

Men's work-related self-care in the Finnish media

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Abstract

Individual responsibility for health at work has been a central point of interest in recent studies of working life. This article contributes to that discussion by considering the role of the media in gendering individual responsibility and the meanings of work-related health in Finnish society. It takes a critical look at media representations of men's work-related self-care. The data comprises 30 texts collected from the Finnish media in spring 2016. The analysis reveals three discourses – Exemplariness, Expertise and Suspiciousness – and shows how they construct ideal ways of being a man in working life. They depict work as a necessary part of life for men. Self-care practices that aim to either maintain endurance or increase performance at work are presented in a favorable light. However, personal wellbeing is portrayed as secondary to productivity. The article concludes with a discussion on the broader implications of the persistent discursive interrelation of men and work for men's social role.

Keywords: gender, health, self-care, media, men, working life

Introduction

In Finnish society, the discussion on the social role of men as both provider and protector has been topical for over a quarter century (Jokinen, 2000; Siltala, 1994). Pietilä (2008, 149) argues that historically, Finnish working life has constituted a 'field of glory' in which men's honor is built on diligence that is signaled by visible results, visible activity in the public sphere as well as poor health caused by hard work. Matthews (2016) and Robertson et al. (2016) argue that sociocultural contexts that encourage men's continuous aspiration to shape the external world are partly causing men's reluctance to scrutinize themselves: ideals such as independence, emotional restraint, intrinsic strength, resilience and orientation toward paid work take away from men's concern for their own health and wellbeing.

Bell (2013) and Cottingham (2017) point out that men in contemporary western societies have fewer possibilities to do manual labor. Echoing these authors I claim that success in the provider role is still dependent on productivity at work, which is increasingly reduced to mean a stable and foreseeable income. The interrelation between men and work is still repeatedly reproduced in this sociocultural context (Bell, 2013; Biese, 2017; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Cottingham, 2017; Jóhannsdóttir & Gíslason, 2018; Whitmer, 2017). However, participation in working life and a focus on the self in the form of care for one's own health

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seem to be increasingly connected. Recent research into working life and organizations has focused on meanings of personal health in working life as both enabling work in increasingly stressful environments (Bressi & Vaden, 2017; Cederström & Spicer, 2015) and as a sign of a professional and committed attitude in competitive organizations (Islam et al., 2017; James & Zoller, 2018; Kelly et al., 2007; Meriläinen et al., 2015; Riach & Cutcher, 2014).

In line with previous research (Bressi & Vaden, 2017; Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Kelly et al., 2007), I define work-related self-care as a set of practices in which an individual decides to take action to support his or her mental or physical health as a reaction to current or anticipated problems in working life. It is noteworthy that 'health' has been an ill-defined concept in both men's health research (Hearn, 2016) and working life research (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, 32–38). Without trying to provide an all-encompassing definition, I follow earlier research on work-related self-care (Bressi & Vaden, 2017; Cederström & Spicer, 2015) in that I understand 'health' as involving both performance and wellbeing. I define 'performance' as the physical and mental ability to use one's self to perform actions that one is aiming to carry out. I define 'wellbeing' as the experience of finding the tasks at hand meaningful and the absence of dislike and distress.

Based on a comprehensive review of the literature on work-related self-care, Bressi and Vaden (2017) recognize that the concept refers to two distinct practices. First, self-care means practices that promote personal wellbeing through regulating the time and effort spent on work. Secondly, as part of a professional role, work-related self-care includes practices that promote work performance. In my analysis I focus on both of these meanings concurrently. Although performance at work and personal wellbeing can sometimes be intertwined and thus be achieved through the same practices (*ibid.*), this is not always the case. I adopt the conception that sometimes practices aimed at promoting performance at work do use personal resources that could be spent on more meaningful projects unrelated to paid work. Attempts to promote work-related self-care can be met with resistance among workers (James & Zoller, 2018) and personal wellbeing can also conflict with the needs of work (LaPointe & Heilmann, 2014).

There is existing research on how texts produce idealized ways of being a man in Finnish society, including in the context of work (Jokinen, 2000; Siltala, 1994). However, Finnish and international research lacks an examination on how increasingly important work-related self-care is incorporated into these representations. Although the media produces and reproduces cultural repertoires used in everyday language to express attitudes to work ethics, its influence is usually underrated (Cotter, 2015; Fairclough, 1995; LaPointe & Heilmann, 2014; Reeser, 2010). Drawing on a discourse theoretical framework (Cotter, 2015; Fairclough, 1995), I analyze 30 texts published in the Finnish media in spring 2016 as representations that both repeat and shape cultural schemes, considering conventional ways of talking about men's health, their attitudes toward their workload and their work-related self-care.

In this article, I aim to answer two research questions: Firstly, what goals of work-related self-care are represented as desirable? Secondly, how are work-related self-care practices and the men practicing them evaluated? I argue that, in most cases, desirable work-related self-care is connected to productivity and performance at work, with personal wellbeing subordinate to these. In addition, the often-repeated idea that men do not take care of their personal wellbeing and health is compromised by new types of representations that include more than one ideal masculinity.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. I begin with a brief discussion of the concept of masculinity and changes in masculinities in contemporary Finland and other Nordic countries. Thereafter, I discuss the methodology, namely discourse analysis, and the media data. The results are presented in subsections on each of the three discourses, Exemplariness, Expertise and Suspiciousness. I end with a summarizing discussion and conclusions.

