthy lifestyle practices, therefore, we must be aware that they encourage self-monitoring, but that they also invite people

29 Idem, 640.

30 Cressida J. Heyes, 'Foucault Goes to Weight Watchers', *Hypatia* 21:2 (2006) 126-149, 134. DOI: 10.1111/j.1527-2001.2006.tb01097.x. Elizabeth Kissling's close reading of celebrity diet and fitness books is similar to Heyes' analysis, but her conclusions about the books' 'rhetoric of sin' is less optimistic. Elizabeth Arveda Kissling, 'I Don't Have a Great Body, but I Play One on TV: The Celebrity Guide to Fitness and Weight Loss in the United States', *Women's Studies in Communication* 18:2 (1995) 209-216, 214. DOI: 10.1080/07491409.1995.11089800.

31 Caused, in part, by what historian Judith Allen calls Foucault's 'relentless gender blindness'. Judith A. Allen, 'The Body and the Senses', in: Sasha Handley, Rohan McWilliam and Lucy Noakes (eds.), *New Directions in Social and Cultural History* (London/New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2018) 65-83, 69.

32 Heyes, 'Foucault Goes to Weight Watchers', 141.

to see their body as a project to work on in order to garner a form of cultural capital.[33]

The observation that in industrialised societies, people are encouraged to think of their body as a project to perfect is central to this dissertation's analysis of the growing prominence of health personalities in the Netherlands after World War II. These famous individuals, in particular, increasingly featured in narratives about finding the balance between freedom and discipline in shaping one's body and one's self. Scholars in the fields of cultural studies and sport history have pointed out how well-known personalities are represented as embodying the right lifestyle choices.[34] Here, the role of professional athletes is especially significant: much more than just brand endorsers for food and physical exercise companies, they feature in popular media as a complex 'set of representations or discourses about the fashioning of the self'.[35] It is the aura of sport, with its 'dramatic immediacy', some scholars maintain, which gives these celebrities 'an important veneer of authenticity'.[36]

This dissertation aims to delve deeper into the ways in which the bodies of athletes have been central to their historical emergence as health personalities. Herein, it builds on the work of sport sociologists and sport historians such as Mary Jo Kane, Helen Jefferson Lenskyj and Toni Bruce. Their work, corroborated by Dutch scholars like Marjet Derks, demonstrates the potential meaning of representations of athletes: in the past as well as today, gendered images of sport celebrities and their athleticism have had

33 Shari L. Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs, *Body Panic: Gender, Health and the Selling of Fitness* (New York, NY [Etc.]: New York University Press, 2009) 179. Dworkin and Wachs mention Loïc Wacquant, who called this type of cultural capital 'bodily capital'. Loïc Wacquant, 'Pugs at Work: Bodily Capital and Bodily Labour among Professional Boxers', *Body & Society* 1:1 (1995) 65-93. DOI: 10.1177/1357034X95001001005.

34 Tania Lewis, *Smart Living: Lifestyle Media and Popular Expertise* (New York, NY [Etc.]: Peter Lang, 2008) 8-10. Barry Smart, *The Sport Star: Modern Sport and the Cultural Economy of Sporting Celebrity* (London/Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2005) 101.

35 Although Graeme Turner's article is about celebrities in general, his definition is particularly relevant for professional athletes. Graeme Turner, 'Approaching Celebrity Studies', *Celebrity Studies* 1:1 (2010) 11-20, 17. DOI: 10.1080/19392390903519024.

36 David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson, 'Introduction: Sport Celebrities, Public Culture, and Private Experience', in: David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson (eds.), *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2001) 1-19, 8.

both restricting as well as emancipatory implications.[37] These authors leave some room, however, for exploring how historical, commercialised images of athletes' bodies could represent new, healthy ways of living. Therefore, an important reason for focusing on these individuals is to further investigate the ways in which their physiques could represent different lifestyle choices – in particular for women.

However, there is a second reason for drawing attention to the historical representation of athletes' bodies. The emergence of celebrity athletes as lifestyle experts has implications for the previously mentioned literature on the ambiguous position in industrialised societies of more 'traditional', trained experts. Examining these health personalities helps to understand the dissertation's overarching subject: the historical process in which expertise is produced and maintained, or what media studies scholar Tania Lewis has called the 'shifting ground of cultural authority'.[38] As such, it brings together the historiography of medicine and science and the field of cultural studies.

As noted, historians of medicine and/or science observe a post-war change in the position of the trained expert. Although most do not go as far as declaring the 'death of the expert',[39] a consensus appears to have been reached that the past 75 years have been difficult for 'traditional' authorities on health. This has led to nuanced discussions of the demands placed on experts with (academic) training, who have increasingly had to 'perform' expertise to divergent audiences.[40] But while historians of health and medicine and historians of science both deal with the effectiveness of trained experts, they tend not to discuss their subjects' competitors, the famous health personalities who also vied for the attention of the public. This is regrettable, because the emergence of these individuals, traced by scholars in cultural studies, may be particularly relevant to the shifting characteristics of expertise. An integrated approach contrasting these two different authorities on the healthy lifestyle will allow for exploring how the celebritisation and mediatisation of

37 Mary Jo Kane and Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, 'Media Treatment of Female Athletes: Issues of Gender and Sexualities', in: Lawrence A. Wenner (ed.), *MediaSport* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998) 186-201, 200-201; Toni Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times: Sportswomen and Media Representation in the Third Wave', *Sex Roles* 74:7-8 (2016) 361-76, 365-369. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-015-0497-6; Marjet Derks, 'Nette vrouwen zweten niet. Sportvrouwen van marginalisering naar profilering', in: Martine S. Prange and Martijn Oosterbaan (eds.), *Vrouwenvoetbal in Nederland: Spiegel En katalysator van maatschappelijke veranderingen* (Utrecht/Amsterdam: Klement/Atria, 2017) 37-59, 54-55.

38 Tania Lewis, 'Branding, Celebritization and the Lifestyle Expert', *Cultural Studies* 24:4 (2010) 580-598, 581. DOI: 10.1080/09502386.2010.488406.

39 Thomas M. Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

40 Vandendriessche, Peeters and Wils, 'Introduction: Performing Expertise', 3-4.

industrial societies has changed the ways in which expertise is constructed and upheld. Particularly relevant is the representation of celebrity athletes as the visible and tangible end-result of 'good' as well as 'bad' lifestyle choices in popular media, which hints at their ability to claim a form of experience-based knowledge unavailable to most trained experts. These historical claims of *embodied* expertise, and their relation to the knowledge of trained experts, demand further research.[41]

Operationalisation

To examine representations of the healthy lifestyle in the Netherlands and the changing role of experts in this domain, the four chapters of this dissertation are divided in two pairs. The theme of the first pair of chapters is the increasingly fraught position of 'traditional' health experts. The first chapter, titled 'Struggling Over Healthy Lifestyles: The Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau and the Individualisation of Public Health (1940-1980)', examines the interactions between trained experts, the Dutch government, and the food industry, and delves into the complicated relationship between employees of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau and its audience. Its purpose is to examine the observations of trained experts about the efficacy of their own work and about their interactions with the public. The chapter concludes with the bureau's adoption of a healthist narrative the 1970s, which placed the responsibility for the health of the public into the hands of individuals.

The second chapter, titled 'Resisting the Idealised "Healthy Lifestyle": Medical Mavericks, Fat Activists, and Couch Potatoes in U.S. and Dutch newspapers (1967-1989)', looks at the relationship between American and Dutch debates on healthy living to further analyse the reception of traditional experts' lifestyle instructions. It will show how popular media called attention to various 'resisters' for challenging existing norms about diet and exercise. Its aim is to trace the emergence of a transnational cacophony of lifestyle advice, and to contextualise the increasingly ambiguous role of trained experts in public debates about health.

The second pair of case studies explores a second, related theme: the gradual emergence of health personalities as new authorities on lifestyle

41 On experience-based expertise, see: Katrina-Louise Moseley, 'Slimming One's Way to a Better Self? Weight Loss Clubs and Women in Britain, 1967-1990', *Twentieth Century British History* 31:4 (2020) 427-453, 440. DOI: 10.1093/tcbh/hwz034; Lewis, 'Branding, Celebritization and the Lifestyle Expert', 581-582.

choices. The first of the two chapters, titled '"Strong as a Bear, Gracious as a Gazelle": The Expansion of Female Athleticism in Dutch Sports Magazines and Advertisements for Sports Food and Beverages, 1960-1980', provides a closer look at representations of female athleticism in advertisements and editorial content found in Dutch sport magazines. As it centres these gendered texts and images, it is intended to show the attraction of sport to manufacturers of lifestyle products, and to establish the increasing relevance of athletic bodies to the marketisation of lifestyle trends.

The final chapter, titled 'Representing Embodied Expertise: Anorexia and the Celebrity Athlete's Lifestyle Advice', develops this idea further and brings the dissertation to the year 2020. It traces the post-sport career of athlete Leontien van Moorsel, whose transformation into an experience-based expert on lifestyle, and more specifically, eating disorders, led to a complex personal narrative about healthy living. Its objective is to analyse the significance of the body in historical representations of celebrity athletes as lifestyle experts. But it also delves into where celebrity experts and trained health experts meet, exploring how popular media represent their evolving relationship.

The four case studies are based on a wide variety of sources that help to clarify the positions or motivations of societal actors and the interactions between these actors. As these case studies will show more extensively, between the years 1940 and 2020, representations of healthy living found their way into popular media (sport magazines, sport biographies, national newspapers, advertisements for sport and food products, television and radio shows), into brochures and reports of (government) agencies in health education, and into popular surveys.

More information about the sources used, and a more detailed justification for their selection, can be found in the introduction of each of the case studies. However, I will shortly discuss the relationship between actors and 'their' sources here. As a start, it should be noted that the boundaries between the societal groups sketched out above were by their very nature blurred. For example, health educators at government agencies sometimes also fulfilled the role of scientific expert, contributing to nutrition research in academic journals. Similarly, a celebrity athlete could both be a promoter as well as a user of a health product. Hence, actors had multiple, sometimes conflicting roles in the production and dissemination of lifestyle advice. Correspondingly, in the sources used for this study actors not only 'speak' from complex positions (as scientist-government official-consumer, for instance), but there are almost always a variety of actors' utterances to be

found in a source, occasionally from conflicting viewpoints.
Often, a historical representation of actors' ideas about, or conceptualisations of, healthy (and unhealthy) living was produced and disseminated by one group of actors without further mediation.[42] For example, the brochures by the aforementioned Nutrition Education Bureau (in chapter 1) were written by the bureau's health educators, and the celebrity athlete (in chapter 4) was able to communicate her views on health directly through radio and television interviews, even if these were sometimes edited.

Other representations are more indirect, because they do not express ideas or conceptualisations of the producer, but of a third party. This is particularly true for the broadest and most ambiguous 'actor' of this dissertation: the public. In many sources, such as government brochures, television shows, and advertisements, this public features solely as an imagined audience. It has been pointed out that it is notoriously difficult, yet important, for (cultural) historians to find out in which ways this audience managed to 'speak back'.[43] In this dissertation, I employ two methods to gage the reception of health advice. First, by considering the implied audience of the brochures of educators, advertisements, newspaper articles, et cetera, I evaluate the reach and the efficacy of these materials. After all, in their search for effective messaging, creators take heed of this (implied) audience, making the public a co-creator of the representations found in sources. Secondly, by looking at the different ways in which audiences interpreted, or *decoded*, representations of healthy living, I examine a more direct process through which they helped produce meaning.[44] I highlight indications of audiences' reactions, even if they are (selectively) represented by other actors, underlining the contested nature of lifestyle advice by showing instances where 'the public' reacts: through calls to information hotlines, letters to the editor, and popular surveys, supplemented with historical figures produced by (medical) experts about the historical lifestyle practices of the Dutch population.

Popular media such as magazines, newspapers, and radio and television shows have a prominent role in this study. Many actors helped create their 'own' media (e.g. feminist activist organisers' booklets in the second case

42 Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in: Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon (eds.), *Representation* (Los Angeles, CA [Etc.]: SAGE Publications, 2013; 2nd Edition), 1-59, 45. These representations are the textual and visual 'signs' for mental concepts.

43 Christine Grandy, 'Cultural History's Absent Audience', *Cultural and Social History* 16:5 (2019) 643-663, 649. DOI: 10.1080/14780038.2019.1680226; Mold et al., *Placing the Public*, 4.

44 Stuart Hall, 'Introduction', in: Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon (eds.), *Representation* (Los Angeles, CA [Etc.]: SAGE Publications, 2013; 2nd Edition) XXI.

study, commercial parties' advertisements in the third chapter) as vehicles to present their personal ideas and conceptualisations of healthy lifestyles, generally linking 'consumption to a wider project for creating forms of self-identity'.[45] Like other industrialised societies, however, the Netherlands 'mediatised' after World War II. While listening figures for radio grew and then stabilised, Dutch newspapers became 'more influential than ever', and television viewing rose by the decade.[46] By the 1960s, Dutch popular media were rapidly attaining a unique position as both a producer and a disseminator of ideas about health. In their work, journalists and editors had a double role: not only did they create their own representations of healthy living, they also functioned as a filter for the dissemination of ideas and conceptualisations of other actors, such as health educators, celebrity athletes, and activists. Because media selectively represent these ideas and conceptualisations, their position in the 'reconfiguration of lifestyle patterns' is critical.[47] In the period between 1940 and 2020, then, popular media, above anything or anyone else, both created their own narratives of how to take care of oneself *and* selectively presented the narratives of other actors.[48]

The source material, and thus the representations analysed in this study, are not representative of Dutch society as a whole. Most sources – particularly, but not exclusively, popular media – overlook the perspectives of certain societal groups. Because many mainstream health practices of the past 75 years – from taking diet pills to the jogging craze – caught on with people whose purchasing power increased disproportionally during the post-war 'golden era' of the Dutch economy,[49] the popular debate on these

45 David Bell and Joanne Hollows, 'Towards a History of Lifestyle', in: David Bell and Joanne Hollows (eds.), *Historicizing Lifestyle: Mediating Taste, Consumption and Identity from the 1900s to 1970s* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2006) 1-20, 5.

46 The quote is from: Pien van der Hoeven and Huub Wijfjes, 'Concentratie en kritische autonomie, 1950-2000', in: Huub Wijfjes and Frank Harbers (eds.), *De krant: Een cultuurgeschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2019) 246-289, 250. See also: Sonja de Leeuw, 'Televisie en actief publiek 1985-2000', in: Bert Hogenkamp, Sonja de Leeuw and Huub Wijfjes (eds.), *Een eeuw van beeld en geluid: Cultuurgeschiedenis van radio en televisie in Nederland* (Hilversum: Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, 2012) 230-273, 247; Huub Wijfjes, 'Radio als stemmingsregelaar 1960-2010', *Een eeuw van beeld en geluid: Cultuurgeschiedenis van radio en televisie in Nederland* (Hilversum: Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, 2012) 192-229, 219.

47 Stig Hjarvard, *The Mediatization of Culture and Society* (Abingdon/New York, NY: Routledge, 2013) 149.

48 Laurie Ouellette and James Hay, 'Makeover Television, Governmentality and the Good Citizen', *Continuum* 22:4 (2008) 471-484, 473. DOI: 10.1080/10304310801982930.

49 Kees J.M. Schuyt and Ed Taverne, *1950: Prosperity and Welfare* (Assen [Etc.]: Royal van Gorcum/ Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 251; Stokvis and Van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier*, 179.

health practices tended to exclude the poorer segments of society as well.[50] Therefore, not only were most representations of healthy living in newspaper articles or in government brochures produced by members of the middle class, but the imagined (and often much of the actual) audiences of these creators belonged to that same social group.[51] As will become apparent, even resistance to dominant ideas about healthy living came from a group in which the working class and/or people of colour were underrepresented.[52] Similarly, lifestyle advice in the past contained certain assumptions about the bodies of its audience. This was particularly true for instructions on physical exercise, which were often impossible to implement for people with disabilities. Hence, the source material largely ignores instances demonstrating the inaccessibility of lifestyle advice, like people's inability to do (strenuous) exercise, or the discriminatory practices of health clubs. I will reflect on these salient silences in the source material at appropriate points in the case studies.

The broad range of genres covered by the source materials, and their various forms (audio, video, text, and image) require more than a one-size-fits-all methodology. Consequently, this dissertation alternates between a detailed approach and a more 'distant' perspective. For example, the advertisements in the third case study have been subjected to a content analysis and a close reading to demonstrate diachronic trends in a small set of textual and visual sources. In contrast, the second case study utilises two vast newspaper datasets, Delpher and ProQuest Historical Newspapers, boasting millions of pages. Demanding a more selective approach, this material was explored using 473 different terms, resulting in complex Boolean searches.[53] Hence, as is more elaborately discussed in the individual case studies, the research methods have been tailored to the genre and form of a particular

50 In the U.S., research has shown that it was also the 'educated, affluent members' of society who showed a disproportionate interest in fitness and healthy eating. Muriel Gillick, 'Health Promotion, Jogging, and the Pursuit of the Moral Life', *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 9:3 (1984) 369-387, 379. DOI: 10.1215/03616878-9-3-369; Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America*, 103.

51 For an impression of post-war newspaper readers in the Netherlands, see: Nederlandse Stichting voor Statistiek, De Volkskrant/Trouw/De Telegraaf/Het Vrije Volk *Lezerskringonderzoek 1961* (The Hague: Nederlandse Stichting voor Statistiek, 1961). The first case study of this dissertation will have more to say about the audiences of (governmental) health education in the Netherlands.

52 In the past, various 'resisters' did point out the general effect of poverty on health, as will become clear in the second chapter.

53 The terms were devised to circumvent some of the well-known issues with the quality of Optical Character Recognition. See Tim Hitchcock, 'Confronting the Digital', *Cultural and Social History* 10:1 (2013) 9-23, 13. DOI: 10.2752/147800413X13515292098070. Historian Hieke Huistra has made similar use of the Delpher database, providing an impression of its (im)possibilities when using Boolean search. Hieke Huistra, 'Experts by Experience. Lay Users as Authorities in Slimming Remedy Advertisements, 1918-1939', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132:1 (2017) 126-148, 132-136. DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10313.

type of source.

This dissertation primarily focuses on the Netherlands. There are compelling reasons for centring Dutch society. First, from a global perspective, government health educators in the Netherlands were among the first and most prominent nutrition and lifestyle educators globally. Secondly, the career in lifestyle advice constructed by former athlete Leontien van Moorsel, the six-time Olympic medal winner central to the fourth chapter, is marked by an intensity and a longevity that stands out even from an international standpoint. More importantly, focusing on the Netherlands allows for assessing the transnational scope of trends in discussions about health. This dissertation both engages with (primarily) the Anglophone scholarly literature on health advice, and places ideas about health in their transnational context by examining the adoption, modification, and rejection of lifestyle advice in this part of Western Europe. The U.S., specifically, has been an important 'reference culture' for lifestyle representations in the Netherlands, as will become clear in the case studies.[54] This means that the focus on the Netherlands, with its close cultural ties with the United States,[55] allows for gauging the influence of these ideas about health beyond U.S. borders. Although the second case study is entirely geared towards analysing the relationship between American post-war debates about health and the history of Dutch lifestyle advice, all chapters are intended to place the actions of societal actors in the Netherlands within larger transnational trends. Furthermore, by examining the national peculiarities of the Netherlands, I contribute to the growing Dutch historiography on debates about health practices. I also aim to help bring European perspectives to the literature about post-war nutrition, sport, and fat activist history, which remain, according to some scholars, significantly U.S.-centric.[56] Additionally, this dissertation will expand the historiography on the changing relation between expertise and authority in the Netherlands, bringing together discussions particular to

54 For more on the U.S. and its status as reference culture in the Netherlands, see: Melvin Wevers, *Consuming America: A Data-Driven Analysis of the United States as a Reference Culture in Dutch Public Discourse on Consumer Goods, 1890-1990* (Utrecht University, PhD Thesis, 2017).

55 James C. Kennedy, 'Cultural Developments in the Dutch-American Relationship since 1945', in: Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith (eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009) 931-948, 932.

56 Christopher Young, Anke Hilbrenner and Alan Tomlinson, 'European Sport Historiography: Challenges and Opportunities', *Journal of Sport History* 38:2 (2011) 181-187; Jenny Ellison, 'From "FU" to "Be Yourself": Fat Activisms in Canada', in: Wendy Mitchinson, Deborah McPhail and Jenny Ellison (eds.), *Obesity in Canada: Critical Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016) 293-319, 293-294; Marie Cronqvist and Christoph Hilgert, 'Entangled Media Histories: The Value of Transnational and Transmedial Approaches in Media Historiography', *Media History* 23:1 (2017) 130-141, 132. DOI: 10.1080/13688804.2016.1270745.

Dutch historians of medicine and science with recent views on popular forms of expertise in cultural studies.

The four case studies roughly span the period of 1940 to 2020. Several lifestyle ideas and health practices discussed in this dissertation existed before the Second World War. Before 1940, the belief that body shape and health, and particularly thinness and health, were intricately related, was common in countries such as the Netherlands and the U.S.[57] Relatedly, athletes 'celebritised' in industrialised societies before World War II, and advertisers were already making use of the positive, healthful image of sport to promote a variety of products in the interwar period.[58] A large transnational collection of representations of healthy living, therefore, existed before the year 1940.

However, although lifestyle advice was not new, in the era after World War II it became more pervasive than ever. There was a difference in degree and in kind between the interwar period and the post-war decades regarding the circumstances and the content of health debates. The further growth of magazines and newspapers, combined with the rapid evolution of radio and television, resulted in a never-before-seen amount of media content on healthy living. More media also meant more advertisers, and with the Netherlands becoming a true 'consumer society' in the 1960s,[59] commercial parties quickly increased their R&D budgets to market lifestyle products.[60] Celebrity figures became increasingly prominent in popular media and advertisements, as they started to share more and more details about their healthy ways of living.

A fundamental difference between pre-war and post-war debates about healthy living is that governments in industrialised societies increasingly joined the conversation. In the Netherlands and elsewhere, the rise of

57 Hieke Huistra, 'Standardizing Slimness: How Body Weight Quantified Beauty in the Netherlands, 1870-1940', in: Claudia Liebelt, Sarah Böllinger and Ulf Vierke (eds.), *Beauty and the Norm: Debating Standardization in Bodily Appearance* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 45-72, 50; Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013) Ch. 7.

58 Nicholas Piercey, 'Investment, Advertisement, and Sponsorship: Business in Dutch Football 1910-1920', *Dutch Crossing* 35:1 (2011) 89-104, 93. DOI: 10.1179/155909011X12930363744223; Marjet Derks, 'Sportlife: Medals, Media and Life Courses of Female Dutch Olympic Champions, 1928-1940', *Historical Social Research*, 39 (2014), 144-162, 154. DOI: 10.12759/hsr.39.2014.1.144-162; Maria J. Veri, 'Got Athletes? The Use of Male Athlete Celebrity Endorsers in Early Twentieth-Century Dairy-Industry Promotions', *Journal of Sport History*, 43:3 (2016) 290-305. DOI: 10.5406/jsporthistory.43.3.0290.

59 Peter van Dam and Joost Jonker, 'Introduction: The Rise of Consumer Society', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132: 3 (2017) 3-10, 7. DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10396.

60 Hartmut Berghoff, Philip Scranton and Uwe Spiekermann, 'The Origins of Marketing and Market Research: Information, Institutions, and Markets', in: Hartmut Berghoff, Philip Scranton and Uwe Spiekermann (eds.), *The Rise of Marketing and Market Research* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 1-26, 4.

cardiovascular diseases and their perceived relationship with lifestyle choices,[61] meant that trained health experts and governmental organisations became increasingly convinced of the importance of preventative medicine.[62] Therefore, new institutions joined the debate about healthy living, backed by a growing number of scientific studies on the effects of nutrition and physical exercise.[63] Though certain forms of non-commercial nutrition education existed before World War II, the 1950s and 1960s saw an increasing quantity of contested lifestyle advice that went far beyond dietary choices. Lastly, for the first time resistance against dominant ideas about healthy living became mainstream in the 1970s and 1980s. Hence, as a cacophony of contradictory health advice emerged between 1940 and 2020, it forms a crucial period for the history of representations of healthy living.

61 Elisabet Helsing, 'The History of Nutrition Policy', *Nutrition Reviews* 55:11 (1997) S1-S3, S1. DOI: 10.1111/j.1753-4887.1997.tb01569.x; Annemarie de Knecht-van Eekelen and Anneke H. van Otterloo, 'What the Body Needs: Developments in Medical Advice, Nutritional Science and Industrial Production in the Twentieth Century', in: Alexander Fenton (ed.), *Order and Disorder. The Health Implications of Eating and Drinking in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000) 112-144, 122

62 On the interest of the Dutch government, see: Ruurd F. van der Heide, 'Voedingsbeleid: De consument tussen overheid en bedrijfsleven', in: Adel P. den Hartog (ed.), *De voeding van Nederland in de twintigste eeuw: Balans van honderd jaar werken aan voeding en gezondheid* (Wageningen: Wageningen Pers, 2001) 145-158, 149; Maikel Waardenburg and Maarten van Bottenburg, 'Sport Policy in the Netherlands', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 5:3 (2013) 465-475, 468. DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2013.796566; Pieterman, *Gewicht zit niet*, 37-79.

63 Adel P. den Hartog, 'The Diffusion of Nutritional Knowledge: Public Health, the Food Industry and Scientific Evidence in the Netherlands in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in: Derek J. Oddy and Lydia Petráňová (eds.), *The Diffusion of Food Culture in Europe from the Late Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (Prague: Praha Academia Publishers, 2005) 282-294, 286.

Chapter 1

Struggling over Healthy Lifestyles: The Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau and the Individualisation of Public Health (1940-1980)[1]

BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review 136:1 (2021) 4-32.
DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10672.

1 The content of the four chapters of this dissertation has not been changed since their publication as articles. Minor exceptions are changes in the layout of tables and figures, slight changes in wording (e.g. 'chapter' instead of 'article') and changes to footnotes to improve the dissertation's coherence. The most significant change can be found in the fourth chapter, where author-date citations have been changed to footnotes to fit in with the style of the rest of the thesis.

Abstract

In the second half of the twentieth century, advice on healthy living became pervasive in Western societies. While scholars have shown how the output of health educators echoed scientific consensus and ideas about 'good citizenship', the impact of their interactions with government and food industry representatives, and especially their complicated relationship with audiences, remains underexplored. This chapter centres the experiences of the staff of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau – now known as the Centre for Nutrition ('Voedingscentrum') – by examining health educators' own observations about the efficacy of their work. Using sources such as internal guidelines, surveys, minutes of meetings, and annual reports, it demonstrates how the bureau struggled to position itself towards government ministries and commercial parties. Furthermore, it shows how unsuccessful attempts to reach the general population frustrated educators, and proposes that these struggles partially explain the transformation of the bureau's lifestyle advice in the 1970s into a 'healthist' narrative about the responsibility of individuals. Hence, by analysing the complex interactions between health educators and other actors – in particular their audience – this chapter sheds light on the historical development of the genre of lifestyle advice.

Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, advice on healthy living became pervasive in Western societies. Convinced that people's rising body weight and sedentary lifestyles were detrimental to their well-being, health educators disseminated guidelines on dietary choices and physical exercise.[2] In the Netherlands and in other countries, these instructions increasingly treated people as independent consumers, whose personal lifestyle choices shaped public health. While this way of thinking was not new,[3] in the mid-1970s, the moralisation of personal health intensified significantly.[4] In critical nutrition studies and fat studies, scholars have identified the problematic effects of such narratives,[5] arguing that the advice given by health educators constituted a form of biopolitics.[6] According to these critical perspectives, a significant consequence of the pronounced 'healthist' discourse of the 1970s was the further stigmatisation of the body weight of individuals, which intersected with existing sexist, racist, and classist ideas.[7]

2 Ulrike Thoms, 'Learning from America? The Travels of German Nutritional Scientists to the USA in the Context of the Technical Assistance Program of the Mutual Security Agency and its Consequences for West German Nutritional Policy', *Food & History* 2:2 (2004) 117-152, 147-148. DOI: 10.1484/J.FOOD.2.300100; Mark W. Bufton, 'British Expert Advice on Diet and Heart Disease, c. 1945-2000', in: Virginia Berridge (ed.), *Making Health Policy: Networks in Research and Policy after 1945* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2005) 125-148, 131; Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007) 38-50.

3 Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013) 19; Christianne Smit, *De volksverheffers. Sociaal hervormers in Nederland en de wereld, 1870-1914* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2015) 253-337.

4 Robert Crawford, 'Healthism and the Medicalization of Everyday Life', *International Journal of Health Services* 10:3 (1980) 365-388. DOI: 10.2190/3H2H-3XJN-3KAY-G9NY; Friedrich Schorb, 'Fat Politics in Europe: Theorizing on the Premises and Outcomes of European Anti-"Obesity-Epidemic" Policies', *Fat Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Body Weight and Society* 2:1 (2013) 3-16, 8. DOI: 10.1080/21604851.2012.654722; Klasien Horstman, 'Struggling with Science and Democracy: Public Health and Citizenship in the Netherlands', in: Frank Huisman and Harm Oosterhuis (eds.), *Health and Citizenship: Political Cultures of Health in Modern Europe* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014) 191-208, 192.

5 For example: Charlotte Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food & Health* (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2013); Adele H. Hite, 'Nutritional Epidemiology of Chronic Disease and Defining "Healthy Diet"', *Global Food History* 4:2 (2018) 207-225. DOI: 10.1080/20549547.2018.1498256; Alexandra Brewis and Amber Wutich, *Lazy, Crazy, and Disgusting: Stigma and the Undoing of Global Health* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019) 102-104.

6 Christopher R. Mayes and Donald B. Thompson, 'What Should We Eat? Biopolitics, Ethics, and Nutritional Scientism', *Journal of Bioethical Enquiry* 12:4 (2015) 587-599, 588. DOI: 10.1007/s11673-015-9670-4. Mayes and Thompson cite Michel Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France* 1977-1978 (New York, NY: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2007).

7 E. Melanie DuPuis, 'Angels and Vegetables: A Brief History of Food Advice in America', *Gastronomica* 7:3 (2007) 34-44, 39-41. DOI: 10.1525/gfc.2007.7.3.34; Natalie Boero, *Killer Fat: Media, Medicine and Morals in the American "Obesity Epidemic"* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012) 52-55; Hite, 'Nutritional Epidemiology', 212, 218.

However, this focus on the healthist implications of lifestyle advice limits our understanding of health educators as historical actors themselves. Because their instructions are often presented as the logical product of ideas about 'good citizenship' and scientific consensus, educators are treated as a somewhat isolated group, with a significant amount of agency. While some research examines the interactions between health educators and representatives of government and the food industry,[8] it is particularly the complex relationship between these lifestyle educators and the general population – their principal target audience – that remains underexplored. Therefore, this chapter centres the experiences of educators themselves, to examine if, and how, their perceptions of (their relationship with) government officials, the food industry, and especially their target audience shaped their instructions. By investigating educators' own observations about the reception of their work, it aims to facilitate a deeper understanding of the genre of lifestyle advice, and the developments that led to the start of its transformation in the 1970s.

To analyse lifestyle educators' changing perception of their target audience in the post-war era, I focus on the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau ('Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding', now known as the Centre for Nutrition, or 'Voedingscentrum'). The archives of this bureau allow for an analysis of detailed material on the attitudes and reflections of nutrition educators, which is rare in both the Dutch and the international literature.[9] Founded in 1941 and nominally an independent foundation from 1956 onwards, the bureau was set up and principally funded by the Dutch government to encourage healthy eating habits among the general population.[10] In reality, its ambitions went far beyond diet, as it tried to improve public health by promoting broad lifestyle changes. There is good reason for focusing on the Netherlands, since the country played a pioneering role in the history of European nutrition education. Not only did several Dutch nutrition experts join the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition of the League of Nations (1935-1937) and the FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee

8 For example: Nestle, *Food Politics;* Gyorgy Scrinis, *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013); Biltekoff, *Eating Right*.

9 It appears the only Dutch exception is Adel den Hartog's overview of the bureau's wartime efforts: Adel P. den Hartog, 'Nutrition Education in Times of Food Shortages and Hunger: War and Occupation in the Netherlands, 1939-1945', in: Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Rachel Duffett and Alain Drouard (eds.), *Food and War in Twentieth Century Europe* (Farnham: Routledge, 2011) 183-198.

10 Its original name, 'Voorlichtingsbureau van den Voedingsraad', was changed in 1956. National Archive, Stichting Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding, 2.11.96, Inventory number (hereafter 'NA, 2.11.96, Inv.') 15: Board meeting of 3 November 1965.

on Nutrition (1948 to date), but the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau itself also aspired to be a global leader in education methods and material.[11] From an international perspective, the bureau's high ambitions, broad scope and comparatively early start make it a compelling target for studying the changing attitude of lifestyle educators to their audience.

The source material used for this chapter can be divided into three categories. First, I examined minutes of board meetings and advisory board meetings, and internal guidelines and surveys. These allow for a look 'behind the scenes'. Both boards discussed, among other things, new methods in education and ways to maintain an (inter)national network. The second category of sources consists of communications from the bureau to external health professionals: its yearly reports, and a selection of articles published by bureau staff in *Voeding* (the *Netherlands Journal of Nutrition*, 1939-1998).[12] The former contain statistics on material that was published by the bureau, and reported on contacts made with Dutch health professionals, foreign experts, and their audience. In addition to being published in *Voeding*, the yearly reports were sent to ministers, schools for home economics, and consumer and women's organisations. The third type of source comprises promotional material geared directly towards the general population: press releases, leaflets and two films. As this article focuses on the changing attitude of the bureau towards its target audience, the first two categories of sources are most pertinent to its narrative. This focus also means that sources pertaining the bureau's long-term goals were of more interest to this research than those aimed at passing pursuits of the bureau – such as brochures on growing beets, or pamphlets about hygiene in industrial kitchens.

The chapter roughly spans the period of 1940 to 1980. This periodisation is crucial, as insight into the period of 1940-1980 helps to understand health educators' evolving perception of their target audience, and more specifically their changing approach in the 1970s. The first two sections explain bureau staff's perception of the parameters within which they worked. The first section contextualises the foundation of the bureau and sketches its initial post-war ambitions. The second provides a short analysis of how the bureau

11 In this chapter, the 'bureau' itself features as an actor. This is the product of the – mostly anonymous – source material. NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 18: Verslag van een dienstreis naar Londen.

12 The journal and the bureau worked in 'close cooperation'. 'Verslag van de werkzaamheden van het voorlichtingsbureau van den voedingsraad gedurende het dienstjaar 1945' (hereafter 'Yearly DNEB Report 1945'), *Verslagen en Mededelingen betreffende de Volksgezondheid* (hereafter *VMBV*) (1946) 23-40, 24. Any original article involving a meta perspective on the methods and purposes of nutrition education, plus any article about sport and physical exercise, was selected for this research (83 articles, 1941-1980). In 1998, the journal merged with another publication, and its name was changed to *Voeding Nu*.

conceived its evolving relationships with two actors, the Dutch government ministries and the food industry. Then, the chapter's last three sections examine the bureau's work within the perceived parameters, zooming in on its complex relationship with its target audience. They show how the bureau conceptualised and addressed the population of the Netherlands, and how the reflexive approach and the constantly evolving methods of educators could not prevent their increasing frustrations in trying to reach and influence their audience. The chapter ends with the second half of the 1970s, when the disillusionment of bureau staff led, in part, to a lasting change in the way nutrition educators approached the population.

The foundation and the ambitions of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau

In many European countries, the period between the two world wars was one of rising governmental concern about nutrition.[13] The growing number of malnourished individuals – a consequence of the Great Depression – showed an increasing need for a comprehensive approach to food policy. This, along with the discovery of vitamins, gave a clear impulse to nutrition education.[14] Paradoxically, the economic crisis restrained government funding. Therefore, European initiatives for governmental nutrition education remained few, even by the end of the 1930s. In countries such as the UK and the Netherlands, nutrition science and education were underfunded before the Second World War, and the Dutch government agencies concerned with nutrition, such as the Health Council, saw several budget cuts.[15] Home economists in the Netherlands did receive subsidies for nutrition education in the 1930s, but they targeted specific subgroups of the population.[16] This is why, as late as 1937, the League of Nations called on national governments to devise a comprehensive food policy.[17]

13 Joseph L. Barona Vilar, *The Problem of Nutrition: Experimental Science, Public Health and Economy in Europe 1914-1945* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010) 17.

14 Kenneth J. Carpenter, 'A Short History of Nutritional Science: Part 3 (1912-1944)', *Journal of Nutrition* 133:10 (2003) 3023-3032. DOI: 10.1093/jn/133.10.3023.

15 David F. Smith, 'Nutrition Science and the Two World Wars', in: David F. Smith (ed.), *Nutrition in Britain: Science, Scientists and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 1997) 142-165, 150, 154; René Rigter, *Met raad en daad. De geschiedenis van de gezondheidsraad 1902-1985* (Erasmus University Rotterdam, PhD Thesis, 1992) 74-76.

