Body Image Dissatisfaction among Men Engaged in Regular Weight Training Activities:

An exploratory analysis

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Abstract

The central purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the body image dissatisfaction experiences of a group of young adult men who were engaged in regular recreational weight training activities. Within this, three primary areas of enquiry were investigated through the completion of fourteen semi-structured interviews with men aged between eighteen and thirty who were residing in the city of Hamilton, New Zealand. The first area of investigation focused on gaining a broad appreciation of participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences. While participants' reports indicated that for the majority, the experience of dissatisfaction did not have a significantly detrimental effect on their well-being, behavioural indications highlighted a tendency for men to downplay the actual impact of these types of experiences. The second area of enquiry focused on investigating participants' beliefs about specific factors which they thought were influencing their own and others' body image dissatisfaction experiences. Reports tended to suggest that media, particularly advertising, entertainment and Internet-based media, as well as peer, family and opposite sex influences were most central to the development and maintenance of dissatisfaction experiences. Coupled with these influences, social comparison and internalisation processes also appeared to act as important mediating processes for participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences. When considered in their entirety this combination of influences lent support to the sociocultural model as a framework for explaining the development and maintenance of body image dissatisfaction among participants. The third and final area of enquiry was aimed at gaining an understanding of the relationship between weight training and participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences. While results indicated the existence of a positive relationship between regular recreational weight training engagement, body image satisfaction, and other aspects of well-being, engagement also appeared to have an effect in the opposite direction, influencing the quality of body evaluation in a manner which appeared to also increase the likelihood of experiences of body image dissatisfaction among participants.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Throughout history the human body has been an object of fascination. Attired, decorated, mutilated, worshiped and revered, the body is an agent of culture, and a vehicle for the expression of various culture defining practices including eating, dressing, movement and dance (Dutton, 1995). The body is said to act as a constant medium between oneself and one's social world. The size and shape of one's body strongly influences one's social identity, and assumptions are commonly made about an individual or group based on defining characteristics of their appearance (MacLachlan, Mhaille, Gallagher & Desmond, 2012).

For both men and women, the body has also traditionally been shaped by the prevailing norms of dominant groups throughout history, influenced by religious disciplines and by the continually shifting notions of masculinity and femininity among powerful groups throughout time (Dutton, 1995). In ancient Greece, a keen interest in athletic training among the male population resulted in male aspirations toward the attainment of strong and muscular physiques. The male form was celebrated and immortalised in elaborate art, paintings and larger-than-life sculptures. These hero-like or god-like statues, standing much larger and more muscular than the typical man, were emblematic of the ideal male figure at the time, symbolising physical power, authority and self-control, virtues readily celebrated within the society (Dutton, 1995).

In the Imperial Roman era the bare male form was not celebrated in as much the same fashion as it had been in classical Greece. The athletic movement which had helped to shape the ideal male form within Greek society was seen not only as dull, but also as potentially effeminate in comparison to the bloodthirsty nature of the Gladiatorial combat which had become the spectacle of interest of the masses during this period. While the art of statuary continued to influence male conceptions of power, much less interest was dedicated to the study of the nude figure, and instead, the underlying symbolic importance of muscularity as a defining characteristic of male power was represented by the

cuirasse esthetique, the central feature of statuary work during this time. The Roman cuirass with its solid pectoral muscles, protruding thoracic arch and well-defined pectoral muscles, characterised the male physical ideal, representing both political and physical supremacy, and standing as a symbol of male ascendency and heroic strength (Dutton, 1995).

In the 17th and 18th centuries vastly contrasting philosophies regarding the male form existed to those popular within the Greek and Roman periods. Men were rarely represented without clothing, and instead, it became one's duty to look prosperous through appearing well fleshed. A widespread appreciation of the fuller-figure, which indicated affluence in this period, meant that the lean male figure was seen as less desirable, and in most cases signified the working class or impoverished origins of the common man (Dutton, 1995).

As the idealised male body has continued to transform throughout time, the end of the 20th century seems to have become a time of heightened concern about the male body and about body image (Grogan, 2008). A continuous increase in visibility of the male body within the media and popular culture has proven to intensify appearance focus among men, with the popularity of muscularity as an appropriate aspirational goal seen to have given rise to the experience of body image dissatisfaction for an increasing number of men (Olivardia, Pope, Borowiecki & Cohane, 2004; Pope et al., 2005)

This chapter has a number of key purposes. To begin, the aim is to provide a background to the research, including an explanation of the rationale for the decision to investigate this area of research as well as a brief explanation of the researcher's position in the research. The second aim is to present a review of the literature pertaining to men's experiences of body image dissatisfaction. Within this, particular attention is paid to those studies which have attempted to gain an understanding of the way in which body image dissatisfaction can impact upon men's psychological well-being, as well as those studies which have investigated potential links between body image dissatisfaction and other types of difficulties for men. Following this, a summary of the factors which the literature has commonly cited as contributing to body image dissatisfaction for

men will be discussed, with a focus particularly on the social, interpersonal and intrapersonal influences thought to be important in the development and maintenance of such experiences. Finally, a review of the nature of weight training will be undertaken, with a specific focus on the impact that engagement in these activities can have on men's body image experiences, including body image dissatisfaction, as well as the impact of engagement on other aspects of well-being.

Thesis Orientation

Overview

This thesis consists of four main chapters. The first chapter, as previously described, provides introductory material and explores key aspects of the extant literature pertaining to male body image dissatisfaction. Chapter two describes the methodology utilised for this study, highlighting the approaches utilised in the data collection and data analysis processes. The third chapter highlights the key findings of this study. These findings are discussed with reference to findings from previous research. Finally, chapter four summarises the key findings of the study and offers some closing analyses. Some limitations of the current study and recommendations for future research are also offered.

Background to the Research

The researcher is a man in his mid-twenties whose involvement in weight training and muscle development activities has spanned a period of eight years. An interest in exploring the phenomenon that is male body image dissatisfaction has stemmed primarily from observations over the past two years of a growing drive among young adult men to develop muscularity through engagement in weight training activities. This perceived growth has spurred personal speculation that pressure among men to be muscular, and to engage in an active process of developing muscularity, is growing ever stronger and may in fact be affecting them in a negative way.

The purpose of this study is, very broadly, to explore and understand the experience of body image dissatisfaction for men engaged in regular muscle development or weight training activities. As an experiential area paid little attention by researchers traditionally, an element of openness has been considered necessary in this study in order to allow for findings to provide answers to the wide range of questions which are still unanswered across the breath of this research topic. The researcher's hope is that a greater understanding of men's body image dissatisfaction experiences will ultimately provide benefit either directly, or by some other means, for men who are experiencing these types of difficulties in particular.

Literature Review

This review provides an overview of the literature pertaining to the various aspects of men's body image dissatisfaction experiences. Part one explores what the literature can tell us about the body image experiences of men, in particular, their experiences of dissatisfaction with body shape and size. Part two describes what the literature reveals with regard to influences for the development and maintenance of body dissatisfaction among men. Part three explores what past research has suggested with regard to the role and impact of engagement in weight training activities, not only on men's body image experiences, but also on other aspects of their well-being.

Part One: Male Body Image Dissatisfaction

Despite a longstanding fascination with the male body, the study of body image as a specific construct began to gain traction in the early 20th century. The study of body image from within a psychological and sociological framework began with the work of Paul Schilder in the 1920's. Prior to Schilder's work, body image research was largely limited to the study of body related neuropathology, including investigations into distorted body perceptions related to brain damage and peculiar phenomena such as phantom limb syndrome[1] (Cash, 2004; Grogan, 2008). Schilder (1950), who first coined the phrase 'body

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[1] Phantom limb syndrome is the perception of sensations, including pain, in a limb that has been amputated.

image', argued that body image is not simply an isolated cognitive construct, but one created through an interaction between an individual's own perceptions of themselves and their social experiences.

Today, contemporary use of the label 'body image' exists less in the realms of medicine and neuropsychology and is more often present in sociological and psychological literature. Expanding on Schilder's original notion of body image, Thompson (1990) suggests that body image is a multidimensional concept encompassing four primary domains:

1. Perceptions - How an individual views their body and perceives that others view their body
2. Cognitions - How an individual thinks about and evaluates their own body
3. Emotions - Feelings experienced in response to these thoughts e.g. disgust, pride, anxiousness
4. Behaviours - Actions which reflect negative or positive perceptions, cognitions or emotions

Body image is thought to be a key component in the development of personal identity, influencing feelings of self-worth, experiences of similarity to or difference from others, and affecting mental well-being across the lifespan (Grogan, 2008; Lindwall & Hassem, 2004). The degree of importance that individuals' place on their own body image as a contributing factor to their overall sense of self can vary from person to person (Spurgas, 2005), and for many, judgments of self-worth based almost entirely on physical characteristics has been shown to result in subjective depreciation of other potentially valuable human assets (Grogan, 2008).

Body Image Dissatisfaction

The terms 'negative body image', 'body image disturbance' and 'body image dissatisfaction' have each been used in past research to describe non-clinical levels of body related difficulties (Thompson, 1995). While the specific terminology utilised has differed, each of these labels has tended to describe

essentially analogous phenomenon, hence, for the purposes of this piece of research, I will be using the label 'body image dissatisfaction'. Body image dissatisfaction is defined by Grogan (2008) as a person's negative thoughts about his or her own body. This often includes judgments about size, shape and may include muscle tone, and generally involves a discrepancy between one's own body type and an ideal body type.