Theoretical background

Production of idealized images of masculinity

The concept of singular hegemonic masculinity, understood as the most honored way of being a man through which men can compete for a leading position in a society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), has turned into a central point of reference in critical studies of men and masculinities since the early 1990s (Beasley, 2015; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Matthews, 2016). Despite its versatile applications, the concept has been found to be problematic especially in research that focuses on representations of men (Reeser, 2010, 14). The concept is vague in defining what actually counts as hegemonic masculinity, because it seems to refer concurrently to cultural representations of ideal men, institutional practices that guarantee the power of a certain group of men, as well as traits of men belonging to that particular hegemonic group (Hearn, 2004). Based on this remark, Beasley (2015) criticizes the theory of hegemonic masculinity because of its focus on structural oppression practiced by a certain group of men in top positions in politics and business. The workings of discourse, for instance media representations of men, are recognized as a meaningful subject of research only when they actively support and legitimize the oppressive power already possessed by the hegemonic group. Thus, I follow Reeser (2010) in that instead of focusing on how media representations support hegemonic masculinity I focus on how media produces idealized images of masculinity.

Although I retain Connell's definition of masculinity as a 'way of being a man,' I follow Reeser (2010, 18) in his critique of Connell's conception of masculinities. Idealized masculinities are also produced through language and signs in multiple locations such as the family, military and media. This production of idealized images of masculinity happens through continuous copying and is not owned or controlled by a certain dominant group. I do not suggest that media representations are significant only in how they legitimize the oppressive power of a certain group of men, rather I suggest that idealized masculinities also affect behaviors of people who do not identify themselves as men. For example, in western societies, traits and behaviors understood as masculine have been shown to be repeatedly associated with success in working life, which makes performances of masculinity alluring for anyone striving for such success (Biese, 2017; Johansson et al., 2017; Reeser, 2010, 133).

Following Reeser (2010, 14–15) and Beasley (2015), I find Connell's remark on the relationality of masculinities valuable (see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, 848). 'Honor' for certain masculinities (ibid., 832) is not about mere references to these masculinities and presenting them in a favorable light. Instead, a hierarchy of masculinities in which certain masculinities are idealized is also produced through marking some masculinities as subordinate and making comparisons between the two. In line with earlier Finnish research describing a strong hierarchy of masculinities in Finnish society (Jokinen, 2000; Turtiainen & Väänänen, 2012), I focus on which 'ways of being a man' in the context of self-care are idealized and which are represented as undesirable in contemporary Finnish media.

Hybrid masculinities and men's health

Recent discussion in critical studies on men and masculinities has shown a rapid change in expectations concerning men and the consequences of these changes on gender performances by men. During the nation-building efforts in the early 20th century, public discussion in the Nordic countries idealized masculinities characterized by bodily strength, emotional restraint and orientation toward paid work (Jóhannsdóttir & Gíslason, 2018; Jokinen, 2000; Siltala, 1994). These practices, understood here as traditional masculinity, are also recognized as the source of poor health in men's health research (Matthews, 2016; Pietilä, 2008; Robertson et al., 2016). However, Bridges and Pascoe (2014) argue that in western societies, the progress of social movements that aim to achieve gender equality have resulted in a major loss of legitimacy for masculinities based on a sharp gender difference. According to these authors, hybrid masculinity refers

to the incorporation of identity elements previously associated with femininities and marginalized masculinities into the most visible, idealized representations of men and into the behaviors of men who comply with these idealized masculinities.

Bell (2013), Cottingham (2017) and Whitmer (2017) argue that economic shifts change the labor market, removing suitable places for performing traditional masculinities, and this development enhances the emergence of hybrid masculinities in western societies. Jóhannsdóttir and Gíslason (2018) as well as Eerola (2015) suggest that, in the Nordic countries, the idealized manly traits started to hybridize during the second half of the 20th century, as women extensively entered the labor market: the life spheres of men and women became intermingled, and a man's 'decency' in Nordic societies was no longer tied to the avoidance of the feminine. External characteristics of traditional masculinity are no longer part of men's understanding of what is expected of them as members of society. Even so, pressure to be perceived as resilient, professional, and an active doer in one's own life has not stopped affecting men (Eerola, 2015, 55; Jóhannsdóttir & Gíslason, 2018). This development also affects men's self-care (Pietilä, 2008). Following Matthews (2016), I understand hybrid masculinity as an effectual theoretical tool in studying men's health. He argues that although the most honored way of being a man may in some sociocultural contexts include risk-taking and neglect of health, these values should not be understood as fixed, but instead reliant on other social expectations targeted at men.

Partly contrary to Jóhannsdóttir and Gíslason (2018), I suggest that the Finnish locality differs from what could be understood as a pan-Nordic line of development of masculinities. Finland differs from other Nordic countries due its different history of conflict, late industrialization, and low union density until the 1960s (Kasvio et al., 2012; Turtiainen & Väänänen, 2012). Turtiainen and Väänänen (2012) argue that for a long time, small-scale independent farming prepared boys to see solitary work as the primary content of their lives. Although the widescale change towards hybrid masculinities is repeatedly understood as a positive transition in Finnish society, in the lived experiences of men (Eerola, 2015) and in, for example, the media (Hyvönen, 2017), many elements of traditional masculinities persist.