16 Den Hartog, 'Nutrition Education', 184; Pim Huijnen, *De belofte van vitamines: Voedingsonderzoek tussen universiteit, industrie en overheid 1918-1945* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011) 117.

17 Elisabet Helsing, 'The History of Nutrition Policy', *Nutrition Reviews* 55:11 (1997) S1-S3, S1. DOI: 10.1111/j.1753-4887.1997.tb01569.x.

This appeal was picked up by a small group of Dutch officials. Cornelis van den Berg, Director-General of Public Health, felt that the Dutch Health Council was not equipped to treat food issues with the seriousness they deserved, and strove to establish a council centred on nutrition.[18] Talks about creating a Nutrition Council had been underway prior to World War II, but after the German invasion in May 1940, Leendert Kersbergen – the director of the Health Council – acted swiftly. Just twelve days after the invasion, the new Nutrition Council held its first meeting.[19] Originally, nutrition education was to be the task of a subcommittee of the Nutrition Council, but by the autumn of 1940, it had become evident that this sizeable undertaking demanded the establishment of a separate bureau.[20] In 1941, the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau was founded (its official name being Education Bureau of the Nutrition Council, ('Voorlichtingsbureau van den Voedingsraad'). It was subsidised by the State Bureau for the Food Supply in Times of War ('Rijksbureau voor de Voedselvoorziening in Oorlogstijd') and housed in The Hague, in the same building as the Health Council and the Nutrition Council.

In a relatively short time, a small group of government officials had created an infrastructure for Dutch nutrition policies. These initiators often took on roles as nutrition scientists and educators that blurred the lines between academia and the government.[21] One notable example is the prolific Matthieu J.L. Dols (1902-1980), who was intricately involved in the foundation of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau. After the Second World War, he would go on to become director of the Nutrition Council and chairman of the bureau's board. However, he also remained active in nutrition research, as an endowed professor in Nutrition and Food Supply at the University of Amsterdam and as a board member of the journal *Voeding*.[22] Though few nutrition scientists or educators had careers as notable as that of Dols, many staff members of the bureau contributed to scientific discourse and served on committees.

During the war, however, the bureau's main aim was to disseminate information 'to every Dutch person' on how to compose healthy meals despite

18 Cornelis van den Berg, 'Over het ontstaan van de voedingsorganisatie T.N.O. en van de Voedingsraad en over het werk van deze laatste gedurende de bezetting', *Voeding* 26:6 (1965) 299-309, 299.

19 T. Mulder, '25 jaar Voedingsraad in Nederland', Voeding 26:6 (1965) 310-318, 310; Cornelis den Hartog, 'Tien jaren Voedingsraad', *Voeding* 11:6 (1950) 199-216, 199.

20 Cornelis den Hartog, 'Voedingsvoorlichting in Nederland', *Voeding* 21:9 (1960) 459-463, 459; Huijnen, *De belofte*, 132.

21 Huijnen, *De belofte*, 133.

22 Rijk Luyken, 'In memoriam prof. dr. ir. M.J.L. Dols', *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* 124:29 (1980) 1220-1221.

food rationing and scarcity.[23] Its fifteen educators (all women) worked with other agencies to provide leaflets, films, lectures, and cookery lessons for housewives.[24] Director Cornelis den Hartog (1905-1993) travelled the country, disseminating the bureau's messages about cooking economically and the importance of vitamins. This young physician would turn out to become a hugely influential figure in both nutrition science and nutrition education, not just as the bureau's director (from 1941 to 1969), but also as a professor in Human Nutrition at the National Agricultural University of Wageningen (from 1954 to 1972). Known for his – at times stubborn – dedication, Den Hartog would go on to produce over two hundred publications.[25]

FIGURE 1 Cornelis den Hartog (1905-1993).

The strong-willed director of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau from its foundation in 1941 until 1969. © Voedingscentrum.nl

23 'Yearly DNEB Report 1942', *VMBV* (1943) 330-344, 330. For more on the bureau's war years, see: Den Hartog, 'Nutrition Education'.

24 'Yearly DNEB Report 1941', *VMBV* (1942) 637-683, 655.

25 Theodora van Schaik, 'Professor Dr. C. den Hartog en het Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding', *Voeding* 31:11 (1970) 540-546; Willem Bosman, 'In memoriam prof. dr. C. den Hartog', *Voeding* 54:4 (1993) 4-5, 5.

After the Second World War, the continued existence of the bureau was far from certain. As most food rationing had been lifted by the end of the 1940s, and the affluence of the Dutch population rose, malnutrition seemed a problem of the past.[26] In 1947, the Dutch government slashed the bureau's budget by no less than 40 per cent.[27] As the Netherlands became a society of consumers, a new justification for nutrition education was needed.

Consequently, the bureau's focus shifted towards prosperity-related issues: dental caries and, more importantly, 'overeating'. By 1949, an internal document as well as the annual report mentioned the disadvantages of eating to excess, and 1952 saw the bureau's first press release on body weight, titled *A slim figure* (*De slanke lijn*).[28] At the same time, per capita consumption of sugar and fats – seen as an important threat to public health – doubled in the Netherlands between 1947 and 1957.[29] Accordingly, by the end of the 1950s, overeating had become the bureau's core issue.[30] The year 1958 saw the publication of *From overweight to good weight* (*Van overgewicht naar goed gewicht*, see Figure 2), an eight-page leaflet that generated 'great interest'.[31] It stressed the relationship between body weight and health, claiming that 'extra pounds place an extra burden on our heart', but ended on a positive note:

> Your self-control will be rewarded.
> You will feel much, much better.
> You will look much, much better.
> Your friends and family will admire You for the result that You managed to achieve.[32]

26 Jon Verriet, 'Ready Meals and Cultural Values in the Netherlands, 1950-1970', *Food & History* 11:1 (2013) 123-153, 127-131. DOI: 10.1484/J.FOOD.1.103558.

27 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 28: Advisory Board meeting of 16 December 1946.

28 NA, Stichting Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding en taakvoorgangers en de Stuurgroep Project Goede Voeding (1987-1998), (1924) 1941-2001, 2.11.88 (Hereafter: '2.11.88'), Inv. 38: Press releases 1947-1956; NA, 2.11.88, Inv. 279: Leidraad voor voorlichtingscursussen...; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1949', *VMBV* (1950) 313-344, 313.

29 Anneke H. van Otterloo, 'Prelude op de consumptiemaatschappij in voor- en tegenspoed 1920-1960', in: Johan W. Schot et al. (eds.), *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. Volume III: Landbouw, voeding* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003) 262-279, 275.

30 'Yearly DNEB Report 1959', *VMBV* (1960) 1167-1211, 1169.

31 'Yearly DNEB Report 1958', *VMBV* (1959) 1227-1267, 1233.

32 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 12: 'Van overgewicht naar goed gewicht'.

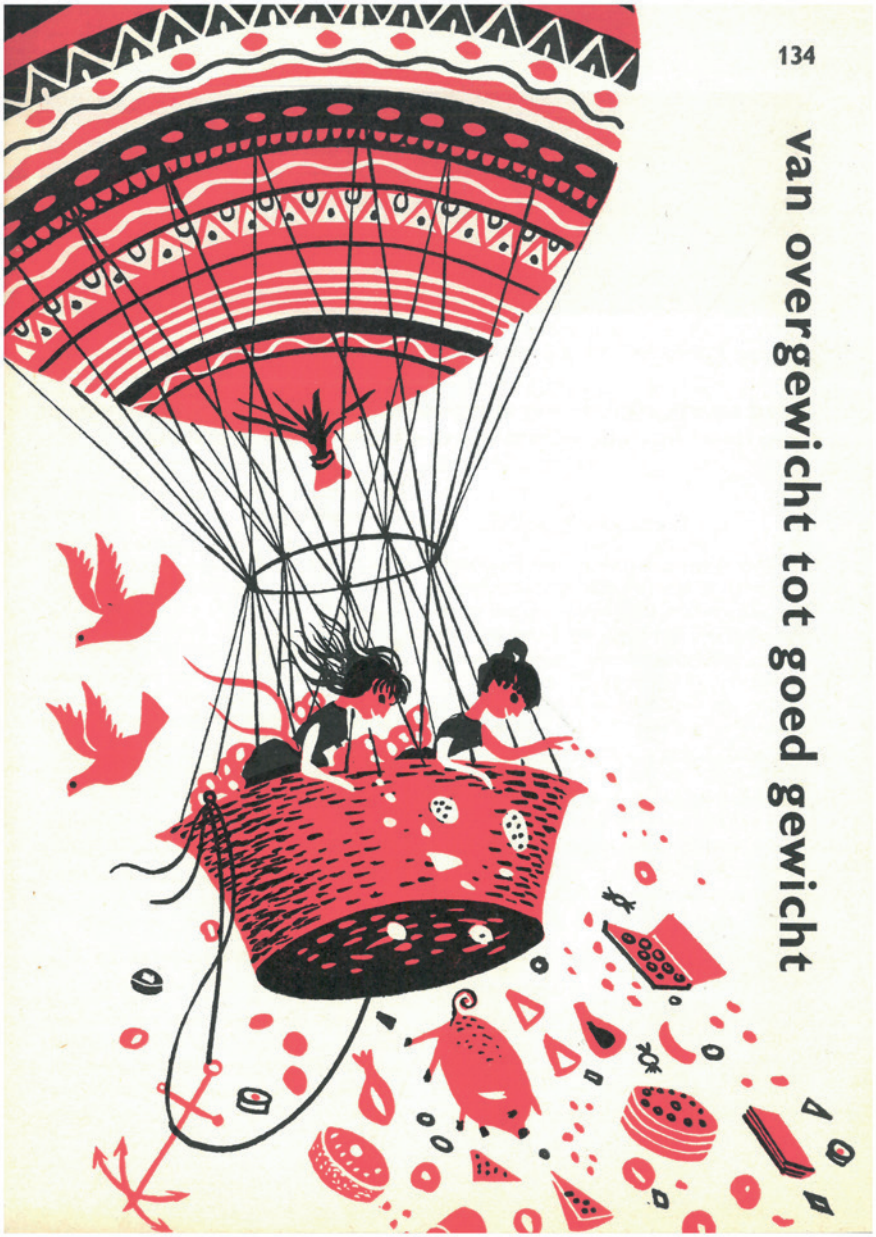

FIGURE 2 From Overweight to Good Weight.

(*Van overgewicht naar goed gewicht*) (cover; The Hague 1958). Voedingscentrum.nl © Illustrator: Jenny Dalenoord.

The Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau's change in orientation in the 1950s was part of an international re-evaluation of (Western) food habits. A key moment came in 1951, when the FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Nutrition zoomed in on the intake of carbohydrates and fats, and called overconsumption 'a problem of major significance'.[33] Though government warnings against 'disproportionate' sugar and fat consumption were not new in the United States, the first serious analyses of the effects of excessive eating took place in the 1950s.[34] All over Europe and in the US, scientists saw what Germans called a *Fresswelle* (feeding spree), and by the 1960s, obesity had become the number one issue in nutrition journals.[35] In little more than ten years, the message of nutrition educators had reversed completely: from 'eat more', to 'eat less'. The fate of nutrition science had briefly been uncertain, but was now 'rescued by obesity', as one prominent nutritionist later put it.[36] As overeating grew into what many considered an important societal problem, the relevance of nutrition education increasingly seemed indisputable.

In taking on the issue of overeating, the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau set itself a formidable task, although such great ambitions were typical for the organisation. In 1946, it had already expressed the desire to make 'every Dutch person "food-minded"'.[37] Even in these early days, the bureau refused to limit itself to diet, going as far as handing out tips on doing laundry.[38] From 1945 onwards, annual reports, board meetings and articles in *Voeding* all demonstrated the great sense of responsibility felt by bureau employees. The prevailing belief was that the bureau *could* and *should* play a significant role in correcting the lifestyle habits of the Dutch population. The organisation grew in size to accommodate these expansive goals. Its government subsidy rose from 125,000 guilders in 1942 to around 900,000 in 1965, facilitating an increase in staff levels from 17 to 41 employees.[39]

With its turn towards addressing overeating in the late 1940s, the bureau again showed its high ambitions. In its attempts to curtail weight gain and

33 Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Nutrition, *Report on the Second Session* (Rome 1951) 43.

34 Helsing, 'The History', S1.

35 Jessica Mudry, 'Nutrition, Health, and Food: "What Should I Eat?"', in: Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Food and Popular Culture* (London/New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2018) 274-285, 280.

36 Biltekoff, *Eating Right*, 115. Biltekoff cites David Mark Hegsted, 'Recollections of Pioneers in Nutrition: Fifty Years in Nutrition', *Journal of the College of Nutrition* 9:4 (1990) 280-287, 284. DOI: 10.1080/07315724.1990.10720381.

37 Cornelis den Hartog and Theodora van Schaik, 'Enkele gedachten over voedingsvoorlichting', *Voeding* 6:7 (1946) 208-214, 213.

38 'Yearly DNEB report 1943', *VMBV* (1944) 399-414, 407.

39 In 1965, the bureau's budget was supplemented by about ten per cent income from sales. NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 15: Board meeting of 1 June 1966.

cardiovascular disease, the organisation did not restrict itself to nutrition education, but took on the much broader goal of lifestyle reform. Specifically, physical exercise was a constant concern. From 1947 onwards, publications focused on the diet of athletes and 'nutrition in sport'.[40] The 1958 leaflet on weight loss, *From overweight to good weight*, already made mention of sport as a sensible part of a weight loss regimen. Physical exercise – burning calories – was becoming part of the conventional wisdom in the fight against overeating. In the same year, in a meeting of the board, chairman Dols pointed out that a campaign on overeating should pay 'great attention to the absolute necessity of sport and games'.[41] A year later, the bureau's first film with a soundtrack, titled *The Family Portrait* (*Het familieportret*), showed an average Dutch family that had grown overweight because of 'an excessive diet and too little physical exercise'.[42]

After an international surge in the interest in sport nutrition during the early 1960s,[43] physical exercise became an even more urgent theme in the bureau's publications and lectures.[44] Monitoring one's physical fitness was no longer just for professional athletes. Diet and exercise were presented as the two factors of greatest importance to healthy living – a mantra that became commonplace in the 1960s.[45] The focus on exercise dovetailed with the bureau's shift towards children as a key audience. Several publications aimed directly at children played into the idea that one of their great desires was to be 'fit'. As one leaflet put it: 'you want to be not just big, but strong, one of the best at gymnastics'.[46] It should be clear then, that as early as the years immediately after the war, the bureau – despite its name – was working to effectuate not just dietary changes, but broad adjustments in individuals' way of living.

40 For example: *De zwemkroniek*, 20 March 1947; 1 May 1947; 17 July 1947, 16 October 1947; 20 November 1947; 2 January 1948 (six-part series).

41 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 12: Board meeting of 8 December 1958.

42 'Yearly DNEB Report 1959', *VMBV* (1960) 1167-1213, 1176.

43 Jon Verriet, '"Strong as a Bear, Gracious as a Gazelle": The Expansion of Female Athleticism in Dutch Sports Magazines and Advertisements for Sports Food and Beverages, 1960-1980', in: Marjet Derks (ed.), *Yearbook of Women's History 38: Building Bodies. Gendered Sport and Transnational Movements* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2019) 137-152, 142.

44 For example: Cornelis den Hartog, 'Voeding en sport', *Geneeskundige Gids* 42 (1964) 1-5; Jan F. de Wijn, *De voeding bij sportbeoefening. Richtlijnen voor kaderinstructie* (The Hague: Nederlandse Sport Federatie, 1965).

45 Cornelis den Hartog, 'Veel calorieën weinig sport', *Elsevier's Weekblad* 22:3 (1966) 11; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1967', *Voeding* 29:7 (1968) 307-348, 307-308.

46 NA, 2.11.88, Inv. 93: Leidraad bij de filmstrook 'Gezonde Voeding' (1970).

The bureau's relationship with the food industry and the ministries

Before expanding on the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau's relationship with its target audience, I want to establish the way its staff perceived and managed their relationship with the food industry and a (changing) group of officials at two ministries. In the eyes of educators, these two crucial parties significantly affected their room for manoeuvre in trying to alter the lifestyles of the Dutch population. Over time, the bureau revised its stance towards both, as it discovered the possibility (or impossibility) of cooperation with industry and government officials.

The bureau's initial attitude towards the food industry was one of trust. Before its foundation in 1941, cooperation between for-profit and non-profit food advisors had been common.[47] Accordingly, when *Voeding* was founded in 1939, industry representatives obtained seats on its board. The bureau took a similar approach: it felt that advertisers could, and should, be partners in bringing about sensible food habits for the Dutch public.[48] According to that logic, it made sense to grant companies the opportunity of sponsoring the 'Wheel of Five' (a diagram depicting the five 'food groups' that comprised the ideal diet). As part of the deal, their product would feature more prominently on the wheel.[49] In some areas, the bureau had an even closer relationship with the food industry: its separate Fish department was partly sponsored by the fishing industry.

By the beginning of the 1960s, the rapidly expanding food industry appeared to be getting a firmer hold on popular nutrition discourse in the Netherlands. Food advertisements were ubiquitous, with about a third of them containing a health claim.[50] However, most large companies went far beyond advertising, using sophisticated marketing methods in an attempt

47 Van Otterloo, 'Prelude op de consumptiemaatschappij', 269.
48 Den Hartog and Van Schaik, 'Enkele gedachten', 208.
49 G.I. ter Haar, G.P.J.M. de Bekker and J. Hammink, 'De Schijf van Vijf - een ideaal voedingsvoorlichtingsinstrument?', *Voeding* 40:2 (1979) 34-41, 38.
50 For advertisements published between 1961 and 1975. G.J. Bos et al., '85 jaar voedingsmiddelenadvertenties in Nederlandse tijdschriften', in: Annemarie de Knecht-van Eekelen and Marianne Stasse-Wolthuis (eds.), *Voeding in onze samenleving in cultuurhistorisch perspectief* (Alphen aan den Rijn/Brussels: Samsom Stafleu, 1987) 135-160, 150.

to forge an 'emotional' connection between consumers and their products.[51] One example is Unilever, which had invested heavily in the development and popularisation of new products, instituting a sixfold increase in their R&D budget over a period of just thirteen years.[52]

It appears that the bureau observed these developments with growing apprehension, as it slowly came to see the interests of corporations as fundamentally different from its own. Unsure about the validity of commercial nutrition education, director Den Hartog openly expressed the concern that consumers were being 'bombarded' with health claims.[53] Accordingly, the bureau ended its collaboration with the fishing industry in 1964, after members of the board had repeatedly voiced doubts about the effect of this partnership on the bureau's objective image.[54] By 1965, that same board was deliberating the need for 'counter measures' (*tegenacties*) to correct the messages from food manufacturers.[55] Though some members expressed doubts about the use of a more combative tone, a television spot taking aim at biscuits (*koeken*), marketed towards children, followed in 1968. Firmly warning against these sugary products, the spot formed one of the bureau's first public, explicit counter messages.[56] A few years later, the annual report of 1972 echoed this change in approach. It castigated the industry, stating that many commercials contained 'highly questionable information' that at times could form a 'threat to public health'. At the same time, the report pointed out the shifting power dynamic, explaining that the bureau had only very limited opportunities to fight this giant.[57]

51 Hartmut Berghoff, Philip Scranton and Uwe Spiekermann, 'The Origins of Marketing and Market Research: Information, Institutions, and Markets', in: Hartmut Berghoff, Philip Scranton and Uwe Spiekermann (eds.), *The Rise of Marketing and Market Research* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 1-26, 4; Keetie Sluyterman, 'B2B or B2C? Dutch Approaches towards Marketing and the Consumer, 1945-1968, with Particular Attention to Heineken's Brewery', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132:3 (2017) 11-36, 23. DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10397; Robert Fitzgerald, 'Marketing and Distribution', in: Geoffrey G. Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* (Oxford/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008) 396-419, 399.

52 Between 1952 and 1965. Babette Sluijter and Anneke H. van Otterloo, 'Naar variatie en gemak 1960-1990', in: Johan W. Schot et al. (eds.), *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. Volume III: Landbouw, voeding* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003) 280-295, 287.

53 Cornelis den Hartog and Alice Copping, 'The Nutritional State of Europe and the Need for Education and Training in Nutrition', *Voeding* 21:2 (1960) 53-62, 58.

54 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 29: Advisory Board meeting of 20 January 1947; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1963', *VMBV* (1964) 1361-1409, 1362. Educators had little room for manoeuvre: the Swedish colleagues of the bureau would later demonstrate that extensive collaboration with the food industry could do serious damage to their perceived impartiality. Fredrik Norén, '"6 to 8 Slices of Bread": Swedish Health Information Campaigns in the 1970s', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 43:2 (2018) 233-259, 250. DOI: 10.1080/03468755.2018.1430567.

55 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 15: Board meeting of 3 November 1965.

56 'Yearly DNEB Report 1968', *VMBV* (1969) 1-54, 32.

57 'Yearly DNEB Report 1972', *Voeding* 35:2 (1974) 100-167, 100.

Ministry officials were the intended audience for these subtle complaints about the bureau's modest means. Though it did not make a habit of openly criticising its funding, allusions to the bureau's disappointing financial opportunities had been an occasional part of annual reports, the topic of many board meetings and the subject of several letters to its two sponsors, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery and Food Supply.[58] The bureau intended to signal to policymakers that its financial situation limited its opportunities: the frugal salary budget established by the ministries, it claimed, had a direct effect on the quality of nutrition education in the Netherlands.

Bureau staff may have been aware that a more general lack of interest in public health existed in the political sphere.[59] Overeating, the organisation's main concern from the 1950s onwards, was hardly ever mentioned in the chambers of parliament.[60] As late as the 1970s, even the more general topic of nutrition was rarely featured in the programmes of political parties.[61] This, in part, explains the fact that the archives of the bureau contain little information concerning interactions with politicians or with the ministries – although some meetings, of course, were 'off the record'.

Criticising politicians or officials at the ministries for a lack of interest required a delicate touch on the part of the bureau. In 1956, the organisation had deliberately been classified as a foundation (*stichting*) to prevent the appearance of propaganda.[62] This meant that according to its statutes, the bureau could operate without any ministerial interference. At the same time, however, the foundation was almost entirely dependent on the ministries for its funding. As Cornelis den Hartog himself warned, this financial dependence

58 The responsibilities of ministries changed over the years, with the result that by 1980, the ministries' names had been changed to Public Health and Environmental Hygiene, and Agriculture and Fishery. 'Yearly DNEB Report 1947', *VMBV* (1948) 805-826, 805; Cornelis den Hartog, 'Gedachten bij het 12½-jarig bestaan van het Voorlichtingsbureau van de Voedingsraad', *Voeding* 14:9 (1953) 410-415, 413; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1971', *Voeding* 34:3 (1973) 121-169, 125. Letters: NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 12: Board meeting of 25 March 1957; Inv. 14: Board meeting of 13 April 1964; Inv. 18: Board meeting of 3 September 1970.

59 Henk Rigter and René Rigter, 'Volksgezondheid: Een Assepoester in de Nederlandse politiek', *Gewina* 16:1 (1993) 1-17, 1.

60 Roel Pieterman, *Gewicht zit niet tussen je oren: Beleid en wetenschap in perspectief* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017) 54-55.

61 Annemarie de Knecht-van Eekelen and Anneke H. van Otterloo, 'What the Body Needs: Developments in Medical Advice, Nutritional Science and Industrial Production in the Twentieth Century', in: Alexander Fenton (ed.), *Order and Disorder. The Health Implications of Eating and Drinking in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000) 112-144, 129-130.

62 'Yearly DNEB Report 1956', *VMBV* (1957) 539-596, 539. In West Germany, colleagues at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung also set up their organisation on a non-profit basis, because the perceived legitimacy of government information was a problem post-World War II. Thoms, 'Learning from America?', 143.

meant the government could 'exert great influence on the bureau'.[63] In the end, the general lack of ministerial interest gave the bureau significant room to set its own agenda, but when the ministries did speak up, it was inclined to listen. Hence, the strategies of the ministries, as well as those of the food industry, were seen as crucial by the bureau, which claimed that both parties limited its efficacy in reaching the target audience.

Conceptualising and approaching the target audience

Carefully positioning itself with respect to the ministries and to commercial parties, the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau set out to reach its target audience to the best of its ability. As I will demonstrate, in the decades after the Second World War this complicated relationship hinged, in part, on the bureau's approach of its audience – and had significant consequences for the ambitions of its staff.

Though this chapter focuses on the direct relationship between the bureau and its target audience, it should be noted that the organisation also tried to forge an *indirect* relationship with the Dutch population through what it called its cadre (*kader*) – intermediaries such as external health professionals, school teachers, the media and consumer organisations. The bureau's collaborations with this cadre, however, were marked by increasing frustration. Some organisations proved ideal partners in the quest for healthy living, such as the Consumers' Union, which consulted the bureau before publishing anything food-related,[64] and the Dutch Heart Foundation, which found a willing partner in the bureau for its promotion of dietary moderation and physical exercise. However, the annual reports, articles in *Voeding*, and the minutes of meetings suggest little success was achieved with two vital groups: health professionals and school teachers. Director Den Hartog wrote in frustration in 1964 that teachers were 'generally ignorant of even the simplest principles of nutrition'.[65] Doctors were hardly any better, according to an annual report, which called them 'completely unaware of the importance of food for health'.[66] Year in and year out, the bureau was unable to reach these professionals, either with its promotional material or through *Voeding*, which

63 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 23: Board meeting of 30 September 1975.
64 'Yearly DNEB Report 1963', *VMBV* (1964) 1361-1409, 1387.
65 Cornelis den Hartog, 'Nutrition Education in the Netherlands', *Voeding* 25:3 (1964) 179-184, 182.
66 'Yearly DNEB Report 1973', *Voeding* 36:1 (1975) 1-39, 1.

– despite various efforts – neither group read.[67] This might explain why the bureau, after shifting some of its focus to intermediaries around 1955, had opted for a re-intensification of direct communications with the general population by 1970.[68]

Such direct interaction between the bureau and the public was more immediately gratifying. Frequent contact was also necessary to be able to adequately conceptualise audiences, in order to optimise the organisation's messages. Even before the foundation of the bureau, educators had segmented their audiences and differentiated their instructions. A 1940 guideline on nutrition education, for instance, contended that it was time to look beyond the housewife.[69] Other articles stressed the difference between the city and the countryside, noting that messages should be 'as individualised as possible'.[70] It should be noted that much of its material still addressed women. Not only because of gendered language or the use of certain imagery, but also because meal preparation was a thoroughly gendered practice in the post-war Netherlands.[71] As a consequence, despite the bureau's intentions, it was (middle-class) housewives who tended to show up for its lectures and buy its leaflets.

Reaching all segments of society proved difficult for the bureau. Its strenuous attempts to communicate with what it termed the 'most vulnerable groups' are illustrative.[72] The bureau's own research indicated that income and education levels correlated with both knowledge of, and adherence to, the bureau's lifestyle advice.[73] When a 1954 leaflet aimed at factory workers was criticised during a board meeting, one staff member confessed that 'it had been difficult to get a sense of the interests of factory workers'.[74] Moreover, the bureau received feedback suggesting that its leaflets contained language that was too complicated for some.[75] Suppressing personal proclivities in the production of new material appears to have been difficult for bureau staff. It is therefore no surprise that a small survey found the organisation's lifestyle

67 NA, 2.11.88, Inv. 422: Rapport 'Persberichten. Meningen-wensen-toepassing: enquête' (1969) 6.
68 'Yearly DNEB Report 1955', *VMBV* (1956) 481-536, 481; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1970', *Voeding* 32:10 (1971) 510-547, 512.
69 E.G. van 't Hoog and G.P.J. van Overbeek, 'Practische voorlichting op voedingsgebied', *Voeding* 2:4 (1940) 144-156, 146.
70 Cornelis den Hartog and Theodora van Schaik, 'Beschouwing over de gebruikelijke methodiek bij de voedingsvoorlichting I', *Voeding* 9:5 (1948) 200-204, 200.
71 Verriet, 'Ready Meals', 132-134.
72 'Yearly DNEB Report 1951', *VMBV* (1952) 537-575, 537.
73 'Yearly DNEB Report 1967', *Voeding* 29:7 (1968) 307-348, 315; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1968', *VMBV* (1969)1-54, 19; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1970', *Voeding* 32:10 (1971) 510-547, 522.
74 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 29: Advisory Board meeting of 29 November 1954.
75 'Yearly DNEB Report 1955', *VMBV* (1956) 481-536, 492.

advice was especially popular among its own personnel.[76] Some measures were taken to acknowledge and overcome this middle-class bias. One example is that the bureau made efforts to keep its publications and lectures affordable.[77] To facilitate communication with the 'socially lower classes' (*sociaal lagere klassen*) it had started early on to pre-test material using a council of housewives 'stemming from different groups of the population'.[78] It also relied on intermediaries for getting its message across in communities that were culturally or religiously dissimilar.[79]

The complex relationship the bureau had with sections of its audience was nevertheless still apparent at times. Despite his best efforts at accommodating those who were having trouble with the bureau's recommendations, Cornelis den Hartog may have unintentionally conveyed some of his hostility towards the 'culturally backward areas' he wrote about in *Voeding*, where he found people 'tenaciously clinging to certain food habits'. To Den Hartog, 'culture' was mostly an obstacle:

> Though at first sight nutrition may seem to be exclusively a matter of biology, the nutritional adviser soon learns that culture is of great importance in human nutrition. The adviser is continually confronted with the fact that, owing to the established values, standards, purposes, and expectations of the group, the scientifically founded nutritional advice is disregarded.[80]

Internal reports that remarked upon audiences' preference for televisions, Solexes (light motorbikes), and inbreeding (inteelt) seem to confirm feelings of superiority among the educators.[81] Some audiences might have felt alienated from bureau employees, both because of cultural differences and the palpable condescension of educators. Hence, similar to communications with intermediaries, direct interaction with the public was a continuing challenge for the bureau throughout the period from 1941 to 1980.

76 'Yearly DNEB Report 1966', *VMBV* (1967) 1078-1119, 1086.
77 For example: 'Yearly DNEB Report 1957', *VMBV* (1958) 1321-1376, 1348.
78 'Yearly DNEB Report 1946', *VMBV* (1947) 512-536, 529.
79 Cornelis den Hartog, 'Culture and Nutritional Advice in the Netherlands', *Voeding* 22:1 (1961) 35-40, 36.
80 Idem, 39, 35.
81 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 30: Advisory Board meeting of 4 February 1957.

The efficacy and the revision of methods

Despite the cultural differences between its staff and sections of its audience, the late 1940s and most of the 1950s formed a markedly optimistic era for the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau. Though the future would bring signs of the bureau's disappointing societal impact, annual reports of these early years anticipated favourable conditions for the profession of nutrition education. With the dominance of the food industry over representations of healthy living still far from absolute, the bureau's report of 1954 claimed that people were increasingly seeing the value of nutrition education, and that they were turning towards the bureau in growing numbers.[82] Lacking scientific indications of its actual impact, the bureau often took its considerable output as proof that it was changing lives (see Table 1). The growing number of people who knew about the Wheel of Five was taken as another manifestation of the bureau's influence, though the wheel's actual ability to affect lifestyles was not measured.[83] The fact that people's familiarity with the bureau's message was in no way a guarantee of a broad change in everyday habits was ignored: the yearly report from 1955 concluded that inadequate dietary practices were 'generally' the result of ignorance.[84]

TABLE 1 Yearly output of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau.

Printed material (sold)	560,605
Individual dietary advise	6816
Lectures (often incl. a film produced by the bureau)	222
Press releases	38
Booths at public exhibitions	24

Averages of 1945-1969 (printed material, individual dietary advise) and 1945-1980 (lectures, press releases, booths). This table is compiled by the author based on the annual reports published in *Verslagen* en *Mededelingen betreffende de Volksgezondheid* (1945-1966, 1968) and *Voeding* (1967, 1969-1976, 1978-1980) and National Archive, Stichting Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding en taakvoorgangers en de Stuurgroep Project Goede Voeding (1987-1998), 2.11.88, inv. 65: 'Yearly DNEB Report 1977'.

The bureau tried to keep up with the latest innovations in education methods. Though there was no system of large-scale, structural feedback in place,

82 'Yearly DNEB Report 1954', *VMBV* (1955) 487-540, 487.
83 Ter Haar, De Bekker and Hammink, 'De Schijf', 38. By 1976, 26 per cent of the Dutch population had at least heard of the Wheel of Five, and 51 per cent recognised it on sight.
84 'Yearly DNEB Report 1955', *VMBV* (1956) 481-536, 481-482.

bureau employees nonetheless reflected on their performance. Time and again, American discoveries were influential, especially in 1951, when Cornelis den Hartog completed a three-month visit to the United States – along with many other European colleagues – as part of the European Recovery Program, while head of education Theodora van Schaik (1915-1988) acquired a master's degree in Food and Nutrition at the agricultural university of East Lansing in Michigan.[85] Two of the bureau's most important representatives, Den Hartog and Van Schaik made sure that 1952 would become 'the birth year of new starting points, new channels, new methods and new resources',[86] with the organisation shifting its focus – with American funding – towards the visualisation of material and the self-motivation (*zelfwerkzaamheid*) of audiences.[87] As a result, education became more interactive, press material started to include more illustrations, and lectures became 'an exchange of ideas', often featuring a film.[88] In 1953, the bureau hired an expert in 'press, propaganda and aesthetic advice', and eventually, its staff became determined to make an impact through both radio and television as well.

International contacts were essential to the development of the bureau's output. Many foreign organisations sent material to their Dutch colleagues, who took a keen interest. Yearly reports also boasted membership of organisations such as the American Dietetic Association, the Council of the British Nutrition Society, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung, together with many visits to conferences, such as the French Journées Nationales de Diététique, the International Dieticians Congress and the Group of European Nutritionists Congress. Apart from exchanging information with U.S. nutritionists and officials (between 1945 and 1980, 89 per cent of yearly reports mentioned contact with Americans), the bureau primarily focused on European colleagues. Nevertheless, its network stretched far, as shown by mentions of contact with educators from Argentina, Iran, Ghana, and Thailand.

85 Adel P. den Hartog, 'The Diffusion of Nutritional Knowledge: Public Health, the Food Industry and Scientific Evidence in the Netherlands in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in: Derek J. Oddy and Lydia Petráňová (eds.), *The Diffusion of Food Culture in Europe from the Late Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (Prague: Praha Academia Publishers, 2005) 282-294, 286; Thoms, 'Learning from America?', 117, 120.

86 'Yearly DNEB Report 1952', *VMBV* (1953) 57-97, 57.

87 'Yearly DNEB Report 1951', *VMBV* (1952) 537-575, 539; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1954', *VMBV* (1955) 487-540, 487.

88 'Yearly DNEB Report 1952', *VMBV* (1953) 57-97, 77-78.

FIGURE 3 Theodora van Schaik (1915-1988).

A crucial figure in the early decades of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau, first as head of education (1941-1964), then as head of general nutrition affairs and nutrition research (1965-1970). Here, Van Schaik educates the viewers of the Dutch 1953 TV show *Onder nul* (*Below freezing*) on what to eat and drink in wintertime. © ANP.

Though fellow educators, particularly those from the US, had a notable impact on the strategies used in the Netherlands, the bureau also boasted of its own impact on the world. Substantial interest in the bureau's publications existed in West Germany, where nutrition education material was 'generally unreadable' in the 1950s, according to historian Ulrike Thoms.[89] However, French, English and Belgian educators also showed interest, because of the bureau's succinct, modern writing and its extensive use of visuals,[90] and many 'fellows' from all over the world visited the bureau for weeks at a time. For bureau staff, going abroad was not always a learning experience, but at times also a reminder that the bureau could be an 'example' to foreign colleagues and that its publications were 'among the best'.[91] The years between 1945 and 1960 in particular comprised a period of optimism, with the yearly report of 1959 concluding that education techniques were becoming 'ever more perfect'.[92]

89 'Yearly DNEB Report 1948', *VMBV* (1949) 433-457, 449; Thoms, 'Learning from America?' 145.
90 'Yearly DNEB Report 1953', *VMBV* (1954) 569-617, 596; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1954', *VMBV* (1955) 487-540, 496.
91 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 17: Board meeting of 24 April 1969; Inv. 34: Advisory Board meeting of 25 February 1970.
92 'Yearly DNEB Report 1959', *VMBV* (1960) 1167-1213, 1167.