Comparing Men's and Women's Body Image Experiences

Body image research has traditionally focused on the experiences of women, most popularly exploring the link between negative assessments of body size and shape and the development of psychological disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa (Cash, 2004; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001). In general, the literature tends to suggest that women place a greater significance on bodily appearance as an indicator of self-worth than do men, and as a consequence, experience more body-image related psychopathology than do men (Davidson & McCabe, 2005; Grossbard, Lee, Neighbors & Larimer, 2009; Palladino-Green & Pritchard, 2003). Despite suggestions that body image dissatisfaction is much more of a pervasive issue for women than it is for men, the increasing numbers of men seeking psychological intervention for body image-related difficulties has highlighted the increasing pervasiveness of this issue among the male population (Davey & Bishop, 2006; Olivardia, Pope & Hudson, 2000). Whether this recognised increase is the result of added awareness of the existence of, and increased openness to talking about and seeking support for, body image issues among men is beyond the scope of this study. Whatever the explanation, suggestions that male body image disturbance specifically linked to 'muscle tone' almost doubled in the thirty-year period from the 1970's onwards indicates that this is an issue not limited only to the female population (Cash, 2002).

Research highlighting differences between men and women's experiences of body image dissatisfaction has provided credence to the inappropriateness of generalising results from female-focused research across gender groups. While men and women generally differ in terms of physical appearance, there are also distinct differences in what each tends to value in their own appearances (Cash,

2004). The literature consistently supports the idea that women experiencing body image dissatisfaction across all age groups typically strive for a slimmer body regardless of their BMI (Tiggemann & Slevec, 2012). In contrast, findings from male-focused research has shown that men's dissatisfaction is more bi-directional, with just as many men wanting to gain weight as lose weight (Furnham, Badmin & Sneade, 2002).

The Nature of Male Body Image Dissatisfaction

While a very small percentage of men with body image difficulties experience clinically significant symptoms necessitating therapeutic attention, a much larger percentage appear to experience more mild body image difficulties which, while not altogether disabling, are still undesirable in many respects, and have been shown to put individuals at risk of developing more severe difficulties (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2002). Research findings in this area have also shown a link between non-clinical level experiences of body image dissatisfaction and experiences of poor self-esteem and reduced life satisfaction for men (Cafri, Strauss, & Thompson, 2002; Johnson & Wardle, 2005; McCreary & Sasse, 2000; Olivardia et al., 2004; O'Dea & Yager, 2006).

Body image disturbance at a more severe level has been associated with the development of depression, eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorder (Cafri et al., 2002; Kostanski & Gullone; 1998; Olivardia et al., 2004; McFarland & Kaminski; 2009; Stice, 2002). One particular subtype of body dysmorphic disorder, termed muscle dysmorphia, has been linked particularly to muscularity-focused body image dissatisfaction at the more severe end of the spectrum. This type of body image disturbance was first identified and classified by Pope, Katz and Hudson (1993) in their seminal exploration of a disorder which they coined 'reverse anorexia' in a sample of 108 male bodybuilders. Pope and colleagues (1993) described a disorder wherein individuals experienced a profound preoccupation with appearing small and weak despite, in reality, often appearing sufficiently muscular. More recently this phenomenon, now more commonly known as 'muscle dysmorphia', has been conceptualised as a form of body dysmorphic disorder wherein individuals are shown to experience an intense preoccupation with a perceived lack of muscle size

(Pope, Gruber, Choi, Olivardia & Phillips, 1997). In the official diagnostic literature, body dysmorphic disorder is a clinically defined disorder which describes individuals whom are preoccupied with one or more perceived defects or flaws in their appearance which in reality are not observable or appear only slight to others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Recently a muscle dysmorphia specifier was added to this the body dysmorphic disorder diagnosis within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorder – Fifth Edition (DSM-V), meaning that for an individual who meets the diagnostic criteria for body dysmorphic disorder, the presence of muscle dysmorphia will be more precisely classified in cases where an individual is preoccupied with the idea that his or her body is too small or insufficiently muscular (APA, 2013). In addition to the distress found to be experienced by many in association with a perceived lack of muscularity, a number of detrimental behavioural correlates have also been linked to muscle dysmorphia. Steroid abuse has been cited as common among many who are striving for increased muscularity (Pope et al., 2002; Klein, 1995), and the potential risks associated with abuse of such substances are well documented (Klein, 1995). Liver dysfunction, cardiovascular complications and damage to endocrine systems are but a few physical outcomes associated with steroid abuse (Klein, 1995), while psychological and behavioural impacts shown to sometimes accompany steroid abuse include an exaggerated sense of self or feelings of grandiosity and increased levels of aggression, commonly known as 'roid rage' (Klein, 1995). A link between muscle dysmorphia and experiences of obsession with, and dependence on, physical exercise has also been well documented. Some have observed a distinct loss of life balance among those with symptoms of muscle dysmorphia wherein individuals begin to neglect important life commitments outside of their weight training activities such as relationships and occupation-based obligations. In their study, Pope and colleagues (2000) found that many men considered that they were obsessed with the 'bodybuilding lifestyle', and for many, any time not spent in the gym was spent thinking about or preparing for training (Pope et al., 2000). Experiential studies have also described the experiences of male weight trainers who felt they would go crazy if they were forced to miss a workout for a day (Pope et al., 2002), while experimental studies have also suggested the presence of a number of psychological and

physiological disturbances for individuals experiencing exercise withdrawal, including: anxiety, depression, restlessness, guilt, tension, sleeplessness and stress and discomfort (Aidman & Woollard, 2003). The addition of this muscle dysmorphia specifier into the official diagnostic literature clearly indicates concern over the increasing pervasiveness of these types of difficulties among men.

Summary

Body image dissatisfaction is a phenomenon currently not limited by gender. For men, muscularity-focused body image dissatisfaction in particular appears to be growing more prevalent, at least within the Western context. A number of undesirable corollaries have been shown to be associated with male body image dissatisfaction experiences. At the milder end of the spectrum dissatisfaction has been linked to poor self-esteem and reduced life satisfaction while at the more severe end of the spectrum dissatisfaction has been linked to the development of clinically definable difficulties including depression, eating disorders and muscle dysmorphia, each of which carry with them a number of potentially harmful corollaries.

Part Two: Influences for Male Body Image Dissatisfaction

A wide range of influences appear potentially influential in the development of body image dissatisfaction experiences for men. The proceeding discussion provides an overview of what the existent research can tell us about these many influences, highlighting the probability that not one, but a number of factors may lay influence to the development and maintenance of these experiences for men.

Sociocultural Influences

Research has recognised the existence of significant social pressure, particularly within the Western social context, for individuals to meet specific aesthetic appearance ideals (Grogan, 2008; Kirkpatrick & Sanders, 1978).

Physical appearance within this context seems to have become a 'measuring stick' for self-worth, with research showing that people generally equate the degree to which an individual matches culturally-defined appearance ideals to that individual's value as a human being (Grogan, 2008). For those who meet body ideals, a number of positive personality characteristics are typically conferred, with labels like 'strong', 'brave', 'helpful' and 'happy' commonly offered (Kirkpatrick & Sanders, 1978). Conversely, failure to meet these ideals is often attributed to personal failure on the part of the individual who are typically assigned a number of negative personality-based labels such as 'lazy', 'self-indulgent', 'unhappy' or 'lonely' (Grogan, 2008).

Is the Drive for Muscularity Universal or Culturally Influenced?

There is ongoing debate as to why, in Western society, the preferred aesthetic characteristics for each gender have been defined as such. Some authors have attempted to argue that the drive for the attainment of a muscular physique among men is not limited to the Western context, envisaging the existence of an evolutionary basis for such preferences. From this perspective, a drive to develop a particular physique is thought to stem from the fact that in evolutionary terms, individuals who meet body-related ideals are seen to enjoy superior heritable fitness and are, therefore, preferable when considered as mating partners (Frederick et al., 2007).

Several studies exploring the body image experiences of men not residing in the West have perhaps provided credence to the notion that judgments of bodily attractiveness may be innate and consistent across cultures. Xu and colleagues (2010) investigated the social and cultural factors which influenced young Chinese adults' views of their own bodies, as well as their efforts to engage in body change strategies. Results suggested that the majority of men within this non-Western context experienced body image disturbance associated with a drive for increased muscularity. Similarly Mellor, McCabe, Ricciardelli and Merino (2008) investigated body image dissatisfaction and body change behaviours in Chile, finding that, as in Westernised nations, Chilean

men too experienced a strong drive to develop a muscular, mesomorphic physique.

Others have questioned the legitimacy of research which has attempted to claim that the drive to obtain muscularity is more a universal and evolutionary-driven desire than a culturally specific one, arguing the need to take into account the influence of the confounding which can occur when the degree to which modern Western norms may have infiltrated and adapted the norms of cultural groups outside of mainstream Western society is not taken into consideration. Becker, Burwell, Gilman, Herzog and Hamburg (2002) investigated the degree to which exposure to Western cultural ideals, through television viewing, affected the body image and eating attitudes of ethnic Fijian female adolescents. Results suggested that following three years of Western television exposure, the body image and eating attitudes of participants involved had been affected significantly, with the majority of participants desiring a change in their appearance that allowed their appearance to become more analogous to the Western models and actors who were being presented (Becker et al., 2002). Findings from a comparison-based study conducted by Brevis, McGarvey, Jones and Swinburn (1998) wherein the body image experiences of Samoan men living in Samoa were compared to the body image experiences of Samoan men living in New Zealand suggested that, compared to Samoan men living in Samoa, Samoan men living in New Zealand were much more likely to experience a drive to meet the muscular male ideal portrayed as most desirable in Western society. Similar to conclusions made by Becker and colleagues (2002), Brevis and colleagues (1998) theorised from the results of their study that it was not simply an innate drive which led men to desire a muscular figure, but the values and attitudes which individuals are exposed to within a particular context which influence a drive toward the attainment of particular body-related characteristics.