Pietilä (2008) and Ojala et al. (2016) argue that in Finland, men who intentionally take care of their health and wellbeing face an ideological dilemma between healthy lifestyle and what is expected of them as men. In Finnish society, women believe that avoidance of the apparent visual signs associated with poor health, such as obesity, contributes to success in life more often than do men: thus, healthiness is attached to fewer perceived benefits in men's lives (Sarpila & Eerola, 2016). The dilemma can be resolved by understanding self-care as rationality. When perceived as self-control with quantifiable benefits at hand, it can be dissociated from other forms of self-care, for example care about appearance, which is regarded as unnecessary and feminine (Jallinoja et al., 2015; Ojala et al., 2016; Pietilä, 2008).

When self-care is tied to performance rather than wellbeing, it can turn into an arena of competition between individuals. Previously men have been identified with a type of self-care that leads to increased work performance, making self-care about limits and discipline practiced in order to develop oneself rather than about nurturing self-help and rest in order to achieve wellbeing (Johansson et al., 2017; LaPointe & Heilmann, 2014; Meriläinen et al., 2015; Ojala et al., 2016; Riach & Cutcher, 2014). Leaders and knowledge workers have been seen as more likely to invest heavily in their own health (Johansson et al., 2017; Meriläinen et al., 2015; Riach & Cutcher, 2014). However, Pietilä (2008) and Ojala et al. (2016) suggest that Finnish men in other fields of work also practice self-care and perceive it as rational in contrast to a more traditional masculinity with its unhealthy codes of behavior. This article contributes to this discussion by showing what kinds of self-care practiced by men are represented as desirable in the Finnish media.

Data and method

The data analyzed here are part of a wider data set of 2,555 texts published in the Finnish media dealing with equality and equity in work and education. I participated in the data collection as a part of the WeAll

project along with seven other researchers, who also wrote a report that describes the material, how it was collected, and how it can be later used in qualitative research (Lehtonen et al., 2017). The research team also collected data on the text types, the themes and the actors represented in each text. From this electronic database, I searched for texts that were categorized as ‘journalistic interviews’ and focused on men. Within this subgroup of 194 texts, I chose 27 texts on work-related self-care practiced by interviewees I interpreted as men. Additionally, I searched for texts that were categorized as ‘news articles’ that focus on men and deal with health. Within this subgroup of 494 texts, I first performed an initial screening based on their titles and then I chose three texts that deal with work-related self-care practiced by men who were interviewed in the articles. My data consists of 30 texts, listed in Appendix Table A1. The texts were published 1.1.2016–30.4.2016 in *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS, N=13), *Turun Sanomat* (TS, N=8), *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus* (MT, N=3), and the online news of the Finnish public broadcaster *Yleisradio* (YLE, N=6). According to the audit statistics offered by Finnish print media industry, HS, TS and MT were among the four most read Finnish newspapers that are not tabloids (MediaAuditFinland, 2016). I chose them to achieve a representative sample of different socioeconomic and cultural settings in Finnish society. Due to the small size of the data, the study design did not include a comparison between media sources.

Skeggs and Wood (2012) argue that stories focused on individuals are increasingly used to address affective topics, such as health, in media. Focusing on journalistic interviews makes it possible to analyze what forms of self-care are evaluated positively and what kinds of men’s self-care are understood as desirable. Instead of purely descriptive or explicitly normative elements, journalistic interviews include evaluation (Cotter, 2015). This is performed through attaching affects such as disgust, pity and admiration to individuals that are also gendered (Skeggs & Wood, 2012).

I interpreted interviewees as men mainly based on their names and photographs. This did not necessarily enable recognizing the manifoldness of different gender identities. Although it was possible to search for texts in which gender minorities appear in the WeAll project database (Lehtonen et al., 2017, 15), no such texts were suitable for this research. Of the material, 19 texts out of 30 were written by women based on their names. Texts written by men and women drew from all the discourses found. My aim was not to compare these, but to take a discursive approach to analyze representations of men practicing self-care as part of Finnish media culture as a whole. To emphasize this focus, I also removed the names of authors and interviewees from the text quotes.

Men appearing in the data as interviewees were mainly white Finnish speakers. In one text the main interviewee was a member of an ethnic minority, namely Roma. Three texts indicated that the interviewee was under 30 years old; other interviewees were older and experienced in their work, retiring soon or retired. In one text the sexuality and gender identity of the main interviewee were discussed and the interviewee was identified as non-heterosexual. The majority of texts contained implicit references to heterosexuality. It is evident that the selected texts do not represent the whole male labor force in Finland. Despite a referential relationship to actual events, the media representations focus on people who are considered interesting. Thereby power is already exercised in the recruiting of interviewees (Cotter, 2015; Fairclough, 1995; Skeggs & Wood, 2012).

The data were analyzed using critical discourse analysis (Cotter, 2015; Fairclough, 1995). I analyzed the data thematically from two particular perspectives, first by identifying what kind of self-care was represented, and secondly by identifying how this form of self-care, its goals and its practitioner were evaluated as a part of the representation (see Fairclough, 1995, 5). To begin with, I coded self-care practices, goals of self-care and evaluations of both self-care and its practitioner in each text. Then, I compared the goals of self-care with the evaluations. As a result, I constructed three discourses, understood as ways of realizing and organizing stories and the reality they represent (ibid., 91).