At the same time, there was an awareness that only a better understanding of the behaviour of the Dutch public would lead to optimally designed communications. Ultimately, increased insight into nutrition education's disappointing effects on actual behaviour would lead to a thorough re-evaluation of the bureau's approach, and an adjustment in strategy in the mid-1970s. However, initial calls for the application of insights from social psychology (to comprehend how people made lifestyle decisions) and the polling of audiences did *not* stem from worries about efficacy. In fact, the application of the social sciences in governance to help understand audiences was part of an international optimism about social engineering, or the 'scientisation' of (governmental) policy.[93] For years, the bureau appealed for the employment of sociological and/or psychological knowledge in yearly reports and in articles in *Voeding*, as well as in informal conversations with the ministries, which had a substantive say in staffing policies. Eventually, the bureau was allowed to appoint a social psychologist in 1965.[94] Tasked with reviewing the efficacy of nutrition education in the Netherlands, she quickly indicated that measuring impact would prove costly and difficult. Hence, despite many calls for research on this matter, results remained meagre.[95]

Despite difficulties in measuring the bureau's impact, there had been early signs that called for some scepticism. The 1953 yearly report commented on discrepancies between the public's knowledge and their lifestyle choices: though 90 per cent of a lecture's audience knew that brown bread was 'the best bread', and while 'everyone' was aware that they were supposed to drink three-quarters of a litre of milk per day, the educator had found that actual practices deviated greatly from these standards.[96] Around the same time, one bewildered advisory board member asked a simple question, foreshadowing things to come: 'why don't people do as they're told?'.[97] By the early 1960s, the rapidly increasing consumption of fats and sugar – the two things the bureau rallied against – seemed to indicate that the bureau's output was having little effect on actual lifestyle choices.

93 Lutz Raphael, 'Embedding the Human and Social Sciences in Western Societies, 1880-1980: Reflections on Trends and Methods of Current Research', in: Kerstin Brückweh et al. (eds.), *Engineering Society: The Role of the Human and Social Sciences in Modern Societies, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke [Etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 41-56, 52-53.

94 For example, in 1940 and in 1964: Van 't Hoog and Van Overbeek, 'Practische voorlichting', 146; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1964', *VMBV* (1965) 1569-1621, 1570.

95 For example, in 1948 and 1973: Cornelis den Hartog and Theodora van Schaik, 'Beschouwing over', 204; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1973', *Voeding* 36:1 (1975) 1-39, 2.

96 'Yearly DNEB Report 1953', *VMBV* (1954) 569-617, 602-603.

97 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 29: Advisory Board meeting of 12 May 1952.

In the 1960s, using small-scale surveys, social psychologists increasingly confirmed that nutrition education was having a disappointing impact. A 1965 article in *Voeding* was representative of the shifting mood. In this piece, titled 'Changes in behavioural patterns in the case of nutrition education, seen through the eyes of the social psychologist', the author was curious about:

> [w]hether people genuinely think that the food habits of people can be changed just like that. As a psychologist, this seems far from self-evident to me. A person changes their behaviour sporadically, and even then, very slowly.[98]

Surveys substantiated this conviction. A 1947 study from the US, cited in *Voeding* in 1957, found that the effect of nutrition lectures on audiences' food habits was discouraging.[99] It confirmed that the lack of impact was an international problem: in countries like the United States and West Germany, most people were listening 'to a sermon of moderation while eating away to excess'.[100] In 1967, Dutch research produced similar results: housewives with greater knowledge of nutrition did not serve 'healthier' meals than their peers (see Figure 4). Efforts to critically examine the bureau's efficacy increased. By 1972, 'evaluation research' had become a separate section in the yearly reports, and the bureau had become a member of the Education Study Group, the Contact Centre for Education and the Foundation for Health Information and Education.[101]

98 J. Jansen, 'Wijziging in het gedragspatroon bij voedingsvoorlichting, bezien door de sociaal-psycholoog', *Voeding* 26:4 (1965) 138-146, 138.

99 P.B. Ornee, 'Onderzoek naar de resultaten van menuverbetering door voorlichting of extra melkvoeding bij schoolkinderen', *Voeding* 18:1 (1957) 29-105, 99-100. Ornee cites Kurt Lewin, 'Group Decision and Social Change', in: Theodore Newcomb and Eugene Hartley (eds.), *Readings in Social Psychology* (New York, NY: Holt, 1947) 197-211.

100 Thoms, 'Learning from America?', 149; Quote from Du Puis, 'Angels and Vegetables', 34.

101 'Studiekring Voorlichting', 'Het Contactcentrum op Voorlichtingsgebied', 'De Stichting Gezondheidsvoorlichting en -opvoeding'. 'Yearly DNEB Report 1972', *Voeding* 35:2 (1974) 100-167, 164.

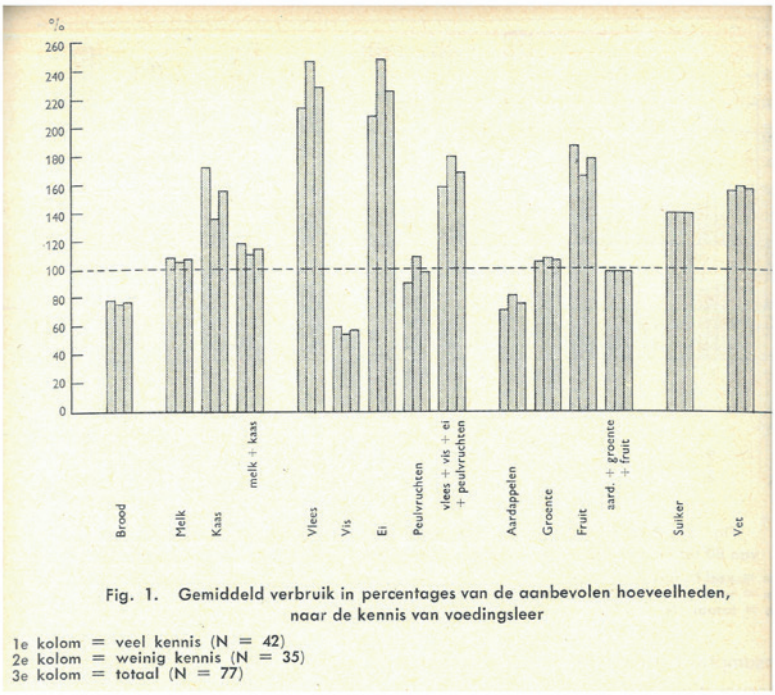

FIGURE 4 Nutrition knowledge and food habits.

This graphic shows the results from a study on the relationship between people's nutrition knowledge and their food habits. Based on a survey conducted among 77 Dutch housewives, the study concluded that among these women, familiarity with basic nutrition science had no significant effect on the use of different types of ingredients. Taken from: Meintje Peters-Nanninga and Hadewijch Bessems-Destaebele, 'De invloed van de kennis van voedingsleer op de voeding van het gezin', *Voeding* 28:3 (1967) 103-111, 105. © Meintje Peters-Nanninga and Hadewijch Bessems-Destaebele.

While the bureau's department heads called for new methods backed by insights from the social sciences, educators in the field were, however, hesitant. They kept telling participants to be quiet during so-called 'exchanges of ideas'.[102] Educators also failed to lower the level of abstraction in these 'chats'.[103] The clash between the forward-thinking leadership and these reticent employees continued into the 1970s, as Heleen Rijneveld-van Dijk (head of the department of audio-visual communication, didactics, public relations, design and production of material) explained in a series of articles

102 'Yearly DNEB Report 1951', VMBV (1952) 537-575, 561-562; 'Yearly DNEB Report 1952', *VMBV* (1953) 57-97, 59.

103 Cornelis den Hartog and Theodora van Schaik, 'Een nieuwe wijze van voedingsvoorlichting', *Voeding* 14:5 (1953) 251-255, 251-252.

in *Voeding*. She raised the concern that certain educators still preferred the (outdated) leaflet format, and that some persisted in a 'just do as I say' attitude.[104]

More structural issues lay at the core of the troubles with personnel. According to Theodora van Schaik, bureau staff were overworked under Cornelis den Hartog, a 'charming dictator' who worked day and night.[105] Besides Den Hartog's demanding approach, staff were also feeling the effect of significant employee turnover: almost half of the bureau's female employees only stayed for two years or less. As these young dieticians left, generally to get married, it caused a severe lack of continuity.[106] What also did not help, was the existing salary cap – a source of constant negotiation with the ministry – that made filling vacancies very difficult.[107] The most challenging vacancy to fill, however, would turn out to be that of Den Hartog. After he became full professor in 1969, the bureau had three (acting) directors in just three years before settling on a more permanent candidate. By then, an internal report concluded, the bureau was underperforming, in part because without their 'charming dictator', departments were becoming more and more autonomous.[108]

By the mid-1970s, the lack of effect generated by 35 years of nutrition education had become deeply disappointing to employees of the bureau. Despite efforts in the Netherlands and abroad to curtail the 'nutrition transition', global fat and sugar consumption kept rising throughout the 1960s and 1970s,[109] in correlation with obesity levels.[110] In many countries, the optimism about the possibilities of social engineering had started to dwindle.[111] As a result, the bureau's yearly report of 1977 was characterised by a substantial shift in tone. Opening with a broad contemplation of transnational

104 Heleen Rijneveld-van Dijk, 'Hoe zeg ik het de ander?' *Voeding* 34:3 (1973) 117-120, 118; Heleen Rijneveld-van Dijk, 'Hoe zeg ik het de ander? II', *Voeding* 35:3 (1974) 190-194, 190.

105 Van Schaik, 'Professor Dr.', 544; Bosman, 'In memoriam', 5.

106 43 per cent between 1942 and 1960. Up to 1957, Dutch law prohibited married women from holding governmental positions. Cornelis den Hartog and Theodora van Schaik, 'Vijfentwintig jaar Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding', *Voeding* 26:6 (1965) 398-419, 401.

107 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 12: Board meeting of 25 March 1957; Inv. 14: Board meeting of 13 April 1964.

108 NA, 2.11.96, Inv. 23: Board meeting of 24 April 1975.

109 Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation on Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases, 'Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases', *WHO Technical Report Series 916* (Geneva 2003) 13-29.

110 It is difficult to find pre-1975 BMI statistics, but an increase starting (at least) in 1945 is likely. NCD Risk Factor Collaboration, 'Worldwide Trends in Body-Mass Index, Underweight, Overweight, and Obesity from 1975 to 2016: A Pooled Analysis of 2416 Population-based Measurement Studies in 128.9 Million Children, Adolescents, and Adults', *The Lancet* 390:10113 (2017) 2627-2642. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(17)32129-3.

111 Raphael, 'Embedding the Human', 53.

food habits, it concluded that while the nutritional knowledge of the Dutch population was adequate, its application left much to be desired. 'Should the Nutrition Education Bureau have prevented such an expansive "change" in the consumption pattern?' its authors asked, adding, 'Would it all have gone differently if we had educated in a different way?'.[112]

The strategic adjustment of the mid-1970s

The Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau kept reviewing and altering its practices for a period of over thirty years, continually looking to improve its methods. By the mid-1970s, it concluded that overeating was a complex, multicausal problem, which demanded broad lifestyle changes in matters such as diet, smoking, drinking, exercise, the release of stress, and sleep.[113] At the same time, the post-war decades saw an ever more powerful food industry and a government with little apparent interest in health interventions. This explains the dejected tone of the 1977 annual report: with obesity levels rising quickly, the bureau's problems must have seemed insurmountable.

Under these circumstances, a healthist narrative on the responsibility of audiences, which had gained traction since the late 1950s, became pervasive. It had started with the annual report of 1958, suggesting that overeating was a problem for which 'our population will partly have to find the solution itself'.[114] In 1960, an article in *Voeding*, co-written by Cornelis den Hartog, moralised dietary choices by emphasising the effect of bad eating habits on the rising cost of health care.[115] There was an international, political context for this stance. In the same year, U.S. President John F. Kennedy had spoken of the 'softness' of the nation, and appealed to Americans to return to 'physical vigour'.[116] Furthermore, at the end of the 1960s, politicians in the Netherlands challenged the Dutch population in a similar way, bemoaning the spread of 'potbellies' (bad food habits) and 'weak muscles' (lack of exercise).[117] Consequently, many national governments started 'Sport for All' campaigns

112 NA, 2.11.88, Inv. 65: 'Yearly DNEB Report 1977', 3.
113 For example: NA, 2.11.88, Inv. 295: 'Trim ook met je vork' (1974); Inv. 122: 'Eet verstandig, eet matig' (1978).
114 'Yearly DNEB Report 1958', *VMBV* (1959) 1227-1267, 1227.
115 Den Hartog and Copping, 'The Nutritional State', 58.
116 John Hoberman, 'Sport and Political Doctrine in a Post-Ideological Age', in: Robert Edelman and Wayne Wilson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sports History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017) 29-44, 34.
117 Harm Kaal, 'A Friendly Match: Sport and Political Culture in the Netherlands between the 1950s and 1970s', in: Paul Puschmann and Tim Riswick (eds.), *Building Bridges. Scholars, History and Historical Demography* (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2018) 216-236, 231.

to revitalise the population. At the same time, with the rise of healthism, overeating was increasingly individualised. A thin and healthy body was becoming both an individual moral goal as well as a duty towards others. Educators, overwhelmed by the magnitude of their task, found merit in this way of thinking.

By the mid-1970s, the bureau decidedly changed course. The new strategy was 'emancipation': people should be entirely free to dismiss well-meant advice. In 1975, it proudly presented a 'discussion film' titled *You should decide for yourself* (*Je moet het zelf maar (w)eten*), which was designed to create awareness among adolescent viewers, to help them set their own dietary priorities.[118] In the animation (which ran for approximately 15 minutes), people from different backgrounds describe their food habits (see Figure 5).[119] Loosely based on a set of interviews, the film presents without comment what the bureau considered correct opinions, such as 'it is bad to eat without variation', alongside 'bad practices': 'I want [...] endless amounts of whipped cream, all day long'. After it was shown in a theatre, the bureau took a small survey among adolescents, revealing that the film was well-liked.[120] Heleen Rijneveld-van Dijk, head of audio-visual communication, suggested that *You should decide for yourself* could be used in a broader context, and that it had the ability to bring new inspiration to the profession of education in general.[121] According to the 1976 yearly report, the production was a big hit at international film festivals, which was taken as proof that it was far ahead of its time.[122] The film's relative success appeared to confirm that the healthist focus on 'emancipation' was the way forward.

118 In Dutch, the title means 'You decide/you have to eat it (weten/eten)'. 'Yearly DNEB Report 1975', *Voeding* 37:11 (1976) 629-669, 629.

119 The film can be viewed at the Eye Filmmuseum. Design, script and art direction: Harrie Geelen. Toonder Studio's BV.

120 The film was shown after the main feature. Heleen Rijneveld-van Dijk, 'Het tot stand komen van een voorlichtingsfilm op voedingsgebied', *Voeding* 37:11 (1976) 620-625, 622, 623.

121 Idem, 622.

122 'Yearly DNEB Report 1976', *Voeding* 38:11 (1977) 594-641, 617.

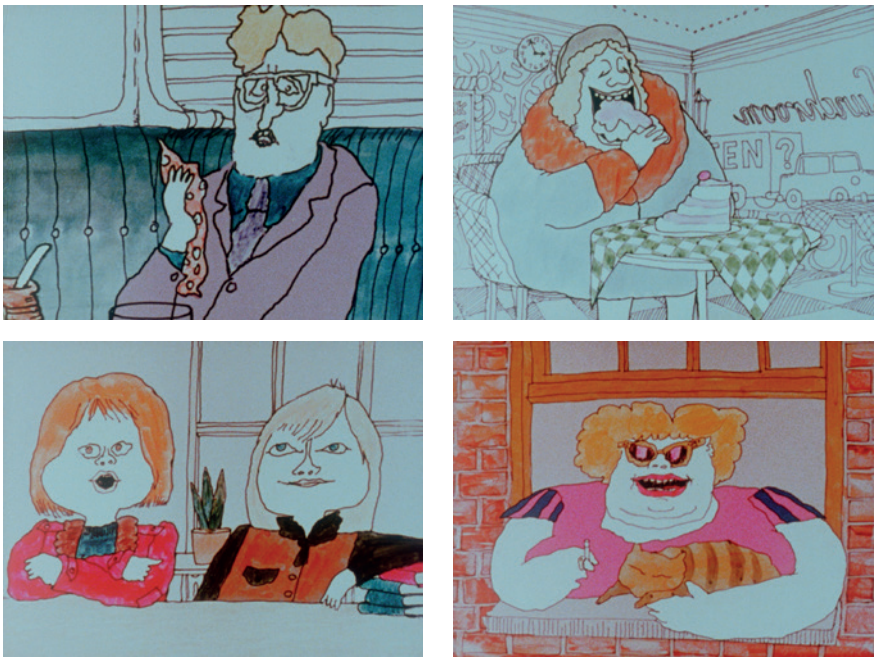

FIGURE 5 Je moet het zelf maar (w)eten.

Four stills from the film *Je moet het zelf maar (w)eten* (You should decide for yourself) from 1975, commissioned by the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau. The film presented both 'good' and 'bad' food practices, as described by a diverse group of interviewees. Although it was intended to be non-judgmental, it did imply a direct relationship between people's body size and their dietary choices. © Toonder Studio's BV. Collection of the Eye Filmmuseum.

It seems that for some educators, this adjustment in the relationship with their target audience did not stem from new-found, deeply held healthist convictions. Instead, it formed a practical answer to their experience of powerlessness. This conclusion is supported by the fact that several educators felt very conflicted about promoting 'responsibilisation' while overseeing an expanding cacophony of contradictory lifestyle advice. The bureau's 1978 yearly report concluded that it was making 'particularly heavy demands' on consumers' individual responsibility, in spite of their increasing confusion and insecurity. [123]An author of a 1980 article in *Voeding* noted that while people certainly had agency, the relentless popularisation of all kinds of lifestyle instructions typical of 'late capitalist consumer society' demanded a lot from individuals.[124]

123 'Yearly DNEB report 1978', *Voeding* 41:4 (1980) 1-17, 2.
124 Koen Blokker, 'Doelen van voedingsvoorlichting', *Voeding* 41:4 (1980) 135-138, 135.

There was another sign that the adherence to the logic of healthism might have been somewhat superficial. While their goal in the 1970s was the 'emancipation' of the general population, bureau employees also increasingly called for direct government interventions, such as prohibiting the use of particular ingredients, levying import duties on certain products, making clear food labelling mandatory, and incorporating nutrition education into schools' official curricula.[125] Hence, the bureau took an ambiguous position in the 1970s. Cognisant of the influence of powerful societal actors and of a public that was uncertain yet unresponsive, it was forced to re-evaluate its stance. The turn to the healthist narrative of 'emancipation' formed only a partial solution.

Concluding remarks

The post-war decades turned out to be an era of increasing frustration for the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau. Not only did it find that its interests deviated more and more from those of the powerful food industry and the Dutch ministries, but it also strained to reach all audiences, struggling to get its message heard – and more importantly, implemented. Despite these difficulties, the bureau broadened its scope. Starting from the position that effectively changing people's lifestyles meant comprehensively changing people's lifestyles, it turned towards the issue of physical exercise, and even smoking, stress management and sleep. Eventually, to resolve the discrepancy between its expanding mission and its uncertain societal impact, it latched onto the healthist discourse of 'emancipation'. From the mid-1970s onwards, the bureau would inform the public, but individuals would keep full authority – and responsibility – over their own lifestyle decisions.

By centring the experiences of bureau staff, this chapter has highlighted the impact that health educators' evolving relationships with other actors had on the (re)formulation of their instructions. The significant struggles of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau preceding its change in strategy in the 1970s suggest that an analysis of educators' ideological shift to healthism cannot adequately be explained by their adherence to scientific consensus or ideas about 'good citizenship', but needs to take a long-term view at their experiences and practical considerations. Specifically, educators' reflections

125 Ruurd F. van der Heide, 'Voedingsbeleid: de consument tussen overheid en bedrijfsleven', in: Adel P. den Hartog (ed.), *De voeding van Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. Balans van honderd jaar werken aan voeding en gezondheid* (Wageningen: Wageningen Pers, 2001) 145-158, 151-153.

on the relationship with their target audience and the efficacy of their output help to understand the production process of lifestyle advice, shedding light on the historical development of the genre. On its most basic terms, therefore, this case study builds on the conclusion, reached by others, that in the post-war Netherlands, the popularisation of neoliberal ways of thinking such as healthism could occur through other channels than political parties.[126] More importantly, it supports the argument that historical research on broad, transnational changes in ways thinking about public health should not lose sight of their concrete and practical context.

At first glance, the bureau's stance towards 'emancipated' individuals appears to have changed little over the past forty years. A self-published book about the history of the organisation from 2014 opens with its director's reassurance that people are now free to make their own lifestyle choices. The time of judgmental educators and their 'finger wagging', he explains, is in the past.[127] In the 21st century, many health professionals in the Netherlands and in other countries have demonstrated a continued focus on the healthy lifestyle, and on the responsibility of the individual citizen – as much of the literature cited in this chapter's introduction attests to. This, I think, points towards avenues for future research, which could both connect – and contrast – current ideas about healthy living to the past, bridging the gap between the post-war decades and the present. Specifically, the history of promoting, negotiating, and resisting the healthy lifestyle could be analysed through the interactions between a broad range of national and transnational actors, such as health professionals, NGOs, (sports) celebrities, health gurus, the food industry, government officials, and audiences, to increase our understanding of the complex developments that continue to shape popular ideas about public health.

126 Bram Mellink, 'Politici zonder partij: Sociale zekerheid en de geboorte van het neoliberalisme in Nederland (1945-1958)', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132:4 (2017) 25-52, 52. DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10220.

127 After a merger, the name of the bureau was changed to Nutrition Centre ('Voedingscentrum') in 2000. Quote from director Felix Cohen. Truska Bast and Boudewijn Breedveld, *Van schaarste naar overvloed: 70 jaar voedingsvoorlichting in Nederland* (The Hague: Voedingscentrum, 2014) 5.

Chapter 2

Resisting the Idealised 'Healthy Lifestyle': Medical Mavericks, Fat Activists, and Couch Potatoes in U.S. and Dutch Newspapers (1967-1989)

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Abstract

In the past, advice on healthy living has often been neglected, or even openly defied. However, despite the prevalence of historical resistance against an idealised healthy lifestyle, this phenomenon has seen minimal investigation. Using eight American and Dutch newspapers, this case study analyses how various 'resisters' found cross-border recognition from journalists for challenging existing norms about diet and exercise. It demonstrates that in the post-war era, lifestyle advice was increasingly contested in the U.S. and the Netherlands, leading to a transnational cacophony on the topic of health, and an increasingly ambiguous role for medical experts.

Introduction

In industrialised societies, the decades after World War II saw the rapid popularisation of an idealised 'healthy lifestyle'. While such discussions about the relationship between health, diet, and exercise were certainly not a novelty,[1] after 1945 scientists, politicians and government officials grew more and more worried about the effects of people's changing eating habits and sedentary lifestyles. As a result, they increasingly asserted the importance of staying thin and fit.[2] In countries like the U.S. and the Netherlands, the efforts of these professionals found the support of journalists, TV editors and advertisers, who vigorously promoted ways to get 'in shape' through optimised nutrition and physical exercise.[3]

By the 1970s, the sustained production and dissemination of idealised images of healthy living had prompted a scholarly reaction. Increasingly, academics interrogated the moral and political charges of representations of health. In this regard, the work of political economist Robert Crawford was particularly influential. Building on the insights of (among others) Michel Foucault,[4] Crawford warned against the notion that individuals bore the sole responsibility for their well-being.[5] In a 1980 article, he asserted that this

1 Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013) 158; Gwenn Van den Steen, 'Alles voor de slanke lijn: Een historische kijk op de afslanktrend in Nederland', *Brood & Rozen* 20:2 (2015) 5-25, 13, 18. DOI: 10.21825/br.v20i2.7931.

2 Charlotte Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health* (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2013) 115-116; John Hoberman, 'Sport and Political Doctrine in a Post-Ideological Age', in Robert Edelman and Wayne Wilson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sport History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017) 29-44, 34; Jon Verriet, 'Struggling over Healthy Lifestyles: The Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau and the Individualisation of Public Health (1940-1980)', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 136:1 (2021) 4-32. DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10672.

3 Jessica Mudry, 'Nutrition, Health, and Food: "What Should I Eat?"', in: Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Food and Popular Culture* (London/New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2018) 274-285, 281; Shelly McKenzie, *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013) Ch. 4; G. Bos et al., '85 jaar voedingsmiddelenadvertenties in Nederlandse tijdschriften', in: Annemarie de Knecht-van Eekelen and Marianne Stasse-Wolthuis (eds.), *Voeding in onze samenleving in cultuurhistorisch perspectief* (Alphen aan de Rijn/Brussels: Samsom Stafleu, 1987) 135-160, 150; Ruud Stokvis and Ivo van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier: De onweerstaanbare opkomst van de fitnesscultuur* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: De Arbeiderspers/Het Sporthuis, 2008) 225-226.

4 Particularly relevant is Foucault's writing on biopower. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1978) 140-141.

5 Robert Crawford, 'Healthism and the Medicalization of Everyday Life', *International Journal of Health Services*, 10:3 (1980) 365-388, 370. DOI: 10.2190/3H2H-3xjn-3kay-G9ny.

conceptualisation of health as the result of individual lifestyle choices, what he called 'healthism', was becoming a dominant ideology.[6]

The ideology of healthism remains an important focal point in contemporary cultural analyses of health, with some scholars claiming that health has become not just a desired state, but a civic responsibility.[7] Nutritionists and fat studies scholars, in particular, have directed their attention to this 'responsibilisation', adding to the critical historiography by examining how the stigmatisation of people's lifestyle choices has intersected with existing sexist, racist, ableist and classist ideas.[8] Several emphasise the role played by popular media. 'Newspapers, television shows, and magazines', sociologist Natalie Boero explains, were crucial in circulating the normative and punitive sentiments that mark discussions about diet and body weight.[9]

However, the image of an inescapable, transnational discourse on the healthiest way to live evoked by the historiography may seem at odds with the relative inefficacy of lifestyle advice. To the majority of medical experts, at least, the post-war rise of relative body weight and cardiovascular disease in countries like the U.S. or the Netherlands suggested that people, in the words of sociologist Melanie DuPuis, 'listened to a sermon of moderation while eating away to excess'.[10] The 1970s and 1980s, in particular, comprised a period of growing concern among health educators and governmental officials in industrialised societies about the inefficacy of promoting fitness and health.[11]

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6 Petr Skrabanek and Nikolas Rose, among others, further problematised the 'responsibilisation' of health. Petr Skrabanek, *The Death of Humane Medicine and the Rise of Coercive Healthism* (Suffolk: The Social Affairs Unit, 1994); Nikolas Rose, 'The Politics of Life Itself', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 18:6 (2001) 1-30. DOI: 10.1177/02632760122052020.

7 Jonathan Metzl, 'Introduction: Why Against Health?', in: Jonathan Metzl and Anna Rutherford Kirkland (eds.), *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010), 1-11, 2. Other recent work belonging to this tradition of critical health scholarship includes: Alexandra Brewis and Amber Wutich, *Lazy, Crazy, and Disgusting: Stigma and the Undoing of Global Health* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019); Christopher R. Mayes, *The Biopolitics of Lifestyle: Foucault, Ethics and Healthy Choices* (London/ New York, NY: Routledge, 2015); Dorothy Porter, *Health Citizenship: Essays in Social Medicine and Biomedical Politics* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

8 E.g. Sabrina Strings, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2019) Ch. 3; Amy Erdman Farrell, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture* (New York, NY/London: New York University Press, 2011) 59-81, 119-127.

9 Natalie Boero, *Killer Fat: Media, Medicine and Morals in the American 'Obesity Epidemic'* (New Brunswick, NJ [Etc.]: Rutgers University Press, 2012) 3. In the Netherlands, these media also played a significant role. Babette Sluijter and Anneke H. van Otterloo, 'Naar variatie en gemak 1960-1990', in: Johan Schot et al. (eds.), *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. Volume III: Landbouw, voeding* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003) 280-295, 284.

10 E. Melanie DuPuis, 'Angels and Vegetables: A Brief History of Food Advice in America', *Gastronomica* 7:3 (2007) 34-44, 34. DOI: 10.1525/gfc.2007.7.3.34.

11 Alex Mold et al., *Placing the Public in Public Health in Post-War Britain, 1948-2012* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019) 88-91; Verriet, Struggling over Healthy Lifestyles', 27-28.

It should be said that this apparent contradiction can partially be explained by structural barriers to healthy living, which continue to affect the well-being of marginalised groups.[12] But at times, scholars' focus on a 'cult of thinness' has also led to a narrative about the promotion of healthy living that is too straight-forward, in which it seems the ideal is promoted by resolute medical experts and eagerly picked up eagerly by popular media.[13]

This case study traces expressions of resistance against the idealised healthy lifestyle in national newspapers in the U.S. and the Netherlands, in particular between 1967 and 1990. In doing so, it builds on the aforementioned tradition of critical thought about the rise of healthism, and on a modest historiography on the emergence of feminist activists' protest against the ideals of health professionals in the 1970s and 1980s.[14] However, here the focus will not be on the utterances of these groups per se, but on the ways in which mainstream journalists represented the critiques of these and other groups to a broader audience, a topic which has received little scholarly attention thus far.[15] Furthermore, by examining the portrayal of these resisters in national media, I seek to strengthen scholarship dealing with what media studies scholar Tania Lewis has called the 'shifting ground of cultural authority'.[16] As historians of science have demonstrated, in the post-war era the relationship between trained experts and the public became more fraught.[17] Without going

12 Melody Smith et al., 'Systematic Literature Review of Built Environment Effects on Physical Activity and Active Transport – an Update and New Findings on Health Equity', *International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity* 14:158 (2017) 1-27. DOI: 10.1186/s12966-017-0613-9; Tim Townshend and Amelia Lake, 'Obesogenic Environments: Current Evidence of the Built and Food Environments', *Perspectives in Public Health* 137:1 (2017) 38-44. DOI: 10.1177/1757913916679860.

13 Sharlene Hesse-Biber, *Am I Thin Enough Yet? The Cult of Thinness and the Commercialisation of Identity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996); Farrell, *Fat Shame*, 26.

14 E.g. Zora Simic, 'Fat as a Feminist Issue: A History', in: Helen Hester and Caroline Walters (eds.), *Fat Sex: New Directions in Theory and Activism* (London: Routledge 2015) 15-35; Nora Kreuzenbeck, 'Nothing to Lose: Fat Acceptance-Strategien und Agency als Widerstand und Unterwerfung in den USA von der Mitte der 1960er bis in die frühen 1980er Jahre', *Body Politics* 3:5 (2015) 111-134; Greta Rensenbrink, 'Fat's No Four-Letter Word: Fat Feminism and Identity Politics in the 1970s and 1980s', in: Elena Levy-Navarro (ed.), *Historicising Fat in Anglo-American Culture* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2010) 213-243.

15 This is especially a problem for the field of fat history, because, as Elena Levy-Navarro and Nina Mackert point out, research that neglects forms of 'resistance' often portrays fat people as lacking agency. Elena Levy-Navarro, 'Fattening Queer History: Where Does Fat History Go from Here?', in: Esther Rothblum and Sondra Solovay (eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader* (New York, NY/London: New York University Press, 2009) 15-22, 16; Nina Mackert, 'Writing the History of Fat Agency', *Body Politics* 3:5 (2015) 13-24, 21.

16 Tania Lewis, 'Branding, Celebritization and the Lifestyle Expert', *Cultural Studies* 24:4 (2010) 580-598, 581. DOI: 10.1080/09502386.2010.488406.

17 Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters and Kaat Wils, 'Introduction: Performing Expertise', in: Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters and Kaat Wils (eds.), *Scientists' Expertise as Performance: Between State and Society, 1860-1960* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 1-13; Wiebe E. Bijker, Roland Bal and Ruud Hendriks, *The Paradox of Scientific Authority: The Role of Scientific Advice in Democracies* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 2009) 163-164.

as far as declaring the 'death of the expert',[18] I aim to demonstrate how the mediatisation of industrialised societies resulted in a more ambiguous societal position for medical experts. In that way, I intend to increase awareness of the cultural resonance of these challenges to existing norms about diet and exercise, and to help better understand the ambiguous effects of post-World War II lifestyle advice in countries such as the U.S. and the Netherlands.

The main source material for this chapter is drawn from eight digitised newspapers from the United States and the Netherlands (see Table 2). These national newspapers represented a large total readership, meaning they reached a variety of social groups, albeit with a significant bias towards the American and Dutch upper and middle classes.[19] For national dailies in the U.S., the years covered by this case study comprised a period of prestige – in which they consolidated their circulation despite growing competition from TV news – and for the press in the Netherlands, they formed an age of expansion where newspapers became, according to some scholars, 'more influential than ever'.[20] Although these newspapers will primarily be used as a combined reflection of 'mainstream' print media, I will point out relevant dissimilarities in their reporting.

TABLE 2 Selection of newspapers.

The United States	The Netherlands
Los Angeles Times (LAT)	*De Telegraaf* (TEL)
New York Times (NYT)	*Trouw* (TRO)
Wall Street Journal (WSJ)	*De Volkskrant* (VOL)
Washington Post (WaPo)	*Het Vrije Volk* (HVV)

The selection spans from 1945 to 1989, apart from *De Telegraaf* (1949-1989).

18 Thomas M. Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

19 David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (New York, NY: Open Road Media, 2012) 305, 527; Edwin Diamond, *Behind the Times: Inside the New New York Times* (New York, NY: Villard Books, 1994) Ch. 3; Nederlandse Stichting voor Statistiek, De Volkskrant/Trouw/De Telegraaf/Het Vrije Volk *Lezerskringonderzoek 1961* (The Hague: Nederlandse Stichting voor Statistiek, 1961). There were small, yet significant differences between readerships, for example between the income levels of readers of the 'strictly socialist' *Het Vrije Volk* and the 'reactionary right-wing' *De Telegraaf*. Martin van Amerongen, 'Je zag en rook het: Socialisten kunnen geen kranten maken', in: Ben Maandag and Rien Robijns (eds.), *...En niet vergeten: Herinneringen aan Het Vrije Volk* (Amsterdam/ Antwerp: Veen, 1991) 139-142, 140; Mariëtte Wolf, *Het geheim van De Telegraaf: Geschiedenis van een krant* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009) 352.

20 Halberstam, *The Powers That Be*, 247, 250; Pien van der Hoeven and Huub Wijfjes, 'Concentratie en kritische autonomie, 1950-2000', in: Huub Wijfjes and Frank Harbers (eds.), *De krant: Een cultuurgeschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2019) 246-289, 250.

By exploring the connections between American and Dutch lifestyle journalism, this chapter will be able to gauge the transnational impact of resisters. In the past, scholars have executed comparative analyses of the discourse about the importance of living healthily or the post-war rise of fatness – though most focus on the relationship between the U.S. and Britain.[21] Research on historical forms of resistance to this discourse, however, is often focused exclusively on U.S. society, lacking a perspective of the cross-cultural influence of resisters' narratives.[22] Fat studies scholar Charlotte Cooper warns against this approach, and against the assumption that resisters in other countries have simply welcomed and adopted the 'wisdom' of resisters (in her case fat activists) from the U.S.[23] Therefore, this chapter will examine whether the U.S. was indeed, as some have argued, an important 'reference culture' to the Netherlands, and look into the way in which American ideas about health were mediated, adapted or rejected in the Netherlands.[24]

The digitised source material was accessed through two newspaper databases, ProQuest Historical Newspapers and Delpher.[25] Although I encountered issues with searchability common to digitised newspapers,[26] the quality of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for the second half of the twentieth century proved comparatively favourable. Furthermore, the use of a fairly large number of overlapping search strings – 191 for the U.S., 282 for the Netherlands[27] – means that, while this case study is not intended to provide an all-encompassing overview, most significant forms of resistance have been included into my selection. As the majority of search strings used contain a clear indication of resistance ('excessive exercise', 'health crusade', 'weight-

21 E.g. Avner Offer, 'Body Weight and Self-Control in the United States and Britain since the 1950s', *Social History of Medicine* 14:1 (2001) 79-106. DOI: 10.1093/shm/14.1.79; Nicos Kefalas, 'Self-Help and Self-Promotion: Dietary Advice and Agency in North America and Britain', in: Mark Jackson and Martin D. Moore (eds.), *Balancing the Self: Medicine, Politics and the Regulation of Health in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020) 127-157. One exception is Peter Stearns, who draws a comparison between the U.S. and France. Peter N. Stearns, *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West* (New York, NY/London: New York University Press, 2002).

22 Jenny Lloyd, 'Bodies over Borders: The Sized Body and Geographies of Transnationalism', *Gender, Place & Culture* 21:1 (2014) 123-131, 125. DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2013.791253.

23 Charlotte Cooper, *Fat Activism: A Radical Social Movement* (Bristol: HammerOn Press, 2016) 154.

24 Melvin Wevers, *Consuming America: A Data-Driven Analysis of the United States as a Reference Culture in Dutch Public Discourse on Consumer Goods, 1890-1990* (Utrecht University, PhD Thesis, 2017).