Research highlighting variations in body ideals across cultural contexts also provides credence to the idea that a drive for muscularity may not be biologically and evolutionary driven, but may instead be determined by, and nurtured within, the cultural climate within which an individual exists. Yang, Gray

and Pope (2005), for example, found that in Taiwan, a man's masculinity was gauged less in terms of the shape or size of his body, and more in terms of the mental strength and intelligence that he was able to exhibit. Jung, Forbes and Chan (2010) compared the muscularity-focused body image dissatisfaction experiences of college-aged men in the U.S and Hong Kong, with findings suggesting that men in Hong-Kong were generally more satisfied with their own level of muscularity than men in the U.S., and were more likely to reject the exaggerated muscular ideal that men in the U.S. were generally found be striving for. Kanayama and Pope (2011), in their exploration of body image-related psychopathology among individuals living in China and Japan, also offered the suggestion that muscularity is a trait which tends to vary in terms of value across different cultural contexts, explaining that while, particularly in Japan, a high value is placed on many aspects of physical appearance, muscularity as a personal characteristic is not valued highly. Kanayama and Pope (2011) also discussed how traditional Japanese values emphasised the value of discipline, intellect and character as indicators of power and masculinity as opposed to Western culture where masculinity is typically displayed through the attainment of muscularity and the exhibition of feats of physical strength.

The New Zealand Context

While some researchers have indicated that exposure to New Zealand culture may influence men's body image experiences, their drive for muscularity in particular (Brevis et al., 1998), others (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2002; Hokowhitu, Sullivan & Tumoana Williams, 2008; McCabe et al., 2011) have attempted, more specifically, to highlight the potential nature of this influence by drawing attention to a number of possible sociocultural elements perhaps somewhat unique to the New Zealand context which may uniquely influence male body image experiences. Sport in particular has been recognised as a medium within which concepts of masculinity have been constructed (White & Gillet, 1994; Young, 1993), with research suggesting that for many men within the New Zealand context, a major motivating factor in the drive to obtain a muscular physique is to guarantee inclusion and success in sporting pursuits (McCabe et

al., 2011). Rugby in particular has been described as playing a central role in defining masculinity in New Zealand, delineating what constitutes being a man; strength, fearlessness, muscularity (Hokowhitu et al., 2008). Some studies have suggested that muscular professional rugby players are recurrently represented as the ideal, the pinnacle of male being, and have suggested that the All Black jersey has become a representation of "maleness and heterosexual potency" (Star, 1999; p. 232). The media is said to play a considerable role in projecting images of muscular sporting figures through mediums such as movies, television and advertising, and some have suggested that the attachment of sporting figures to the mainstream media in New Zealand has meant that popular sporting figures are just as important in standing as points of comparison for men to compare their own bodies against as models and actors (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2002).

Sociocultural Theory

Despite disagreement among researchers regarding which factors influence the development and maintenance of muscularity-focused body image dissatisfaction among men, social and cultural pressures have been considered central to the development of this type of body image disturbance, at least in the West. This had lead to the development of a sociocultural theory as a framework for explaining its influence. Central to the sociocultural theory of body image disturbance is the idea that body image ideals are promoted through the cultural transmission of opinions about the value of particular aesthetic ideals within a given cultural context. Within the existent body image research, sociocultural theories of body image disturbance have typically proven dominant, focusing on the way that unrealistic, 'body perfect' ideals are transmitted and reinforced within a particular cultural context (Tiggemann, 2011). According to sociocultural theory, dissatisfaction with body shape and size and beliefs about the essentiality of obtaining a particular bodily aesthetic are fostered through the influence of a number of contributors including the media, who are often considered the most potent and pervasive from of influence, in addition to peers and parents (Tiggemann, 2011).

As Tiggeman (2011. p.14) has suggested however, "in its simplest form, the sociocultural model would have *everyone* suffering from extreme body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders, which is clearly not the case". As such, researchers have also attempted to explain why, if all men are exposed to these aforementioned pressures to some degree or another, all are not suffering body image dissatisfaction difficulties. Results of such research have led to hypotheses that one or more mediating mechanisms may in fact affect a link between the aforementioned influences. The most popularly postulated of these mediating processes include social comparison processes, a tendency wherein individuals make comparisons against others in the absence of objective criteria, and internalisation processes, a tendency wherein one embraces and utilises societal ideals in setting personal body image-related goals (Tiggemann, 2011).

Evidence for Social Comparison as a Mediating Process

Research findings have tended to support the idea that a relationship exists between social comparison processes and body image dissatisfaction for men. In a meta-analysis undertaken by Myers and Crowther (2009) which aimed to understand the potential link between social comparison and the development of dissatisfaction with one's own appearance results suggested that while the relationship between social comparison and body image dissatisfaction was stronger for women, this process was in fact a significant contributing factor for the development of body image dissatisfaction among men (Myers & Crowther, 2009). Diedrichs, Lee and Kelly (2011) too found social comparison against peers to be a key influence for men's dissatisfaction with their own muscularity.

Experimental research has also provided evidence for the idea that comparisons made by men against universalistic media targets also influences men's body image dissatisfaction. A meta-analysis by Bartlett, Vowels and Saucier (2009) explored the possible link between exposure to muscular images through the media and male body image disturbance, finding that pressure from mass media, and exposure specifically to muscular images within the media, promoted negative body image among men. Leit, Gray, Harrison

and Pope (2002) exposed a sample of college-aged men to either neutral images or to idealised images of the male body, with findings suggesting that exposure to such idealised images impacted negatively on subjects' levels of body image disturbance by increasing the discrepancy between their current perceived muscularity and their desired level of muscularity (Leit et al., 2002). Agliata and Tantleff-Dunn (2004) completed a similar investigation, examining the effects of exposure to television advertisements featuring either idealised male images or neutral images. These authors found that following exposure to idealised male images within television advertisements, dissatisfaction with muscularity significantly increased for men, as did depressive symptoms (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004).

Evidence for Internalisation as a Mediating Process

A number of studies examining the role of internalisation as a mediator between sociocultural influences and body image dissatisfaction experiences have found support for the idea that this phenomenon may too in fact act as an important mediating process (Halliwell & Harvey, 2006; Jones, Vigfusdottir & Lee, 2004; Karazsia & Crowther, 2008), while a number have not (Bearman, Presnell, Martinez & Stice 2006; Chen, Gao & Jackson, 2007). Perhaps most relevant to this study are results from studies which have engaged samples of young adult and middle-aged men and have focused on muscularity-focused body image dissatisfaction in particular. Results from these studies have shown strong support for the idea that internalisation acts as a central mediator linking sociocultural pressure to develop muscularity and the development of body dissatisfaction among men (Karazsia, & Crowther, 2009; Karazsia & Crowther, 2010; Tylka, 2011).

Media Influence

The mass media, which constitutes a wide range of mediums including print, radio, cinema, television, and more-so in the last few decades, the Internet and social media, exist as a prominent vehicle through which cultural ideals are disseminated (Grieve, 2007). Given their far reaching and pervasive nature, the mass media have traditionally been understood to have the ability to broadly

communicate prevailing mainstream norms, uphold popular notions of masculinity and femininity, and have a hand in the creation of what are often considered norms in terms of the acceptability and unacceptability of particular physical attributes within Western society in particular (Bordo, 1999). With particular regard for body ideals, the mass media are thought to play a key role in the widespread propagation of mainstream notions of attractiveness, often acting as key players in the popularising of particular body-related trends or movements (Bordo, 1999).

Characteristics of Media Exposure

The existent literature tends to suggest that a perceived increase in the visibility of the body within mainstream media has contributed to an increased focus on the body within mainstream culture. An increasing tendency for media to engage in body-related objectification, or the act of treating or viewing the body as an object or commodity (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), is thought to have played a significant part in this, with evidence, mostly from longitudinal-based content analytic studies, suggesting that the unclothed male figure is also becoming increasingly more visible within film (Pope et al., 2000) and print media (Leit, Pope & Gray, 2001; Pope et al., 2001; Petrie et al., 1996) in a manner in which the body is being linked to a monetary value.

Not only has an increase in the visibility of the male body been observed within the media, but research findings have also alluded to the increasingly muscular nature of the male images being presented to men. Both Leit and colleagues (2001) and Spitzer, Henderson and Zivian (1999), for example, have noted a steady increase in the muscularity of the male models being presented through various types of media over the last three to four decades while a similar increase in the muscularity of toys targeted towards young men has also been noted over time (Baghurst, Hollander, Nardella & Haff, 2006; Pope et al., 1999).

Media Advertising and Consumer Culture

Some researchers have specifically acknowledged the role that media advertising and consumerism have played in the development and maintenance

of a movement toward an increase in muscularity among men, arguing that in contemporary society, 'fitness culture' has primarily become a commercial enterprise (Grieve, 2007; Maguire, 2008; Pope et al., 2002; Stern, 2003). Researchers have highlighted a tendency for marketers to expose consumers to models who match unrealistic appearance ideals while concurrently marketing products and services to consumers in a way which particularly appeals to the idea that consumption will reduce any discrepancy between individuals' current body shape and size and the muscular ideal being advertised (Grieve, 2007; Stern, 2003). Experiential research in particular has highlighted a tendency among many men to engage in a pattern of consumption of a wide range of exercise and muscle building based products which promise significant appearance improvements but which most often do not in fact lead them to experience the benefits being advertised (Pope et al., 2002).

The Internet and Social Media

Also worth specific mention are more modern forms of media less frequently examined in past research. While investigations of the impact of the media on body image over the last four decades have typically focused on the impact of television and print media, the potentially significant impact that newer media vehicles may be having on body image attitudes has scarcely been investigated. The establishment and increasing popularity of social media platforms such as Facebook may in fact be impacting a shift in the manner in which individuals are becoming exposed to body-image related content. With new types of body-related trends such as the 'thigh gap'[2] being popularised primarily through online platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, the advent of these types of communication vehicles appears to have led to a mode in which the development and communication of particular body image norms is much more user-driven and reciprocal in nature.

Indications from the few studies that have explored the potential impact of more modern media-based vehicles such as Facebook on body image experiences have indicated a potentially significant impact in terms of the effect of exposure

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[2] The thigh gap is a gap between the thighs, when standing with the back upright, and the left and right knees touching each other. Some women aim to achieve this in order to increase their perceived attractiveness.

on body image experiences Findings from an Australian study which explored the link between Internet use and body image among adolescent women suggested that more frequent Internet use was associated with more intense internalisation of thin ideals, increased dissatisfaction with body weight, higher levels of body image comparison and an increased drive for thinness among women (Tiggemann & Miller, 2010). An Israeli study focusing more specifically on the impact of Facebook use on body image disturbance in a group of female adolescents suggested a significant link between the frequency of the use of this social networking resource website and the development of body image disturbance and eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa (Spivak, 2010).