The perspective informing my study is that mass media has ‘power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, [and] social identities’ (Fairclough, 1995, 2). Nevertheless, Fairclough (ibid., 98) points out that there is no single political goal – let alone singular user of power – affecting public discussion in which certain discourses become dominant at the expense of some other discourses. Furthermore,

media representations are also motivated by other things than the aim to influence: they are, for example, entertainment (*ibid.*, 44–46). In addition, stylistic conventions in a particular genre (Cotter, 2015) as well as cultural assumptions of gendered behavior (Reeser, 2010) affect the contents of texts in the media. Thus, I was determined to carry out an analysis of how reality is represented in each individual text without aiming to expose a certain political agenda behind the data analyzed. This sort of hypothesizing about political agendas may make researchers consider certain aspects of texts less important if they do not seem to support the anticipated motives (Fairclough, 1995, 45).

Results: evaluating men practicing work-related self-care

I identified three discourses that all viewed men's participation in working life as valuable. To answer my first question about desirable goals of self-care, I searched for texts containing positive or non-negative evaluations of self-care. A unifying feature of these texts was appreciation of interviewees' efforts to continue working for as long as possible and/or increase their work performance. I then interpreted two distinct discourses from these texts based on which attributes were emphasized as desirable: their personal attitudes towards work and self-care or their skills and knowledge in self-care. Where self-care was viewed with suspicion in my data, the interviewee's choice to value his personal wellbeing over productivity was represented as dubious or undesirable. Here it is noteworthy that, echoing Fairclough (1995, 125–126), certain discourses attached to certain types of interviewees. The exemplary nature of interviewees was mostly attached to men doing work that was clearly recognized as wearing. Expertise in self-care was often represented in texts in which the interviewee had other major merits in working life.

In the following subsections I describe the discourses in detail. In the Exemplariness discourse, interviewees were seen as having a desirable attitude towards work that manifested as a willingness to practice self-care in order to maintain work performance and continue to work. In the Expertise discourse, interviewees had explicit knowledge of self-care practices and the texts implied that readers could learn self-care tips from them by reading the text. In the Suspiciousness discourse, men practiced self-care by decreasing their work pace at the expense of productivity. This choice was presented as unexpected or undesirable. Some of the texts analyzed contained aspects of more than one discourse. The texts analyzed are described in more detail and listed under the most prevalent discourse in Appendix Table A1. Texts are referenced by their numbers in this table.

Exemplariness

Texts which I interpreted as representatives of the Exemplariness discourse share three features: 1) Interviewees worked in jobs that were seen as unusually challenging either due the interviewee's age and/or because the work was particularly wearing. 2) Self-care was practiced only in order to solve problems and challenges as they appeared – to maintain performance at work but not to increase it. 3) Readiness or willingness to invest one's own time and resources to maintain performance at work were not evaluated negatively; instead they were either evaluated positively through choice of words and/or, in Fairclough's terms (1995, 106), setting self-care and its goals as very 'present' without questioning them. Here references to a wearing occupation and to time-consuming and arduous self-care justify representing an interviewee as an exemplary character.

Interviewees had or had had a long work history either in permanent employment or as entrepreneurs. Some interviewees had unconventional occupations, such as an athlete or a musician. In one text (26) interviewees were retirees looking back on their careers. Recurrent features of texts drawing from the Exemplariness discourse include an interviewee near retirement age, addressing memories of a distant past, or work in manual labor or as a professional athlete. 12 texts out of the 14 drawing from this discourse include at least one of these features.

Historically, texts and talk describing achievements of exceptional men have been used to express ideals, fantasies, and desires as regards ideal individual behavior in society, especially in working life. These representations are used to make the intended audience feel that they themselves and their efforts are insufficient (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Reeser, 2010; Siltala, 1994). A text entitled ‘Back from retirement to the construction site – 65-year-old [construction worker] works 11 hours a day’ can be understood as an expression of such an ideal:

“Although he has worked for over forty years, [construction worker] can still go on effortlessly. His secrets are a hopeful attitude and a large amount of exercise. [...] – It is about temperament, physical condition and health, I am in good shape. [...] [Construction worker] emphasizes the right attitude, because ‘weekly commuting men are their own breed.’

– Not everybody can do it, and not everyone is commuting weekly. Especially young people are not interested. Most of us are old codgers.” (13)

In the text, a prolonged career is understood as an outcome of the right attitude which is not likely to appear among younger people who are represented as non-exemplary. The significance of the attitude, rather than intrinsic traits, is stressed, as it is stated that maintaining performance is about self-care practices that are available to anyone, such as ‘proper sleep and eating regularly’.

Although the old age of an interviewee and comparing him to younger men are central themes in many texts drawing from this discourse, young and middle-aged men were also marked as exemplary. A text about a man in his late 20s, who works as both a border guard and a farmer, is titled ‘A decent man’. His decency is justified by stressing that he has the right attitude to work which makes him willing to devote a lot of time to self-care:

“The most important criterion to fulfill in order to become a border guard is the right attitude. You must internalize the nature of a military position: you have to work on your physical condition and skills, as when you are ordered, you must go, during both peacetime and in a state of emergency. [...] I practice fitness boxing, jog or do weight training an hour or two every day. Otherwise I will die in the case of a real-life situation.” (5)

The border guard justifies his practices of self-care through necessity. Thus, his practices of self-care do not include meditating on how he could improve his personal wellbeing. Instead, talk about health is tied to performance at work and the possible risk of death.