25 ProQuest Historical Newspapers, https://about.proquest.com/products-services/pq-hist-news.html (accessed: 18 October 2021); Delpher, https://www.delpher.nl/over-delpher/wat-is-delpher/delpher-voor-iedereen (accessed: 18 October 2021).

26 Tim Hitchcock, 'Confronting the Digital', *Cultural and Social History* 10:1 (2013) 9-23, 13. DOI: 10.2752/147800413X13515292098070.

27 There is a discrepancy between the number of search strings used, in part, because English terms were searched in Dutch sources but not vice versa.

obsessed'), my personal dataset of 334 American and 208 Dutch newspaper articles is skewed towards more pronounced expressions of defiance. Lastly, while this set does incorporate articles on topics such as smoking and alcohol use, I have chosen to limit the scope of the research by focussing primarily on articles about dieting and physical exercise.

The structure of the chapter reflects two distinct phases in the history of resistance against the idealised healthy lifestyle. After a short prologue about the years between 1945 and 1966 to set the scene,[28] the first section deals with the period of 1967-1977, tracing the rise of fat activism in the late 1960s, the start of feminist commentary on the relationship between sexism and fat stigma, and the emergence of mass interest in physical exercise and jogging. The second section delves into the years between 1978 and 1989, when the volume of resistance increased greatly in both the U.S. and the Netherlands, and the debate about healthy living became both more serious and more playful.

1945-1966: Prologue

Shortly after the Second World War, a transnational consensus emerged among scientists problematising the dietary habits and the sedentary lifestyle of industrialised nations. Government institutions such as the United States Department of Agriculture and the President's Council on Youth Fitness in the U.S. and the Nutrition Education Bureau in the Netherlands became involved, fervently promoting a healthy lifestyle as an antidote to 'affluenza'.[29] Because relative body weight was taken as a proxy for a person's general health, the mid-1950s saw the inception of what the *Washington Post* called a transatlantic 'war against obesity'.[30] Although trained experts portrayed fatness as a health issue, or even the 'greatest single hazard to human life',[31] their assertions were sometimes hard to distinguish from existing beauty norms, such as when prominent nutritionist Ancel Keys called it both unhealthy and 'repugnant'.[32] Although women were the principal target of this increased bodily scrutiny, men were also criticised for leading a sedentary life: their 'desk-itis', U.S. and

28 The research for this study covers 1945-1989, but the period between 1945 and 1966 saw only 52 'resistance' articles (2.4 per year).
29 Later renamed the President's Council on Physical Fitness. McKenzie, *Getting Physical*, Ch. 1; Verriet, 'Struggling over Healthy Lifestyles'.
30 Ed., 'Fat Marches On', *WaPo*, 6 February 1956.
31 Ed., 'Overeating Called "Compulsive"; Diet Held Only Way to Reduce', *NYT*, 21 October 1950.
32 Strings, *Fearing the Black Body*, 178.

Dutch observers concluded, was partly to blame for the rising incidence of cardiovascular disease.[33]

In the years between 1945 and 1966, American and Dutch newspapers printed very few opinions contradicting this perceived importance of the healthy lifestyle. Occasionally, journalists did show an interest in contrarian medical professionals such as Alvan Feinstein or Peter Steincrohn. The former, an epidemiologist, was cited in the *New York Times*, pointing a finger at his colleagues in the field of medicine. They, Feinstein claimed, were not giving fat individuals the help they needed by imposing the neo-Calvinist dogma of 'Thou must eat kale'.[34] According to Feinstein, Americans could afford to be less preoccupied with moderate excess body weight, as it seemed to carry few health risks. Similarly, Steincrohn, a best-selling author and a self-styled 'medical maverick', was popular among American and Dutch journalists for his many challenges of existing health rules.[35] A sympathetic article in *De Telegraaf* from 1953, for example, called him a 'prophet of (appropriate) laziness'.[36] A decade later, the *LA Times* extensively cited claims made by Steincrohn, such as that there was 'no special honor in belonging to the cult of the physically active' for people over age 40, and that there was little scientific evidence that exercise guaranteed either good health or a longer life.[37] However, all in all, such challenges to dominant norms about healthy living were very rare in American and Dutch newspapers between 1945 and 1966. Both the rise of fat activism and the growing backlash against jogging meant that this would start to change from the year 1967 onwards.

1967-1977: Protesting fat stigma and the rise of jogging

The United States

Dieting and fatness

In the U.S., the years between 1967 and 1977 formed a key period in the popularisation of physical fitness and healthy eating. Kenneth Cooper's book *Aerobics* (1968) sold millions, and by the year 1970, Americans were spending

33 McKenzie, *Getting Physical*, Ch. 3; Stokvis and Van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier*, 16.
34 Gerald Walker, 'The Great American Dieting Neurosis', *NYT*, 23 August 1959.
35 E.g. Peter Steincrohn, 'Laziness Can Be a Safety Valve', *WaPo*, 24 July 1950. The term 'medical maverick' is used in an advertisement for the book How to be Lazy, *Healthy and Fit*: 'If You're Over Thirty', *WaPo*, 22 March 1970.
36 Eric Koch, 'Wees verstandig, veertiger...Wees lui', *TEL*, 21 February 1953.
37 Ed., 'Ex-Doctor Advises: Eat, Drink, Be Merry', *LAT*, 1 December 1963.

175 USD million annually on exercise equipment.[38] The rising popularity of jogging among young, affluent people became the premier indication to observers that the 'age of exercise' had begun,[39] with polls showing a tenfold increase in the number of regular runners in the 1970s.[40] At the same time, the foundation of Weight Watchers in 1963 had meant a further commercialisation and popularisation of weight reduction diets, causing some to conclude that in the U.S., 'slimness [was] the new god'.[41]

In this 11-year period, as media coverage of health trends intensified, newspaper journalists also increasingly discussed forms of resistance against mainstream thinking about lifestyle. Particularly the *LA Times*, based in the city that many saw as the epicentre of health movements, documented various forms of resistance against then-prevalent lifestyle trends.[42] As newspapers hired journalists specialised in science writing, reports on nutrition research and dieting also became noticeably more critical in the late 1960s.[43] Concurrently, amidst a growing scholarly scepticism about the intentions and merits of medical science (which would later result in the critique of healthism),[44] the public increasingly scrutinised expert opinion.[45] With newspapers more often pointing out the contradictory findings of nutrition researchers, some doctors openly worried about losing the 'confidence of the public'.[46]

This more critical attitude towards medical expertise seems to have been a stepping stone to the rise of fat activism in the United States. The year 1967 saw an important turning point in the form of a carnivalesque 'Fat-in' in Central Park. In an interview with the *New York Times*, its organiser explained that the demonstration, which attracted around 500 people, was intended to protest discrimination against fat people: 'People should be proud of being fat'.[47] In

38 McKenzie, *Getting Physical*, Ch. 2 and 3.
39 Alan Cartnal, 'The Ladies in Weighting', *LAT*, 19 September 1976.
40 Darcy Plymire, 'Positive Addiction: Running and Human Potential in the 1970s', *Journal of Sport History* 31:3 (2004) 297-315, 297; Muriel Gillick, 'Health Promotion, Jogging, and the Pursuit of the Moral Life', *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 9:3 (1984) 369-387, 379. DOI: 10.1215/03616878-9-3-369.
41 Steve Harvey, 'Going on a Diet – an American Obsession', *LAT*, 8 April 1973.
42 27 out of 55 American newspaper articles selected for the 1967-1977 period (49 per cent) were published by the *LA Times*.
43 Jane Gregory and Steve Miller, *Science in Public: Communication, Culture, and Credibility* (Cambridge, MA: Basic Books, 2000) 45.
44 Jacob Stegenga, *Medical Nihilism* (Oxford/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018) 12.
45 Nicolas Rasmussen, *Fat in the Fifties: America's First Obesity Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019) 127.
46 Jeanne Voltz, 'Diet Critics on Receiving End', *LAT*, 18 February 1971. Alex Mold et al. show how British health educators had similar worries about a 'sceptical public' in the 1980s. Mold et al., *Placing the Public*, 9.
47 Ed., 'Curves Have Their Day in Park', *NYT*, 5 June 1967.

the years following the event, the fat acceptance movement became more organised and well-known through the formation of the National Association to Aid Fat Americans (NAAFA; 1969); the publication of a manifesto by Llewelyn Louderback titled *Fat Power: Whatever You Weigh Is Right* (1970); and the founding of several radical feminist fat activist groups like the Fat Underground (1972).[48] NAAFA, which copied much of its language from the civil rights movement ('Fat-in', 'fat power', 'fat is beautiful'), attracted a modest amount of press. Journalists gave its founders a platform to explain the organisation's goals, informing readers that fat people formed a marginalised group that was now 'beginning to fight back'.[49] However, on health, as on other matters, NAAFA's views were cautious, with founders Bill and Joyce Fabrey stressing that, although fat pride was an important goal, they did not 'accept being fat'.[50]

Around the year 1970, a more fundamental critique of dieting also arose. At first glance, it may have seemed as if journalists were continuing their stories on the 'national fetish' of weight reduction and its 'devious fads'.[51] However, an important shift had occurred in the late 1960s: now, reporting on the excesses of diet culture sometimes discussed medical experts in an unfavourable light. The catalyst was a 1968 article in *Life* magazine by Susanna McBee, whose tour of ten different physicians' offices yielded her thousands of diet pills, including amphetamines and hormones – despite her 'slender' figure.[52] The *LA Times*, *Washington Post* and *New York Times* reported on her exposé and on the congressional investigations that followed.

In the early 1970s, newly founded activist organisations like the feminist Fat Underground incorporated the growing distrust of health experts into their arguments. Founded in 1972, the California-based FU took an approach to fat activism inspired by second-wave feminist thought. In part because the discussion around fatness, dieting and exercise often targeted women, FU claimed that fat prejudice, like sexism, was a patriarchal way of thinking that objectified women's bodies.[53] The group sometimes relied on 'prankish' tactics like crashing weight-loss meetings to criticise the intimate ties of such groups to what historian Katrina-Louise Moseley has called 'an established culture

48 At the end of the 1980s NAAFA, while keeping the acronym, changed its name to National Association for the Advancement of Fat Acceptance.

49 Judy Klemesrud, 'There Are a Lot of People Willing to Believe Fat is Beautiful. . .', *NYT*, 18 August 1970.

50 Al Martinez, 'Militant Fats: A Heavyweight Fight for Rights', *LAT*, 8 August 1972. Emphasis added.

51 Harvey, 'Going on a Diet', *LAT*, 8 April 1973; Frederick Stare, 'Promoters Get Fat on Reducing Fads', *LAT*, 17 October 1968.

52 Rasmussen, *Fat in the Fifties*, 141-142.

53 Amy Farrell notes that this strand of fat activism often intersected with lesbian feminism. Farrell, *Fat Shame*, 140-143.

of female beauty cultivation'.[54] But FU was also engaged in more serious efforts, publishing pamphlets with titles like *Health of Fat People: The Scare Story Your Doctor Won't Tell You*.[55] Hence, with regard to the medical implications of fatness, it was more nonconformist than NAAFA, asserting that fat people could be 'as healthy as anyone else'.[56]

Like NAAFA, the Fat Underground received little attention from journalists between 1967 and 1977. One exception, published by the *LA Times* in 1976, was a sympathetic 2,300-word article by Jane Wilson, who explained that the U.S. had a 'fiercely antifat culture', which had made FU 'habitually sceptical of received medical and psychiatric wisdoms'.[57] In the article, Wilson extensively quoted FU founder Vivian Mayer, then known by her radical name Alderbaran, who suggested that fat stigma, not fatness, was making people ill. Activists like Alderbaran claimed that weight cycling, or yo-yo dieting, might be more harmful than simply being fat. Although this claim was supported by a growing number of nutritionists, activists also presented their own bodily experiences as a form of expertise about fatness.[58] This was a significant addition to the repertoire of resistance: now, instead of arguing that fat people deserved respect despite existing notions of the optimal lifestyle, feminists asserted that these ideas were factually incorrect. While fat activist groups like FU received little national publicity between 1967 and 1977, these arguments, and a more general scepticism about nutritional expertise, were increasingly finding their way to mainstream outlets.

Physical exercise

Between 1967 and 1977, the benefits of physical exercise, unlike those of dieting, were frequently disputed. Therefore, when more Americans started jogging in the late 1960s, journalists' personal distaste for this cultural phenomenon often dovetailed with doubts about its health effects. Some conservative critics, such as author Tom Wolfe, related jogging to broader cultural trends, claiming that the individualism of the 1970s – the 'me decade' – was bringing the importance of self-improvement 'to a cosmic level'.[59] To these observers,

54 Katrina-Louise Moseley, 'Slimming One's Way to a Better Self? Weight Loss Clubs and Women in Britain, 1967-1990', *Twentieth Century British History* 31:4 (2020) 427-453, 436. DOI: 10.1093/tcbh/hwz034.

55 Rensenbrink, 'Fat's No Four-Letter Word', 218.

56 Here, FU claimed that people could be healthy 'at every size', in contrast to NAAFA. Idem, 226. For different 'frames' regarding reporting on fat acceptance, see: Abigail Saguy, *What's Wrong with Fat?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 66.

57 Jane Wilson, 'Fat Underground Throws Weight into Obesity War', *LAT*, 8 January 1976.

58 Rose Dosti, 'Environmental Conditions Called Key to Overeating', *LAT*, 31 January 1974.

59 Jürgen Martschukat, 'The Age of Fitness: The Power of Ability in Recent American History', *Rethinking History* 23:2 (2019) 157-174, 166. DOI: 10.1080/13642529.2019.1607473.

excessive interest in exercise was a sign of 'a narcissistic preoccupation with the self'.[60] Several journalists, like Osgood Caruthers, also had their doubts about the physiological consequences of jogging, remarking that people running along the beach in Los Angeles were 'in various stages of cyanosis as they trot the trail blindly, slack-jawed and gasping for survival'.[61] Stories of mid-jogging heart attacks played into these reservations, and were covered extensively by newspapers, whose pages offered, according to one journalist, 'haunting testimony'.[62]

Despite these negative views of physical exercise, medical experts cited in newspapers were generally optimistic about its health effects. Jogging, they asserted, protected against some of the ills of industrial societies such as coronary heart disease and hypertension.[63] Nonetheless, these trained experts, together with the American Heart Association, did show some reserve, and warned that would-be joggers would need to undertake a full physical examination, or stress test. Having lost some of their influence on Americans' nutritional choices – by the mid-1970s, articles about dieting no longer told readers to consult their doctor – it seems that some physicians now tried to use the domain of physical exercise to establish themselves as gatekeepers of healthy lifestyle choices.

All the same, journalists, striving for a balance of opinion, frequently cited conflicting opinions. Interviews with experts such as Peter Steincrohn, who remained a famous figure well into the 1970s, may have sown doubt among readers as to whose medical judgements they should trust. Occasionally, famous runners also showed a disregard for the opinion of some medical experts. George Sheehan, in his best-seller book *Running and Being*, described doctors who were doubtful about jogging as 'stupid' and '[il]logical',[64] while James Fixx, in what would become the most successful book on running of its time, wrote that 'neither our doctors nor the government can be expected to bring us good health'.[65] Hence, like fat activists, on the topic of health these runners explicitly countered traditional medical expertise with their own

60 Plymire, 'Positive Addiction', 300.
61 Osgood Caruthers, 'Dry Run for the Martini Set', *LAT*, 23 September 1973.
62 Earl Gustkey, 'Joggers: Some Run Risk of Fatal Step', *LAT*, 31 March 1970.
63 Alan Latham, 'The History of a Habit: Jogging as a Palliative to Sedentariness in 1960s America', *Cultural Geographies* 22:1 (2015) 103-126, 107. DOI: 10.1177/1474474013491927.
64 Plymire, 'Positive Addiction', 303.
65 Aaron Haberman, 'Thousands of Solitary Runners Come Together: Individualism and Communitarianism in the 1970s Running Boom', *Journal of Sport History* 44:1 (2017) 35-49, 41-42. DOI: 10.5406/jsporthistory.44.1.0035.

form of embodied, 'experiential knowledge'.[66] The result was that, between 1967 and 1977, certain doubts about the insights of trained experts seemed to be growing among both advocates and sceptics of physical exercise.

The Netherlands

Dieting and fatness

In the Netherlands, dieting and physical exercise also received increasing media attention between 1967 and 1977. Weight reduction became a 'collective obsession' for the Dutch in the 1960s, and fatness was increasingly framed as a problem, particularly for women.[67] Politicians now lamented the spread of potbellies and weak muscles in national newspapers,[68] and started promoting the 'Sport for All' movement.[69] Although a significant proportion of the Dutch middle class joined 'anti-tummy clubs' to go out and exercise on specially designed 'trimming' tracks, it should be noted that it was only after 1977 that the cultural significance of physical exercise dramatically rose in the Netherlands.[70] This means that for the years between 1967 and 1977, critiques of diet culture formed the most prominent resistance against mainstream ideas about healthy living. These critiques, therefore, form the basis for this section.[71]

In the late 1960s, Dutch newspapers expanded their horizons, increasingly devoting pages to consumerism and lifestyle.[72] It was here, away from the columns dedicated to hard news, that fatness was often framed as a women's issue. Looking at fatness through a heteronormative lens, newspapers such as *De Telegraaf* conceptualised body weight as an aesthetic issue, telling women they were foolish for 'following each other like sheep in the great slimming

66 Lewis, 'Branding, Celebritization', 581-582; Moseley, 'Slimming One's Way', 440; Jon Verriet, 'Representing Embodied Expertise: Anorexia and the Celebrity Athlete's Lifestyle Advice', *Celebrity Studies* (published online). DOI: 10.1080/19392397.2020.1760908.

67 Ileen Montijn, *Aan tafel! Vijftig jaar eten in Nederland* (Utrecht: Kosmos, 1991) 141, 149.

68 Harm Kaal, 'A Friendly Match: Sport and Political Culture in the Netherlands between the 1950s and 1970s', in: Paul Puschmann and Tim Riswick (eds.), *Building Bridges: Scholars, History and Historical Demography* (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2018) 216-236, 231.

69 Paul Hover, Harold van der Werff and Koen Breedveld, 'The Netherlands: Rising Participation Rates, Shifting Segments', in: Jeroen Scheerder, Koen Breedveld and Julie Borgers (eds.), *Running across Europe: The Rise and Size of One of the Largest Sport Markets* (Basingstoke/New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) 187-207, 188.

70 Stokvis and Van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier*, 179.

71 24 out of 208 Dutch newspaper articles selected for this study were published in the period 1967-1977.

72 Van der Hoeven and Wijfjes, 'Concentratie en kritische autonomie', 287.

parade',[73] because men, in fact, preferred fat women.[74] More generally, the perceived problem of high relative body weight was downplayed. Perhaps in reference to the rise of fat activism in the U.S., one 1973 article even suggested that it was time for a Dutch 'club of superfatties'. Fatness, according to author Henk van der Meyden, was quickly becoming fashionable:

> If fat continues to mean more success in showbiz, then I expect a booklet soon on 'How-do -I-get-fat-advice'. A welcome and perhaps also a healthy change from all the diets meant for becoming as thin and gaunt as possible.[75]

In other instances, newspapers published articles which framed fatness as a health issue. For these articles, Dutch journalists tended to refer to trained experts, citing members of the Nutrition Education Bureau to warn readers about diet gurus.[76] Correspondingly, when Robert Atkins' *Diet Revolution* was published in the Netherlands in 1975, it was negatively received in Dutch newspapers.[77] All the same, the case of the Atkins diet demonstrated that in the Netherlands, too, expert opinion on dieting could vary greatly. Not only was Atkins himself a physician, but the Dutch translation of his guide also came with a foreword by Hans van Swol, perhaps the most well-known Dutch physician of his time. Subsequently, in an article denouncing the book, a dietician of the Nutrition Education Bureau accused Van Swol, the first 'television doctor' of the Netherlands, of 'a lust for publicity'.[78] Just two years later, in 1977, another organisation, the Dutch Heart Association, openly quarrelled with a professor of cardiovascular disease named Frits Meijler on the pages of *De Volkskrant*. Meijler had questioned the idea of a healthy diet as a preventive measure against heart conditions, but according to the association's director, he was 'talking nonsense'.[79] Art Verburg, the article's author, explained to readers that professor Meijler was defying health educators, and suggested that he was 'not averse to publicity'. Hence, this Dutch 'medical maverick', too, was presented as a seeker of attention. At the same time, however, readers were

73 Gerth van Zanten, 'Vermageren mag geen manie worden', *TEL*, 3 May 1972.
74 Henk van der Meyden, 'Dikke meisjes zijn liever', *TEL*, 24 August 1972.
75 Henk van der Meyden, 'Lang leve de dikkerds!', *TEL*, 13 October 1973.
76 E.g. Marijke Hultzer, 'Vermageren alleen verantwoord langs wegen der geleidelijkheid', *TEL*, 7 March 1974.
77 Willem Schrama, 'Het dieet van Dr. Atkins: Alles eten van heel weinig', *TRO*, 29 January 1976; Marja Krans, 'Boeken', *VOL*, 8 November 1975.
78 Krans, 'Boeken', *VOL*, 8 November 1975.
79 Art Verburg, 'Oorzaak hartinfarct onbekend', *VOL*, 24 December 1977.

informed that there was a small chance that Meijler's sceptical views about the importance of diet were actually correct, and that other trained experts were mainly concerned that these public disagreements would diminish the efficacy of popular health advice.

Generally speaking, Dutch forms of resistance against dominant ideas about healthy living in the period between 1967 and 1977 paralleled trends in the U.S., and many revolved around the same cultural products. In both countries, observers remarked that discrimination against fat people was a societal problem, and that being fat should not be an obstacle to living a fulfilling life. Another similarity between resisters on both sides of the Atlantic was the way in which they stressed the importance of health, while attempting to turn the conversation around. Foreboding some of the assertions made by critical health scholars in the subsequent decades, they claimed that the obsessive preoccupation with being thin may be much less healthy than being fat.

That does not mean, however, that journalists did not perceive clear differences between the two societies. In the Netherlands, fat prejudice was often conceptualised as a foreign problem, with newspapers looking abroad and citing resisters from countries such as the U.S. and Britain.[80] Similarly, diet mania and the popularity of physical exercise were also presented as foreign phenomena in the Netherlands. Sceptical of American lifestyle trends, and perhaps influenced by the increase of anti-American sentiments in the late 1960s,[81] journalists used the U.S. as a reference culture to warn Dutch readers about possible future scenarios.[82] Relatedly, such scenario's also included a further rise in people's relative body weight, as it turned out that in this regard, the Dutch – and North-western Europe in general – followed the American trend.[83] Hence, while the critical assessments of journalists implied the existence of a more level-headed Dutch readership, one unpersuaded by these uniquely American pursuits, it appears they also functioned as a warning against the possible cultural influence of American health ideas and practices. At the same time, because these lifestyle trends were mostly presented as foreign, Dutch newspapers hardly reported on Dutch articulations of resistance against dominant ideas about health between 1967

80 E.g. Ed., 'Die en die', *HVV*, 24 October 1970; Ed., 'Dag werk', *HVV*, 4 March 1971.
81 Wevers, *Consuming America*, 418.
82 Rob Kroes, 'Dutch Impressions of America', in: Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith (eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009) 949-959, 953.
83 NCD-RisC Risk Factor Collaboration, https://ncdrisc.org/bmi-mean-line.html (accessed: 18 October 2021).

and 1977. However, that would change after 1978, with both Dutch fat activism and Dutch scepticism about physical exercise finding their way to newspaper columns.

1978-1989: the amplification of resistance and the turn towards satire

The United States

Dieting and fatness

In U.S. society, the cultural significance of the healthy lifestyle was at a high point in the late 1970s and the 1980s. By 1981, around 20 million Americans were on a 'serious diet', often making use of the abundance of diet books and light products on offer in shops and supermarkets.[84] And though the jogging craze 'only [got] crazier' according to some observers,[85] the interest in physical exercise partly moved indoors: by 1988, 10.5 million members of the U.S. population had joined a health club.[86] Nevertheless, many were still having a hard time with healthy eating and physical exercise. Diets remained decidedly ineffective for most Americans, and a 1984-1985 Gallup poll showed that 50 per cent of applicants to exercise programmes quit within the first six months.[87] The apparent effect was that in the American 'era of the body beautiful', both women and men were growing increasingly dissatisfied with their bodies.[88]

In these years, as it was becoming clearer that people could not, or would not, live up to the demands associated with the healthy lifestyle, both scholarly and popular resistance against this dominant ideal also grew. Journalists increasingly focused on this resistance between 1978 and 1989; indeed, 253 of the 334 American newspaper articles selected for this chapter were published in these years.[89] In 1978, mass media reporting on fat activism became a regular feature, and members of fat activist groups were interviewed for both

84 Kim Chernin, 'How Women's Diets Reflect Fear of Power', *NYT*, 11 October 1981; Helen Dudar, 'To Have and Have Not: The Avoirdupois Collection', *NYT*, 5 April 1987.

85 John Hall, 'Running Amok', *LAT*, 6 December 1978.

86 McKenzie, *Getting Physical*, Introduction.

87 Kathleen Doheny, 'Exercise Lovers Keep Pace by Finding Joy, Not Work, in Working Out', *LAT*, 6 March 1986.

88 Harriet Edleson, 'Fear of Fat: Does Obsession with Weight Reflect a Distorted Self-Image?', *WaPo*, 30 April 1986.

89 It should be noted that this effect can partially be explained by an apparent increase in the quality of OCR in ProQuest and Delpher's databases.

the *Phil Donahue Show* and *60 Minutes* as well as for a number of newspaper articles. In particular, NAAFA's lawsuits against cases of fat discrimination gave journalists a reason to focus on what they called a 'militant minority'. Fat prejudice, according to members of NAAFA, was becoming the 'last bigotry'.[90] By the late 1970s, the gendered subject of fatness was also more frequently discussed in newspapers because many of them hired more women. As feminist authors such as Susie Orbach, Marcia Millman and Kim Chernin published critical books on dieting, the works of these 'crusaders for the corpulent' were favourably reviewed by female journalists.[91] Especially significant was the impact of Orbach's *Fat Is a Feminist Issue* (1978), which drew connections between the growing incidence of bulimia and anorexia, the persistent policing of female bodies, and women's restricted agency. Later, when a 1986 study found that many girls under the age of ten were already dieting, observers built on this perceived connection between aesthetic ideals and eating disorders.[92] As resistance against diet culture appeared to be growing in the 1980s, even readers chimed in, protesting the 'thin craze' that was 'being pushed on us public'.[93]

Apart from increased worries about eating disorders and the veneration of thinness, other developments also helped shift the tone of articles on fatness. By the early 1980s, an increasing number of studies demonstrated the complexity of the relationship between fatness and lifestyle. According to the *LA Times*, new conclusions about the yo-yo effect and the adverse bodily consequences of continued dieting led to doctors telling some patients that it was better to stay fat.[94] Over the course of the decade, journalists increasingly challenged the moralisation of lifestyle choices, citing claims that some bodies simply 'refuse to shrink' and that 'skinny people tend to eat more than fat people'.[95] More importantly, some articles now discussed the underlying causes of fatness. Newspapers focused on the interests of the powerful food industry and the unmistakable relationship between health and class, citing medical experts who were averse to the 'responsibilisation' of health and who

90 E.g. Sidney Schaer, 'Overweight Persons Fight Back', *LAT*, 13 April 1980; Lisbeth Fisher, 'Battling Bigotry on Obesity', *NYT*, 11 June 1981. See also: Elizabeth Matelski, Reducing Bodies: *Mass Culture and the Female Figure in Post-War America* (New York, NY/ Abingdon: Routledge, 2017) 134.

91 E.g. Anatole Broyard, 'Books: Not So Jolly', *NYT*, 15 February 1980; Carol Krucoff, 'LOOKS: Fat, They Say, Is Not a Four-Letter Word', *WaPo*, 4 March 1980; It was Krucoff who coined the phrase 'crusaders for the corpulent'.

92 E.g. Richard Cohen, 'Why Do Children Go on Diets?', *WaPo*, 29 March 1986.

93 Ed., 'Dear Ann Landers' (letter to the editor by 'Angry Mom in the Midwest'), *WaPo*, 26 October 1982.

94 Edwin Chen, 'Big Girls Don't Cry – They Sweat', *LAT*, 5 August 1980.

95 Ed., 'Fated to Be Fat', *NYT*, 2 March 1981; Trish Hall, 'When Dieting by Not Dieting Is the Best Approach', *NYT*, 18 May 1988.

explained that Americans lived in an environment that promoted fatness.[96] At the same time, some researchers concluded that moderate fatness was actually healthier than being thin, a finding which was popularised by members of NAAFA. To some observers, like the syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman, the abundance of contradictory information about fatness and health had a paralysing effect. In both the *LA Times* and the *Washington Post* she complained:

> I think it has become impossible for Americans to keep their health IQ updated. We are all suffering from an information glut, research overload. But worse, we have accumulated a midriff bulge of confusing and contradictory health advice.[97]

More than ever before, newspapers consulted medical experts for tips on the healthiest lifestyle. But at the same time, it could be difficult for readers to draw conclusions. A 1987 *Washington Post* article, titled 'Does Obesity Kill?', was typical in this regard: it contrasted the opinion of two specialists (both 'YES' and 'NO'), leaving the reader to decide.[98] A year later, the *New York Times* drew a similarly ambiguous conclusion from the abundance of scientific knowledge on fatness: there was 'no definitive way to say exactly what someone should weigh'.[99]

Physical exercise

As the perceived relationship between diet and health became more complex during the 1980s, so did the connection between physical exercise and health. The backlash against exercise, and jogging in particular, started definitively in 1978. Many observers felt that running drew fanatics, proselytisers who had joined a cult.[100] 'If Karl Marx were alive in this country today', Richard Restak wrote for the *Washington Post*, 'he might well select exercise rather than religion as the "opiate of the people"'.[101] Many authors used humour to ridicule joggers, while cartoonists provided matching illustrations. However, some people seemed genuinely angry, like the reader of the *LA Times* whose letter to

96 Edleson, 'Fear of Fat', *WaPo*, 30 April 1986.
97 Ellen Goodman, 'This Midriff Bulge of Health Advice Can Lead to Indigestion', *LAT*, 26 May 1987.
98 Ed., 'Does Obesity Kill?', *WaPo*, 5 May 1987.
99 William Stockton, 'Ideal Weight Is Just an Elbow Away', *NYT*, 11 July 1988. Historian Mark Bufton has shown how nutrition experts' contradicting messages were also increasingly covered in British popular media during the 1980s. Mark Bufton, 'British Expert Advice on Diet and Heart Disease, c. 1945-2000', in: Virginia Berridge (ed.), *Making Health Policy: Networks in Research and Policy after 1945* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2005) 125-148, 136-137.
100 Plymire, 'Positive Addiction', 298.
101 Richard Restak, 'Strenuous Exercise May Be Dangerous to Your Health', *WaPo*, 22 October 1978.

the editor derided joggers as 'exhibitionistic idiots'.[102] The crux, for syndicated columnists like Ellen Goodman and Art Buchwald, was that 'the lean look down on the lax',[103] 'mak[ing] us feel guilty'.[104] Physical exercise, journalists explained, was a somewhat elitist pastime for well-off Americans.[105] However, the four national newspapers, whose readerships and staff also consisted predominantly of members of the middle class,[106] published many articles arguing both for and against exercise. This phenomenon suggests that perhaps not just exercise itself, but conversations about the perceived importance of physical exercise were a typically middle-class phenomenon. As one reader criticised the *LA Times*' editorial choices: 'Writing a trendy column knocking the virtues of jogging is as much a running-related status symbol as double-knit warmup suits and multi-striped sneakers. Welcome to the club.'[107]

As with their coverage of dietary trends, journalists' writing about physical exercise touched on the connection between health and class, but hardly on the relationship between health and race. This affected their discussions of healthy living in multiple ways. First, the severe effects of structural racism on people's health, now often a research topic in (critical) health studies, received little mention.[108] Second, the four predominantly white newsrooms showed little interest in the fact that parts of mainstream health culture were inaccessible to people of colour, as some articles on the exclusionary practices of health clubs demonstrated.[109] Third, journalists did not cover the rise of alternative health movements founded by people of colour.[110] And lastly, forms of resistance to the equation of thinness and health that were particular to communities of colour went unreported.[111]

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102 Ed., 'Dear Abby' (anonymous letter to the editor), *LAT*, 15 May 1979.
103 Ellen Goodman, 'Run-Down Marriages. . .', *WaPo*, 25 April 1981.
104 Art Buchwald, 'Non-Runners in a Rosie Glow', *LAT*, 29 April 1980.
105 Jane Leavy and Susan Okie, 'The Runner: Phenomenon of the '70s', *WaPo*, 30 September 1979.
106 See note 19.
107 Ed., 'The Current Jogging Craze' (letter to the editor by Gary Medley), *LAT*, 2 December 1978.
108 For an overview, see: David R. Williams, Jourdyn A. Lawrence and Brigette A. Davis, 'Racism and Health: Evidence and Needed Research', *Annual Review of Public Health* 40 (2019) 105-125. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040218-043750.
109 Practices continuing until (at least) 1989. Ed., 'Club Loses Racial Suit', *NYT*, 24 January 1962; Neil Lewis, 'Rights Group Sues Gyms Over Membership', *NYT*, 14 November 1989. See also: McKenzie, *Getting Physical*, Ch. 5.
110 Clovis Semmes, 'Entrepreneur of Health: Dick Gregory, Black Consciousness, and the Human Potential Movement', *Journal of African American Studies* 16 (2012) 537-549, 538. DOI: 10.1007/s12111-011-9208-8; Travis Weisse, '"Alone in a Sea of Rib-Tips": Alvenia Fulton, Natural Health, and the Politics of Soul Food', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 74:3 (2019) 292-315, 294. DOI: 10.1093/jhmas/jrz028. On newsrooms' whiteness, see: James McPherson, *Journalism at the End of the American Century*, 1965-Present (Westport, CT/London: Praeger, 2006) 10.
111 Andrea Elizabeth Shaw, *The Embodiment of Disobedience: Fat Black Women's Unruly Political Bodies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006) 1.

Although their articles on jogging and aerobics tended to focus on class, the elitist image of exercise was not the only reason for journalists' dismissive attitude. Just as with the relationship between thinness and health, the connection between exercise and health was increasingly under scrutiny.[112] An important factor was the increase of high-profile running incidents, such as president Jimmy Carter's collapse in 1979, and the unexpected deaths of Congressman Goodloe Byron in 1978 and jogging guru James Fixx in 1984. The latter's passing in particular generated a significant number of alarmist articles on the dangers of running. Sometimes, medical professionals were among the most pessimistic of commentators, calling jogging 'a miserable post-collegiate athletic travesty that has already killed scores, possibly hundreds'.[113] Cardiologist Henry Solomon's *The Exercise Myth*, which came out in the same year as Fixx's death, also received a great deal of attention. The book by this 'highly qualified medical sceptic' was well-received by journalists, who now seemed more open to the idea that exercise was needless and potentially dangerous.[114]

Another discursive trend that was similar to the way journalists treated the pursuit of thinness was that they now increasingly pathologised the desire to be 'fit'. The lay opinion that a preoccupation with exercise was a sign of a personality defect, often touted by conservative thinkers in the 1970s, was now given credence by medical experts. A 1980 article in the *Washington Post* asked, 'Are You Addicted?', and cited psychiatrist Norman Tamarkin, who had spoken at a White House Symposium on the 'compulsive athletic personality'. Tamarkin explained that exercise might not only be physically, but also psychologically unhealthy: 'When everything becomes secondary to physical exercise, the person may be literally running away from some deep problems'.[115] Several articles now presented some people's joint obsession with sports and body weight as a growing societal problem. Influenced by famous athletes, these people were setting unrealistic standards for themselves, which meant that fitness regimes resulted in 'the very stress they were prescribed to relieve [...]'.[116] Whether the discussion was about diet or exercise, by the early 1980s, a more general concern about the effects of a very restrictive lifestyle emerged, with one reader of the *LA Times* claiming that it was not a good idea to avoid 'all the things the "experts" say are bad'.[117]

112 John Stewart, 'Race Is On for Health, Wealth, Fun', *LAT*, 17 April 1978.
113 Restak, 'Strenuous Exercise', *WaPo*, 22 October 1978.
114 E.g. Melva Weber, 'The Exercise Myth', *WaPo*, 16 January 1985; Charles Preston, 'Exercise Kills: Throw Out Your Sneakers', *WSJ*, 8 February 1985.
115 Carol Krucoff, 'FITNESS: Obsessed!', *WaPo*, 17 October 1980.
116 Donna Niewiaroski, 'The Fitness Craze's Partial Insanity', *WaPo*, 17 July 1989.
117 Ed., 'Not in the Race' (letter to the editor by Lucina McDermott), *LAT*, 19 December 1982.