Reality Television

Reality television is another fairly recent addition to the sphere of entertainment media thought to have a potentially influential impact on body image experiences of men (Dallesasse & Kluck, 2013). While very little research has explored the link between reality television exposure and body image dissatisfaction, a quantitative content analysis completed by Dallesasse and Kluck (2013), which measured the degree to which reality television shows depicted men in a way which embodied a muscular ideal, suggested that the majority (between 70 and 88%) of the primary male cast members across a wide range of different reality television shows were either somewhat or very muscular, with a large percentage also exhibiting low levels of body fat (91-95%).

Evidence for Impact of the Media

Though it was once believed that men were largely invulnerable to the media as an influence for the development of body image dissatisfaction, research has shown that this is clearly no longer the case. In their qualitative investigation of bodybuilders' experiences, Grogan, Shepherd, Evans, Wright and Hunter (2006) found that all of the men whom they spoke to felt that media influence in the form of magazines, movies and television contributed to them feeling

unhappy with their own bodies and consequently experiencing a drive to change their bodies through engagement in weight training.

Experimental research has also provided credence to the notion that exposure to muscular images through the media can result in increased dissatisfaction with body shape and size among men. Agliata and Tantleff-Dunn (2004) explored the effects of exposure to television advertisements featuring either ideal male images or neutral images on men's own body image experiences, finding that participants' muscle dissatisfaction increased significantly more following exposure to idealised images than following exposure to neutral images (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004). Baird and Grieve (2006) conducted a similar investigation, examining the possible differential impact on male body image of exposing men to either magazine advertisements containing muscular male models promoting a product or the product advertised on its own. Results suggested that exposure to advertisements containing muscular images resulted in significantly lower body satisfaction post-exposure for men exposed to images of muscular models compared to those who simply viewed the products without the models.

Not all research has supported the contention that exposure to idealised media images can negatively influence the development of body image dissatisfaction for men. Humphreys and Paxton (2004) too looked at the effect of exposure to idealised body images on men's body image satisfaction and psychological well-being, including levels of depression and anxiety, and concluded that exposure to idealised images did not cause a significant increase in body image dissatisfaction or psychological distress in men. Humphrey's and Paxton (2004) suggested that negative reaction to such images was dependent upon personal and individual attributes and couldn't be generalised to all men. Both Labre (2002) and Saunders (2004) endorsed the positive aspects of exposure to idealised media images for men, claiming that these images promoted physical activity, social involvement and decreased risk of chronic diseases. Similarly, in their investigation of the impact that sociocultural influences could have on the body satisfaction of adolescent men, Ricciardelli, McCabe and Banfield (2000) found that the majority of the participants they interviewed either acknowledged

that media exposure either increased their satisfaction with their bodies or had no impact on their overall body satisfaction.

Interpersonal Influences

While the media are thought to be the primary driving force for the development of body image dissatisfaction according to sociocultural models of body image disturbance, peers and parents are also considered to be central contributors due primarily to a socialisation process wherein appearance feedback typically encourages men to strive for strength and muscularity, while women are encouraged to make their bodies more beautiful.

Family Influence

Interestingly, and perhaps logically, the existent research also tends to suggest a shifting of influences in terms of appearance feedback as boys move through from adolescence to early adulthood. As a primary socialisation agent, the family is thought to play an important role in transmitting messages about the body to boys as move they through childhood and adolescence. Stanford and McCabe's (2005) investigation of the influence of a range of messages from parents, peers, and the media on male adolescents' body image supported this notion, with results suggesting that while each of these influences had some effect on male body image dissatisfaction, parental messages exerted the strongest influence above those of peers and the media. Ricciardelli and colleagues (2000) also provided evidence of the important impact that family influence can have on body image among boys during adolescence, finding that while mothers were most likely to exert a positive influence on participants' feelings about their own bodies, with comments such as "You've got pretty big muscles" for example, comments from other family members, particularly fathers and brothers, also had a significant negative influence on participants' feelings about their own bodies.

Peer Influence

As boys move through to early adult, family members are seen to have less of an influence than other factors when it comes to the development of male body image dissatisfaction. Within a college setting particularly, research has shown that appearance-related feedback from peers tends to become a much stronger influence as boys experience greater opportunity to receive encouragement and criticism via their peers, and to observe their peers' attitudes and behaviors toward the body (Bardone-Cone, Cass & Ford, 2008). Research has revealed that commentary related to one's body shape or size, has been associated with the development of body image dissatisfaction for both younger men and older men alike, with some going as far as to claim that appearance-related teasing may in fact be the most significant predictor of men's body image dissatisfaction (Vartanian, Giant, & Passino, 2001). Body-focused teasing has been shown to be particularly influential in terms of body image dissatisfaction when it occurs during early vulnerable periods of development such as puberty (Ricciardelli & Mccabe, 2011), with research also suggesting that a history of teasing can potentially lead to long-lasting effects on body image for individuals who experience such feedback (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, Haines, & Wall, 2006; Gleason, Alexander, & Somers, 2000; Paxton, Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006).

Intimate Partner Influence

Despite research existing to show that intimate partner feedback can also be particularly influential in terms of the development of men's body image dissatisfaction, this type of influence receives little mention in the sociocultural theoretical literature. Despite this, research has suggested that intimate partner feedback may in fact be as important, if not more important, in terms the development of body image dissatisfaction than other types of influences, particularly among young adult men. Adams and colleagues (2005) conducted an exploratory investigation of the body image dissatisfaction experiences of a group of men aged between 18 and 32. Results suggested that most typically the triggers for men's experiences of dissatisfaction with their own body shape and size were interpersonal in nature, resulting from negative feedback from

others, especially intimate partners, as well as from comparison to other men. Fawkner (2004) interviewed a group of 34 Australian men, investigating the role of the media and other influences on men's body image. Fawkner (2004) found that comments from peers, intimate partners and potential partners were most influential in men's own evaluations of their bodies.

Summary

A wide range of influences appear to contribute to the development and maintenance of body image dissatisfaction for men. While some have claimed that a drive for muscularity is universal and experienced by men globally, others have suggested that such a drive is culturally bound and guided primarily by ideals fostered within the Western sociocultural context in particular.

Among those who consider sociocultural influences key in the development of pressure toward the attainment of muscularity, the media have been recognised as central benefactors driving body image pressures, exerting influence through a range of different mediums including advertising, print and television, in addition to more modern forms of media such an Internet-based social media and reality television. Particular sociocultural characteristics somewhat unique to the New Zealand context also appear potentially significant in influencing male body image experiences, with the popularity of sporting pursuits, rugby in particular, appearing to influence body image attitudes, particularly those linking muscularity to masculinity. More intimate influences including peers, family members and intimate partners also appear potentially influential for men's body image dissatisfaction experiences, particularly through the role that these sources play in the provision body-related commentary.

Part Three: Body Image Dissatisfaction and Weight Training Engagement

Research capable of describing the nature and quality of body image dissatisfaction, particularly that associated with muscularity, among men is fairly scarce, both nationally and internationally. Likewise, a thorough scholarly understanding of the relationship between engagement in body change

processes and the experience of body image dissatisfaction among men is also severely lacking, particularly when the focus is on recreational weight training rather than competitive bodybuilding. The ensuing discussion highlights what is known about this relationship. Where literature focused on non-competitive or recreational weight training is unavailable, literature highlighting what is known about the nature of competitive weight training is referenced.

Body Modification Through Weight Training

Rates of Engagement

Findings from National Health Interview Surveys have indicated that 25% of adults in the United States report regularly engaging in any leisure-time activity designed to strengthen muscles, such as weight lifting or calisthenics (Adams & Schoenborn, 2006), while another smaller American study has suggested that as many as 45 percent of men aged between 18 and 24 are involved in some form of strength training activity (Chevan, 2008).

Within the New Zealand context the exact prevalence of weight training engagement among men is also difficult to estimate definitively, though one study conducted by Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) estimated that close to 26 percent of a sample of New Zealand adults had participated in equipment-based exercise at least once between the period March 2007/2008, with this the fourth most popular sport and recreation based activity behind walking, gardening and swimming (SPARC, 2009).

Competitive Versus Non-Competitive Weight Training

Given a lack of relevant research able to explicate the experiential nature of muscle building activities at a non-competitive or recreational level, it is relatively unclear exactly to what degree the experiential, cultural and clinical features of bodybuilding engagement at the competitive level may explain or describe the experiences of those engaged at a non-competitive or recreational level.

Some researchers have attempted to differentiate between 'bodybuilders' and 'weight trainers' by alluding to differences in the primary goals of each activity, which, for the bodybuilder is related to the tendency to strive for muscular hypertrophy[3] and perfect developmental form, while for those engaged in weight training, may be more focused on the development of size or strength to supplement other interests i.e. sporting pursuits (Basford, 1985).

Klein (1993), perhaps the most prolific researcher in the realms of bodybuilding, has referred to competitive bodybuilding as being connected to, yet distinct from, the world of non-competitive bodybuilding. Klein (1993) considered that while bodybuilders, competitive and non-competitive, may share a common interest in working toward the construction and evolution of a muscular physique, there are also systems, a culture and a sense of extremeness attached to high-level competitive bodybuilding which differentiated this activity from weight training engagement at a more recreational level.