In texts drawing from the Exemplariness discourse, interviewees discuss health in a way that can be interpreted as being a vital possibility for contemporary men (Ojala et al. 2016). On the one hand, the ideological dilemma between health awareness and masculinity, as described by Pietilä (2008), is not explicitly referred to. On the other hand, silence concerning one’s own personal needs is not replaced by the completely opposite code of behavior, allowing all kinds of expressions of personal needs. Instead, in the Exemplariness discourse self-care is mentioned only in order to emphasize the laboriousness of a particular job and the exemplariness of a man working in it. The Exemplariness discourse participates in constituting an idealized masculinity that is a hybrid masculinity including independence, emotional restraint and resilience (Jóhannsdóttir & Gíslason, 2018; Turtiainen & Väänänen, 2012) as well as an increasing appreciation of health awareness (Ojala et al., 2016; Pietilä, 2008).

Expertise

The texts I interpreted as representatives of the Expertise discourse share the following three features: 1) An interviewee introduces a new form of self-care; this novelty is either based on the misfortunes which interviewees have faced or their personal expertise in a certain field of self-care; this expertise is used to justify their position as an interviewee. 2) Self-care is presented as exceptional: it improves work performance and wellbeing at work from its current or past state; men represented as experts possess

knowledge that is also a distinct practice with an identifiable impact on health. 3) Men represented as experts also have explicit, justified and easily shareable knowledge of how their self-care practices work; thus, the texts imply that readers can also learn these practices and that it is beneficial for them to do so.

In texts drawing from the Expertise discourse, interviewees had distinct work-related merits. All of them had a bachelor's degree or higher. Interviewees who were not in managerial positions had other merits that justified their position as an expert, such as highly demanding work or a long career, for example as an occupational psychologist or physician.

The voice of the occupational psychologist tells readers to stop self-criticism and free brain capacity to solve external problems. Muting exaggerated self-criticism equals higher performance at work:

"[Occupational psychologist] compares self-compassion to a muscle that can be strengthened by training. [...] Previously [occupational psychologist] had a guilty conscience if he, for example, postponed doing paperwork by getting a cup of coffee. When he returned to his desk, his inner critic blamed him for being lazy. [...] As [occupational psychologist] has stopped dwelling on his mistakes, he thinks he has become a better [...] psychologist." (21)

The quote above is based on two beliefs described by Kelly et al. (2007). First, it is believed possible to overcome one's own emotions and attitudes through self-care. Secondly, this process is identified as a key instrument in increasing performance and success at work. As outlined by Ojala et al. (2016), here too, control over health is instrumentalized to achieve desired outcomes.

In texts drawing from the Expertise discourse, practices of self-care can be explicitly expressed as a list of procedures or identified as a particular tool, such as 'self-compassion' or 'job crafting'. Thus, readers can adopt them too:

*"When [...] [headteacher] wants to thank, he may create a Ghostbusters video. Most recently, he sent an animated ghost video to young people and their parents, when pupils behaved exceptionally well in a library.
The video not only made the pupils but also the parents happy, and it did not take more of [the headteacher's] time than writing a message.
'I like to play with things and try new ways of doing things. I give them a quick dry run and if the experiment does not work, I try something else.' [...] It is worth it, because **job crafting** is found to be a good way to sustain work engagement." (19; emphasis in original)*

The headteacher's daily routines and practices affecting his wellbeing at work are the explicit focus of attention and discussion. These practices are also seen as a way to increase engagement, commitment and motivation at work. This representation of self-care constructs an idealized way of being a man that, echoing Bridges and Pascoe (2014), visibly differs from masculinities built around silence concerning personal needs.

Eerola (2015) and Jóhannsdóttir and Gíslason (2018) argue that there is still a potential contradiction lurking in this position: although men are allowed to focus on their personal wellbeing and enhance their role in, for example, family life, the ideal of high performance at work still affects them. Thus, men cannot thoroughly give up expectations tied to paid work in order to pursue personal wellbeing, because paid work is still assumed to be part of a man's ideal life course. A project manager advocates rationing one's efforts in order to find a balance between personal wellbeing and high work performance:

"I was lucky to learn early that although I am able to do enjoyable things at work, they do not give me a good vibe if I do not take care of recovery, exercise and interpersonal relationships. I started to think about methods to control the use of my time. [...] Now I have responsibility as a superior. As I am in a new kind of situation, I cannot follow old routines and proven methods. I must be careful not to start working overly long hours. [...] I started to prevent people from booking me for meetings before nine o'clock." (16)

The project manager is shown to care for his own wellbeing through the regulation of work time, which differs from the maximum imaginable dedication to work. However, wellbeing is also seen as a source of both responsibility and motivation to do work assignments well, which, echoing Bressi and Vaden (2017), turns wellbeing into a component contributing to performance at work. In the Expertise discourse, resistance towards viewing wellbeing from a work perspective, as described by James and Zoller (2018), is not addressed. Instead, use of self-care to keep working is emphasized:

“The second burnout came ten years after the first one. Before that, he had learned something. [Entrepreneur] did not yearn for work during his sick leave anymore.