Hence, in the late 1970s and the 1980s, the growing doubts of journalists and some trained experts about the health effects of dieting and exercise resulted in frequent calls for a more flexible approach to the healthy lifestyle. In the past, the majority of these appeals had been serious in tone, with 'medical mavericks' and fat activists supported by a changing group of sympathetic journalists. Humorous takes on health subcultures were not unknown, but from the late 1970s onwards, satire writers devoted increasing attention to the topic in their newspaper columns. The wry observations on health trends by syndicated columnists such as Ellen Goodman and Colman McCarthy were reflected in other cultural products as well. Films such as *HealtH* (1980), *Going Berserk* (1983), and *Perfect People* (1988) made fun of the health-obsessed. At the same time, books such as Vic Ziegel and Lewis Grossberger's *The Non-Runners Book* (1978), which sold over 200,000 copies,[118] and Jack Mingo's *The Official Couch Potato Handbook* (1983, see Figure 6) ridiculed the societal preoccupation with exercise.

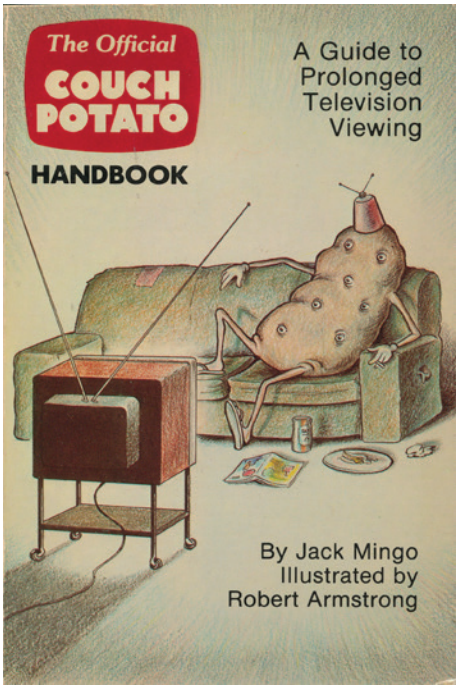

FIGURE 6 ***The Official Couch Potato Handbook.***

The cover of Jack Mingo's *The Official Couch Potato Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: Capra Press, 1983). © Jack Mingo and Robert Armstrong.

118 Cherie Burns, 'Running for the Money', *NYT*, 26 October 1980.

The use of humour also brought something different, since it allowed observers to go beyond questioning existing norms about healthy living. Now, an increasing number of critics of diet culture and exercise trends unapologetically refused to participate: they dropped the 'health frame' altogether. As *New York Times* columnist Don Lessem explained, he was 'aerphobic': 'most of us are overweight and out of shape, and we enjoyed getting there'.[119] The *Non-Runner's Book*, meant to reassure 'people who feel guilty for not running',[120] emboldened journalists to reveal themselves as non-runners and non-dieters, proudly acknowledging their 'years of careful pastry selection and strain aversion'.[121] The Couch Potatoes, a group of Californian men, were propagandists for another lifestyle choice seen to have a degenerative effect on health: watching television.[122] By the early 1980s, their movement was eagerly covered by print media. Regardless, though its satirical handbook was seen as 'very much of its time', most of its spoofs on diet and fitness culture were not picked up by the press.[123] The rebellious club grew into an international organisation of 8,000 members over the course of the 1980s, and couch potatoes became, according to the *New York Times*, the new in-crowd.[124] To summarise, although the vast majority of resistance to dominant ideas about healthy living between 1945 and 1989 was provided by medical experts and fat activists, by the 1980s, satirists had joined these sceptics on the pages of national newspapers. Together, these resisters questioned, according to Ellen Goodman, the wisdoms of 'Jane Fonda, Richard Simmons and the entire medical establishment'.[125]

The Netherlands

Dieting and fatness

Like their American colleagues, Dutch newspaper journalists published more articles than ever on the societal quest for the healthiest lifestyle. Between 1978 and 1989, jogging rapidly gained in popularity, and many Dutch people joined a gym.[126] Dieting was still immensely popular, with people in the Netherlands

119 Don Lessem, 'The Exercise Epidemic and How to Cure It', *NYT*, 17 August 1980.
120 William Gildea, 'Taking the Lead in the Race against Running', *WaPo*, 21 July 1978.
121 Martha Smith, 'Me Jogging? You Gotta Be Joking!', *LAT*, 21 October 1983.
122 Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Post-War America* (Chicago, IL/London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 114.
123 Beth Ann Krier, 'The Attack of the Couch Potatoes', *LAT*, 26 September 1983.
124 Ed., 'Catering to a Couch Potato's Every Need', *NYT*, 12 November 1987.
125 Ellen Goodman, 'The Rise of the Couch Potato', *WaPo*, 1 December 1987.
126 Hover, Van der Werff and Breedveld, 'The Netherlands', 191-192.

spending 60 million guilders (around 30 USD million) per year on different regimens.[127] By the second half of the 1980s, journalists were claiming that the 'thinness and health mania' had definitively blown over from the U.S.[128] But despite the continued dominance of these ideals, government reports showed that Dutch people were feeling moderately less healthy as time went on. Tellingly, in 1992, one survey found that 20 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women in the Netherlands of 'normal' size were unhappy with their relative body weight.[129] It seems likely that some felt they were to blame for their perceived lack of good health. This healthist way of thinking was encouraged by organisations such as the Dutch Heart Association, which confided to *De Telegraaf* that it aimed to make people feel guilty about their lifestyle.[130] It was in this climate that resistance against ideas about the healthy lifestyle became much more visible in Dutch newspapers.[131]

The focal point, for many Dutch journalists, remained diet culture. Continuing an earlier trend, many of them claimed that diet regimens amounted to a shake-down industry, and that weight reduction was often detrimental to health, no matter what people thought. However, despite increased scepticism about dieting, journalists' conclusions could still be equivocal: Willem Schrama's critical article on dieting in *Trouw*, for instance, concluded with an appeal for 'sensible' weight reduction, recommending the paper's own three-week diet plan.[132] Nonetheless, by the second half of the 1980s, it had become common knowledge that most diets were severely ineffective, and their health effects – in part because of the yo-yo effect – ambiguous.[133]

The continued promotion of weight-loss diets now seemed particularly problematic to journalists, because research increasingly demonstrated that fatness was more than a matter of individual willpower. As early as 1978, *Het Vrije Volk* and *De Volkskrant* revealed the importance of environmental factors to readers, explaining how having thin siblings and a thin partner, as well

127 In 1978. Tjarda Harmsma, 'Alleen de "dikkerd" heeft geen baat bij afslankindustrie', *HVV*, 8 July 1978.
128 Hans Roodenburg, 'Slankheidsmanie profijtelijk voor Unilever', *HVV*, 1 March 1989.
129 Henk Swinkels, 'Trendcijfers gezondheidsenquête; gezondheidsindicatoren 1981-1994', *Maandbericht Gezondheidsstatistiek* 14:8 (1995) 5-15.
130 Marie-Thérèse Roosendaal, '"Way of Life" krijgt weinig respons', *TEL*, 18 August 1988. This idea of the 'unfit' body also springs from an ableist logic, as historian Jürgen Martschukat points out, but this was not explicated by resisters in U.S. and Dutch newspapers. Martschukat, 'The Age of Fitness', 158.
131 158/208 Dutch newspaper articles selected for this study were published in the 1978-1989 period.
132 Willem Schrama, 'Snelle dieetkuur vaak een zinloze methode', *TRO*, 26 April 1980. The booklet was bought by 17,000 readers.
133 E.g. Ed., 'Afvallen bij instituut is duur en onzinnig', *VOL*, 23 January 1986.

as one's income, were significant predictors of adult relative body weight.[134] Hence, around the same time as Robert Crawford's problematisation of healthism, without making mention of the scholarly discourse, journalists' critical coverage of the relationship between socioeconomic status and health also contested the 'responsibilisation' of people's health. Another similarity between American and Dutch journalists was that the latter also had little to say about the effect of structural racism on people's health, even though it seems probable that this was an issue of some significance in the Netherlands as well.[135]

Occasionally, Dutch journalists would try to present the relationship between class and health as a specifically American problem. In a 14-part (!) series in *De Volkskrant* on 'Healthcare in the United States', foreign correspondent Caspar Bleys critically assessed the usefulness of health education, explaining that in the U.S., tens of millions were living under the poverty line, 'with bad health as a consequence'. In an extreme example of the importance of environment to one's well-being, he remarked that the premier health risk of black men living in American cities was homicide.[136] Two readers of *De Volkskrant*, however, argued that Bleys' 'everything's better here' perspective was wrong, as the structural relationship between health and income was similar in the Netherlands.[137] Some promoted more permanent solutions to this problem, such as the socialist *Het Vrije Volk*, which asked why the Dutch government did not make light food products more affordable.[138] By the second half of the 1980s, the causes of fatness were beginning to seem ever more complicated, as several journalists reported that people's metabolism also played an important role.[139]

In the 1960s and most of the 1970s, journalists had presented Dutch health trends, and resistance to them, as delayed echoes of changes in American society. Now, however, that delay seemed to disappear: in many ways, the Dutch debate about fatness took on the shape of the discussion in the U.S. In the late 1970s, the feminist works of Susie Orbach and Marcia

134 Harmsma, 'Alleen de "dikkerd"', *HVV*, 8 July 1978; Erna van den Berg, 'Vermageringsdieet is vaak gevaarlijk', *VOL*, 15 July 1978.

135 It is difficult to find historical data on the topic. Recent research suggests that in the Netherlands, individuals who perceive ethnic discrimination tend to have more health problems. Umar Ikram et al., 'Perceived Ethnic Discrimination and the Metabolic Syndrome in Ethnic Minority Groups: The Healthy Life in an Urban Setting Study', *Psychosomatic Medicine* 79:1 (2017) 101-111. DOI: 10.1097/PSY.0000000000000350.

136 Caspar Bleys, 'Voorlichting over gezondheid blijkt vaak niet te werken', *VOL*, 4 April 1987.

137 Ed., 'Gezondheidszorg' (letter to the editor by Julia Cohen and Berry Robben), *VOL*, 29 April 1987.

138 Ed., 'Gouda wordt anti vet-stad', *HVV*, 14 October 1988.

139 E.g. Liesbeth Klumper and Dick van der Veen, 'Lijnen helpt maar even', *TRO*, 15 April 1988.

Millman struck a chord with Dutch journalists, many of whom had already pointed out the gendered mechanisms of fat stigma. By the 1980s, Dutch newspapers had hired more female journalists,[140] who popularised Orbach's ideas about the relationship between eating disorders and sexism. They also interviewed Dutch psychologists such as Lola Verkuil, who adapted Orbach's writings into 'food addiction' therapy. Such therapies were aimed at helping women to be more accepting of their bodies, but some journalists, echoing Robert Crawford's work on healthism, remarked that this individualised the problem of fatness, which to them seemed to be of little use in the fight against fat stigma. Verkuil herself explained that such structural critiques were better left to others: 'That's something you should talk to *Vet Vrij* about'.[141]

Vet Vrij ('Fat Free') was a Dutch fat activist organisation founded in 1981. The group was one of the first non-U.S. fat activist organisations, and was followed by feminist groups founded in Australia, France and Britain.[142] Often using literal translations of the mottos of New Haven's Fat Liberation Front and other American fat activist groups ('How Dare You Presume that I'd Rather Be Thin?'), this Dutch organisation quickly gained the attention of the press.[143] In the first article on *Vet Vrij* in *De Telegraaf*, Annemarie Bremer, one of its founders, explained that the group had been very directly influenced by their American 'sister group':

> In America there's 'Fat Liberation', an organisation of fat women, who are proud of their own bodies. I am in contact with them and they often send me material that is very useful.[144]

Vet Vrij's annual 'Fat Women's Day' in Amsterdam, an attempt to create an atmosphere for fat acceptance in the Netherlands, received a lot of coverage. In interviews scheduled around this day, the group's members explicated their feminist approach, pointing out that they were 'not a marriage agency'.[145] Not every article on the organisation was positive: journalist Lisette Lewin ('not fat') got into a discussion at a Fat Women's Day when she remarked that *Vet Vrij* was not letting women think for themselves.[146] Nevertheless, the group expanded, with small clubs of fat women being organised outside of

140 Van der Hoeven and Wijfjes, 'Concentratie en kritische autonomie', 271.
141 Arno Haijtema, 'Overeten hangt samen met ongelijke positie vrouw', *VOL*, 3 October 1985.
142 Simic, 'Fat as a Feminist Issue', 22; Cooper, *Fat Activism*, 138-139.
143 Els Smit, 'Dikkerdjes willen er graag goed uitzien', *HVV*, 19 November 1983.
144 Hanneke Peters, '"Waarom mag een vrouw niet dik zijn?"', *TEL*, 20 June 1981.
145 Ed., 'Dikke vrouwen', *TRO*, 27 November 1982.
146 Lisette Lewin, '"En dan néém ik een gebakje"', *VOL*, 29 November 1982.

Amsterdam by 1983.[147] On at least two occasions, members of *Vet Vrij* presented the group's position in prime-time TV shows. More generally, the goal of Dutch fat feminists – fat acceptance – was becoming a commonly heard refrain in the Netherlands. In the early 1980s, *De Telegraaf* showed a particular interest in the topic, publishing multiple articles on *Vet Vrij*, a plus-size fashion special, and 10 letters to the editor from authors who were unapologetic about their relative body weight. As one reader wrote, 'Being fat is unhealthy? What nonsense!'.[148]

As had happened in the U.S., fat activism arrived in the Netherlands amidst rising doubts about the value of nutrition expertise. By 1980, the popularisation of various contradictory nutritional theories had caused considerable confusion. As historian Alex Mold's work on Britain has shown, the resultant scepticism was sometimes voiced in 'more libertarian' newspapers.[149] Again, the right-wing *De Telegraaf*, which was by now well-known for its anti-establishment sensibility, struck a rebellious tone.[150] In an article titled 'The War of the Food Experts', journalist Wim Koesen paraphrased British nutritionist Magnus Pyke:

> People are being scared to death with threats, are getting confused because almost every expert has a contradictory theory, and have wandered into the middle of an outright nutrition war.

Koesen's conclusion was simple: 'Go ahead and stuff yourself every once in a while'.[151] *De Volkskrant*, though much more moderate in tone, also observed that the findings of American nutritionists were creating a heated debate in Europe about the relationship between nutrition and health.[152]

As a consequence of such controversies, feminist fat activists in the Netherlands, like their counterparts in the U.S., increasingly focused on the role of medical experts in the perpetuation of fat stigma. *Vet Vrij*'s 'book of complaints' (1982, see Figure 7) even contained an entire chapter on gendered fat prejudice among Dutch physicians, claiming that doctors' health advice was indistinguishable from societal beauty norms, and that they were obsessed with dieting.[153] Correspondingly, their American colleagues, historian Jessica

147 Smit, 'Dikkerdjes willen', *HVV*, 19 November 1983.
148 Ed., '"Zwaargewichten" hebben geen moeite met hun dik zijn', *TEL*, 22 November 1982.
149 Alex Mold, '"Everybody Likes a Drink. Nobody Likes a Drunk": Alcohol, Health Education and the Public in 1970s Britain', *Social History of Medicine* 30:3 (2017) 612-636, 631. DOI: 10.1093/shm/hkw094.
150 Wolf, *Het geheim*, 377.
151 Wim Koesen, 'De oorlog van de voedselexperts', *TEL*, 24 May 1980.
152 Hans Friedeman, 'Vrees voor cholesterol en vet overdreven', *VOL*, 4 June 1980.
153 Marianne van Dodewaard, 'Meer dik', *TEL*, 18 June 1984.

Parr shows, were also accused of entertaining negative stereotypes about fat people.[154] By the end of the 1980s, Dutch journalists placed nutrition research within what they now called the 'medical-industrial complex': to them, it was a field of study which necessitated a 'fresh, cynical view'.[155] Hence, over the course of the 1980s, newspaper journalists had come to follow nutrition science with increasing suspicion, advocating a more fundamental discussion about the merits of healthy dieting.

FIGURE 7 Vet Vrij's Book of complaints.

The cover of *Fat and Happy: Book of Complaints by Fat Women* (Amsterdam, 1982). © Annemarie Bremer, Anna van der Bijl, Jetteke de Visser and Annelies Vos.

Physical exercise

In contrast to nutrition fads, trends in physical exercise started slowly in the Netherlands. However, by the early 1980s fitness studios were emerging and the Dutch, encouraged by national celebrities, were getting into aerobics.[156] Jogging and marathon-running also increased in popularity. 'Even the Dutch are giving in', *De Volkskrant*'s Hans van Wissen wrote. 'Sober. Sceptical. Relativistic. But in ever-greater numbers.'[157] Journalists presented jogging and

154 Jessica Parr, 'Obesity and the Emergence of Mutual Aid Groups for Weight Loss in the Post-War United States', *Social History of Medicine* 27:4 (2014) 768-788, 776. DOI: 10.1093/shm/hku020.

155 Evelyne de Leeuw, 'Moet hoge bloeddruk als ziekte worden behandeld?', *VOL*, 5 November 1988.

156 Stokvis and Van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier*, 130.

157 Hans van Wissen, '"Die malle ruimte waarin 42 kilometer lang God en de duivel aan het bekvechten zijn"', *VOL*, 22 May 1982.

aerobic dancing as highly commercialised, bourgeois trends from the U.S.[158] Though American observers' levels of derision were never reached in Dutch newspapers, some commentators did describe aerobics as a brain-damaging, 'jacked-up fad',[159] and jogging as 'a collective madness, blown over from America, from which nothing good has come since jazz music [...]'.[160] Because newspaper editors increasingly encouraged a more personal style, journalists revealed themselves as runners or non-runners. The animosity between the two groups even entered the offices of *Het Vrije Volk*, as columnist Bert van Dommelen openly ridiculed two colleagues who liked to jog:

> A born masochist and a converted chain smoker: these are the people who regularly use these columns to tell you that long-distance running feels good, and is good for you. You should decide for yourself, but if I were you, I wouldn't fall for it. And you can trust me. Every day I smoke about one and a half packs and pour myself a generous swig of beer.[161]

Apart from the ridicule reserved for running, most articles on strenuous physical exercise were more serious in tone. The Netherlands had its own jogging scare, most clearly illustrated by *Het Vrije Volk*'s front-page article about the death of James Fixx.[162] Dutch authorities, from the minister of public health to the head of medical affairs of the Heart Association, were apprehensive about the trend as well.[163] Whether they were describing jogging or bodybuilding, by the mid-1980s journalists at different newspapers claimed the occupation with 'fitness' was going to cause multiple deaths. Fixx's sudden death, coupled with that of Dutch professional runner Stijn Jaspers (also in 1984), even caused enthusiastic runners to entirely abandon the health argument, now claiming that running simply 'felt good'.[164]

In the early 1980s, similar to their American colleagues, Dutch journalists also partially shifted their attention from the physiological effects of strenuous exercise to its psychological consequences. As in the U.S., this was primarily presented as an argument in favour of moderation. Some echoed

158 Mart Smeets, 'Hardrenners', *TRO*, 29 October 1982.
159 J.C. Brak and Ruud Verdonck, 'Ruiken', *TRO*, 4 October 1983.
160 Jules Deelder, 'Lopen en laten lopen', *HVV*, 15 April 1989.
161 Bert van Dommelen, 'Met Nike naar 't hiernamaals', *HVV*, 20 February 1985.
162 Ed., 'Jogger nummer 1 loopt zich dood', *HVV*, 23 July 1984.
163 Hans van Wissen, 'Van der Reijden en het nieuwe sportbeleid', *VOL*, 3 December 1983; Marcella van der Wiel, '"Voor het hart is ontspanning beter dan inspanning"', *TEL*, 24 July 1984.
164 Jelle Jan Klinkert, 'Hardlopen is lekker, maar meer ook niet', *TRO*, 27 August 1985.

conservative thinkers in the U.S., warning against narcissism. Most observers, however, made use of expert opinion when discussing the relation between exercise and anorexia or people's compulsive need for running. The research of American psychiatrists, which focused on people who ran more than 80 kilometres per week (almost two marathons), was quickly extrapolated to all enthusiasts of aerobics, 'trim' exercises, and jogging.[165] Others employed a biological framework, drawing attention to runners' physiological dependence on the release of endorphins, comparing these hormones to heroin.[166] Perhaps because journalists often saw these problems as American imports, they also looked to medical experts from the U.S. for an analysis of their causes. The effect was that the Dutch debate about 'unstable' and 'masochistic' fitness enthusiasts showed remarkable similarities to that found in U.S. newspapers.[167]

However, in contrast to some of their American colleagues, Dutch journalists maintained a fairly serious tone when discussing lifestyle trends throughout the 1980s. With some exceptions, the pathologisation of dieting and exercise was framed as genuine concern for public health. Where American newspapers assigned a significant portion of their lifestyle pieces to the opinion pages or to sections on popular culture, Dutch articles on the same topics were placed on the sports pages or categorised as science writing. It thus seems that satirical books for non-runners and couch potatoes translated poorly to the Dutch debate on exercise. Though newspapers in the Netherlands increasingly struck a more light-hearted tone in the 1970s and 1980s, their use of humour was still limited in comparison to that of their American counterparts.

Concluding remarks

The period between 1945 and 1989 saw a transnational rise in the cultural significance of healthy living. However, at the same time, resistance to this idealised lifestyle became increasingly visible in American and Dutch newspapers. At first, journalists voiced cautious criticisms focused on the 'excesses' of diet culture and exercise enthusiasm, often deferring to medical experts. Then, from the 1970s onwards, they pathologised the healthy lifestyle, amplifying a varied group of resisters that pointed out its seemingly

165 J.M. Janbroers, 'De onbedwingbare drang tot trimmen', *TEL*, 16 July 1983.
166 Ludwig Benecke, 'De verslaving van de langeafstandsloper', *VOL*, 10 September 1983.
167 Hans van Wissen and Bert Wagendorp, 'Wie aan fitness doet is narcist', *VOL*, 2 Oktober 1989.

negative physiological and psychological effects. Therefore, by this decade, the perspectives printed by newspapers increasingly paralleled those of both active and future critical health scholars. In the 1980s, American observers definitively added another approach to the resistance genre: now, many used satire to oppose public health directives, sometimes straightforwardly asserting their right to live an unhealthy life.

The analysis of newspapers from the Netherlands demonstrates how easily ideas about health and lifestyle crossed borders. Dutch journalists generally organised the discussion about healthy living around the same talking points as in the U.S. while citing American journalists, medical experts and activists. At the time, the overwhelming majority of Dutch journalists saw the U.S. as a vital reference culture, and the Netherlands, on most occasions, as a passive adopter of health routines. This meant that while they tried to reject certain 'problematic' health trends seen in the U.S., American practices were often treated as a vision of the future, with journalists looking to the U.S. for analysis of these cultural phenomena. It should be noted that despite the transnational impact of American thinking about healthy living (both from enthusiasts as well as resisters), there were actually significant differences between the two societies regarding lifestyle trends. Not only did the fitness boom never reach American heights in the Netherlands, but newspaper journalism about health issues also remained – with some notable exceptions – much more serious in tone.

While the post-war era assuredly saw the spirited popularisation of an 'ideal' lifestyle, supposedly resulting in both thinness and health, an analysis of newspaper journalism between 1967 and 1990 shows that American and Dutch ideas about the topic were more complex and contested, with popular media amplifying a variety of critical voices – from 'medical mavericks' to fat activists to satirists. The hiring of more female journalists, together with an increased focus on 'soft' news and lifestyle issues, had a significant impact on the breadth of opinion on health issues printed by American and Dutch newspapers.

Here, journalists' representations had a dual effect on how expertise could be forged and maintained. First, while trained experts certainly remained important authorities on health throughout this period, their role took on a more ambiguous character. Physicians and researchers were regularly accused of bias and disreputable commercial interests, and those who were quoted in newspaper articles also had to contend with colleagues opposing their views. By the 1980s, a growing number of journalists were exposing contradictions in expert opinion about the effect of people's lifestyle

on their well-being. The effect was, in part, that viewpoints in newspapers sometimes paralleled arguments in critical health studies of the time. Second, by highlighting the subjective nature of health, journalists in the 1970s and 1980s helped activists, satirists, and celebrity athletes claim a type of *embodied* expertise, which was based on their own physical experiences. Accordingly, the post-war history of newspaper journalism on healthy living demonstrates how such claims facilitated the expansion of access to popular debates about health, and further contextualises the resultant cacophony of lifestyle advice.

Chapter 3

‘Strong as a Bear, Gracious as a Gazelle’: The Expansion of Female Athleticism in Dutch Sports Magazines and Advertisements for Sports Food and Beverages, 1960-1980

Yearbook of Women’s History 38: Building Bodies. Gendered Sport and Transnational Movements (edited by Marjet Derks) (Hilversum: Verloren, 2019) 137-152.

Abstract

Scholars have claimed that contemporary representations of female athleticism are characterised by a 'messy multiplicity': images of stereotypical femininity now exist alongside representations combining beauty and power. However, this perspective neglects the historicity of 'messy' representations of sportswomen. To address the scope of female athletes' agency in the twentieth century, this chapter analyses how these women were represented, but also what sport food products they were offered in advertisements, and how these affected new types of athletic femininity. Concentrating on the 1960s and 1970s in the Netherlands, it aims to examine the gendered representations of athleticism and the tangible nutritional options afforded to women amidst transnational commercial interests, scientific consensus, powerful cultural customs, and sport-related practices. By studying trends in ideas about sportswomen and their bodies, it helps understand the cultural values that continue to shape lifestyle choices.

Introduction

'Did you ever wish you were a boy?', a 1992 Nike advertisement asked its female readers. Challenging the gendered nature of athleticism, it encouraged sporting women to 'stop beating yourself over the head for things that weren't wrong in the first place'. In *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon* (2003), Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin present the ad's publication as a watershed moment for the unapologetic acceptance of female athleticism.[1] Nonetheless, representations of sportswomen have remained ambiguous.[2] Social scientists argue that depictions of women often conform to traditional ideas about femininity and sexuality, which conceptualise the female body as slender, yet non-aggressive, firm, yet passive.[3] Sociologist Toni Bruce reflects on the resulting 'messy multiplicity': images of stereotypical femininity, she contends, now exist alongside representations combining beauty *and* power. To Bruce, this elucidates women's agency, and its limits, in the cultural sphere of sports.[4]

Scholars present the realisation of this 'messy multiplicity' as a recent development.[5] Correspondingly, historical studies on representations of female athleticism often paint a picture of near-total hegemonic masculinity, focusing on the constraints on women's bodily practices in the past.[6] Historian

1 Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin, *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon* (Minneapolis, MN/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 2-3. In this chapter 'athleticism' is defined as the bodily actions that advance sporting achievements.

2 Agnes Elling, Rens Peeters and Leonne Stentler, 'Tussen nieuwe heldinnen, voetbalbabes en lerende amateurs', in: Martine S. Prange and Martijn Oosterbaan (eds.), *Vrouwenvoetbal in Nederland: Spiegel en katalysator van maatschappelijke veranderingen* (Utrecht/Amsterdam: Klement/Atria, 2017) 209-236, 222.

3 Mary Jo Kane and Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, 'Media Treatment of Female Athletes: Issues of Gender and Sexualities', in: Lawrence A. Wenner (ed.), *MediaSport* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998) 186-201, 186; Noortje van Amsterdam et al., 'A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: Constructing (non-)Athletic Bodies', *Journal of Youth Studies* 15:3 (2012) 293-309, 293. DOI: 10.1080/13676261.2011.643233.

4 Toni Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times: Sportswomen and Media Representation in the Third Wave', *Sex Roles* 74:7-8 (2016) 361-376, 368. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-015-0497-6. Historian Nancy Hewitt coined the term: Nancy A. Hewitt, 'Introduction', in: idem (ed.), *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010) 1-12, 7.

5 Heywood and Dworkin, *Built to Win*, 2-3; Jennifer Hargreaves and Eric Anderson, 'Sport, Gender and Sexuality: Surveying the Field', in: Jennifer Hargreaves and Eric Anderson (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality* (London [Etc.]: Routledge, 2014) 3-18; Bruce, 'New Rules'.

6 Stephen Wagg, '"If You Want the Girl Next Door...": Olympic Sport and the Popular Press in Early Cold War Britain', in: Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews (eds.), *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War* (London [Etc.]: Routledge, 2007) 100-122; Lindsay Parks Pieper, 'Sex Testing and the Maintenance of Western Femininity in International Sport', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31:13 (2014) 1557-1576. DOI: 10.1080/09523367.2014.927184; Dennis Krämer, 'Mediale Praktiken des Gendering: Tamara und Irina Press im westlichen Sportdiskurs zu Zeiten des "Kalten Krieges"', in: Gabriele Klein and Hanna K. Göbel (eds.), *Performance und Praxis: Praxeologische Erkundungen in Tanz, Theater, Sport und Alltag* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017) 191-209.

Joyce Kay signals that such efforts often consist of cherry picking: scholars, 'as a means of redressing a perceived imbalance, have selected the most telling, sometimes the most extreme, examples of bias against sportswomen'.[7] In actuality, while athleticism remains a gendered concept, its variations, and its association with masculinity and femininity, have never been fixed.[8]

This case study aims at critically examining the *historicity* of the aforementioned 'messy multiplicity' to show the ambiguous realities of the historical position of female athletes. It will zoom in on a specific aspect of sportswomen's representations: their textual and visual association with sports food and beverages. By promising specific and direct bodily effects, these internationally promoted products claimed to afford and delimit the cultivation of various kinds of (female) athleticism. Hence it is especially in the domain of these ergogenic aids – enhancers of physical performance – and their declared transformative powers that female strategies for advancing sporting achievements could potentially originate. Such a focus will both help to understand the complexity of representations of women in sports as well as address properly the scope of female athletes' possibilities in the twentieth century amidst commercial interests, powerful cultural customs, and sports-related practices. Focusing on the 1960s and 1970s in the Netherlands, a period of vital importance to the popularisation of sports nutrition, this chapter hypothesises that 1) Dutch media increasingly presented athletic bodies as obtainable and desirable to women and that 2) advertisements of sports food and beverages sought to promote various forms of female athleticism.

Operationalisation

Contrasting two Dutch sports magazines, *De Atletiekwereld* ('The World of Athletics') and *Sport & Sportwereld* ('Sports and the World of Sports'), this chapter surveys both editorial content (for the years 1960, 1970 and 1980) and advertisements (1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1980). The former periodical was geared toward an active sporting community, while the latter primarily served the passive spectators of mediatised sports. Comparing the two allows for a look at diverging views on gender and athleticism between the somewhat confined

7 Joyce Kay, 'A Window of Opportunity? Preliminary Thoughts on Women's Sport in Post-war Britain', *Sport in History* 30:2 (2010) 196-217, 209. DOI: 10.1080/17460263.2010.481206.

8 James A. Mangan, 'Epilogue – Prospects for the New Millennium: Women, Emancipation and the Body', in: James A. Mangan and Fan Hong (eds.), *Freeing the Female Body: Inspirational Icons* (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001) 237-250, 242.

world of organised sports and the more expansive sports culture. Because of its multidisciplinary nature, the focus on athletics helps to examine the diverse athletic ideals within the 'mother of all sports'. Furthermore, it offers insight into a sport in which the female athlete stood out long before 1960 (not just in the Netherlands), while facilitating both her celebration – as the sympathetic, 'modest' woman – as well as her exclusion – in the form of sex testing.[9]

The two magazines had diverging target audiences. *De Atletiekwereld* was the magazine of the Royal Dutch Athletics Federation (K.N.A.U.) from 1934 to 2004. While membership of the federation grew rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s, its magazine's readership remained modest.[10] As the official publication of the federation, however, it could undoubtedly be found in every athletics club's clubhouse. It was published fortnightly, meaning 72 issues were analysed for their editorial content, whereas the set of advertisements was taken from 120 issues. *De Atletiekwereld* eventually featured a full-colour cover, whereas its contents were invariably printed in black and white. The magazine's size grew significantly between 1960 and 1980, from on average 15 pages to 45 pages per issue. The male authors of *De Atletiekwereld* transcended their role as journalists: by virtue of their managerial duties at the federation, and their role as speaker at international conferences, they formed a group of expert mediators between sports institutions and athletes.

Sport & Sportwereld had a different, and larger, audience than *De Atletiekwereld*. Launched in 1951 as a weekly magazine, on 1 July 1970 it became the sports section of national newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* while keeping its original editorial board. Through this move, *Sport & Sportwereld*'s readership grew instantly from 45,000 to 365,000.[11] Afterwards, the newspaper branded itself as *the* sports publication.[12] Like *De Atletiekwereld*, and like many present-day sports publications in the Netherlands and elsewhere, the magazine's editorial board consisted solely of men.[13] Though *Sport & Sportwereld* was turned into a daily section once it became part of *Algemeen Dagblad*, for consistency in the dataset only its Monday edition – when the sports section was by far the most extensive – was analysed. The editorial content of 152

9 The two most well-known Dutch cases being, respectively, Fanny Blankers-Koen and Foekje Dillema, who both enjoyed their greatest successes in the 1940s. See also: Parks Pieper, 'Sex Testing'.

10 K.N.A.U. membership: 1955 - 13,000; 1965 - 20,000; 1980 - 40,000. De Atletiekwereld readership: 1955 - 2,000; 1980 - 7,000. Untitled, *De Atletiekwereld*, 9 July 1955; 'K.N.A.U. boekte 40.000e lid', *De Atletiekwereld*, 6 November 1980.

11 'Tennisdirecteur ontvangt eerste proefnummer AD Sportwereld Pro', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25 February 2008; Untitled, *Algemeen Dagblad: Sport & Sportwereld* (From here on: *AD: S&S*), 6 July 1970.

12 AD Advertisement, *AD: S&S*, 27 May 1980.

13 Bruce, 'New Rules', 362.

issues and the advertisements of 256 issues (all printed in black and white) were studied. *Sport & Sportwereld*'s size remained constant over the years: 7.1 to 7.7 pages per issue. In comparison to *De Atletiekwereld*, it was written in a more popular style geared toward sports spectators. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of its advertisements were unrelated to sports, promoting things like cigars, baby bottle heaters, life insurance and whisky. One advertisement for King Peppermints poked fun at readers' lack of athletic involvement, promising 'a round of fresh energy… for sitting in the stands'.[14]

Surveying the editorial content of these two magazines will help to understand attitudes toward female athleticism in the cultural spheres inhabited by sportswomen, whereas analysing advertisements will bring into view the tangible goods offered to women in pursuit of that same athleticism. The textual and visual content of both have been close-read, focusing on authoritative claims, adjectives, recurring rhetoric, affordances, and metaphors. While the spectacle of sports maintains 'a symbiotic relationship with visual culture', and advertisements tended to circulate more widely than most other (visual) sources used for historical scholarship, they have been largely ignored by sports historians.[15] This is regrettable, since the advertising of sports food or beverages can potentially reveal a complex dialogue between producer and consumers. Herein, the former is both shaping and anticipating the latter's desires, enhancing the commodity's meaning by 'affiliating needs with particular products'.[16] All food and drink advertisements featuring an explicit ergogenic – enhancing physical performance – effect, or deploying a visual cue linking the commodity to athleticism, have been examined.[17] Using a mixed methodology of content analysis and close-reading, their ergogenic promises and representations of gender have been coded, and their various connotative meanings have been studied.[18]

The period of 1960-1980 was of great significance to the topic at hand. Influenced by transnational economic events, the beginning of the 1960s saw the birth of a Dutch consumer society.[19] Sports food and beverages from

14 King Peppermints advertisement, *AD: S&S*, 2 November 1970.

15 Mike Huggins, 'The Visual in Sport History: Approaches, Methodologies and Sources', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 32:15 (2015) 1813-1830, 1813, 1817. DOI: 10.1080/09523367.2015.1108969.

16 Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, 'Mobilizing the Consumer: Assembling the Subject of Consumption', *Theory, Culture & Society* 14:1 (1997) 1-36, 6. DOI: 10.1177/026327697014001001.

17 If during a year a product was promoted using the strategy mentioned here, all ads for that product of that year have been coded as sports food/beverage advertisements.

18 William Leiss et al., *Social Communication in Advertising: Consumption in the Mediated Marketplace* (New York, NY/London: Routledge; 3rd Edition) 163-166; Nicholas Holm, *Advertising and Consumer Society: A Critical Introduction* (London/New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017) 45-55.