Bodybuilding and Sub-Culture Development

While research capable of illustrating the experiential nature of non-competitive or recreational weight training is currently lacking, anthropological and ethnographic accounts have however, provided a description of the experiential nature of engagement in muscle development activities at the competitive or professional level. Research has tended to suggest that competitive bodybuilders represent a sub-culture consisting of a collection of individual members, each of whom share a number of common values, interests and behaviours (Klein, 1993). According to the literature, central to this bodybuilding 'culture' are shared opinions about the desirability of the hyper-muscular or mesomorphic figure (Pope et al., 2000; Olivardia et al., 2004) often considered unnatural or extreme within mainstream culture (Filiault & Drummond, 2010). A tendency among bodybuilders to focus strongly on, and frequently critique, the body has also been noted (Roundtree, 2005), with the body often being seen to be objectified by bodybuilders and viewed as a 'project' worthy of very deliberate shaping and sculpting (Shilling, 1993). An important set of values,

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[3] Muscular hypertrophy involves an increase in the size of skeletal muscle

attitudes and behaviours linked to the importance of commitment and work ethic have also been seen to exist among those within the bodybuilding 'culture'. In their investigation Smith and Stewart (2012) highlighted the existence of a 'muscle at any cost' ethos within bodybuilding circles wherein an inherent essentiality existed in displaying dedication, proving one's own masculinity and achieving excellence through the toleration of mental and physical pain no matter what the cost. White, Young and McTeer (1995) considered that the rationalisation of violence, pain and injury that occurred within many physical sports also tended to include weight training, with the tolerance of risk of illness or injury for the sake of gains in strength or size influenced by health compromising norms present within the culture of the activity.

Very specific and deliberate dieting practices have been shown to be common in bodybuilding circles (Cafri et al., 2005). Klein (1993) also found commonalities among bodybuilders related to language and communication, suggesting that bodybuilding is seen not only to dominate the subject matter of conversation among bodybuilders but also to influence the type of language used among bodybuilders (Klein, 1993). The existence of what has been labeled a 'scientific gossip network' has also been highlighted within bodybuilding circles, wherein information about training, dieting and supplement use, typically with no apparent origin is passed from individual to individual through word of mouth (Klein, 1995).

Identity Development

Research has also highlighted the role that engagement in body development activities among bodybuilders can play in shaping and strengthening participants' individual identities. Some claimed to have observed fairly significant changes for bodybuilders' in terms of their identity development where often a bodybuilders' size or their status as a bodybuilder came to gift them a certain degree of respect from those around them, bodybuilders and non-bodybuilders alike (Roundtree, 2005). Others have cited the existence of some more adverse consequences associated with this type of identity redevelopment experience, particularly for men whose identities had become so

intertwined with bodybuilding engagement that ceasing engagement for one reason or another appeared to result in a degree of identity or role confusion (Pope et al., 2002).

Ethnographic researchers have also alluded to the way in which the distinct sense of community fostered within bodybuilding circles can come to aid in the development of a sense of shared identity among bodybuilders (Andrews, Sudwell & Sparkes, 2005; Klein, 1995). Research conducted by Andrews and colleagues (2005) resulted in accounts from bodybuilders which suggested that a sense of connectedness or group identity was fostered as a result of communicating, interacting and being in such close physical proximity to likeminded people with similar goals and attitudes and objectives. Regular engagement in muscle building activities has also been seen to allow for the development of networks through which members can not only foster camaraderie and competition, but also share and gain knowledge in order that performance and potential for improvement can be maximised (Andrews et al., 2005; Klein, 1995).

General Benefits

Research has pointed to the presence of a number of physical and psychological benefits for those regularly engaged in resistance training or muscle development activities (Andrews, et al., 2005; Depcik & Williams, 2004; Lepage & Crowther, 2010; Pope et al., 2002; Tucker, 1983; Williams & Cash, 2001). Those perhaps most relevant to this study are findings which suggest that engagement in these types of activities is linked to improvements in self-esteem and satisfaction with body shape and size (Depcik & Williams, 2004; Lepage & Crowther, 2010; Tucker, 1983; Williams & Cash, 2001). Benefits associated with improvements in physical strength (Andrews et al., 2005) and improvements in affective experiences for non-depressed individuals (Pope et al., 2002) have also been linked to regular engagement in weight training activities.

Clinical Benefits

When utilised as part of a clinical intervention, regular weight training has also been linked to improvements in mood (O'Connor, Herring, & Caravalho, 2010; Singh, Clements & Fiatarone, 1997; Timonen, Rantanen, Timonen, Sulkava, 2002) cognitive functioning (Perrig-Cheillo, Perig, Ehrsam, Staehlin & Kriggs, 1998; Cassilhas et al., 2007) self-esteem (Campbell & Hausenblaus, 2009, Cash, 2004; Fox 2000; Ossip-Klein et. al., 1989) and quality of life (Kimura et al., 2010), particularly among depressed older adults.

Summary

Engagement in muscle development strategies such as weight training appears to have a significant influence not only on men's body image experiences, but also on other important aspects of men's physical and psychological well-being. While research is lacking in terms of its ability to describe the experiential quality of engagement in muscle development activities at the recreational level, research which has described the nature of engagement in these types of activities at a more serious, often competitive level, has indicated that these types of activities may also be significantly influential for men in terms of both individual and group-based identity development.

Rationale for the Current Research

While research has traditionally focused on female experiences of body image dissatisfaction, muscularity-focused body image dissatisfaction as it is experienced among men appears to lack the same level of scholarly understanding. With what appears to be a steady growth in the prevalence of such experiences among men, it is reasonable to assert that a greater understanding of the nature of this type of experience is required in order to promote prevention or more effective management of these and potentially related difficulties among men. As a separate group in themselves, those engaged in muscular development processes through involvement in weight training activities may represent a group particularly prone to a high level of body focus. A greater understanding of the relationship between body image dissatisfaction experiences and engagement in body change strategies may

provide a greater appreciation of whether such body change strategies benefit men in terms of their body image experiences or whether in fact engagement in these types of activities actually promotes more deleterious outcomes with regard to body image dissatisfaction experiences.

CHAPTER TWO: Method

This chapter will outline and describe the methods employed in collecting and analysing the data for this study. The aim of the study is outlined and some key ethical considerations are examined. The qualitative interviewing process used to collect participant data is described and the advantages and disadvantages of this approach are discussed. Participant recruitment methods are outlined and the participant group is also described. Thematic analysis, the process used in analysing and interpreting data within this study is also explained and the theoretical framework used to guide the data analysis and interpretation processes is described.

A. Research aims

The overall aim of this study was to gain a greater understanding of the body image dissatisfaction experiences of young adult men regularly engaged in recreational weight training activities within the New Zealand context. Within this, three main areas of investigation are pursued. The first explores the nature and quality of men's body image dissatisfaction experiences, attempting to identify, primarily, the severity and experiential impact of dissatisfaction experiences among men and the potential relationship between body image dissatisfaction experiences and other more severe psychopathology. The second area of investigation explores the influences men consider important to the development of body image dissatisfaction. Within this, the potential impact of social, interpersonal as well as intrapersonal influences are explored. The final area of investigation explores the relationship between engagement in weight training and aspects of men's well-being, with a particular focus on the relationship between engagement in these types of activities and men's body image experiences.

The methodological aims of this study are somewhat separate to the majority of research traditionally undertaken in this area in that this study aims to gain a subjective picture of body-image related experiences from men's own

perspectives themselves rather than aiming to scientifically or objectively measure such experiences. This study therefore, is seen by the researcher at least, as existing as an exploratory investigation which may not only describe individual experiences but also highlight key areas for further investigation.

B. Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the University of Waikato School of Psychology Research and Ethics Committee. In composing an application for the Research and Ethics Committee several possible issues were brought to the attention of the researcher:

Privacy and confidentiality: The researcher recognised the need to ensure that all identifiable participant information remained private and confidential. All participant data was anonymised and pseudonyms were used in the place of participants' actual names. Because several participants were known to the researcher personally, an initial discussion to explicitly explain the divide between personal and professional relationships was required in order to ensure that these participants were fully informed about, and comfortable with, participating in the research. The researcher also outlined his own roles and the ethical obligations he was required to follow to ensure that he was working within the guidelines set out by the University of Waikato School of Psychology Research Ethics and Committee.

Obligation to keep participants informed: Participants were sent an information sheet (See Appendix B) to explain the goals of the research and describe the interview process. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research and their right not to disclose any information they did not feel comfortable disclosing

Recognition and protection of the cultural and intellectual property rights of Maōri: The researcher made sure to consult with a Maōri academic staff member who provided guidance throughout the research process. The

researcher was able to check with this member of staff that procedures were being carried out in a culturally sensitive manner.

C. Research Method

Existing as a core investigative methodology, qualitative research includes a wide range of approaches used in the process of gathering and analysing experiential data in order to discover meaningful themes or patterns as they relate to a particular phenomenon (Wengraf, 2001). Given a specific research question or research aim, qualitative methodologies typically allow for a descriptive and detailed investigation of a particular area of inquiry, with a focus on understanding quality of experience rather than identifying cause-and-effect relationships through manipulating a particular set of variables. Within qualitative research an emphasis is placed on understanding the importance of social context, history and language and how these might impact both upon what a participant experiences and how these experiences are communicated (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In considering the specific research method to be employed in this study the researcher carefully considered not only the characteristics of the target participant population but also the value that could be derived from the available research methods. While the researcher was aware of warnings suggesting that men are often reluctant to discuss their own body image concerns (Pope et al., 2000), a face-to-face interview format was chosen over quantitative formats such as surveys or questionnaires often employed in body image research. It was anticipated that this method of enquiry would result in a more in-depth, experiential exploration of male weight training and body image experiences than the aforementioned quantitative formats would allow. Furthermore, the researcher understood that face-to-face interview formats allow for the development of a relationship between a researcher and a participant which can help to foster a sense of trust and security between the two parties and ensure that participants' responses most accurately reflected their actual experiences (Silverman, 2006).

Working within a qualitative research framework it is important that a researcher explicitly outlines the theoretical or epistemological position from which they are working. Epistemological frameworks provide a set of rules and assumptions about the nature of the information gathered and guide a researcher toward suitable data interpretation methods based on the claims that are made about knowledge within a particular framework (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). For the purpose of this study a relativist social constructionist framework was chosen to guide the analysis and interpretation of participant data. From this epistemological position the researcher made assumptions about the subjective nature of participants' experiences, suggesting that rather than one truth existing for all, truth or knowledge is constructed through subjective appraisal and the provision of meaning toward particular experiences, influenced also by the sociocultural and historical context within which individuals exist (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). Working from such a position, the researcher acknowledged and reported participants' experiences with the consideration that research findings are influenced by the social, cultural and historical context within which participants reside.