He decided to learn a new way to live.

– I had to learn to use my time in another way. I still work, but I choose the time carefully. I often work in the evening after my children have gone to sleep. Then, I work efficiently for an hour or two.” (24)

“[Senior constable] came back to work very relaxed two weeks ago. He reintegrated with his colleagues quickly, and his year of job alternation leave was a success.

– I got my health and sleep rhythm back. My body thanks me. Now, as we are getting a new police station in the fall, it is like a new road opening ahead.” (27)

The two quotes above imply that although paid work can be extremely hazardous to health, it is still a self-explanatory part of men’s lives. Texts drawing from the Expertise discourse are based on an idea identified in earlier research on work-related self-care: without self-care, contemporary working life demands more performance or drains more personal resources than the average worker has (Islam et al., 2017; James & Zoller, 2018; Kelly et al., 2007). This needs to be remedied by never-ending curiosity about new methods of developing oneself. In texts drawing from the Expertise discourse interviewees are positioned as experts and it is claimed that they possess valuable information that readers can make use of.

Suspiciousness

In texts I interpreted as representatives of the Suspiciousness discourse, interviewees take care of their health and wellbeing by leaving their current workplace which leads to decreased productivity. This move is viewed as dubious: a more conventional and desirable alternative to that particular choice is described in the text. The dubious choice is either presented as understandable through careful justification or it is questioned.

For example, a janitor’s decision to leave his job because of bullying is first presented as understandable. This decision is then justified through his previous efforts to resolve the situation in some other way in order to stay in the job:

“Bullied employees tell us now how they used all means at their disposal to challenge their superior’s aggressive behavior. [...] Eventually the men resigned, as problems in the workplace did not leave them at peace even during leisure time. [...] [Janitor] lost not only sleep but also his peace of mind and his intimate relationship.

‘I was quite tense for six years, it probably influenced the situation.’ [...] The men tried to achieve a change in their difficult situation through their union representative, occupational healthcare and the health and safety department. Everyone said the same: someone should intervene in the situation.” (28)

The janitor’s method of caring for himself, resigning, is still represented as undesirable as such. This dissatisfaction with the situation is not only described in the writer’s voice, but it is also attached to the janitor, who is shown to be devoted to his work. The janitor is not represented as a dishonorable character, although his resigning is not considered as a possibility to revamp his life or find new meaningful activities. Instead, the appreciative attitude is directed at his previous struggle to keep his job; here the text

draws from the Exemplariness discourse.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that repeated public display legitimates general acceptance of certain masculinities. Referring to these authors, Reeser (2010, 14) and Robertson et al. (2016) argue that masculinities are repeatedly compared in everyday language to highlight a difference between idealized and subordinate masculinities. The text about an artist who leaves his laborious shift work and tries to make a living from selling his art, begins and ends with references to employment which is understood as a part of a conventional life path:

“ ‘Don’t give up the day job’ is a well-known phrase used to discourage artists. [Artist] considers leaving employment his best decision. [...] He has not applied for arts grants, and his livelihood is so-so. Despite this, he sees things as being the way they should be.

– This is some sort of human experiment, [artist] jokes. – Now we shall see what kind of mental and economic plight an individual gets into when he does whatever he wants.” (30)

Although this choice is not represented as morally wrong, the likelihood that it will affect the artist’s wellbeing negatively is stressed. Negative aspects of leaving employment are understood as common sense (see Fairclough 1995, 67). This emphasizes the odd nature of this choice. Here the evaluative content of the text does not aim at representing the artist’s behavior as a model to be followed: although becoming an artist is represented as a personally reasonable choice, it is also implied that such a career change does not automatically increase personal wellbeing.

More straightforwardly, in another text an actor-writer is described as ‘stupid,’ when he refuses highly paid work offers in Finland because of the intolerant political climate and moves abroad (29). Here the freedom to express his homosexuality and to act in roles questioning heteronormativity is compared with better-paid work, with more value attributed to the latter. His urge to live and work in a place where ‘everybody lives and lets live’ is seen as understandable, although the possibility of fulfilling this desire is subordinated to the possibility of exploiting his high popularity in Finland. The text does not judge his wish for freer sexual and gender expression, but does place a higher value on an entrepreneurial and market-oriented attitude, which is a persistent feature of both traditional and hybrid forms of masculinity (see Bell, 2013; Cottingham, 2017; Jóhannsdóttir & Gíslason, 2018; Whitmer, 2017). Although both the artist and the actor-writer are represented as happy with their choice of self-care, this accomplishment is contested based on an obligation to work as productively as possible.

Men whose self-care is shown to decrease productivity seem to manage to take care of their wellbeing effectively. Nevertheless, their methods of self-care are not represented as exemplary or inspiring. This is in line with what LaPointe and Heilmann (2014) found: long-held dreams and a desire to slow down are understood as culturally acceptable and legitimate reasons for downshifting in the Finnish mass media, but only for women. ‘Downshifting’ was the only category in which only one man appeared as a main character in a career change story in Finnish magazines and newspapers from 2009 to 2012. Downshifting conflicts with both traditional Nordic masculinities (see Jóhannsdóttir & Gíslason, 2018; Turtiainen & Väänänen, 2012) and with currently idealized hybrid masculinities (Cottingham, 2017; Jóhannsdóttir & Gíslason, 2018), of which paid work and productivity are still core components. Biese (2017) terms the ideal of a career without breaks as ‘masculinist.’ She argues that although this ideal is also applied to women, they have honorable ways of escaping it, such as dedication to family life.