19 Peter van Dam and Joost Jonker, 'Introduction: The Rise of Consumer Society', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132:3 (2017) 3-10. DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10396.

countries like the United States, West Germany and Switzerland flooded the market, aided by an increasing interest in the material facilitation of athletic achievements. Sports nutrition became part of a broader, transnational move toward empirically tested training methods and match preparation. Citing scientists and coaches from Western and Eastern Germany, the United States and the Soviet Union,[20] *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld* advocated the rational, methodical evaluation of training exercises and athletes' lifestyles that were rapidly becoming the international norm.[21] As it catered to an active athletics community, *De Atletiekwereld* especially reported on international sports science conferences and reviewed foreign-language publications on modern training techniques and sports nutrition, trying to help Dutch athletes in keeping up with their international competitors.[22]

What follows first is a discussion of the ideas about female athleticism and sports nutrition in the editorial content of these two magazines. The second section of this chapter analyses the advertisements for sports food and beverages: their ergogenic promises, their visual language, and their affordance of female athleticism.

Female athleticism and female bodies in *De Atletiekwereld*

De Atletiekwereld often focused on women and their successes. For the volumes of 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1980, 35 per cent of its cover photos featured female athletes, almost always actively engaged in feats of athleticism, while many articles featured women's athletic achievements. Following an angry letter about the prioritisation of men's disciplines in sports magazines in 1960, authors often put the achievements of female athletes first in the ensuing years.[23] What is more, women read *De Atletiekwereld*, evidenced not just by its editorial content but also by the multiple advertisements geared specifically to women.[24]

20 Resp.: 'Atletiek-expert zegt: conditie belangrijker dan techniek', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 19 September 1960; 'De weg naar prestaties', *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 February 1970; 'De weg naar prestaties', *De Atletiekwereld*, 5 March 1970; 'De weg naar prestaties', *De Atletiekwereld*, 9 and 23 April 1970.

21 Uta A. Balbier, '"A Game, a Competition, an Instrument?": High Performance, Cultural Diplomacy and German Sport from 1950 to 1972', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26:4 (2009) 539-555, 547-550. DOI: 10.1080/09523360802658200.

22 'Op uw plaatsen...Jeugdrubriek', *De Atletiekwereld*, 7 May 1960; 'Boekbespreking', *De Atletiekwereld*, 8 October 1960.

23 'Revue der clubbladen', *De Atletiekwereld*, 9 April 1960.

24 E.g. advertisements for sports bras. *De Atletiekwereld*, 5 June 1980.

From 1960 to 1980, the authors of *De Atletiekwereld* grew increasingly supportive of different forms of female athleticism. One example was their evolving position on the physical consequences of long distance running for women, a major debate in the world of sports. In 1960, granting that it had taken them some time, they proclaimed that these events should be accepted 'for the full 100%'.[25] After an international conference in Austria in 1966, *De Atletiekwereld* confirmed that there was no medical reason for women to train or run less than men.[26] Such ideas about the limitations of the female body could shift gradually in the magazine, often backed by the opinion of medical professionals. In 1960, for example, *De Atletiekwereld* problematised menstruation: a period only suited for 'light sports'.[27] Yet twenty years later, the magazine conceived of menstruation as having no discernible effect on athletic performance whatsoever.[28]

In describing female athletic bodies, *De Atletiekwereld*'s authors were not always as open-minded. On the one hand, female athleticism was celebrated. According to a 1960 article, Wilma Rudolph, a black American sprinter, was 'the ideally built woman, strong like a bear, yet gracious as a gazelle'.[29] While congruous with the concept of 'pretty and powerful' introduced earlier, the comment also seems inspired by the belief that there was something 'natural' about black athletic bodies.[30] More often than praising women's physical strength, however, *De Atletiekwereld* warned female athletes of becoming too masculine. In 1960, the magazine cited Dr Nelly Wegener-Sleeswijk's problems with strength training for women from a cultural, though not a medical, standpoint. She conceived of her ideas about female athleticism in a transnational framework, as she cautioned, 'The masculine shape of the heavily trained sportswoman, as we see among Eastern European sportswomen, does not concur with our Western beauty standards'.[31] Dr Wegener-Sleeswijk's recommendations carried weight, as she was a member of the National Olympic Committee and a public figure.[32] Her remarks were poignant given the ongoing controversial sex tests, introduced by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) in 1950. Intended to assuage

25 'Van het wedstrijdfront', *De Atletiekwereld*, 9 April 1960.
26 'De weg naar prestaties', *De Atletiekwereld*, 27 May 1966.
27 'Het MEISJE en de VROUW in de sport', *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 November 1960.
28 'Première avon running circuit', *De Atletiekwereld*, 22 May 1980.
29 'Onstuitbare Wilma Rudolph wint ook de 200 meter', *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 September 1960.
30 Brett St Louis, 'Sport, Genetics and the "Natural Athlete": The Resurgence of Racial Science', *Body & Society* 9:2 (2003) 75-95. DOI: 10.1177/1357034X030092004.
31 'Het MEISJE en de VROUW in de sport', *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 November 1960.
32 E.g. 'Vrouwen en sport', *Driekwart in de middag* (Dutch TV), 13 June 1963. https://www.npo.nl/driekwart-in-de-middag/21-05-2015/WO_NTR_865386 (accessed: 18 October 2021).

fears about Eastern European men 'secretly' competing in women's sports, they simultaneously reinforced existing ideas about feminine athleticism.[33]

De Atletiekwereld's authors allowed for feats of great strength and endurance, but that athleticism was not always permitted its bodily expression. As in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, authors proved concerned with the concept of 'grace', especially in 1960.[34] Perhaps here the unique position of athletics determined their ambiguous positioning. Some of the sport's elements were seen as similar to swimming: their bodily expression did not clash with traditional notions of femininity, or extended them in a way that was acceptable. But other disciplines, which featured the bodily demonstration of intense muscle power, remained the domain of men.[35] In 1980, for instance, the magazine praised runner Grete Waitz's 'feminine' body, because it did not evince her considerable physical efforts.[36] Two weeks later, however, a different article and a letter to the editor revealed that not everyone appreciated the persistent focus on feminine beauty and 'grace'. Its authors chided the prioritising of appearance in *De Atletiekwereld*'s writing on female athletes.[37] In a rare reference to broader societal struggles, the letter argued that running should not be a beauty contest 'in an era of women's emancipation'.[38] In subsequent issues, offending authors struck a more measured tone in writing about women's achievements.

Female athleticism and female bodies in *Sport & Sportwereld*

Two major ways in which *Sport & Sportwereld* differed from *De Atletiekwereld* were its focus on male achievements and its depiction of female athletes. To illustrate the first point: 90 per cent of its cover photos exclusively featured sportsmen, most of them at the height of athletic achievement, while the great majority of the articles in the magazine were exclusively about male sports.[39] This particular focus had commercial reasons: generally, popular sports

33 Parks Pieper, 'Sex Testing'; Wagg, 'If You Want'.
34 Idem, 1561; Idem, 105.
35 Marjet Derks, 'Nette vrouwen zweten niet. Sportvrouwen van marginalisering naar profilering', in: Prange and Oosterbaan (eds.), *Vrouwenvoetbal in Nederland*, 37-59, 39, 43.
36 'Grete Waitz geeft lange afstand nieuwe dimensie!', *De Atletiekwereld*, 27 March 1980.
37 'De tweede avon-loop', *De Atletiekwereld*, 23 October 1980.
38 'AW-lezers grepen naar de pen', idem.
39 The current global average for the proportion of men's/women's sports in print media is about 90/10. Bruce, 'New Rules', 362.

received the spotlight (70 per cent of cover photos featured men's football). Women only featured during moments of international appeal like the Winter and Summer Olympics.[40]

However, when *Sports & Sportwereld* did cover women's sports, its appraisal of female athleticism was unreservedly positive. In 1960, the magazine lauded 'sturdily built' female swimmers for their 'fantastic achievements'.[41] Even when employing a 'strong, almost manly style', they were complimented for their 'magisterial times'.[42] Neither 1970 nor 1980 was different. Foreign athletes received praise too, like Soviet 'power skater' Nina Statkevich who was willing to 'cross the finish line more dead than alive'.[43] In 1980, *Sport & Sportwereld* openly celebrated female muscle power by putting a photo of Erica Mes, Miss World Bodybuilding, on the cover.[44]

Sport & Sportwereld occasionally fostered inflexible ideas about 'acceptable' bodies. Remarks about appearances – about 'gentle, intelligent little' faces[45] – not only trivialised women's accomplishments, but also tended to police bodies that were seen to be divergent from the norm. Like in *De Atletiekwereld*, medical professionals were most disparaging. A member of the medical commission of the IOC, the well-known Professor Ludwig Prokop, remarked upon the 'pyramids of flesh and bones' in weightlifting and the 'starving children' of gymnastics. He warned against hormone treatments and the 'manly traits' women might develop.[46] Interestingly, authors of *Sport & Sportwereld* became increasingly aware of their masculine conceptualisation of athleticism. One 1970 column on women's football posited that 'womanly', like 'manly', would need to become a synonym for decisiveness or forcefulness.[47] Of course, women themselves often challenged gendered views on athleticism, like the group of female cyclers asking to join the 'muscle fortification' training of the

40 Globally, representations in sports publications become more gender-equal around the time of big tournaments, such as the Summer and Winter Olympics. Pirkko Markula, Toni Bruce and Jorid Hovden, 'Key Themes in the Research on Media Coverage of Women's Sport', in: Toni Bruce, Jorid Hovden and Pirkko Markula (eds.), *Sportswomen at the Olympics: A Global Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage* (Rotterdam [Etc.]: Sense Publishers, 2010) 1-18, 3.

41 'Ilsa Konrads opent recordjacht!', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 11 January 1960. Dutch female swimmers had achieved great international successes even before World War II. Marjet Derks, 'Sportlife: Medals, Media and Life Courses of Female Dutch Olympic Champions, 1928-1940', *Historical Social Research* 39:1 (2014) 144-162. DOI: 10.12759/hsr.39.2014.1.144-162.

42 'Extra record zwemmen door Nederlandse meisjes', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 13 June 1960.

43 'Russin Nina Statkevitsj de sterke Europese kampioene vóór Stien, Ans en Attje', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 2 February 1970.

44 'Erica haalt de top', *AD: S&S*, 10 November 1980.

45 'Erica Terpstra bereikte zeer snel de top der vrije slag-cracks', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 22 August 1960.

46 'Geslachtstest barrière voor enkele vrouwen', *AD: S&S*, 2 Augustus 1980.

47 'Kick Geudekers Kolom: De dames waren heel wat "mans"', *AD: S&S*, 23 November 1970.

Royal Dutch Cycling Union, despite not having been invited. The girls, the magazine wrote, were 'more fanatical than the boys'.[48]

Hence in various articles on women's sports, authors of both *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld* monitored female athletes' conformity to existing beauty standards. At the same time, they conceived of physical strength and general athleticism as important explanations for women's successes, and they generally cheered for these feats of female athleticism, especially by 1980 – regardless of a sportswoman's nationality. Herein, the magazines followed a trend seen in other countries like Sweden, where the trivialising focus on sportswomen's looks diminished somewhat – perhaps temporarily – from 1970 onwards.[49] More importantly, the magazines presented these female successes as the product of women's dedication to their sport, and their rational approach to training and nutrition.

Sports nutrition in *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld*

The early 1960s marked a turning point in the Dutch interest in sports nutrition. Four publications in four years, tailored to serious athletes, popularised the emerging international consensus on the diet of sportspersons.[50] These books featured frequent and explicit references to scientific, authoritative works from countries like West and East Germany, the United States, Switzerland, and the Soviet Union. To the authors of *De Atletiekwereld*, sports nutrition was also a topic of increasing interest. A 1960 or 1970 issue of the magazine featured, on average, 0.6 references to sports nutrition, a figure that rose to 1.5 in 1980. Since the magazine catered to a community of active sportspersons, articles on the topic included practical advice, all the while presenting a specifically Dutch lack of nutritional knowledge as impeding international success in athletics.[51]

48 'Winterse conditie-training van KNWU werd afgesloten', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 16 February 1970.

49 Pia Lundquist Wanneberg, 'The Sexualization of Sport: A Gender Analysis of Swedish Elite Sport from 1967 to the Present Day', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 18:3 (2011) 265-278, 269-271. DOI: 10.1177/1350506811406075.

50 Nederlandse Sport Federatie, *Symposion 'voeding en sport'* (Hilversum, 1962); Het Nederlands Zuivelbureau and Nederlandse Sport Federatie, *Voeding en sport: Inzichten en uitspraken van Europese en Amerikaanse medici met betrekking tot de invloed van de voeding op conditie en prestaties van sportlieden* (Amsterdam: Het Nederlandse Zuivelbureau, 1963); Jan de Wijn, *De voeding bij sportbeoefening: Richtlijnen voor kaderinstructie* (The Hague: Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding, 1965); Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding, *Sport en voeding* (The Hague: Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding, 1965).

51 'Olympische lessen', *De Atletiekwereld*, 22 October 1960.

De Atletiekwereld's authors saw a link between variants of athleticism and nutritional components. Athleticism was neatly divided into two different strands: the capacity for short bursts of physical strength and the ability to endure prolonged, more moderate exercise. Increasing one's physical strength called for a protein-rich diet, whereas endurance sports asked for simple and complex carbohydrates. These two strands of athleticism came with typical athletic disciplines – e.g. shot putting and running a marathon – and typical body shapes – leptosome and pyknic. A third body category, the intermediate, 'athletic' type, could theoretically excel at anything.

Dietary advice in *De Atletiekwereld* was generally not gender-specific. In a short piece on the Summer Olympics of 1960, *De Atletiekwereld* affirmed the importance of protein to the body of athletes, men or women: 'chicken in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening […]'.[52] The magazine also introduced male and female long-distance runners to the relatively new concept of carbo-loading.[53] There were some exceptions: sometimes, articles spoke of the diet of 'sportsmen' (*sportmannen*) instead of 'sportspersons' (*sporters*). However, significantly, increasing one's physical strength with the help of protein consumption was specifically presented as a method for young women on two separate occasions.[54] By aiming most of its articles on nutrition at both male and female athletes, and by sometimes offering up advice specifically geared toward women, *De Atletiekwereld* presented sportswomen with the tools for increasing their athleticism.

On the topic of sports and food, *Sport & Sportwereld*'s approach was less comprehensive and less academic than *De Atletiekwereld*. The food practices of male and female athletes came up in interviews and ranged from very deliberate – a personal seaweed recipe – to intuitive – 'nonsense, that scramble for yeast flakes and wheat germs'.[55] Sports nutrition was at times part of the broader discussion about the international reputation of Dutch sports. The magazine argued that a lack of proper medical, psychological *and* nutritional guidance had rendered the Netherlands a minor actor on the international stage.[56] Without making any distinctions between the nutrition of sportsmen

52 'Op uw plaatsen…Jeugdrubriek', *De Atletiekwereld*, 8 October 1960.

53 'De weg naar prestaties', *De Atletiekwereld*, 10 April and 7 August 1975; Claudia Ridel Juzwiak, 'Reflection on Sports Nutrition: Where We Come From, Where We Are, and Where We Are Headed', *Revista de Nutrição* 29:3 (2016) 435-444, 437. DOI: 10.1590/1678-98652016000300013.

54 'Voeding en sport (3)', *De Atletiekwereld*, 25 September 1964; 'De weg naar prestaties', *De Atletiekwereld*, 22 January 1970.

55 '"Arie, laat je tanden zien, want je zal het heel moeilijk krijgen!"', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 4 January 1960; 'Als in Rome de wind links van achteren waait…', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 11 April 1960.

56 'Sport-Nederland is lelijk achterop geraakt', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 5 September 1960.

and -women, *Sport & Sportwereld* advocated a scientific approach, to compete with the 'laboratory-grown and laboratory-fed athletes from America and Australia'.[57] However, because of its tendency of preferring male sports in general, the diet of male athletes did take precedence in *Sport & Sportwereld* in comparison to *De Atletiekwereld*. At any rate, the general impression of readers of both magazines must have been that sports nutrition constituted a mysterious and exciting field.

Advertisements for sports food and beverages

Commercial enterprises sought to capitalise on the increasing interest in the athlete's diet. Corporations, producers of food and beverages in particular, played a large role in the post-war era world of sports. International brands such as Rivella, Mars, and Coca-Cola sponsored teams and increased their visibility in stadiums. One entire industry aligned itself with sports in countries like the Netherlands, the United States, and Great Britain: dairy associations promoted milk as *the* drink for athletes.[58] The Dutch Dairy Board paid for tournaments and advertisements, in addition to funding multiple scientific conferences and handbooks on sports and sports nutrition.[59]As a publicity stunt, one milk producer even spent 5,000 guilders in supplying Dutch Olympic contenders for the 1960 Summer Olympics with all the milk they could drink.[60]

An indispensable way to reach potential consumers was publishing advertisements in sports magazines. *De Atletiekwereld* printed 74 sports food/beverage advertisements in the years 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1980, compared to 265 ads in *Sport & Sportwereld*. For both magazines, sports food/beverage advertisements comprised 8 per cent of total ads. There was a difference in concentration, however: the less commercial *De Atletiekwereld* contained only one sports food/beverage ad every 38 pages, whereas in *Sport & Sportwereld* the ratio was one in seven pages. In the latter magazine, advertisers often sought to associate their product with the broader sports culture without suggesting an ergogenic effect. In some Rivella advertisements, for instance, readers

57 'Amerika heroverde in Rome zwemhegemonie', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 12 September 1960.

58 Maria J. Veri, 'Got Athletes? The Use of Male Athlete Celebrity Endorsers in Early Twentieth-Century Dairy-Industry Promotions', *Journal of Sport History* 43:3 (2016) 290-305, 291. DOI: 10.5406/jsporthistory.43.3.0290.

59 'Het MEISJE en de VROUW in de sport', *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 November 1960. The Dairy Board spent 19 million guilders on advertising in 1968 alone. 'Nederlands Zuivelbureau: Reclamebudget 1968 ruim 19 miljoen gulden', *Revue der Reclame* 28:9 (1968) 231-233.

60 'Olympische deelnemers zullen genoeg melk kunnen drinken', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 7 June 1960.

were encouraged to identify with spectators, not sportspersons, drinking its beverage.[61] Twenty different brands were promoted in the two magazines. Dextro-Energen, a German producer of glucose tablets, featured most prominently, comprising 20 per cent of sports food/beverage ads. A range of international companies advertised for nutritional products, with seven of the ten most prevalent brands hailing from foreign countries such as the United States, Germany, and Switzerland. Some advertisers even exploited the fact that Dutch sports commentators presented other countries as more nutritionally advanced. Champ, for instance, presented the logos of eight different West German sports federations that had endorsed their beverages.[62]

The ergogenic effects promised in sports food/beverage advertisements used similar concepts and language as both the articles on nutrition in *De Atletiekwereld* and the popular writings on scientific nutritional knowledge of the time.[63] Textually, sports food/beverage ads often promised an increase in short- or long-term energy (37 per cent of them) or the increase of physical strength (3 per cent). Many advertisements promised both effects (29 per cent). There were no clear diachronic trends, and while different companies advertised in the two magazines, the types of athleticism they promoted was quite similar (see Figure 8).

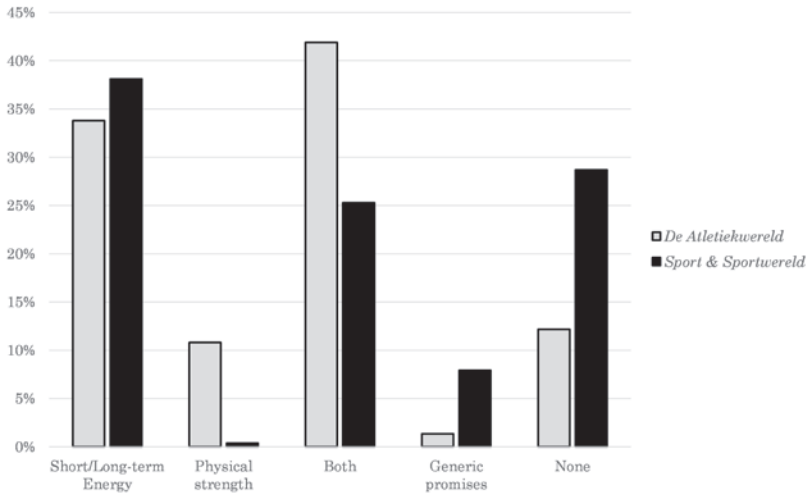

FIGURE 8 Ergogenic promises in advertisements.

Ergogenic promises in sports food/beverage advertisements in *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld*, 1960-1980.

61 Rivella advertisement, *Sport & Sportwereld*, 15 February 1960.
62 Champ advertisement, *De Atletiekwereld*, 7 August 1980.
63 See note 50.

Still, some discernible differences between the two magazines did exist. Advertisers publishing in *Sport & Sportwereld* looked to attract both active sportspersons and spectators. This expansive strategy involved either making a very generic ergogenic claim, or not making a claim at all. Another incongruity between the two magazines was the share of advertisements promising an increase of physical strength through consumption of their protein-rich product, which occurred much more frequently in *De Atletiekwereld* (53 per cent) compared to *Sport & Sportwereld* (25 per cent). It would appear that the sugary beverages and chocolate bars in *Sport & Sportwereld* had a much broader appeal than protein-based foods and beverages. Thus, these facilitators of different types of athleticism offered to sportsmen and -women were the result of a complex interplay between existing international ideas about effective sports nutrition, the latest technological possibilities of producers and what they felt were consumers' aspirations, and the medium in which the product appeared.

Gender in sports food/beverage advertisements

The visual elements of sports food/beverage advertisements reveal existing, gendered views on sports nutrition, and on the type of athleticism these products were supposed to facilitate. Over 71 per cent of sports food/beverage advertisements depicted a sportsperson, or a person who stood to benefit from the product's ergogenic potential. Of these advertisements, 192 out of 243 (79 per cent) exclusively featured one or more men. Another 43 (18 per cent) portrayed at least one man and one woman, whereas only eight advertisements (3 per cent) exclusively depicted female athletes, none of which featured in *De Atletiekwereld* (Figure 9; the two magazines have been grouped together).

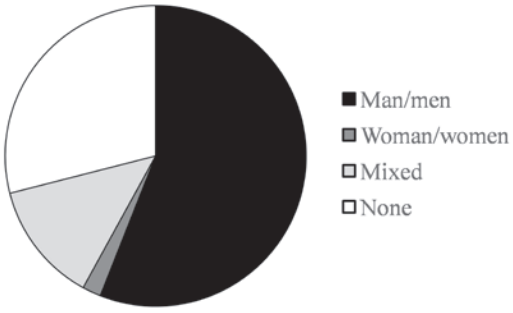

FIGURE 9 Gender in advertisements.

Gendered depictions of sportspersons in sports food/beverage advertisements in *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld*, 1960-1980.

In advertisements, a relation existed between the gender of the sportsperson depicted and the promised ergogenic effects. Of the 51 advertisements featuring one or more women, most fixated on increasing short-/long-term energy (37), whereas none solely promised to increase physical strength. Visually, too, physical strength was mostly associated with sportsmen. One advertisement for Mars was very unambiguous: in the centre of the ad, a man is depicted lifting a giant Mars bar, while in the distance a woman, in Sunday dress, looks on. The weightlifter is holding up the candy bar with apparent ease: a smile is visible on his face, which is turned toward the woman. His sleeveless shirt and very short pants reveal much of his muscular body. Near his feet is a barbell. The young woman has been drawn much smaller, in the upper-left corner. Gazing at the man, she is smiling with a hand near her heart, suggesting she is not just impressed by his achievement, but swooning over him. The text next to the weightlifter reads: 'A source of energy for You as well!'[64] In this advertisement, the product is depicted as an integral part of human interaction, with the ad promising a type of self-transformation. After all, it is the Mars bar that has given the man his strength.[65] Here, as often in the world of sports, the male body is worshipped 'to the exclusion of the female body as active'.[66] Depicting its central figure as the object of female desire, the advertisement's visualisation of sports food clear connotes heteromasculinity.

Many advertisements often explicitly linked products to men and manliness. Two examples are a product line called 'Super Mascula', and a producer of coffee and tea, Douwe Egberts, which tried to alter tea's purported feminine image. It asked, by way of footballer Piet Keizer, 'Tea a women's drink? Is football a women's sport?'[67] In 1965 and 1970, full-page advertisements in *De Atletiekwereld* for milk, a product consistently and prominently promoted in several Dutch sports magazines, portrayed masculine athletic achievement in all its forms. The series even depicted korfball, conceived as a mixed-gender sport, as an all-male affair.[68] Here the gendered conventions of Dutch advertising does not deviate much from international standards, as milk

64 Mars advertisement, *Sport & Sportwereld*, 4 April 1960.

65 Leiss et al. would classify this advertisement as part of the 'personalization' genre. Leiss et al., *Social Communication*, 186.

66 Patricia Vertinsky, 'Gender Matters in Sport History', in: Robert Edelman and Wayne Wilson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sports History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017) 445-460, 448.

67 Super Mascula advertisement, *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 September 1960; Douwe Egberts advertisement, *AD: S&S*, 21 December 1970.

68 Milk advertisement, *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 November 1970.

producers in other countries also deliberately associated their product with masculinity.[69]

However, this focus on sportsmen and masculinity in sports food/beverage advertisements obscures certain subtleties. In general, advertisements did exhibit traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity, as other genres of advertisements of the time did.[70] Regardless, a change appears to have taken place around 1980, when a significant majority of advertisements lacked gendered representations, by featuring no sportsperson at all (60 per cent), and the proportion of advertisements depicting men was lower than ever (34 per cent). The series of masculine advertisements for milk in *De Atletiekwereld* ended abruptly halfway through 1975, replaced by version in which gender played no role. Later, in 1980, milk ads promised 'more muscle power' – to men and to women.[71] In fact, six out of nine 'physical strength' advertisements found were without reference to any sportsperson, and therefore 'gender-neutral'. Perhaps producers of sports foods and beverages slowly started to seek out women in their pursuit for more revenue.

On limited occasions, advertisements could be found to explicitly celebrate and facilitate female athleticism. Most of the advertisements featuring female athletes showed them during feats of athleticism (38/51), like Grapillon's tennis player, in a dynamic depiction of anticipation before hitting the ball. A creation by Dextro-Energen even presented multiple female swimmers mid-action (Figure 10).[72] In the latter advertisement, four athletes are depicted as their bodies hit the water. The splashes created by their impact lend the ad a sense of dynamism, while the four women, lined up in the pool, suggest fierce competition. Because of the angle, the swimmers remain anonymous. Their athletic strength and agility are evidenced by their muscular bodies, with two of the athletes suspended in the air just before impact. The advertisement's text, however, has a somewhat different message, stressing a perceived problem with the combination of women and athleticism: 'Nervous anxiety costs energy. Are you feeling weak?' Consequently, despite its celebration of muscular athleticism, the overall effect of the ad is ambiguous: it offers women the chance at self-transformation through the consumption of Dextro-Energen tablets, but it also implies that the natural state of the female athlete is, at times, problematic. Without the product, her purported 'nervous

69 Veri, 'Got Athletes?', 296.

70 Jon Verriet, 'Ready Meals and Cultural Values in the Netherlands, 1950-1970', *Food & History* 11:1 (2013) 123-153, 134-141. DOI: 10.1484/J.FOOD.1.103558.

71 Milk advertisement, *De Atletiekwereld*, 29 May 1975 and 25 September 1980.

72 Grapillon advertisement, *Sport & Sportwereld*, 19 July 1965; Dextro-Energen advertisement, *Sport & Sportwereld*, 24 May 1965.

energy' would be a barrier for achieving great feats of athleticism. Hence, in the cases of Grapillon and Dextro-Energen, advertisements offered women a new purchasable form of female athleticism, through the commodification of strong, female bodies, but not without qualifications.

FIGURE 10 Advertisement for Dextro-Energen.

Advertisement for Dextro-Energen in *Sport & Sportwereld*, 24 May 1965. © Dextro-Energy.

Other advertisements were more resolute. The Dutch company Medica-sport openly targeted women with a product called Medivas, produced 'for the sportswoman'. The 1965 advertisement explained that these lozenges contained iron, for the proper functioning of the organs, 'especially during menstruation'.[73] Here, the commercial product once again matched scientific knowledge as popularised in contemporary monographs,[74] but it also aligned with the needs of at least some female athletes. Runner Grete Waitz, for instance, announced in *De Atletiekwereld* that she herself took iron pills, 'but every woman does that!'[75]

73 Medica-sport advertisement, *De Atletiekwereld*, 29 January 1965.
74 See note 50.
75 'Grete Waitz geeft lange afstand nieuwe dimensie!', *De Atletiekwereld*, 27 March 1980.

Conclusion

Scholars have often presented past views on female athleticism in an uncomplicated manner. Historically, they contend, sportswomen were trapped by hegemonic ideas of masculinity and femininity, which has only recently given way to a more complex 'messy multiplicity'. However, a survey of existing notions of female athleticism in Dutch sports magazines shows that in some cases, this characterisation does a disservice to understanding complex, protracted historical processes.

The first hypothesis of this chapter, that Dutch media increasingly presented athletic bodies as obtainable and desirable to women, can be accepted. To be sure, athleticism was – and is – a gendered concept. Both journalists and advertisers often associated feats of athleticism, especially feats of great physical strength, with men and masculinity. Yet despite the transnational exchange of ideas between scientists, journalists and corporations, there were distinct variations in representations between types of media, between national contexts, and between different periods. In the Netherlands, the attitude toward female athleticism appears to have been complex: often and increasingly progressive, while on occasion fixated on traditional ideas about femininity. Though broader cultural trends like the second wave of feminism were rarely discussed in a direct manner, it seems likely that women's emancipation had some influence on its development.[76] After all, the world of sports can form its own cultural sphere, but it is always tethered to society at large, as evidenced by research demonstrating the relation between women's positions in sports and societal gender roles.[77] Neither *De Atletiekwereld* nor *Sport & Sportwereld* displayed anything similar to the unrelenting praise for the traditional 'girl next door' occasionally encountered in other countries. These demanding feminine norms were related to anxieties about the successes of 'manly' Eastern European women, a Cold War frame perhaps not as influential in the Netherlands as in countries extensively entangled in this global conflict.[78] Hence, it seems evident that different societies could harbour conflicting ideas about athleticism.[79]

76 Ruud Stokvis and Ivo Martijn van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier: De onweerstaanbare opkomst van de fitnesscultuur* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: De Arbeiderspers/Het Sporthuis, 2008) 157.

77 Inge Claringbould and Annelies Knoppers, 'Regimes van genderongelijkheid in voetbal', in: Prange and Oosterbaan (eds.), *Vrouwenvoetbal in Nederland*, 139-153, 140.

78 See note 6.

79 Henning Eichberg, 'Body Culture', in: Steven W. Pope and John Nauright (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Sports History* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2010) 162-181, 174.

The second hypothesis, that advertisements of sports food and beverages sought to promote various forms of female athleticism, cannot be accepted unreservedly. In the two magazines, the topic of sports nutrition was presented as a flourishing discipline. Especially *De Atletiekwereld* made mention of the scientists from West and East Germany, the United States and the Soviet Union who were providing the groundwork for women looking to improve in physical strength or in endurance sports. However, the gendered representations in advertisements by international companies were often more traditional. The lack of sportswomen in many of these ads could be read as a dismissal, and their scattered depictions were often not as broad-minded some of the editorial content in *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld*. Regardless, even these ads afforded sportswomen the tools – on occasion explicitly – to shape their own athleticism, especially by 1980. By sometimes presenting positive representations of female athletic achievement, and by increasingly advertising their products as useful to men *and* women, producers gradually tried to change the market for sports food and beverages. Herein, the focus on these products of international origins on offer to sportsmen and -women particularly reveals the patently limited, but significant space that female athletes could navigate in the Netherlands during the 1960s and 1970s.

Lastly, though the power of recurring representations of female athleticism should not be underestimated, it would be a serious mistake to assume that women blindly accepted them, or that they did not buy sports food and beverages marketed to men. Part of this audience should be conceptualised as active, resistant, or subversive toward the dominant narratives of the advertising genre.[80] While this chapter represents an attempt at analysing the (nutritional) possibilities offered to audiences in Dutch sports culture, a fruitful focus for future studies could therefore be the dietary strategies of female athletes themselves. Chances are this increased focus on the nutritional affordances of women would verify that the theoretical concept of a 'messy multiplicity' concerning representations of female athleticism should be embraced for the twentieth as well as the 21st century.

80 Huggins, 'The Visual', 1824.

Chapter 4

Representing Embodied Expertise: Anorexia and the Celebrity Athlete's Lifestyle Advice

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Abstract

Celebrity athletes have become a popular source for advice on healthy living. However, little research exists on the changing representations of their interventions. This chapter analyses the case of Dutch top cyclist Leontien van Moorsel, whose celebrity status increased after a highly-publicised struggle with anorexia. By examining biographies, cookbooks, and radio and TV appearances, it traces Van Moorsel's celebrification and her transformation into an experience-based expert on lifestyle, and more specifically, eating disorders. It argues that, following her 'anorexic period', the cyclist's physical appearance was presented as proof of her *embodied* expertise on defeating anorexia. Simultaneously, through her TV appearances as a coach for girls engaged in self-starvation, Van Moorsel reveals a tension between her 'experience' and her 'expertise': her representation as a dispassionate expert on anorexia demanded that she actively distanced herself from her own life story. Hence, the case of Van Moorsel demonstrates the possible contradictions in representations of celebrity athletes' expertise. However, it also shows that it is likely that the social field of sport will continue to offer unique possibilities for presenting celebrity athletes as experts on healthy living.

Introduction

In recent decades, celebrities have become a popular source for lifestyle advice. They are increasingly represented as authorities, 'placed in the same discursive category as other "experts", such as doctors, psychologists, and dieticians'.[1] As this new type of expert gains ground, some academics contend that the voices of traditional experts are being drowned out.[2] This transition can partially be explained by the way in which celebrity representations validate consumerist and individualist ideals. Tania Lewis, Brenda R. Weber, and Angela Smith have argued that portrayals of celebrity experts invite audiences to think of themselves as consumers, and to think of lifestyle as an individual project one must perfect.[3] In this context, claims of expertise have often been based on celebrities' pre-fame occupations, as demonstrated by the careers of people like Jamie Oliver – who had previously been a professional chef – and *Supernanny* Jo Frost – who had been a babysitter. As these examples illustrate, the celebrity's original social field helps them to 'migrate' to the role of lifestyle expert.[4]

The relevance of celebrities' original social field for representations of their expertise explains the rising prominence of the *athlete* in popular debates about lifestyle. It should be noted that significant public interest in athletes' way of living is far from new. A century ago, their images were already used to sell a variety of health products.[5] But in recent years the involvement of professional athletes in representations of 'healthy' lifestyles has grown

1 Tania Lewis, *Smart Living: Lifestyle Media and Popular Expertise* (New York, NY [Etc.]: Peter Lang, 2008) 3.

2 Staffan Furusten and Andreas Werr, 'The Contemporary Expert Society', in: Andreas Werr and Staffan Furusten (eds.), *The Organization of the Expert Society* (New York, NY/London: Routledge, 2016), 1-21; Thomas Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

3 Lewis, *Smart Living*; Brenda R. Weber, *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity* (Durham, NC [Etc.]: Duke University Press, 2009) Introduction; Angela Smith, 'Lifestyle Television Programmes and the Construction of the Expert Host', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 13:2 (2010) 191-205. DOI: 10.1177/1367549409352279.

4 Olivier Driessens, 'The Celebritization of Society and Culture: Understanding the Structural Dynamics of Celebrity Culture', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16:6 (2013) 641-657, 648. DOI: 10.1177/1367877912459140.

5 Melinda J. Jones and David W. Schumann, 'The Strategic Use of Celebrity Athlete Endorsers in Print Media: A Historical Perspective', in: Lynn R. Kahle and Chris Riley (eds.), *Sports Marketing and the Psychology of Marketing Communication* (Mahwah, NJ/London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004) 107-131, 114; Maria J. Veri, 'Got Athletes? The Use of Male Athlete Celebrity Endorsers in Early Twentieth-Century Dairy-Industry Promotions', *Journal of Sport History* 43:3 (2016) 290-305, 291. DOI: 10.5406/jsporthistory.43.3.0290.

significantly.[6] Yet, while scholars have reflected on the highly commercialised celebritisation of the field of sport,[7] the construction of athletes as experts on healthy living remains an uncommon topic in both cultural studies and sport history.