D. The Researcher

As part of the process of engaging in research, a researcher must consider their own position within the world and strive to understand how this might come to have an effect not only the particular area of research that they choose to investigate, but also on the data collection, analysis and reporting processes (Willig, 2001).

As an active male in his mid-twenties, the researcher's periodic involvement in weight training over an eight-year period lead, inherently, to the development of his own experiences, beliefs, values and assumptions in relation to this research area. His knowledge of the literature and existing theory pertaining to this subject area further contributed to preconceptions associated with this research topic. While it is impossible to retract these experiences, the researcher sought to minimise any bias caused by pre-existing belief structures through a process of personal reflection. Equipped with a more thorough

understanding of the biases that he might possess, the researcher was then able, throughout the research process, to actively and mindfully separate his own experiences from those of the research participants. The use of a semi-structured interview format also allowed participants the flexibility to explore and discuss the experiences which were of most prominence to them in relation to the research topic rather than have this be guided primarily by the researchers own preconceptions.

E. Research Participants

Screening Criteria

For the purposes of this study participants were recruited purposefully based on their involvement in, and understanding of, the research area of inquiry.

While both men and women have been shown to experience body image issues, the scarce nature of literature pertaining to male experiences of body image dissatisfaction in comparison to that which exists focusing on female populations provided a rationale for this study having a purely male focus. The exploration of, and comparison between, the experiences of both men and women, therefore, was beyond the scope of this research.

For the purposes of this study, participants recruited were required to be in the 18-29, 'under 30s' or 'young adult' age group (Barnett & Lapsley, 2006). Given that body image dissatisfaction experiences are known to differ across the lifespan (Tiggeman, 2011), this chosen age bracket assisted in the maintenance of some uniformity within the sample.

Because no strict definition currently exists to define involvement in weight training, for the purposes of this study, the researcher, in consultation with trained staff at several weight training facilities, defined involvement in weight training as 'involvement in some form of resistance training activity on at least three separate occasions each week for the duration of at least a 6 month period'.

A sample size for this study was set around a recruitment goal of 12 participants based on recommendations from past literature (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). The issue of data saturation, occurring when the collection and coding of additional information results in no new or original data, was also taken into account in deciding the number of interviews to undertake (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006).

Participant Recruitment

Several methods were employed in recruiting participants for this study. Recruitment posters were the primary source of recruitment and these were placed in gymnasiums and recreational centers within Hamilton and Cambridge following approval from staff members or managers within these institutions. Recruitment posters were also placed around the University of Waikato campus. A secondary method of participant recruitment was undertaken using a process commonly known as snowballing where participants were asked to provide information about the research to other prospective participants who met the criteria for involvement (Noy, 2008). Participants who wanted to be involved in the study were required to contact the researcher either by telephone or email. Following initial contact participants were sent out an information sheet (See Appendix B) which explained the criteria required for participants to be involved in the study, explained in a more thorough manner the goals of the research, while also providing a more thorough description of the research process. Individuals provided with an information sheet were asked to read through the information provided and contact the researcher with further questions or to confirm that they did or did not want to participate in the study. Following an expression of interest in being involved in the research, an interview was scheduled. Of the twelve participants, six displayed interest after seeing recruitment posters while the remaining six participants were recruited through word of mouth.

Participant Description

A total of 12 participants took part in the interview process. Participant details including; pseudonym, age, ethnicity and length of time involved in training are outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Time Involved in Weight Training
Carlos	27	NZ European	1 year 3 months
Brad	19	NZ European	3 years
Reuben	29	NZ European	10 years
Sam	23	NZ European	6 months
Leon	26	NZ European	6 months
Neil	24	NZ European	1 year
Phillip	22	NZ European	6 years
Jordan	21	Cook Island/NZ Maori/Tahitian/Scottish	1 year 6 months
Keith	21	NZ European	5 years

Grant	27	NZ European	8 years
Fraser	19	NZ European/NZ Maori	3 years
Stephen	25	NZ European	2 years 6 months

In summary the 12 male participants ranged in age from between 19 and 27. While 10 participants identified as New Zealand European, one participant identified as both New Zealand European and Maori and one participant identified as Cook Island/New Zealand Maori/Tahitian/Scottish. The shortest length of time involved in weight training was six months while the longest length of time involved was 10 years. Participants varied in the frequency of their training from between three and six days a week. All participants were living and training in the Hamilton area at the time that the interviews took place.

F. Interview Procedure

Interviewing formats utilised by qualitative researchers range from unstructured, where a participant is asked to narrate their experiences with little intervention from the researcher, to fully structured where an interviewer directs specific questions toward a participant which are to be answered in sequence (Wengraf, 2001). A semi-structured interview format was utilised in this study and allowed the researcher to gain an insight into participants' experiences in a structured yet flexible manner (Wengraf, 2001). While the presence of a certain level of structure within this type of format can ensure that participants are rightly directed or redirected toward important areas of inquiry, a degree of flexibility allows participants to lead their own narrative dialogue in a more relaxed conversational style than may be allowed within a more structured format. The provision of a certain level of freedom within this type of format also allows for the discussion of issues possibly overlooked in the preliminary stages of the

research process (Wengraf, 2001), and means that the order and direction of questioning can be manipulated to suit a participant's individual characteristics.

A combination of open-ended and close-ended questions were utilised in eliciting participants' responses. While an open-ended questioning style allowed participants the freedom to talk about the experiences which were most salient to them, close-ended questions allowed the researcher to elicit specific information which was important in adding depth and context to the data gathered; demographic information for example. (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Prior to the commencement of the interviews the researcher introduced himself and explained the purpose of the research. Participants were provided with a participant information sheet identical to that which they were provided with upon making first contact with the researcher. Participants were invited to ask any questions which were not answered within the participant information sheet and any queries made were then answered by the researcher. The researcher reminded participants of his own obligations with regard to confidentiality, keeping participants informed and respecting participants' right to refuse or withdraw participation, and he also clarified the participants' own rights with regard to these same issues. The rationale for capturing an audio recording of the interview was explained to each participant. Following this, the researcher gained participants' permission to be involved in the research and have the interview recorded. Interviews were undertaken either in a private room within the library at the University of Waikato campus or at the participants' home, depending on participant preference. Interviews lasted from between 30 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes in duration.

Interview Guide

Interviews were directed by an interview guide developed by the researcher prior to the commencement of interviews (See Appendix D). This guide provided the structure required to ensure that participants' responses were relevant to the research area. The interview schedule also helped with the flow

of the interview, acting as a prompt for the researcher once a particular topic area had been covered (Wengraf, 2001).

Prompt questions were included in the interview transcript and acted as exemplar questions which the researcher could reference. Prompt questions were not read verbatim but provided a point of reference that the researcher could utilise if redirection within the interview was required.

The interview guide covered the following areas:

1. Descriptive demographic information
a.) Age
b.) Ethnicity
c.) Occupation
d.) Interests
c.) Length of involvement in weight training

2. Weight training experiences
   a.) Reason for involvement
b.) Characteristics of involvement
   c.) Diet and supplement experiences
d.) Impact of training on everyday functioning - psychological, physical
   social and occupational
e.) Positive aspects of weight training
f.) Negative aspects of weight training

3. Body image dissatisfaction experiences
   a.) General experiences and characteristics of dissatisfaction
   b.) Impact on functioning
   c.) Depressive, anxious, dysmorphic experiences

4. Factors influential in development of body image dissatisfaction
   a.) Societal
   b.) Intrapersonal

c.) Interpersonal

Interview Transcripts

Participant interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and anonymised to protect participant privacy. Transcripts were then emailed to participants to allow for corrections and changes. Participants were able to return, via email, the transcripts with desired changes or deletions. When no changes of comments were offered it was assumed that no further changes were to be made and the original transcript was used in the analysis process. The purpose of allowing participants to view and edit their interview transcripts was to allow for what some researchers have coined "analytical triangulation" (Watson, 2000, p. 11). Reviewing transcripts allows participants to be involved in a process of validation whereby researcher biases might be neutralised and participants' experiences confirmed or denied (Watson, 2000).

G. Data Analysis

Overview

Interview data was analysed through a process known as thematic analysis. This descriptive strategy facilitates the organisation of interview data in a way which allows meaningful concepts to be captured and reported. While themes may be identified based on the frequency with which particular types of information are seen across the entire data set, they may also be based on the saliency of particular parts of the data with regard to the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). An inductive, or 'bottom up' analytic framework was also utlised which places primary importance on the whole data set in identifying and coding themes. Rather than coding particular parts of the data set which are relevant to a pre-established theory or hypothesis, this data driven approach allows for a more rich description of the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Procedure

The thematic analysis process included a number of phases as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Interview recordings were transcribed and sent to participants to allow for editing and correction. The researcher then read and reread the edited transcripts in order to become familiar with the data. Notes were taken to record preliminary ideas about suitable codes and possible themes were considered. Transcripts were then analysed more closely and parts of the data which were repeated or which expressed an important or interesting idea were highlighted. Code groups were developed based on different subject matter and parts of the data became distinguishable based on how they were grouped. Tentative themes were then developed based on the relationship between different codes. A thematic map was utlised which helped the researcher to group codes and visually consider the relationship between different codes and different themes. Tentative themes were then reviewed, again using a visual map, in order to ensure that they correctly described the data set. Primary themes and sub themes were distinguished and organised accordingly. In some instances it was apparent that separate themes were so similar that the amalgamation of themes would better describe the data set. In other instances a lack of data supporting a theme meant that a theme was deleted entirely. The final step was to define the themes in order to determine exactly what aspect of the data that each theme describes. An appropriate label was given to each theme and a detailed analysis was conducted for each theme itself which helped the researcher to better understand the meaning of the themes with regard to the literature and the already existing theoretical structures pertaining to this topic area.