Discussion and conclusions

This discourse analysis has identified some of the meanings given to men’s work-related self-care in the Finnish media. I focused on how desirable forms of men’s work-related self-care were constructed and how interviewees and their self-care were evaluated. I constructed three discourses: Exemplariness, Expertise and Suspiciousness. Table 1 summarizes the contents and goals of self-care and how interviewees and their

Table 1. The contents of self-care, its goals and the evaluations of self-care and interviewee in three discourses.

	<i>Exemplariness</i>	<i>Expertise</i>	<i>Suspiciousness</i>
Content of self-care	Time-consuming and arduous practices that express deep dedication to work	Novel techniques stemming from deep expert knowledge	Leaving work or getting into less demanding work, which decreases productivity
Goals of self-care	Maintaining work performance and prolong career	Increasing work performance and wellbeing at work from its current or past state	Increasing personal wellbeing, avoiding distressing work conditions
Evaluation of self-care and interviewee	Admiring interviewee through stressing his right attitude	Admiring self-care practices through leaning on expertise of an interviewee	Questioning self-care practices; presenting interviewee as unsuccessful

self-care were evaluated in three discourses.

All three discourses share an explicit appreciation of men's participation in working life and productivity, understood as a long career with stable and foreseeable income. While texts varied in what exact features in interviewees and their self-care were mentioned and therefore marked as meaningful, this appreciation linked the discourses. These discourses form a hierarchy of masculinities in which men who value work performance and productivity over personal wellbeing were idealized over other ways of being a man. Furthermore, the hierarchy was constructed by the presence of the Suspiciousness discourse in which men who take care of themselves by reducing their productivity permanently are represented as exceptional and strange. In contrast, there were two discourses representing desirable self-care, namely the Exemplariness discourse and the Expertise discourse.

In the Exemplariness discourse, men whose attitudes to their bodies, health, and work were altogether designed to fulfill the needs of their work and to stay in that particular job as long as possible, were considered exemplary. Their masculinity was a hybrid of independence, emotional restraint, resilience, and some purposeful self-care practices. Although self-care was represented as a positive thing, the focus in the texts was not on its content. Both interviewees and readers were assumed to share a common understanding concerning the healthiness of lifestyles (see Fairclough, 1995, 106) which are evident in mundane self-care practices, for example 'proper sleep and eating regularly' (13). Instead, texts focused on the exemplariness of particular men whose desirable attitude to work was manifested through commitment to work-related self-care. In the Expertise discourse, men were represented as holders of novel knowledge making it possible for not only themselves but also for other people to increase their wellbeing and performance at work through tools applied to their bodies, attitudes, and overall way of being. Here the role of self-care as part of idealized masculinity is deeper: men's incorporation of behaviors previously understood as non-masculine, such as the spontaneous willingness to immerse oneself in knowledge regarding health at work and sharing this knowledge as well as actively aiming to find wellbeing, were presented as valuable. Here wellbeing was understood as a source of motivation, which turned wellbeing into a component contributing to performance at work and willingness to prolong one's career.

Finnish media represents multiple idealized masculinities, as a comparison of the Exemplariness and Expertise discourses shows, although the differences between these masculinities are not very striking. Through the appreciation of men's self-care that contributes to productivity and work performance, new idealized masculinities are constructed. Men who do not have the will or capacity to do so are subordinated. However, variations in the intensity of interest towards health were allowed. Men represented in the Exemplariness discourse were idealized because of their willingness to spend time and effort in self-care in order to continue working despite the demanding nature of their work. In these texts the attitude towards

self-care, rather than its methods, were seen as admirable. Therefore, willingness to examine and express personal needs was not considered a compulsory element of being a man. My results echo those of Ojala et al. (2016) and Pietilä (2008) in that although elements of traditional masculinity, such as emotional restraint and unwillingness to perceive the self as tired, are still present in the behaviors of some men, the ideological dilemma between being a man and caring for one's own health is no longer in evidence in public discussion in Finnish society.

The results indicate a change in idealized masculinities towards increased awareness of health, although these changes do not necessarily increase society's tolerance of men's vulnerability or negative emotions towards work. The results echo earlier research showing remarkable change in masculinities accepted and idealized in the Nordic countries. However, these representations do not challenge the social role of men as providers, which requires participation in working life. Instead, self-care is turned into a beneficial amendment to this role. Moreover, as the analysis of texts drawing from the Suspiciousness discourse shows, the possibility to engage in self-care is only unequivocally permitted to men who participate in paid work. Echoing Siltala (1994, 153), success in work still increases the personal possibilities available to individual men. On the other hand, the conception of self-care as topical is seen as a consequence of the stressfulness and high demands of working life. Here the focus on men's personal wellbeing, which has been ignored and considered unimportant in earlier representations of idealized masculinities (see Jokinen, 2000), is harnessed as a counterforce to the experience of stress.