This chapter aims to analyse the representation of celebrity athletes' expertise by focusing on Leontien van Moorsel, an internationally renowned former Dutch cyclist.[8] Throughout her life, Van Moorsel has repeatedly and explicitly been represented as an expert in healthy living, both in biographies and on radio and TV shows. More importantly, the specifics of her life story continue to play an important role in these representations. In short: after a number of notable victories in the early 1990s, Van Moorsel suddenly abandoned her sport. She returned to cycle racing a few years later, declaring that she had experienced an 'anorexic period'. Determined to demonstrate that her years of self-starvation were over, Van Moorsel then went on to win six Olympic medals. The cyclist's eventual migration to health expert, then, was intimately connected to her status as the Netherlands' 'most famous ex-anorexia patient', as one biographer put it.[9]

The case of Van Moorsel helps to explain this chapter's supposition that the aura of sport, and its relation to physical culture, affords athletes the possibility to represent an *embodied* lifestyle expertise. Since popular media conceptualise their physique as a sign of health, they have come to symbolise perfect 'After-bodies'. This term, coined by Brenda R. Weber, refers to makeover TV's ultimate promise: the physically and psychologically reconstructed participant.[10] As will be argued, following her struggle with self-starvation Van Moorsel transformed into a distinctive After-body. Representations of the athlete suggested that her lifestyle expertise could be

6 Ernest E. Cashmore, 'Winning Isn't Everything. Selling Is: Sports, Advertising, and the Logic of the Market', P.David Marshall and Sean Redmond (eds.), *A Companion to Celebrity* (Malden, MA [Etc.]: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016) 177-193, 180; Anita Elberse and Jeroen Verleun, 'The Economic Value of Celebrity Endorsements', *Journal of Advertising Research* 52:2 (2012) 149-165, 163. DOI: 10.2501/JAR-52-2-149-165.

7 Richard Giulianotti and Dino Numerato, 'Global Sport and Consumer Culture: An Introduction', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 18:2 (2018) 229-240, 231-232. DOI: 10.1177/1469540517744691; Barry Smart, 'Global Sporting Icons: Consuming Signs of Economic and Cultural Transformation', in: David L. Andrews and Ben Carringto (eds.), *A Companion to Sport* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) 513-531, 514.

8 Though she took the name 'Zijlaard-van Moorsel' after her marriage in 1995, Van Moorsel is still referred to by most media – like the website of her own foundation – by her maiden name. See: https://web.archive.org/web/20210124114714/https://www.leontienhuis.nl/nieuws/i/33-actueel/195-ceo-dante6-fietst-amstel-gold-race-voor-leontienhuis (accessed: 18 October 2021; original link – accessed 5 February 2020 – is no longer available).

9 Gert Jan de Vries, *Gedroomd wielrennen: De carrière van Leontien van Moorsel* (Amsterdam/Antwerp: De Arbeiderspers/Het Sporthuis, 2006) 165.

10 Weber, *Makeover TV*, 22.

'read' from her appearance. More broadly, the case of Van Moorsel allows for an analysis of how celebrity athletes have become – perhaps to a greater extent than other celebrity subtypes – 'a set of representations or discourses about the fashioning of the self'.[11] Notably, such representations of athletes' bodies are typically affected by gendered, raced, and classed norms.[12]

To examine the dynamics of these representations, this chapter focuses on several actors engaged in their construction: biographers, TV and radio editors, as well as the celebrity athlete herself. Conceptualising 'celebrity' as the outcome of a cluster of continually changing – sometimes aligning, sometimes competing – interests, it proposes that Van Moorsel should be seen as 'one of several stakeholders in the exchange'.[13] Herein, the primary focus will be on the construction of Van Moorsel's life story – not on the (apparent) intentions of different actors. It should be noted that this chapter takes a similar approach to eating disorders. I adopt the view, formulated by psychologist Helen Malson, that 'anorexia nervosa' should not be seen as a 'natural clinical entity but [as] a socially (discursively) constructed category' that is constantly changing.[14] This chapter, therefore, primarily looks at how historical actors such as biographers, TV and radio editors, and Van Moorsel herself have used the term 'anorexia' to represent (parts of) their selves and others.

By tracing the career of one specific celebrity athlete, this case study allows for an in-depth look at how the representation of their expertise can change over time. Because the celebrity athlete is a 'multi-textual and multi-platform promotional entity',[15] paying close attention to the *historical* development of their representation in a variety of media is critical. By focusing on an isolated TV show or series, previous research has perhaps put too much emphasis on how media use celebrities, instead of taking the way in which the interests of the two parties align into account.[16] Correspondingly, the source material

11 Graeme Turner, 'Approaching Celebrity Studies', *Celebrity Studies*, 1:1 (2010) 11-20, 17. DOI: 10.1080/19392390903519024.

12 Toni Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times: Sportswomen and Media Representation in the Third Wave', *Sex Roles* 74:7-8 (2016) 361-376. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-015-0497-6.

13 Lorraine York, 'Star Turn: The Challenges of Theorizing Celebrity Agency', *The Journal of Popular Culture* 46:6 (2013) 1330-1347, 1341. DOI: 10.1111/jpcu.12091. York cites: Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London/Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000) 10.

14 Helen Malson, *The Thin Woman: Feminism, Post-Structuralism and the Social Psychology of Anorexia Nervosa* (London [Etc.]: Routledge, 1998) 98.

15 David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson, 'Introduction: Sport Celebrities, Public Culture, and Private Experience', in: David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson (eds.), *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2001) 1-19, 7.

16 E.g. Sandra Wagemakers and Frederik Dhaenens, 'The Power of Celebrities: Past Experiences, Current Status, and a Friendly Encounter as Key Components to Transform Young Individuals in *It Gets Better*', *Celebrity Studies* 6:4 (2015) 568-582. DOI: 10.1080/19392397.2015.1026914.

for this chapter includes a selection of 91 public TV and radio broadcasts, aired between 1989 and 2019 (see Figure 11).[17] Several of these shows featured Van Moorsel as an experience-based expert, assisting and advising both adolescents struggling with an eating disorder as well as others more generally interested in healthy living. The study also takes into account five biographical works and four cookery books in which Van Moorsel makes an appearance. I have chosen not to include an analysis of (the use of) social media. First, because celebrities made little use of Twitter or Instagram for the majority of the three decades covered by this historical case study (1989-2019).[18] Second, because traditional media were (and are) Van Moorsel's main mode of representation, whereas her unverified accounts on social media – where she mostly applies a one-directional 'broadcast model of communication' – continue to attract a comparatively modest following.[19]

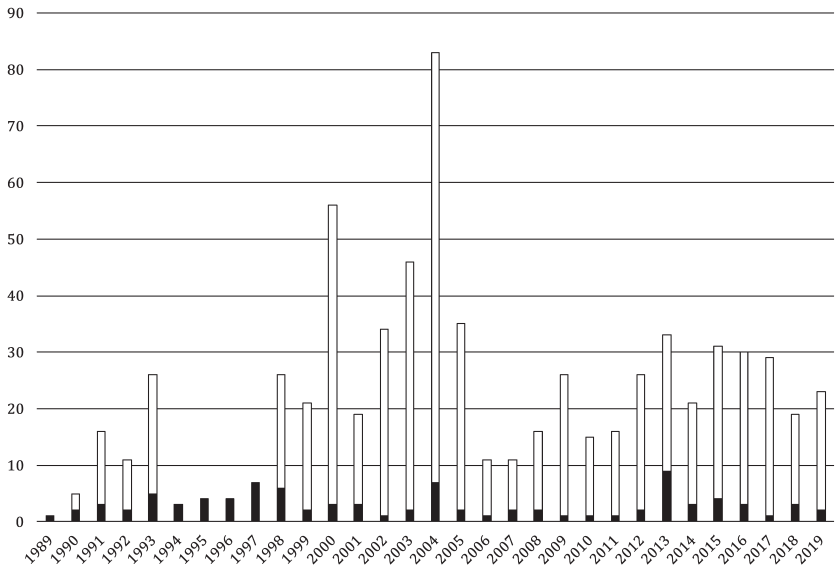

FIGURE 11 TV and radio episodes.

The TV and radio episodes selected for this chapter as a share of the total number of publicly broadcast TV and radio episodes with 'leontien moorsel' in the metadata. https://zoeken.beeldengeluid.nl (Accessed: 18 February 2020).

17 The metadata in the Dutch public radio and TV database at the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision ('Beeld en Geluid') is not perfect. However, in the vast majority of 'hits' for the search string 'leontien moorsel', Van Moorsel appears in person in the given episode. https://zoeken.beeldengeluid.nl (accessed: 18 October 2021).

18 David C. Giles, *Twenty-First Century Celebrity: Fame in Digital Culture* (Bingley: Emerald, 2018) 82.

19 P. David Marshall, 'The Promotion and Presentation of the Self: Celebrity as Marker of Presentational Media', *Celebrity Studies* 1:1 (2010) 35-48, 43. DOI: 10.1080/19392390903519057.

In the first part of the chapter, I track Leontien van Moorsel's transformation into a lifestyle expert. The second part discusses a selection of Van Moorsel's TV appearances between 2012 and 2018 to analyse some of the narrative choices that have helped to fortify her claims of embodied expertise.

Early representations of Van Moorsel's lifestyle

Born in 1970 in Boekel, a small municipality in the southern part of the Netherlands, Leontien van Moorsel started cycle racing at the age of eight, joining the women's seniors in 1988. The early 1990s saw her first international sporting successes and the beginning of her celebrification. In this period, as she started to appear on radio and TV shows, Van Moorsel's first biography was published (1991).[20]

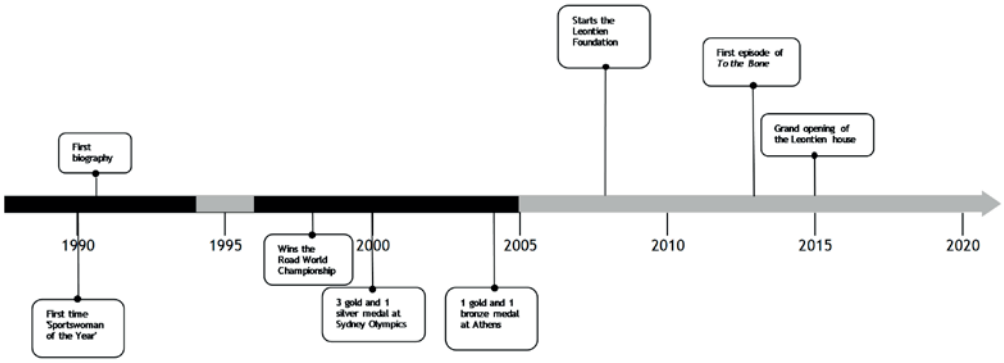

FIGURE 12 Timeline of Leontien van Moorsel's career up to 2019.

A development that quickened the celebrification of Van Moorsel was the evolving stature of women's cycling. Though in the Netherlands, female athletes had received the occasional burst of media coverage as early as the 1930s,[21] by the 1970s, women in cycling were still struggling to draw the attention of journalists. This lack of attention had been partly influenced by

20 Tjerry van Schijndel, *Leontien van Moorsel: Mijn liefde voor de wielersport* (Amsterdam: Fontein, 1991).
21 Marjet Derks, 'Sportlife: Medals, Media and Life Courses of Female Dutch Olympic Champions, 1928-1940', *Historical Social Research*, 39:1 (2014) 144-162, 154. DOI: 10.12759/hsr.39.2014.1.144-162.

decades of (institutional) sexism,[22] but for women's cycling, the 1980s proved a transnational turning point.[23] As the sport quickly professionalised, female cyclists were increasingly being acknowledged by the media.

Early profiles for radio and TV covered both Van Moorsel's athletic achievements as well as her physical appearance. Sometimes called the 'Barbie from Boekel', the cyclist would later distinguish between her appearance and that of her 'butch' colleagues, explaining that her 'feminine' look was deliberate, and a source of great pride.[24] However, because it was rumoured that she experienced distress related to her diet, the media also began to scrutinise Van Moorsel's physical appearance in another way, conceptualising it as a marker of her personal lifestyle. This started at the 1990 Sportswoman of the Year award ceremony, where she was – quite literally – sized up. After accepting her award, the conversation on the podium turned to the cyclist's body. 'How's your weight?', the host inquired suddenly, followed by: 'Diet, also still good?'.[25] The 1993 ceremony was even more curious. Celebrating her title on stage, Van Moorsel was presented a giant cream bun by a chef. He explained that it represented her thigh, and that he had created the pastry for her to get 'nice and fat'.[26] Even though the focus on physical appearance was (and is) common in media representations of female athletes, its magnitude in Van Moorsel's case is noteworthy.[27]

As it turned out, while these early years marked some of Van Moorsel's greatest successes in cycling, they would ultimately become known as her 'anorexic period'. The athlete would later explain that during this period, she had been preoccupied with her weight 'day and night'.[28] Van Moorsel

22 Marjet Derks, 'Nette vrouwen zweten niet: Sportvrouwen van marginalisering naar profilering', in: Martine S. Prange and Martijn Oosterbaan (eds.), *Vrouwenvoetbal in Nederland: Spiegel en katalysator van maatschappelijke veranderingen* (Utrecht/Amsterdam: Klement/Atria, 2017) 37-59, 39; Fiona McLachlan, 'Gender Politics, the Olympic Games, and Road Cycling: A Case for Critical History', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 33:4 (2016) 469-483, 472. DOI: 10.1080/09523367.2015.1134500; Dave Russell, 'Mum's the Word: The Cycling Career of Beryl Burton, 1956-1986', *Women's History Review* 17:5 (2008) 787-806, 792. DOI: 10.1080/09612020802316728; Leah Vande Berg, 'The Sports Hero Meets Mediated Celebrityhood', in: Lawrence A. Wenner (ed.), *MediaSport* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998) 134-153, 138.

23 Shelley Lucas, 'Women's Cycle Racing: Enduring Meanings', *Journal of Sport History* 39:2 (2012) 227-242, 229.

24 Marjolein Hurkmans, *Leontien van Moorsel: De rit van mijn leven. Over haar angsten, verdriet, obsessies, moed en kracht* (Schelluinen: House of Knowledge/De Telegraaf, 2008) 40.

25 Sportverkiezing van het jaar, 1990. TV, *AVRO*. Dec 17.

26 Sportman, sportvrouw, en sportploeg, 1993. TV, *AVRO*. Dec 18.

27 Bruce, 'New Rules', 366; Mary Jo Kane and Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, 'Media Treatment of Female Athletes: Issues of Gender and Sexualities', in: Lawrence A. Wenner (ed.), *MediaSport* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998) 186-201, 186.

28 Bas Steman, *Tinus! Tinus! Van anorexia naar goud* (Naarden: Strengholt, 2002) 66.

was far from the only one struggling. In recent years, it has become clear that professional athletes, particularly sportswomen, run a heightened risk of experiencing extreme distress around food and body weight. Many of them are diagnosed with anorexia.[29] Surveying Dutch cyclists, a 2018 report called attention to the negative effects of the sport's 'disproportionate emphasis' on nutrition. One participant observed the harmful effects of cycling culture's approach to diet: 'Your view of human beings and what is healthy gets all screwed up: as long as you're light, you'll perform…'.[30] This is a transnational problem within the sport, evidenced by the many renowned cyclists – predominantly but not exclusively female – who have recounted past experiences with extreme distress regarding diet, as well as diagnoses of anorexia, including Clara Hughes, Marion Clignet, Tyler Hamilton, Mara Abbott, and Dotsie Bausch.[31]

In the early 1990s, however, such acknowledgements were less common. Accordingly, the narrative of Van Moorsel's anorexia was ambivalent. Between 1991 and 1994, the cyclist herself swung from candid interviews to evasive statements about her food-related struggles. In a chapter for a book titled *A Rose too little. Twenty women about life and well-being*, Van Moorsel spoke of a 'deep depression' and an 'obsession with dieting'. Notably, the chapter was titled 'Fat asses can't cycle' – a direct quote from her coach.[32] Drawing a link between her lifestyle, her physical appearance, and her athletic achievements, Van Moorsel revealed: '"Losing weight, going from 65 to 48 kilo's has also not helped me", it went through my head. "This life has no more meaning"'.[33] However, at other moments, she evaded the public evaluation of her body,

29 Trent A. Petrie and Christy Greenleaf, 'Eating Disorders', in: Athanasios G. Papaioannou and Dieter Hackfort (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Sport and Exercise Psychology: Global Perspectives and Fundamental Concepts* (London [Etc.]: Routledge, 2014) 837-851, 840; Jim Taylor and Jeff Kress, 'Psychology of Cycling', in: Joaquín Dosil (ed.), *The Sport Psychologist's Handbook: A Guide for Sport-Specific Performance Enhancement* (Chicester [Etc.]: Wiley, 2006) 325-350, 337.

30 Anton van Wijk et al., *Opschakelen: Onderzoek naar ongewenste gedragingen in de wielersport* (Arnhem: Bureau Beke, 2018) 19.

31 Jim Caple, 'Cycling Helped Bring Bausch Back from the Brink', *ESPN* (2012), https://www.espn.com/espnw/news-commentary/olympics/article/7805611/2012-london-olympics-how-cycling-helped-bring-dotsie-bausch-back-brink (accessed: 18 October 2021); Marion Clignet and Benjamin C. Hovey, *Tenacious* (Paris: Expansion Scientifique Francaise, 2005) 49; Tyler Hamilton and Daniel Coyle, *The Secret Race: Inside the Hidden World of the Tour De France: Doping, Cover-Ups, and Winning at All Costs* (London: Bantam, 2012) Ch. 10; Clara Hughes, *Open Heart, Open Mind* (New York, NY [Etc.]: Simon & Schuster, 2017) 46; Helen Pidd, 'Mara Abbott Fighting Anorexia and Financial Chasm as She Chases Third Giro', *The Guardian* (2016) https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2016/jul/01/mara-abbott-womens-cycling-still-faces-an-uphill-struggle-giro-rosa (accessed: 18 October 2021).

32 Hugo Camps, *Een roos te weinig: Twintig vrouwen over leven en welzijn* (Amsterdam: Rap, 1994) 174.

33 Idem, 175.

and explained her frequent absences by speaking in euphemisms ('stuck in a rut') or untruths ('a crash in training').[34]

In her early years, one publication provided the most comprehensive account of Van Moorsel's diet and lifestyle: the cyclist's 114-page biography, titled *Leontien van Moorsel: My Love for Cycling* (*Mijn liefde voor de wielersport*, 1991). While she was still a minor celebrity tethered to the social field of sport, the book – the product of a set of interviews with journalist Tjerry van Schijndel – gave Van Moorsel the opportunity to show elements of her life beyond her athletic achievements: her early childhood, her family, love letters from fans, et cetera. Written in the first-person singular, its style followed Van Moorsel's speech mannerisms.

Though Van Moorsel would later characterise the early 1990s as her 'anorexic period', this biography made no mention of such a diagnosis. Nonetheless, it did offer readers an explanation for Van Moorsel's purported need to lose weight. Her unremarkable debut in the women's Tour de France (1989), the cyclist explained, made her realise that she needed to 'work' on her eating habits.[35] At several points, the book intimately discussed Van Moorsel's physique, presenting the athlete's rapid weight loss as the basis for her international achievements. Furthermore, this sudden transformation into a leaner, 'better' version of herself provided Van Moorsel with the opportunity to present herself as a lifestyle expert. In a chapter devoted to conversations between Van Moorsel and her sport dietician, the athlete included detailed nutritional instructions.[36] Crucially, though the complexity and divergent style of the text strongly suggest that it was supplied by the dietician, it is presented as part of Van Moorsel's monologue. The chapter therefore marks the start of a decades-long string of representations of the cyclist as an embodied expert on the topic of lifestyle.

The struggle with anorexia as a source of inspiration

In 1994, while suffering from physical and mental exhaustion because of her prolonged distress around diet, Leontien van Moorsel quit competitive cycling. To some, this was a sudden step, as Van Moorsel had been a dominant force in international cycling, winning the women's Tour de France twice. Despite rumours of disordered eating, most representations of Van Moorsel's

34 Superster vrouwen, 1993. TV, *AVRO*. Jan 23; Sportradio, 1994. Radio, *VOO*. May 16.
35 Van Schijndel, *Mijn liefde*, 42.
36 Idem, 49-53.

dietary habits had been ambiguous, even positive. Her previously mentioned biography, for instance, included a quotation from *The European Sport*: 'This fast and lovely lady can be queen of world cycling. Leontien van Moorsel may have lost her urge for chocolate and French fries, but she is more than hungry for success'.[37] Three years after the release of this biography, however, the cyclist's withdrawal from competitive sport triggered negative representations of her habits regarding nutrition, and more broadly, her lifestyle.

Van Moorsel returned to cycling in 1996. In the years that followed, her 'anorexic period' became *the* organising principle in representations of her life story. Though she made few radio or TV appearances in the mid-1990s, on occasion, Van Moorsel would speak openly of the time when she weighed less than 50 kilos.[38] Indicating that she had suffered from 'a sort of anorexia',[39] she presented a narrative of a prolonged struggle, followed by a definitive defeat of the disorder. While slowly recovering, she proclaimed that she was 'finally doing it in a healthy way'.[40]

By winning the 1998 World Championship time trial, Van Moorsel made her way back to the elite of international women's cycling. Media interest increased, with much of it centred around her past battle with anorexia. One biographer later claimed that for Van Moorsel, 'the human-interest aspect generates more attention than her athletic achievements'.[41] By the year 2000, the story of the cyclist's eating disorder had already become so widely known, that one talk show host was hesitant to discuss it, claiming it had been recounted on TV 'about 723 times'.[42] After the 1998 win, most journalists presented Van Moorsel's life story as a classic comeback narrative. A well-known sport trope, the logic of this 'rise and redemption arc' is that those who work hard eventually overcome adversity.[43] Lance Armstrong – who would become the subject of the cliché himself – immediately anticipated that Van Moorsel's biography had the capacity to inspire, remarking after her 1998 win: 'I do think it's a message, a good message'.[44]

This inspirational quality was quickly turned into something more: many representations of Van Moorsel's comeback focused on possibilities

37 Idem, 72-73.
38 Langs de lijn, 1996. Radio, *NOS*. Jan 4.
39 Het terras, 1995. TV, *VARA*. July 8.
40 Langs de lijn, 1997. Radio, *NOS*. Jan 30.
41 Hurkmans, *Leontien van Moorsel*, 139.
42 TV show, 2000. TV, *TROS*. Dec 26.
43 Garry Whannel, *Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and Moralities* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2002) 154.
44 Pauw & Witteman, 2011. TV, *VARA*. Feb 16.

for emulation. Observers asserted that the cyclist was a 'fantastic example of someone who got [anorexia] under control',[45] and that her triumphant return made her 'one of the most inspiring sportswomen of our time'.[46] Michael Zijlaard, Van Moorsel's husband and agent/manager, concurred. He suggested that her successful return to professional sport could incentivise women to start cycle racing. While just a few years ago, the general public might have been under the impression that 'all women's cyclists are frustrated' and that the sport demanded of cyclists that they 'weighed thirty kilos', he explained, 'now they see like… um… bam! A healthy woman with charisma. Why wouldn't you get on a bike?'.[47]

In the second half of Van Moorsel's athletic career, she perfected her comeback story. Winning six Olympic medals, she became one of the most dominant forces in the history of women's cycling. When Van Moorsel quit the sport in January 2005, she was a six-time Dutch 'sportswoman of the year', and had been named the second-best Dutch female athlete of all time.[48] Eventually, she would come to agree with the appraisal of Lance Armstrong, journalists, and her husband: her life story did contain a 'good message'.[49] This 'message' would become the foundation of Van Moorsel's post-sport career: that the experiences of this celebrity athlete had the potential to shape the experiences and lifestyle of others.

Migrating to the field of lifestyle expertise

In the years surrounding her retirement from cycling, Leontien van Moorsel started to migrate into other social fields, which solidified her celebrity status. After her last race, she and her husband started a company ('Leontien Total Sports') which featured a sport centre and a clothing line. In the years that followed, she would coach her own women's professional cycling team, organise a yearly leisure cycle ride for women ('Leontien Ladies Ride'), and expand her work as a public speaker and product endorser. Many of these endeavours, like those of other branded lifestyle experts, were aimed at elevating the former athlete to 'first-name fame' ('Leontien').[50] At the same

45 TV show, 2000. TV, *TROS*. Dec 26.
46 Steman, *Tinus!*, 6.
47 Langs de lijn, 1998. Radio, *NOS*. Oct 7.
48 De grootste Nederlander, 2004. TV, *KRO*. Oct 11.
49 Pauw & Witteman, 2008. TV, *VARA*. Oct 27.
50 Tania Lewis, 'Branding, Celebritization and the Lifestyle Expert', *Cultural Studies* 24:4 (2010) 580-598, 580. DOI: 10.1080/09502386.2010.488406.

time, her comeback story was the subject of a near-constant stream of TV and radio appearances, and was covered extensively in four biographical works published between 2002 and 2008 – three of which were based on interviews with Van Moorsel herself.[51]

What explains Van Moorsel's continued celebrification after her retirement from cycling in 2005? On the one hand, the financial consequences of Van Moorsel's post-sport activities provided a strong motivation for both her and a close circle of stakeholders to try to solidify her celebrity status. In her 2008 biography, she explained: 'Once I stopped cycling, I started earning proper money'.[52] Van Moorsel's further celebrification was helped by the fact that the 21st century saw a transnational increase in the public interest in the lives of (female) athletes.[53] However, according to several journalists there were also specific factors that contributed to her celebrity status: they claimed that both the allure of her comeback story as well as her openness in sharing details about her life were crucial.[54] It may also have helped that portrayals of Van Moorsel aligned with common gendered cultural values: because many commentators in the predominantly white and male sphere of journalism considered her to be physically attractive, she represented a traditional, non-threatening type of femininity.[55]

Before and after her retirement, observers consistently emphasised the possible emulative effect of Van Moorsel's life story. TV presenters remarked that she set an 'excellent example' to others, and wanted to know what lessons people should take from her story.[56] In a book about celebrities overcoming substantial challenges, one author even suggested that 'inspiring people is now her work'.[57]

Van Moorsel herself also seemed intent on influencing people's way of living. In her 2008 biography, she remarked: 'I am not a nutrition professional, but being an expert based on my experience, I could easily fill a book about getting in shape.' Pointing to her own physique, she suggested that what

51 Léon de Kort, *46,0611 Km: De kroon op mijn carrière* (Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel [Etc.]: Levamo Sport [Etc.], 2003); De Vries, *Gedroomd wielrennen*; Hurkmans, *Leontien van Moorsel*; Steman, *Tinus!*.

52 Hurkmans, *Leontien van Moorsel*, 48.

53 Aad Haverkamp, *Biografieën in beweging: Een cultuurhistorische analyse van levensverhalen van Nederlandse topsporters, 1928-2014* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2019) 144.

54 Hurkmans, *Leontien van Moorsel*, 6; Jan Vriend, *Uit het dal: Hoe bekende Nederlanders de grootste tegenslag in hun leven te boven kwamen* (Grave: Dedicon, 2006) 25.

55 Bruce, 'New Rules', 362; Kane and Lenskyj, 'Media Treatment', 187.

56 TV show, 2000. TV, *TROS*. Dec 26; TV show, 2004. TV, *TROS*. Sept 1; Max & Martine, 2006. TV, *MAX*. Dec 5; De wereld draait door, 2007. TV, *VARA*. Oct 10.

57 Vriend, *Uit het dal*, 33-34.

mattered most was getting plenty of exercise: 'I am living proof that it works'.[58] Correspondingly, four cookery books, published between 2002 and 2018, advertised Van Moorsel's way of living.[59] Inviting the celebrity athlete to give her 'vision on nutrition',[60] the editors of these books used the aura of sport to present their recipes as 'healthy'. Because they also recount Van Moorsel's 'anorexic period', however, the mention of sport creates an unresolved tension in these books. After all, Van Moorsel's athletic ambitions had been the reason for her fitness, but were also presented as an important catalyst for her eating disorder. To resolve this ambiguity, the cookery books make use of photos to signal a definitive end to Van Moorsel's anorexia. A 2012 booklet consisting of lunch recipes featured eleven photos of the former athlete preparing and eating lunch in and around her own home, suggesting she clearly had moved beyond representations of athleticism.[61] Van Moorsel's post-sport life, then, was presented as ordinary: the six-time Olympic medallist now lived like the average – slender and feminine – housewife.

Van Moorsel's status as the country's 'most famous ex-anorexia patient' also offered the possibility to specifically target others engaged in self-starvation. This appears to have been a personal ambition of the former cyclist: as early as the year 2000, Van Moorsel had been counselling young women in the privacy of her own home.[62] Eventually, between 2012 and 2018, she would extensively coach adolescents on public TV, both in a six-part series focused on anorexia called *To the Bone* (*Tot op het bot*, 2013), as well as in single episodes of *It Gets Better* (2012) and *The Food Fight* (*Het voedselgevecht*, 2018). In a radio interview explaining *To the Bone*'s conception, Van Moorsel described the series as a result of her wish to inform a broader audience, 'to reach families and show families…'. Furthermore, she highlighted the relevance of her show by asserting that anorexia and other eating disorders were a 'growing problem' in the Netherlands.[63]

This last statement was not entirely justified. Over the past thirty years, the number of diagnoses for 'anorexia nervosa' has not grown much in the

58 Hurkmans, *Leontien van Moorsel*, 111.

59 Rob Geus, *De smaak van topsport* (Baarn: Tirion Sport, 2008) 42-47; Carlien Harms-Aris and Tiny Geerets, *Sportkookboek: Deel 2* (Nieuwegein: Arko Sports Media, 2002) 30-31; Nanneke Schreurs and José Van Riele, *Fit vega(n) food: Recepten, weekmenu's en tips* (Utrecht: Kosmos, 2018) 34-35; Leontien van Moorsel, *Gezond Lunchen met Leontien* (Amsterdam: Carrera, 2012).

60 Harms-Aris and Geerets, *Sportkookboek*, 11.

61 Van Moorsel, *Gezond lunchen*.

62 Steman, *Tinus!*, 151.

63 BNN today, 2013. Radio, *BNN*. Nov 12.

Netherlands and in other industrialised countries.[64] On the other hand, though, many cases of self-starvation remain undetected by healthcare providers. Plus, many cases still lead to death, which suggests an enduring, problematic lack of efficacy in the psychological treatment of self-starvation – a conclusion also reached by a recent Dutch report.[65] Another reason for the belief that anorexia is a growing problem may have been the increased cultural interest in eating disorders. The success of recent TV documentaries on the topic (*Emma wil leven* (*Emma Wants to Live*, 2016), *Gegijzeld door anorexia* (*Taken Hostage by Anorexia*, 2019), and *Louis Theroux: Talking to Anorexia* (2019)),[66] alongside the series featuring Leontien van Moorsel, attests to the enduring appeal of popular narratives about anorexia. Their ratings – varying from 263,000 to over 1 million viewers – indicate that the audience for such productions goes beyond adolescents engaged in self-starvation and their relatives.[67]

In addition to the societal interest in anorexia, Van Moorsel's personal involvement may have also been encouraging to the producers of *To the Bone*, *It Gets Better* and *The Food Fight*. Her celebrity status and her experience with self-starvation imparted these shows with a degree of legitimacy and an added dramatic element. Furthermore, there is some evidence that when celebrities take up social causes, they gain in popularity by having a personal, long-term connection to the cause.[68] Therefore, Van Moorsel was ideally positioned to take the role of experience-based expert in a TV show.

64 Hans W. Hoek, 'Review of the Worldwide Epidemiology of Eating Disorders', *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 29:6 (2016) 336-339, 338. DOI: 10.1097/YCO.0000000000000282; Anna Keski-Rahkonen and Linda Mustelin, 'Epidemiology of Eating Disorders in Europe: Prevalence, Incidence, Comorbidity, Course, Consequences, and Risk Factors', *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 29:6 (2016) 340-345, 341-342. DOI: 10.1097/YCO.0000000000000278; Frédérique R.E. Smink, Daphne van Hoeken and Hans W. Hoek, 'Epidemiology of Eating Disorders: Incidence, Prevalence and Mortality Rates', *Current Psychiatry Reports* 14:4 (2012) 406-414, 407-408. DOI: 10.1007/s11920-012-0282-y.

65 Anita Jansen, 'Vijftig jaar eetstoornissen: Nieuwe kansen!', *Gedragstherapie* 49:3 (2016) 296-304, 302; K-EET, 'Voorstel en advies voor een landelijke ketenaanpak eetstoornissen', *Attachment to a Letter to the House of Representatives of the Netherlands II,* 31839-698 (2019), https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/10/23/k-eet (accessed: 18 October 2021).

66 Emma wil leven, 2016. TV, *BNNVARA*. Nov 8; Gegijzeld door anorexia, 2019. TV, *BNNVARA*. Oct 16. Louis Theroux: Talking to Anorexia, 2019. TV, *VPRO*. Nov 29.

67 Statistics from the Dutch the Dutch Foundation for Ratings Research (SKO), obtained through email correspondence with broadcasting organisations.

68 Koen Panis and Hilde Van Den Bulck, 'Celebrities' Quest for a Better World', *Javnost – The Public* 19:3 (2012) 75-92, 88. DOI: 10.1080/13183222.2012.11009092.

Van Moorsel's stance toward anorexia nervosa

The second part of this chapter examines the representation of Leontien van Moorsel's embodied expertise by focusing on three specific elements of her expertise: her stance toward anorexia nervosa, the way in which therapeutic methods taken from her own life are represented, and how, in these shows, she was positioned toward traditional, trained experts. Because of Van Moorsel's prominent role in *To the Bone*'s six episodes, the main focus of the analysis will be on this show.

To the Bone aired in the autumn of 2013 to an average of 834,500 viewers per week. Every episode features a different female participant diagnosed with anorexia, who receives moral support and guidance from Leontien van Moorsel. The former athlete also explains their behaviour to presenter Sophie Hilbrand, who never meets the participants. For 50 to 55 minutes, every episode follows a fixed pattern, closely aligning with the genre conventions of makeover TV.[69] First, Van Moorsel meets the participant and her family, after which they set various short-term goals (e.g. 'playing hockey again', 'going to a restaurant'). Then, in all episodes – which are filmed over the course of one year – moments of success are followed by at least one relapse, with all six stories ending on a positive note. Van Moorsel is essential to the structure of each episode: she checks in on participants, coaches them in achieving their goals, and 'translates' their thoughts and emotions to Hilbrand, who plays the role of layperson. In the show's first episode, the former cyclist can be seen or heard about 35 per cent of the time (19/55 minutes) – a proportion that remains fairly even throughout the series. Naturally, the focus is on the experiences of participants, but Van Moorsel's story and accompanying life lessons are fundamental to each episode.

In *To the Bone*, *It Gets Better* and *The Food Fight*, Van Moorsel represents the ultimate After-body: she is the physical end-result of a successful 'battle' with anorexia. In many interviews regarding her post-eating disorder status, Van Moorsel had used the language of transformation, speaking of having a 'new body and a new mind',[70] and declaring that she was '100 per cent healed'.[71] In an attempt to harness the inspirational power of this transformation, *To the Bone* similarly reifies anorexia, representing the disorder as external to the self – an entity to defeat. Its first episode introduces Van Moorsel with images of the former cyclist during 'the lowest point' in her career. After this segment

69 Smith, 'Lifestyle Television', 193.
70 Geus, *De smaak van topsport*, 44.
71 BNN today, 2012. Radio, *BNN*. Nov 28.

of the athlete's period of self-starvation, more recent footage is shown of Van Moorsel eating in a restaurant and laughing with her family. The sequence strongly suggests that the former cyclist's experiences hold the key to recovering from anorexia. Crucially, these clips get shorter in every episode, until by the fourth episode, Van Moorsel's Before-body – showing the visible signs of self-starvation – is never shown again.

As an After-body, Van Moorsel forms a visual reminder to the participants she is coaching: change is possible. In an interview about a year before the premiere of *To the Bone*, she explained:

> [W]ith some young people you just click. And I can see that when I come into the room, then you see a bit of confidence. You see them think... At the moment that you're in the middle of your eating disorder you think: I will never get better. And when they then see someone who has had it too and is truly enjoying life again, and radiant... yes you do see, um, that they gain some confidence.[72]

Participants frequently concur, speaking of Van Moorsel as a 'big example of the fact that it is possible',[73] and even, at times, of wanting to be 'just like her'.[74] The latter is encouraged by Van Moorsel, who exclaims in *It Gets Better* (2012): 'Look at me, I did it too!'.[75] The implication of this assertion is common in celebrity health advice: 'I look better, I *am* better'.[76] In an episode of *To the Bone*, Van Moorsel asks the participant: 'When you look at me, how do you see me?', resulting in the following exchange:

> **Participant**: 'Yeah just as, yeah, someone who is well-groomed and who looks good and healthy.'
> **Leontien van Moorsel**: 'But then really that is something we should strive for!'
> **Participant**: 'Yeah that's the goal, really.'[77]

72 Idem.
73 BNN today, 2013. Radio, *BNN*. Nov 12.
74 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 2. TV, *BNN*. Nov 21.
75 It Gets Better, 2012. TV, *BNN*. July 10.
76 Elizabeth Arveda Kissling, 'I Don't Have a Great Body, but I Play One on TV: The Celebrity Guide to Fitness and Weight Loss in the United States', *Women's Studies in Communication* 18:2 (1995) 209-216, 213. DOI: 10.1080/07491409.1995.11089800.
77 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 2. TV, *BNN*. Nov 21.