The following chapter presents the findings with regards to the themes which arose from participants' reports regarding the experiential nature and quality of body image dissatisfaction experiences. I draw on the aforementioned literature review to allow for contrast and comparison between participants' experiences and other studies reviewed.

CHAPTER THREE: Results and Discussion

This section aims to outline key findings with regard to the three main areas of investigation in this study. Part one reports on participants' own body image experiences, particularly their experiences of body image, and I discuss these findings in depth. In part two I explore and discuss key factors which participants considered central in the development and maintenance of body image dissatisfaction experiences. Finally part three explores the relationship between engagement in body change strategies such as weight training and men's well-being, particularly their body image dissatisfaction experiences as well as other areas of well-being.

Part One: Men's Experiences of Body Image Dissatisfaction

This section aims to outline key findings with regard to participants' reports of their own body image experiences, particularly their experiences of body image dissatisfaction. These body image experiences are discussed in three main parts in terms the nature and quality of body evaluation, the nature and quality of body image dissatisfaction experiences and the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and other aspects of psychological well-being. Participants' experiences are discussed with reference to past research to allow for comparisons to be made between the experiences of men interviewed in this study and what research has traditionally alleged regarding the experience of body image dissatisfaction among men.

A. Body Evaluation

The first major theme within this section highlights the significance and quality of participants' experiences of body evaluation, highlighting trends in terms of the way that participants reportedly perceived and understood the physical body.

Intensity of Body Evaluation

In general, reports indicated a tendency among the participants to focus strongly on their own and others' appearances, particularly in terms of the level of muscularity that they and others possessed. While participants appeared to play down the extent to which physical appearance, particularly their own physical appearance, was important to them, possibly out of concern that they would be viewed as potentially effeminate or narcissistic, accounts did tend to highlight to a certain degree that a strong focus on appearance, and muscularity in particular, did in fact exist among participants.

As participants became engaged more heavily in strategies to change their own body shape and size it appeared as though this fervent focus on appearance, particularly the level of muscularity that they and others possessed, increased further. Neil in particular noted a greater level of attention being paid to his own and others' physical appearances as his weight training efforts gathered momentum.

> **Neil:** *The more and more into weight training you get…you're sort of noticing it more…and noticing more people are muscly as well.*

While a direct causal relationship cannot be clearly explicated between the level of engagement in weight training activities, the intensity of body focus and the development of body image for men, results perhaps suggest that weight training engagement may in fact contribute to an increased likelihood of body image dissatisfaction through its role in promoting a higher level of appearance focus and consequently a greater potential for negative body evaluation.

Nature of Body Evaluation

Body Objectification

Similar to past research findings where professional bodybuilders were found to engage in the objectification of their own and others' bodies (Klein, 1993), participants in this study also tended to report engaging in a similar manner of body appraisal. As in research past (Klein, 1993), this tendency toward

divorcing the individual from their physical body appeared to be accompanied by a tendency to view the muscle development activities that they were engaged in as a sort of project wherein the body was viewed as a discrete entity capable of shaping and moulding into something worthy of personal pride and respect and admiration from others.

Body Dissection

A tendency toward objectifying the body also appeared to affect the specific manner in which participants evaluated their own and others' bodies. An additional tendency was apparent where-in participants appeared to scrutinise their own bodies according to individual parts or areas, in addition to evaluating the body as a whole.

> *Neil: I think the more you get into the more you just become focused on specific body parts. Maybe you start noticing that 'hey my traps are a bit small'…like…'I want bigger traps'.*

Appearing to result from this very specific manner of body evaluation was a strong focus on proportionality among participants. Not only did participants express discontent with body shape and size in terms of muscle mass and overall levels of muscularity, but they also suggested that experiences of dissatisfaction were often motivated by a focus on particular body parts or muscle groups and the perception that one or more particular body areas or lacked an appropriate level of muscle mass when comparisons were made to other areas or to the body as whole.

> *Jordan: It got to the point where I just wanted to train legs forever…I couldn't even give a shit about the rest of my body.*

> *Phillip: In terms of specific areas…chest…the defined pecs and what not. I think everything is fine but the chest…it seems out of proportion…not as developed as the rest.*

Fraser: You do look at yourself sometimes and see 'oh I need to fix that because that's not in proportion to that'.

Grant: The major body dissatisfaction for me…it was funny because I would never train my legs…I would only train my upper body so I looked a bit like a triangle.

As was suggested earlier with regard to a perceived link between engagement in muscular development activities and appearance focus, it also appeared, according to one participant's reports at least, that proportionality could become more prominent of an issue for participants as the intensity and duration of engagement in muscle development activities increased.

Neil: If you sort of look at it from the beginning I generally wanted big everything you know…and then as you train more and more you sort of notice like little things like 'hey my forearms aren't as big as they need to be to fit in with my arms' or 'hey I have skinny calves…they're not in proportion to my thighs.'

Distorted Perceptions of the Body

The majority of participants also reported recognition of a tendency to experience distorted perceptions of their own bodies during the process of body evaluation. This typically occurred in a manner in which they assessed that their bodies were less muscular than they were in reality. It appeared as though recognition of such distortions was normally prompted by specific experiences wherein incongruence between reality and their own perceptions of their bodies was highlighted.

Neil: It's your eyes playing tricks on you…I think that I'm smaller when I look in the mirror than I probably am in reality than. If I'm buying a shirt I'll pick up a size small and like…try to squeeze it on but it's like…you're a medium you know.

> *Keith: I look at other people and think 'oh man they're bigger than me and they haven't been training as long' when they're really not…like…I'll say that to my girlfriend and she'll be like 'no don't be stupid you're bigger than them…like…I know that I probably am too big...like…especially for my height but I'll look at myself and think 'no…I'm not really that big'.*

As with other body evaluation tendencies among this group, the tendency for participants to experience distortions in the way that they viewed their own bodies appeared also to influence upon the exacerbation of dissatisfaction experiences through an increased likelihood that men's own bodies would be perceived by them as less muscular than was desired.

Summary

Participants tended to engage in some shared tendencies in terms of the extent in which, and manner with which, they evaluated their own bodies. Generally, the men interviewed displayed a tendency to focus a great deal on physical appearance, and appeared highly susceptible to engaging in the evaluation of their own and other's appearances, focusing particularly on body shape, size and muscularity levels.

Interestingly engagement in muscle development activities appeared to have a significant relationship to the way in which participants tended to view their own and others' bodies. Reports suggested that as participants began to engage in weight training activities and consequently experienced an increase in their own level of muscularity, appearance focus, particularly a focus on muscularity, was magnified. In terms of the nature and quality of the body evaluation which participants reportedly engaged in, participants displayed a tendency toward objectifying their own and others bodies. This in turn appeared to lead to a very specific manner of scrutinisation of their own and others bodies and a tendency to focus very particularly on proportion as a key indicator of bodily attractiveness. A propensity to experience distorted perceptions of the body in a manner in which the body was often seen as less muscular than it was in reality

was also reported as common among participants and appeared to impact upon the likelihood that body image dissatisfaction would be experienced.

B. Body Image Dissatisfaction Experiences

The second major theme in this section highlights participants' experiences of body image dissatisfaction, underlining primarily, the nature and quality of dissatisfaction experiences.

Due to the criteria required in being recruited for this study, all interviewed participants were expected to report the experience of at least some degree of dissatisfaction with their body shape and size at some point during their lives. Reports did in fact indicate that this was the case. The level of detail into which participants explained their dissatisfaction experiences was somewhat limited however, perhaps speaking to a tendency for men to want to avoid exhibiting distress or vulnerability associated with issues related to body image. Despite this, some degree of understanding of participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences was able to be gained and is discoursed in the following discussion.

Degree of the Distress Experienced

The majority of participants reported that the degree to which body image dissatisfaction caused them distress was fairly minimal. In the case of the majority of participants, dissatisfaction tended to be described less in terms of distress and suffering and more in terms of annoyance and frustration with not possessing the body shape and size which they desired. While some sense of a relationship was seen to exist between particular aspects of psychological well-being and body image dissatisfaction, as will be described in further detail at a later point in this discussion, dissatisfaction with body shape and size, for the majority of participants, was not reportedly associated with experiences of significantly detrimental mood or anxiety difficulties. Despite this, participants did however acknowledge the potential for such difficulties to arise should the appropriate circumstances occur. This will be described in further detail later in this discussion.

Despite dissatisfaction not being verbally reported as particularly distressing by participants, behavioural indications perhaps highlighted a tendency for participants', through their own verbal reports, to play down the degree to which dissatisfaction actually bothered them. According to at least a few participants' reports of their own behaviour, dissatisfaction with body shape and size did appear to lead to motivation to want to hide their bodies from others' eyes. Consequently, a number reported engaging in compensatory behaviours in an attempt to avoid or minimise experiences of body image dissatisfaction. Several participants reported incidents, particularly during the beginning stages of their training, wherein they would avoid revealing their bodies to others in order to avoid the possibility of negative judgment and further personal dissatisfaction with body shape and size.

> **Neil**: *In the beginning you know…you don't want to be rocking the shirtless look when you're fat or when you don't have the abs…you don't want to be in some photo…like…over summer.*

> **Reuben:** *…yeah…I'd never go around with a shirt off at the beach.*

For some, clothing choices appeared to act as a type of avoidance behaviour wherein potential negative judgments could be avoided through the masking of one's true body shape and size. For one participant, the wearing of extra layers of clothing reportedly helped him to disguise his true body shape and size to others, therefore averting the possibility of negative self-judgment or negative judgment from others about his body.

> **Fraser:** *I used to wear a jersey because then people don't look at you…people try to size you up.*

For Jordan too, clothing choices prior to, and in the early stages of his muscle development journey appeared to act as a form of avoidance wherein body image dissatisfaction and potential negative judgment was avoided through the sporting of clothing which disguised his true body shape and size.