When evaluating the results of the present study, it must be understood that all qualitative analysis is interpretation. This is particularly true for discourse analysis, which aims to analyze social realities behind texts in the form of attitudes and expectations (Fairclough, 1995). My findings fit with previous theories of both health in working life and masculinities. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that the interpreter always adds something to the original data and leaves some aspects underemphasized. To counteract this, I sought to avoid searching for a particular agenda behind the representations I analyzed, as noted by Fairclough (1995). The risk of tendentious selection of data was also reduced by the data collection method. Eight persons participated in planning the data collection and the 30 texts used here were chosen from a database that was not collected for the purposes of this study alone (Lehtonen et al., 2017).

This study contributes to Finnish research on texts that produce idealized ways of being a man. Future research on media representations of working life should pay closer attention to the reproduction of meanings given to gender, health and success in working life and especially the interconnections between them. Although social change in idealized masculinities and increased awareness of meanings of health at work have been well-documented, few studies explicitly identify differences between the genders in representations of work-related self-care.

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Author biography

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Appendix

Table A1. Texts analyzed with their sources.

#	Source	Occupation	Method(s) of self-care	Goals of self-care
Exemplariness				
1	HS 2.1.2016, D1–D4	Snowboarder	Rest, medication	Maintain capability to snowboard
2	HS 31.1.2016, D4	Taxi driver	Rowing and skiing	Avoid back pain caused by driving
3	HS 13.2.2016, B15–B16	Javelin thrower	Disciplined exercise, regulation of exercise, ‘listening’ to body	Avoid further injuries and prolong career
4	HS 16.4.2016, D1–4	Physician, CEO of company in social welfare and health-care field	Running, skiing, cutting out unnecessary activity in workplace	Avoid unnecessary stress in order to continue working despite health issues
5	MT Kantri supplement, 13.1.2016, 25	Border guard, farmer	Fitness boxing, jogging and weight training	Maintain physical condition needed in border guarding
6	MT 20.4.2016, 22–23	Lumberjack	Abundant eating	Compensate for energy consumption
7	MT 4.4.2016, 10	Singer	Maintaining intimate relationship	Avoid stress produced by conflict between domesticity and working life
8	TS 17.1.2016, 10	Boxer	Disciplined exercise	Success in sports
9	TS Talous supplement, 19.1.2016, 3	Application manager	Walking, jogging, gym, combining business trips and avoiding working at home	Physical wellbeing
10	TS 21.2.2016, 5	Priest	i) Playing ice hockey ii) Changing roles within same field to a lower position	i) Avoid getting fatter and laziness, empty mind before workday ii) Avoid conflicts in workplace
11	TS 9.3.2016, 16	CEO of a Finnish forest industry group	Maintaining intimate relationship, shared hobbies with wife	Maintain work performance
12	TS 26.3.2016, 13	Cook	Cutting out unnecessary activity in workplace, sitting quietly during breaks	Maintain work performance
13	YLE 14.3.2016	Construction worker	Proper sleep, porridge, exercise, shared hobbies with wife	Maintain work performance
14	YLE 18.3.2016	Former stevedore	Avoiding alcohol consumption despite attitudes allowing drinking	Maintain work performance
Expertise				
15	HS 16.1.2016, D1–4	Physician	Circle of success based on six scientific elements, a phone application helping to apply the circle	Increase physical performance, cope with mental pressure
16	HS 24.1.2016, D5	Service design team manager	Allocating meetings and exercise	Avoid burnout
17	HS 11.2.2016, C10–11	Mail carrier, former late stage medical student	Changing occupation	Cope with perfectionism, find a job compatible with personality
18	HS 17.3.2016, C1–3	Futurologist, lecturer	Inuring self by getting into new situations	Get rid of anxiety
19	HS 23.3.2016, A16–17	Headteacher	Job crafting	Avoid burnout without reducing amount of work

20	HS 10.4.2016, D5	Project manager	Comparing self to others, maintaining preparedness to change work	Stay employed through being a better worker than colleagues
21	HS 14.4.2016, C2–3	Occupational psychologist	Self-compassion	Avoid self-critique that consumes mental resources
22	TS 6.1.2016, 19	CEO of an insurance company	i) Changing from one field of work to another ii) Running	i) Avoid getting bored ii) Meet the increasing challenges of working life
23	TS 11.2.2016, 13	CEO of a software company	Looking for personal motivation for work	Cope with plausible misfortune in software business
24	YLE 30.3.2016	Entrepreneur	Regulating work time	Deal with recurrent burnout
25	YLE 9.4.2016	Owner of a factory producing musical instruments	Play in workplace	Break down rigid atmosphere in workplace
26	YLE 17.4.2016	CEO of a software company	Avoiding business news	Maintain mental health, focusing on profitable work
27	YLE 18.4.2016	Senior constable	Job alternation leave	Physical health, sleep rhythm, and work satisfaction
Suspiciousness				
28	HS 10.3.2016, A19–20	Janitor	Resigning	End harassment
29	HS 16.4.2016, C1–4	Actor-writer	Refusing highly-paid work offers, moving abroad to work	Escape intolerant political climate
30	TS 3.4.2016, 21	Artist, former shift worker	Changing occupation	Opportunity to do personally interesting work