To demonstrate that she is a rational anorexia expert, Van Moorsel not only presents herself as '100 per cent healed', but also explicitly distances herself from her previous experiences. Consequently, the three TV shows suggest that anorexia's manifestations are both understandable as well as foreign to Van Moorsel. In *To the Bone*, for instance, Van Moorsel pokes gentle fun at participants for their 'anorexic' beliefs, often calling them a 'dope' (Dutch: *muts*) when they express that they feel 'fat'.[78] Though Van Moorsel consoles participants by saying that she knows 'like no other' how they feel, she assertively distances herself from anorexia when speaking directly to the camera. Her reaction to seeing one of the participants for the first time constitutes a clear example: 'Well, it scares me every time, but now, now I was truly scared. I… phew. She is in a very advanced stage and I really… It made me a little nauseous'.[79] In their analysis of *It Gets Better*, Sandra Wagemakers and Frederik Dhaenens point out that this distancing strategy helps to suggest that the celebrity After-body is 'more balanced' than the participants.[80] For the purposes of this chapter, it is also significant that Van Moorsel's positioning suggests a tension between 'experience' and 'expert' that cannot entirely be resolved. Ostensibly, in order to convey that she has gained the ability to dispassionately evaluate the symptoms of anorexia, the former cyclist strikes a tone that closely aligned with conventional morality. Though Van Moorsel bases her expertise on her lived experience, here she distances herself from the participant, choosing to sympathise instead with the internal audience (the family members of participants and presenter Hilbrand) and the majority of the external (home) audience, to whom the logic of persons engaged in self-starvation could seem alien.[81]

Therapeutic methods and embodied experience

The therapeutic methods employed by Leontien van Moorsel in *It Gets Better*, *To the Bone*, and *The Food Fight* have their basis in her own experiences with self-starvation. However, this relation between Van Moorsel's life story and the approaches used is often left implicit. From 1997 onwards, Van Moorsel would often repeat her key aphorism to overcoming an eating disorder: 'A balanced

78 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 1. TV, *BNN*. Nov 14; Episode 2. Nov 21; Episode 3. Nov 28; Episode 4. Dec 5.
79 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 2. TV, *BNN*. Nov 21.
80 Wagemakers and Dhaenens, 'The Power of Celebrities', 575.
81 Charlotte Brunsdon, 'Lifestyling Britain: The 8-9 Slot on British Television', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6:1 (2003) 5-23, 10. DOI: 10.1177/1367877903006001001.

life leads to greater rewards'.[82] To help participants (re)gain that balance, she uses several approaches in *To the Bone* that appear to have been effective in her own recovery. Because taking pride in her looks had been a source of comfort throughout her athletic career, Van Moorsel attempts to boost the confidence of participants in *To the Bone* by complimenting them on their appearance.[83] Similarly, the show features several scenes in which Van Moorsel and participants go shopping together. The former cyclist presents buying clothes as having a therapeutic aim, as it helps participants confront their changing bodies. However, Van Moorsel's personal attachment to shopping – her 'only hobby', according to biographers – is left unsaid.[84]

Another method used in *To the Bone* is the 'moment in the mirror', an exercise that is common to the makeover genre.[85] Here, its goal is to demonstrate to both the participant as well as the home audience the effect anorexia can have on body image.[86] It is a method lifted straight from Van Moorsel's own life, as confirmed by a 2008 interview with her husband Michael Zijlaard:

> You don't want to know how many times I've stood in front of the mirror with her and told her to look at herself. "Come on, who do you think you are tricking here? One day you're with me, the next you want to go back to square one". There we stood, the two of us. To the point of tears.[87]

In 2013, Van Moorsel takes on the role of her husband in *To the Bone*. While looking in the mirror herself, she assertively tells one participant: 'How nice would it be if you just, like this [puts hand through her hair], think: "Oh I look good, my hair looks nice today. It's all good"'. At the end of the episode, Van Moorsel rewards the young woman with a professional photoshoot, to 'affirm what a beautiful person she is'.[88] It is clear, then, that *To the Bone* employs Van Moorsel's personal experiences when presenting consumption and taking pride in one's appearance as tools for empowerment.

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82 Jij & ik, 1997. TV, *NCRV*. Oct 6; Steman, *Tinus!* 93, 150; Geus, *De smaak van topsport*, 45; BNN today, 2012. Radio, *BNN*. Nov 28; Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 4. TV, *BNN*. Dec 5; Het voedselgevecht, 2018. TV, *KRO-NCRV*. Nov 15; Schreurs and Van Riele, *Fit vega(n) food*, 35.

83 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 1. TV, *BNN*. Nov 14; Episode 4. Dec 5.

84 Steman, *Tinus!*, 19; Hurkmans, *Leontien van Moorsel*, 37.

85 Rachel Moseley, 'Makeover Takeover on British Television', *Screen 41:3* (2000) 299-314, 306. DOI: 10.1093/screen/41.3.299.

86 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 1. TV, *BNN*. Nov 14; Episode 3. Nov 28; Episode 4. Dec 5; Episode 6. Dec 19.

87 Hurkmans, *Leontien van Moorsel*, 101-102.

88 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 4. TV, *BNN*. Dec 5.

To the Bone also draws on the genre conventions of makeover TV in these instants. These conventions accommodate what some would call a 'postfeminist sensibility': they incorporate a 'grammar of individualism' and an 'obsessive preoccupation with the body' in their pursuit of 'empowering' women.[89] Focusing on the individual agency of participants, *To the Bone* suggests that anorexia is preventing young women from fulfilling their social duties as traditionally feminine, active consumers. In this regard, it is particularly significant that some critical psychologists see anorexic women as being in *defiance* of the – at times conflicting – responsibilities associated with femininity.[90] In focusing on individuals and their social obligations, *To the Bone* pays little attention to this societal context of anorexia. The effect is that its formula exhibits what Lauren Berlant has called a 'cruel optimism': it presents as desirable that which arguably hinders participants in their flourishing.[91] In other words: though the pressure to comply with social expectations may partially explain anorexia's prevalence, it is compliance with such pressures which *To the Bone* paradoxically presents as the key to participants' liberation.

Hence, Van Moorsel's experiences with self-starvation have had a significant impact on the structure of these TV shows, as the application of her personal methods demonstrates. Yet while viewers of *It Gets Better*, *To the Bone* and *The Food Fight* are repeatedly reminded that the former cyclist's expertise, and therefore her authority, comes from personal experience, Van Moorsel rarely relates her therapeutic approaches to her own life story. There are exceptions: during a dinner scene in *To the Bone*'s third episode, Van Moorsel practices tough love while telling the participant that she herself used to be on the receiving end of this very direct method.[92] Similarly, in the show's first episode, she explains that setting clear goals has helped her through tough times.[93] But such glimpses into Van Moorsel's own history with self-starvation are sparse. The 'moment in the mirror' method is never presented as something that was important to Van Moorsel herself; neither are shopping for clothes or beautifying oneself. In instances where Van Moorsel is trying to explain the behaviour of participants – when one adolescent girl is

89 Rosalind Gill, 'Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10:2 (2007) 147-166, 149. DOI: 10.1177/1367549407075898. See also: Stéphanie Genz, 'Third Way/Ve: The Politics of Postfeminism', *Feminist Theory* 7:3 (2006) 333-353, 345. DOI: 10.1177/1464700106069040.

90 Susie Orbach, *Hunger Strike: The Anorectic's Struggle as a Metaphor for Our Age* (London: Karnac Books, 2005).

91 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011) 1.

92 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 3. TV, *BNN*. Nov 28.

93 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 1. TV, *BNN*. Nov 14.

purposefully trying to hurt the people she loves most, or when a participant engaged in endurance sport is eating too little – she is also reluctant to relate them to her personal experiences.[94]

Regardless, the focus on one specific celebrity has clear consequences for the content of the shows. The centrality of Van Moorsel's life story and the extent of her expertise appear to have influenced the selection of participants and, in a more general sense, the story told about eating disorders. Notably, both the shows as well as most representations of Van Moorsel's life story focus on the physical consequences of self-starvation, offering little consideration of its causes and the entire psychological profile of its subjects – an approach that also reflects, in part, contemporary psychotherapeutic practice.[95] Another way in which Van Moorsel's stories about her experiences appear to have influenced the shows, is their presentation of the disorder as a problem demanding the intensive involvement of family members. Presumably, such editorial choices were not just governed by Van Moorsel's experiences and conventional psychiatric wisdom, but also by genre conventions: focusing on the causes of self-starvation complicates storylines, whereas the social interaction between participants and family members give both *To the Bone* and *It Gets Better* an emotional charge. It seems plausible that the goals of the shows' producers and those of Van Moorsel ran parallel. The former cyclist, ultimately, was able to present herself as an expert based on her experience, without being forced to disclose too much about her personal life, while the editors could focus on Van Moorsel – using her celebrity to draw viewers – without derailing the storyline with extensive flashbacks to her athletic career.

Positioning toward healthcare professionals

The final aspect of Leontien van Moorsel's representation as an expert on lifestyle and, more specifically, anorexia that will be discussed here, is the way she was positioned in relation to trained nutritionists and psychologists. In the early stages of her career, representations of her expertise focused solely on Van Moorsel. Eventually, they changed, making space for the presentation of professionals as valuable colleagues of the former cyclist. As recounted, in her first capacity as expert Van Moorsel received full credit: her 1991 biography does

94 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 2. TV, *BNN*. Nov 21; Episode 6. Dec 19.

95 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Washington, DC/London: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013; 5th Edition) 338-345; K-EET, 'Voorstel en advies', 11-12.

mention her personal dietician, but its comprehensive advice on nutrition is attributed to Van Moorsel. Though the author's intention may have been to sustain the book's first-person singular form, the effect of this choice is that it presents Van Moorsel as a definitive source on (sport) nutrition.

In later years, given the opportunity Van Moorsel would occasionally point toward official sources of information: in a 1997 radio interview, she explained how people should eat foods from 'every meal disk' – referring to the model of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau.[96] In more recent TV shows, her positioning toward professional authorities appeared to have changed permanently. Though *It Gets Better*, *To the Bone* and *The Food Fight* all present the former cyclist as an important expert on anorexia, the shows unquestionably acknowledge – and adhere to – the expertise of trained professionals in nutrition and psychotherapy. In fact, both *It Gets Better* and *To the Bone* affirm the importance of professional psychological help by showing parts of participants' sessions with their therapist. In the second episode of *To the Bone*, Van Moorsel is very clear about what she sees as the limits of her expertise:

> I want to share my experience, and to keep showing [the participant]... that, um, life without an eating disorder, that then you actually have a good life. But I can't do this alone. And I don't feel confident doing this alone. Yes, we need real professionals here.[97]

In treating the help of 'real' professionals as a welcome addition instead of a threat, Van Moorsel carves out an important but limited role for her own embodied expertise. In the context of *To the Bone*, which devoted much time to the ideas and the suggestions of the former cyclist and her '24/7' availability to participants, this invitation resembles a gesture of generosity – despite its humble wording. From a position of control, the celebrity athlete offers air time to trained psychologists. For both Van Moorsel and the show's editors, the participation of these professionals has the welcome effect of legitimising the ex-cyclist's claim of expertise. However, it also reflects a broader practice: Dutch healthcare professionals often make use of experience-based experts when treating self-starvation.[98]

96 Langs de lijn, 1997. Radio, *NOS*. Jan 30.
97 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 2. TV, *BNN*. Nov 21.
98 Daniëlle Meije et al., *Achterbanraadpleging zorgstandaard eetstoornissen* (Utrecht: Trimbos-Instituut, ResCon, Weet, Ixta Noa, 2016) 11.

FIGURE 13 Opening of the Leontien House.

Leontien van Moorsel (left) with Queen Máxima of the Netherlands at the Grand Opening of the Leontien house. © Patrick van Katwijk, 2015.

Van Moorsel's commitment to working with trained professionals was not limited to these TV shows. Both *To the Bone* and *The Food Fight* introduce viewers to the Leontien Foundation, a charity funded by gifts from individuals and commercial parties. In 2015, this foundation opened the Leontien house, a renovated farmhouse offering walk-in consultations for people with eating disorders. The charity still exists today, aiming to 'motivate, coach and mentor' people with an eating disorder.[99] According to Van Moorsel, who recently claimed that the house was one of her proudest achievements, its grand opening had meant the fulfilment of a long-standing wish.[100] As explained in the TV shows, the Leontien house offers 'inspiration' days, with Van Moorsel showing footage from the highs and lows of her cycling career. According to the house's website, on a regular week a team of 120 volunteers use their expertise based on experience to counsel visitors, with the occasional help of a trained psychologist.

Hence, both Van Moorsel's TV shows as well as her charity work underscores the importance of professional care for people with an eating

99 'Het Leontienhuis', *Het Leontienhuis* (2019) https://www.leontienhuis.nl/ (accessed: 18 October 2021).
100 Meer dan goud, 2019. Episode 6. TV, *EO*. Aug 30.

disorder. Ultimately, however, both champion the experience-based expert. In fact, at the end of two episodes of *To the Bone*, Van Moorsel invites the participant to join the Leontien house's team of volunteers.[101] Both accept the opportunity instantly, seemingly thankful for the chance to become an experience-based expert. By offering them the possibility to become role models to others, *To the Bone* grants the two adolescent girls the prospect of transformation. According to the show's logic, they can now achieve the ultimate goal for a person with anorexia: the status of After-body.

Conclusion

Over the course of her career in cycling, Leontien van Moorsel became a celebrity athlete. After an initial, cautious attempt at lifestyle advice, she faced a highly-publicised 'anorexic period', causing a change in representations of the cyclist as an experience-based expert. On the one hand, the aura of sport remained critical in giving Van Moorsel's advice on nutrition and exercise – detailed in a considerable amount of (cookery) books and TV and radio shows – a degree of legitimacy. Yet at the same time, following her 'anorexic period', representations of Van Moorsel often contained a contradictory message: engaging in competitive sport could, in fact, be incompatible with a healthy lifestyle. Because many of these representations never resolved this tension, post-anorexia portrayals of the cyclist show the possible ambiguities in presenting celebrity athletes as experts on healthy living. Van Moorsel's 'unhealthy' and 'healthy' narratives could coexist while hardly influencing each other. This flexible use of her life story illustrates the distinct authority granted to celebrity athletes who migrate to the field of lifestyle expertise.

Part of the authority of celebrity athletes stems from the fact that they are *embodied* experts: their physical appearance is presented as a sign of health. This is certainly corroborated by Van Moorsel's case, whose consistent representation as an After-body suggests that her appearance is used as a marker of a (rediscovered) healthy lifestyle. However, the former athlete's life story also demonstrates that this representation as an After-body has specific effects on the conceptualisation of the experience-based expert. On the one hand, Van Moorsel's personal experience with anorexia functioned as the basis for positioning her alongside trained professionals. But at the same time, the TV shows in which she appeared in the 2010s hint at a tension between

101 Tot op het bot, 2013. Episode 4. TV, *BNN*. Dec 5; Episode 6. Dec 19.

'experience' and 'expert'. *It Gets Better*, *To the Bone*, and *The Food Fight* contain few references to Van Moorsel's personal experiences and methods for coping with anorexia. Such editorial choices were in all likelihood partially shaped by genre conventions. But the way in which the former cyclist actively distances herself from her period of disordered eating also suggests that in this case, representing a dispassionate expert demands the suppression of (parts of) the celebrity athlete's life story.

Ultimately, the case of Van Moorsel demonstrates the particular value of analysing the role of *athletes* as celebrity experts, as it highlights the relevance of celebrities' original social field. The former cyclist's story illustrates the unique possibilities the aura of sport has offered (and continues to offer) athletes in regard to their celebrification and their migration to lifestyle advice. At the same time, focusing on athletes can also help to illustrate that this migration is complex, and that the representation of celebrities' embodied expertise is, at times, decidedly ambiguous.

Conclusion

In the 21st century, more energy, money, and time than ever are being spent on getting people in industrialised societies to live healthily. Many actors, such as governmental organisations, NGO's, commercial parties, and celebrities are engaged in popularising lifestyle advice. As troubling inequalities in health persist, and the debate about the rise in health care spending intensifies, trained experts in the Netherlands as well as elsewhere are redoubling their efforts, staging a number of lifestyle interventions aimed at marginalised groups.[1] Yet those working at research institutes and government bureaus find their authority on lifestyle choices continuously challenged. The spread of a pandemic has made strikingly clear how wary some members of the Dutch population are of lifestyle instructions intended to protect the public's health. The distrust of scientists and government institutions surfaces on social media, where plenty of alternative (sometimes commercialised) narratives can be found, focusing on dietary choices and fitness regimens and the role they play in increasing life expectancy. Together, the interactions between a broad array of actors comprise a public debate on healthy living that has become highly complex and contested.

However, controversies about healthy living are not new at all. In many ways, as has been analysed in the previous chapters, they are the result of a long-term development. This dissertation focused on the post-war history of lifestyle advice in the Netherlands. It inquired how scientists, government officials, commercial parties, celebrities, and various formations of the public have contributed to shifting representations of the healthy lifestyle between 1940 and 2020. The four chapters of this study argued that the post-war era saw a pronounced transnational rise in the cultural significance of healthy living. Trained experts, whose interest in lifestyle as a form of preventative medicine heightened in the late 1940s and the 1950s, joined conversations on the dangers of certain food habits and the importance of sport and physical exercise which had already been initiated before the Second World War. A new phase started in the 1970s and 1980s, after experts' initial optimism had waned. Observing how the average body weight of the Dutch population was rising, they started to doubt the efficacy of guiding people's everyday behaviour by disseminating leaflets and videos. These worries coincided with the increased visibility of critical resisters in popular media. Here, more than before, different societal groups were given a podium to openly challenge the claims of established health authorities. At the same time, magazines,

1 See, for instance, Loket gezond leven: https://interventies.loketgezondleven.nl/interventieoverzicht8/lage-ses (accessed: 18 October 2021).

television and radio shows became convenient platforms for famous health personalities, such as (former) athletes, claiming to have insider knowledge on acquiring a balanced, healthy lifestyle and a flawless physique. Not only did both groups further complicate post-war debates on healthy living, they also managed to provoke questions about the legitimacy of 'traditional' trained experts' authority in this domain.

This study was organised in two related subthemes: first, the interactions between trained health experts and their audiences, and second, the emergence of new (celebrity) health personalities. The first two chapters examined the former, beginning with the foundation of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau. After the Second World War, the staff members of this bureau were among the first to predict that because of rising prosperity, overeating rather than malnourishment would become the health problem of the future in industrialised societies. In the decades that followed, the government-subsidised organisation fervently tried to fight this trend, becoming the most prominent source for lifestyle instructions in the Netherlands as well as a transnational leader in health education. It provided leaflets, videos, and lectures, not just to guide the Dutch public towards a leaner diet, but also to convince people to engage in physical exercise, to curtail alcohol and tobacco use, and to manage their personal stress levels.

By using the organisation's archive, the first chapter of this study was able to reveal the 'behind-the-scenes' concerns of health educators working at the bureau, a perspective that has often been lacking in food historiography. It demonstrated that from the 1960s onwards, doubts arose about the efficacy of the bureau's multimedia approach. In part, this was caused by its difficult position: staff regularly discussed how politicians were not (yet) willing to spend large sums of money on preventative medicine, and how the products and messaging of the ever-more powerful food industry ostensibly ran counter to the goals of the bureau. The case study showed that the organisation also had more fundamental problems, particularly when it came to getting its message heard in working class and migrant communities. By the beginning of the 1970s, discouraged by the dietary choices and the sedentary lifestyle of the Dutch public, the bureau switched strategies in a fundamental way. In contrast to the broad ambitions of the 1950s and 1960s, at this point it increasingly started limiting itself to 'emancipating' consumers, stressing individuals' own responsibility for living a healthy life.

The second chapter of this thesis further explored the complicated historical relationship between trained experts and their audiences by investigating the reception of health education. With national newspapers as

its source, this case study analysed the assertions of resisters: those who openly contested the established wisdoms of healthy living. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was rare to observe such challenges in the columns of newspapers: in these decades, the use of a more critical tone was mostly reserved for cases where diet culture and fanatical exercising led to severe excesses. But in the 1970s and 1980s, journalists expanded their horizons and amplified a much more varied group of resisters. They cited, among others, feminist fat activists, who pointed out the apparent negative physiological and psychological effects suffered by those fixated on either fatness or fitness. Often (but not always) inspired by trends from the U.S., these activists were critical of existing beauty standards. They were joined by a small group of dissident doctors, who were given a platform by national newspapers to relativise their colleagues' growing preoccupation with lifestyle. Ultimately, by exposing contradictions in expert opinion about diet and exercise and by trying to present the full breadth of opinion on the topic, popular media helped to create a complex cacophony of lifestyle advice.

Through their focus on the production and reception of trained experts' lifestyle advice, this first pair of case studies advances the historiography of health education in two separate ways. First, they help to explain the limited impact of these instructions on people's everyday practices in the past, and second, they enhance our understanding of the genre's healthist implications. Much of the literature on lifestyle advice, the product of food and sport historians' scholarship, emphasises how inescapable the genre was and is in popular media, but does little to explain its historical inefficacy. By highlighting the role of one specific historical actor, the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau, I argued that while it seems certain that the efficacy of health advice was hampered by the material possibilities of (parts of) the Dutch population, it was also shaped by the organisation's difficulty in reaching marginalised communities. Apart from health educators' ambiguous stance toward the food industry and the Dutch government, the source material suggests that it was this complicated relationship with the public that had a negative impact on the efficacy of the bureau's instructions. Furthermore, the analysis of forms of resistance against the idealised lifestyle also cautions against overstating the pervasiveness of lifestyle advice by trained experts in countries like the U.S. and the Netherlands, as some sport and food historians do, by noting that this 'cult of thinness' was eventually met with various forms of resistance. The concerns of feminist fat activists were of particular interest to popular media. Building on earlier studies on the history of these movements from fat studies scholars, this dissertation not only confirmed

their transnational reach, but also argued that these activists found more mainstream recognition than suggested by the literature. More generally, the fact that national newspapers increasingly represented lifestyle advice as based on inconclusive and contradictory findings helps to contextualise the difficulty health educators experienced in convincing large parts of the public of their well-intentioned instructions.

Thus far, the historiography of health education, the product of both historians of both food and historians of sport and physical exercise, has concentrated not only on the genre's inescapability, but also on its discursive patterns and moral overtones. Critical health studies have highlighted the healthist rationale behind lifestyle advice, explaining that lifestyle advice should be conceived as part of an overarching ideology which presents people's health as the logical outcome of 'good' and 'bad' individual lifestyle choices. This is why, even though some historical studies have focused solely on either diet or physical exercise instructions, this dissertation conceives of both as two strands of the broader 'project' of lifestyle advice. I argue, however, that the considerable interest in the healthist implications of lifestyle advice has led to a neglect of the circumstances under which this advice was produced. The case of the Dutch Nutrition Education Bureau has shown not *how* post-war dietary and exercise instructions were based on a healthist logic, as food and sport historians have often done, but offer a possibility for *why* this was increasingly the case. I argued that, despite the transnational rise of healthism, some health educators appear to have adopted this logic not as a set of deeply-held views, but as a pragmatic answer to the fact that their messages were being ignored and even actively resisted. Interestingly, this resistance in popular media by dissident medical experts, journalists and activists also partially aligned with academic critiques of healthism, particularly when it focused on the socioeconomic roots of fatness and (un)fitness. Consequently, by exploring the parallels between these two debates, the emergence of the academic tradition of critical health studies in the 1970s and 1980s can be more adequately contextualised.

The third and fourth chapter of this dissertation analysed the rise to prominence of a different type of health expert, zooming in on the figure of the athlete. The popularisation of these health personalities was firmly rooted in the post-war commercialisation of lifestyle advice, supported by an expanding food industry and manufacturers of exercise-related products seeking new marketing opportunities. As prosperity rose in the Netherlands from the 1950s onwards, their 'health' foods and sports products were increasingly discussed and promoted in popular media. The third chapter

looked at the contents of Dutch sports magazines during the 1960s and 1970s, and established that articles and especially advertisements represented consumption as a means to creating the fittest body. Eager to associate their foods and beverages with the aura of sport, advertisers portrayed athletes, in particular, as physically attractive personifications of bodily ability. Both their bodies and their athletic successes, these representations implied, were the product of an ideal lifestyle, ready to be emulated by consumers. Furthermore, the chapter showed how the visual and textual representations of journalists and advertisers of optimally healthy bodies tended to align with existing beauty norms. The images of muscular men and slender women in these magazines generally fulfilled mainstream expectations of masculinity and femininity, although they did occasionally promote other, more muscular kinds of bodily shapes for women. By devoting attention to this last fact, the chapter adds to the work of sport sociologists, showing that more nuanced representations of athletes' bodies go back decades, and are therefore not a recent phenomenon.

From the 1960s onwards, such representations of athletes were increasingly employed in the commercialised promotion of healthy living. Whereas before the Second World War sportspersons were occasionally utilised to market health products, by the end of the twentieth century many athletes had become multimedia phenomena. A unique example is Dutch cyclist Leontien van Moorsel, a world champion whose sporting achievements led her to international fame. The fourth chapter of this dissertation analysed Van Moorsel's biographies, cookbooks, and television shows, tracing her transformation from professional athlete to one of the Netherlands' most prominent lifestyle coaches. The chapter asserted that the cyclist's sports career, marked by both great successes as well as a highly-publicised period of disordered eating, complicated her representation as an experience-based expert on healthy living in popular media. Nevertheless, her career in sports remained foundational to her claims of expertise about nutrition and exercise. In fact, because popular media continued to depict Van Moorsel's 'unhealthy' and 'healthy' behaviour side by side, her case illustrates the possible ambiguities involved in representing (ex-)athletes as lifestyle experts.

Together, the second pair of chapters highlighted how journalists, advertisers, and athletes themselves have represented the sportsperson as a personification of healthy living. Of relevance here is the work of sociologists working on physical culture and consumerism, which has established that diet and fitness regimens often promise a transformation of both the body and the self. Building on this insight, this dissertation demonstrated the importance

of the physicality of sport in granting athletes legitimacy in debates about nutrition and exercise, and more broadly, self-transformation. Their physical appearance and ability was often represented as an incomparable sign of healthy living, signifying the athlete's experience-based knowledge on how to live and what to consume. The case of Van Moorsel showed the flexibility of this process: even if athletes' life stories contained ambiguous health practices, their bodies continued to be submitted as visual markers of experience-based expertise. Therefore, I argued that celebrity athletes who engage in lifestyle advice are *embodied* experts: their claim to health expertise is represented as based, in part, on their appearance and their individual physical experiences. By introducing this concept of embodied expertise, this dissertation elaborates on the work of cultural studies scholars, highlighting the special position of the celebrity athlete among the popular lifestyle experts that feature in their studies. However, it should be noted that it was not just athletes who claimed to have embodied expertise: in the 1970s, the arguments of fat activists also drew on the importance of knowledge based on lived, bodily experience. Additionally, these 'new' experts, like Leontien van Moorsel, sometimes acknowledged the importance of (some) trained experts. Hence, embodied expertise was represented not just as opposite, but also as complementary to 'traditional', scientific knowledge on healthy living.

The concept of embodied expertise is also relevant to this dissertation's overarching theme: the increasingly ambiguous role of health experts in the post-war Netherlands, or more generally, the 'shifting ground of cultural authority'.[2] By exploring the emergence of claims of expertise based on individual, bodily experiences, the four chapters of this dissertation bridge the gap between the work of, on the one hand, scholars of the history of health and medicine, as well as historians of science, and, on the other hand, the analyses of cultural studies scholars on popular lifestyle experts. Certainly, the former group's observation that trained experts' societal role became more complex and more fraught is substantiated by these case studies, which show how trained experts struggled to reach audiences, and how members of the public 'spoke back'. But, I demonstrate, it was specifically expertise presented as embodied, employed by celebrity athletes, which increasingly challenged the narratives on healthy living of more traditional authorities. In contrast to the instructions of trained experts, this form of expertise promised a lived experience with the healthy lifestyle and its effects on the part of the

2 Tania Lewis, 'Branding, Celebritization and the Lifestyle Expert', *Cultural Studies* 24:4 (2010) 580-598, 581. DOI: 10.1080/09502386.2010.488406.

expert. Highlighting the subjective quality of being and feeling healthy, health personalities with embodied expertise represented an (individualised, but often universally applicable) set of practices on how to live healthily, which they encouraged audiences to emulate.

Although passionate discussions about diet and exercise and their relation to public health may seem relatively new, they have a long history. This dissertation's method of integrating the many assertions and representations of various actors has shown that the pamphlets of health educators, the advertisements of food multinationals, and the biographies of celebrity athletes were not produced in a vacuum, but that they were all part of a broader societal conversation about healthy living. By contrasting the contributions of these different parties, this actor-centric approach helps to better understand that trained experts did not lose their voice in debates about the optimal lifestyle. However, it does demonstrate that such debates, popularised by mass media, have become increasingly polyvocal and more difficult to navigate. Ultimately, the significant ways in which the epistemological claims of different actors have shaped Dutch debates about health after the year 1945 highlights how contested ideas about healthy living have been, and underscores their historicity.

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Research Data Management

Two types of data were gathered and stored for this project: 'primary' data, consisting of video, audio, and photographs and transcriptions of source material found in archives and libraries, and 'secondary' data, i.e. personal notes and tables for further analysis of the material. Since the dissertation does not feature co-authors or co-researchers, all data collection and storage was done by its author. Most of the primary data is not owned by the author, but by the aforementioned archives and libraries. Because the overwhelming majority of this data consists of copyrighted material, it cannot (easily) be made publicly available.

The secondary data forming the basis for this dissertation, consisting of personal notes and tables produced by the author, will also not be made available to the public. The personal nature of these documents means that they are not suited for sharing with other parties. Regardless, all the information needed to verify and/or replicate the results of this study is given in its four chapters, which also feature justifications for the selection of data as well as the employed methods of analysis.

Nederlandstalige samenvatting

Dit proefschrift analyseert de geschiedenis van gezondheidsadviezen in Nederland tussen 1940 en 2020. Het toont aan dat gezondheidsvoorlichters, journalisten, bedrijven, beroemdheden, en leden van het publiek na de Tweede Wereldoorlog sterk uiteenlopende ideeën aandroegen over wat volgens hen de meest gezonde levensstijl was. Dit boek laat zien dat 'traditionele' experts op het gebied van sport en voeding moeite hadden hun publiek te bereiken en in populaire media steeds meer moesten concurreren met een nieuw type deskundige. Vooral topsporters claimden namelijk te beschikken over expertise die was gebaseerd op hun persoonlijke, lichamelijke ervaringen. Met name vanaf de jaren zeventig verschoven de verhoudingen tussen deze verschillende typen experts. Zo ontstond geleidelijk een kakofonie van levensstijladvies waar tegenwoordig voor veel mensen moeilijk grip op te krijgen is.

In de eerste twee hoofdstukken van deze dissertatie wordt de complexe relatie tussen 'traditionele' gezondheidsexperts en hun doelgroep bestudeerd. Het eerste hoofdstuk belicht de rol van voorlichters, die zich aan het einde van de jaren veertig al zorgen maakten over twee leefstijltrends: het gebrek aan lichaamsbeweging bij veel mensen, en 'overvoeding'. Het door de overheid gesubsidieerde Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding nam vervolgens het initiatief. De organisatie probeerde in de decennia na de Tweede Wereldoorlog met brochures, video's en lezingen de Nederlandse burger andere gewoonten aan te leren. Maar in de jaren zestig en zeventig nam het optimisme van medewerkers af, omdat de effectiviteit van voorlichting sterk tegenviel. De conclusie was onvermijdelijk: ondanks de grote inzet was een significant deel van de bevolking helemaal niet minder gaan eten of meer gaan sporten. Dit eerste hoofdstuk biedt een bijzondere kijk achter de schermen bij deze organisatie, en beschrijft hoe medewerkers van het bureau klaagden over de toenemende invloed van de voedingsindustrie en de beperkte interesse van beleidsmakers voor hun vorm van preventieve geneeskunde. Het laat bovendien zien dat voorlichters ver afstonden van een deel van hun publiek, waardoor zij niet altijd de juiste toon wisten te vinden.

De toenemende twijfel van deze experts, die vaak waren opgeleid in communicatie of voedingskunde, viel samen met een groeiende aandacht voor kritische geluiden, met name in dagbladen. Historici benadrukken vaak dat de naoorlogse decennia werden gekenmerkt door een transnationale slankheidscultus, maar het tweede hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift laat zien dat vanaf de jaren zeventig journalisten steeds vaker een podium boden

aan mensen die zich verzetten tegen bestaande gezondheidsregels. Zo probeerden een aantal non-conformistische dokters de grote bezorgdheid van hun collega's over de levensstijl van Nederlanders te relativeren. Zij kregen bijval van dikheidsactivisten, die zich lieten inspireren door feministische bewegingen in de Verenigde Staten. Net als hun Amerikaanse voorbeelden wezen deze Nederlandse feministen op de negatieve fysiologische en psychologische effecten van een overdreven fixatie op dun en fit zijn. Hun expertise was ten dele gebaseerd, zo stelden zij, op hun eigen lichamelijke ervaringen.

De tweede helft van dit proefschrift richt zich specifiek op de wijze waarop de ervaringsdeskundige in de media werd gepresenteerd. In het derde hoofdstuk wordt besproken hoe in de naoorlogse decennia leefstijladvies steeds vaker een commerciële basis kende, doordat sport- en voedingsbedrijven op zoek waren naar nieuwe afzetmogelijkheden. Hun 'gezonde' producten werden veel besproken en gepromoot in populaire media. Het hoofdstuk stelt dat adverteerders producten graag associeerden met atleten, en op deze wijze presenteerden als onderdeel van een ideale levensstijl. Hun advertenties impliceerden dat door te consumeren het mogelijk was jezelf te transformeren. De producten zouden mensen in staat stellen een dun en gespierd lichaam te kweken, vergelijkbaar met dat van een sportberoemdheid. Deels door zulke representaties werden veel sporters echte gezondheids*personalities*.

In de afgelopen veertig jaar is de media-aandacht voor sporters alleen nog maar toegenomen. Het vierde hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift analyseert de publieke uitingen van de wereldberoemde wielrenner Leontien van Moorsel. Haar bekendheid leidde tot biografieën, kookboeken en televisieprogramma's, en faciliteerde haar transformatie van topsporter naar een van de meest vooraanstaande lifestylecoaches van Nederland. Het hoofdstuk concludeert dat de lichamelijke ervaringen die zij had tijdens haar sportcarrière de basis vormden voor de manier waarop zij zich later presenteerde als expert op het gebied van voeding en lichaamsbeweging. Van Moorsels langdurige worsteling met haar dieet werd echter ook veelvuldig besproken in radio- en televisieprogramma's, waardoor haar verhaal bij uitstek laat zien dat de presentatie van (ex-)sporters als leefstijlexperts zeer ambigu kan zijn.

Als geheel volgt het proefschrift het veranderende krachtenveld tussen verschillende maatschappelijke actoren op het gebied van leefstijladvies. Daardoor maakt het duidelijk dat de pamfletten van gezondheidsvoorlichters, de stellingen van dikheidsactivisten, de advertenties van multinationals en de

biografieën van beroemde atleten niet in een vacuüm werden geproduceerd, maar dat deze allemaal deel uitmaakten van een breder maatschappelijk gesprek over gezond leven. Door de bijdragen van deze verschillende partijen tegenover elkaar te zetten, helpt dit boek beter te begrijpen dat dergelijke discussies, gepopulariseerd door de media, steeds veelstemmiger zijn geworden. Voor veel mensen zijn zulke discussies nu bovendien veel complexer doordat verschillende actoren claimen uiteenlopende vormen van expertise te bezitten. Deze claims waren na het jaar 1945 vormend voor de teksten en beelden die werden gemaakt over de gezonde levensstijl, en laten zien hoe ideeën over gezondheid al lange tijd hevig worden betwist.

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Curriculum Vitae

Jon Verriet (The Hague, 1985) completed a BA in History in 2010 and an MA (cum laude) in Cultural History in 2011, both at Utrecht University. In 2013, he received a year-long grant at Vrije Universiteit Brussel for promising researchers. A year later, his article on the history of the ready-made meal won the Joop Witteveen Prize for the best publication on food history in the Low Countries. By 2016, Verriet had carried out several shorter research projects at both Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Radboud University. Then, in September 2017, he started his PhD project, resulting in this dissertation.

Over the course of the past ten years, Verriet has published articles on the history of food and sport in a number of journals, including *Food & History, Cultural & Social History, Appetite*, *Urban History*, *Celebrity Studies*, and *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review*. He's also contributed to four edited volumes, and has edited a book, together with Annemarie de Knecht-van Eekelen, which was originally written by Adel den Hartog and published posthumously. He currently works as the Senior Advisor Science & Innovation to the Netherlands Commission for Unesco.