> *Jordan: …yeah…now I've gained a bit of weight and I don't look like a skinny prick anymore I can fit proper clothes instead of having to wear big clothes to look bigger.*

For others, reports of a tendency continue engaging in weight training activities despite injury also highlighted some degree of concern associated with possibility that a lapse in training engagement would lead to loss of muscularity. Despite the risk of further injury, some highlighted a tendency to attempt to continue along the process of muscular development.

> *Stephen: If I miss multiple trainings in a row then I feel I have let myself down and I need to make sure I get back into it as soon as possible. One example of that is probably four months ago I got my wisdom teeth taken out and so I was not in the state to train for about a week and so I sort of felt a bit guilty about that…I probably should have taken a few more days because the blood started seeping out of the wound once the blood started pumping.*

> *Carlos: …I thought fuck it and so I started working out again two and a half weeks later [following injury]. I started off with very light weights. I shouldn't be working out but I'm going to the gym after this. I guess I've put my body at the risk of harm because I want to achieve something.*

The Direction of the Dissatisfaction Experienced

Similar to other research results (Furnham, Badmin & Sneade, 2002; Drewnowski & Yee, 1987), a few participants in this study highlighted that personal body image dissatisfaction had the potential to be bi-directional in nature. Particularly for those participants who reported previously being overweight, dissatisfaction often appeared to begin with displeasure in terms of excess body weight that they carried, which, once reduced, then often lead to dissatisfaction with a lack of body mass and a consequent desire to gain weight through the development of muscle mass. This appeared the case for both Neil and Grant who each went through a kind of two-step process wherein

dissatisfaction with the level of body fat that they carried led to a level of dissatisfaction and a consequent drive to eliminate this weight. Once this weight was lost however, these individuals then reportedly became dissatisfied through a view of themselves as skinny or scrawny, leading in turn to a drive for muscularity.

> **Neil:** *I just didn't want to be tiny…well…I didn't want to be fat either but you know…I lost the weight and I was getting real tiny looking.*

While for the majority of participants dissatisfaction appeared to be unidirectional and solely linked to a drive for muscularity, Neil and Grant were able to indicate that dissatisfaction can occur both as the result of the possession of an ectomorphic body shape as well as through the possession of an endomorphic body shape.

The Stability of the Dissatisfaction Experienced

Participants tended to speak about body image dissatisfaction in terms of an ever continuing, but often fluctuating experience rather than an experience that was fixed or which moved continuously upward or downward in any given direction. While Phillip considered that he experienced somewhat of an ever-present sense of dissatisfaction, for him, dissatisfaction was also experienced in phases of greater or lesser intensity.

> **Phillip:** *There's always and underlying sense of it…but there are phases that I go through where I really want to trim down and really radically alter my diet.*

While positive results obtained as a consequence of engagement in weight training reportedly resulted in a degree of improvement in body satisfaction for participants generally, it appeared that due to a tendency to continually adjust personal benchmarks in an upward direction, where participants may have been satisfied with their bodies at one point in time, shifting personal ideals fostered, for some, an ever-continuing sense of discontent with body shape and size. With reference to the aforementioned finding wherein participants were

found to view their own muscular development as a type of body-focused project, it appeared that for a number of participants, personal dissatisfaction or discontent endured as a result of a tendency to view the muscle development process as one which lacked a specific end-point.

> *Leon: I'm fairly happy with my results…but that's another thing is there isn't really an end goal.*

> *Keith: I'm like heaps heavier than what I wanted to be and I'm still thinking about getting bigger so…I don't know…like…I don't think I would want to get any heavier but like…you still go to the gym and still go through the same routine.*

A number of participants claimed to have set specific goals for themselves in terms of muscle development, particularly through measures of body weight. Reports appeared to show however that while the achievement of such targets engendered some degree of satisfaction, participants often tended to then constantly and repeatedly shift this benchmark toward a more muscular standard, contributing to an ever-continuing sense incompletion, and consequently, dissatisfaction.

> *Carlos: I'm at a size now where I have much less body fat than I did last year but I still feel really bad about it…whereas…if I had this same body last year I would have been really happy. But now I've got to this point I want to get rid of this fat. Now I'm thinking I need to get rid of this weight so my abs really show up.*

> *Keith: …pretty much always thinking I've got to get better...like when I started I was like' ok get to __kg and I'll be happy'. I got there and it was kind of like 'ok I'm here now I want to be __kg'. And it just sort of kept going up until now I'm __kg and I'm still thinking I could still improve and could still get better sort of thing. It's probably not a good thing…like…trying to get to a point and then getting there but not stopping there…that's probably a bad thing.*

Participants tended to vary in the degree to which they felt that they would ever see themselves reaching a point of complete satisfaction with their bodies. Despite not establishing a specific benchmark wherein he planned to conclude his muscular development, one participant appeared to hold hope that he would naturally reach a point where he would feel satisfied enough with his body that he would feel content to cease further muscular development.

> **Carlos:** *I don't think I've reached that point yet where I'm happy and I don't know where that point will be...I'd like to think because I'm a smart guy I'd know…but I cant discern when that will be.*

Interestingly, for one participant in particular, such a degree of continuous discontent with body shape and size was in fact considered a positive experience. For Fraser, who appeared to hold a particularly strong view about the positive value of physical fitness and muscularity, rather than viewing this continuous sense of discontent or dissatisfaction as a negative experience he viewed it as a motivating factor for the ever-continuous improvement of his body.

> **Fraser:** *…you're always going to see yourself as smaller than you really are otherwise you stop improving. If you become content you stop…just don't become content…you should never be content with who you are.*

Summary

While participants did not describe at great lengths the nature of their body image dissatisfaction experiences, a number of key qualities of this experience were identified. In general, participants tended to report their dissatisfaction as being more of a discomfort than an experience which led them to undergo a significant level of distress. Behavioural indications, however, indicated what was perhaps a tendency to somewhat downplay the impact of dissatisfaction experiences, with a number of participants found, when discussing behavioural tendencies, to go to some lengths to disguise their body shape and size or engage in training despite injury in order to reduce the potential for the

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occurrence of negative body image experiences. Dissatisfaction appeared for some, to be bidirectional in nature, with some experiencing a desire to lose weight, in addition to a drive to gain weight, through increases in muscularity. Finally, while dissatisfaction appeared to be experienced in phases of greater or lesser intensity, a continuous sense of discontent tended to be experienced across participants which was likely driven by a tendency to constantly shift benchmarks for satisfaction as the body developed and became more muscular through regular weight training.

Similar to that which has previously been found, engagement in body development activities such as weight training also appeared to have a very interesting and unique relationship to the body image dissatisfaction experiences of men. While weight training engagement and the changes that result from this in terms of body size and shape appear to contribute to a heightened sense of satisfaction with the both the body and the self generally, a tendency for engagement in body development activities to promote a very intensive and critical focus for men on their own bodies also appears to result in some negative consequences in terms of men's body image experiences.

C. Body Image Dissatisfaction and Other Symptoms of Psychopathology

The final theme in this section examines the potential relationship between experiences of body image dissatisfaction and other symptoms causative of distress and/or dysfunction. Due to variations in the exact experiential quality of body image dissatisfaction experiences among participants, findings were mixed with regard to the potential link between body image dissatisfaction experiences and more severe psychopathology. Reported generally across the majority of participants was the opinion that dissatisfaction was typically an unpleasant experience, though not one generally associated strongly with psychological disturbance at a level which was significantly distressing or which required professional support or attention. One participant's reports differed however, and indicated that for some men there may in fact exist a potential link between these phenomenon.

Body Image Dissatisfaction and Symptoms of Psychopathology

While previous research has highlighted some degree of association between body image dissatisfaction experiences and symptoms of depression (Cafri, Strauss & Thompson, 2002; McFarland & Kaminski, 2009; Olivardia, et. al., 2004), results from this study suggested that in the case of the majority of participants, body image dissatisfaction experiences were not connected to more serious, clinically definable psychopathology such as depression or anxiety. As was suggested earlier in discussing participants' reports of the nature of their own body image dissatisfaction experiences, participants generally described personal experiences of dissatisfaction as connected to a sense of irritation or displeasure as opposed to a significant sense of distress or suffering.

For the one participant who had reportedly experienced a period of depression at a clinically definable level however, body image dissatisfaction did appear to act as one, among a number of situational factors, also including a relationship break-up, thought to contribute to the development of this type of affective experience.

> *Carlos: …all this stuff started hitting home and I started getting really kind of depressed about everything. It went further because when you start thinking 'this is how I am' there is a bit of a snowball effect…so I started feeling really down about everything…I went into a really deep depression which caused me to quit basically.*

Muscularity Reduction and Symptoms of Psychopathology

While participants did not typically report the experience of symptoms of severe psychopathology in association with their body image dissatisfaction experiences, a number considered the potential risk for developing such psychopathology should the appropriate circumstances arise.

As participants gained muscularity, it appeared, as will be discussed to a greater degree later in this discussion, that some positive effects were promoted in terms of their physical and psychological well-being, particularly in terms of their self-esteem and their experiences of body satisfaction. Conversely however, when participants considered the potential impact of experiencing a significant loss of muscularity through having to cease engagement in weight training for one reason or another, a number were also quick to consider that their body image dissatisfaction at this time would most likely be connected to the experience of more severe and distressing psychopathology.

> *Carlos: I doubt the dissatisfaction with my progress right now would ever cause me to dip down into a depression…but if I was to have to give up I think it may.*

> *Keith: …you're trying to be bigger every time someone sees you…like… to keep that image up sort of thing…like… you don't want to get smaller and they're like "oh he's stopped training" sort of thing.*

> *Phillip: Yes that would hard…I'd get depressed over that. And just having to start again would be hard…not being able to do what I could before.*

Summary

According to the majority of the participants' reports, body image dissatisfaction did not appear to be linked to other forms of more severe psychopathology such as clinical depression or clinical anxiety. For one participant, while not a single contributing or causal factor, dissatisfaction did appear to be associated somewhat with the experience of a period of depression, perhaps indicating that in concert with the occurrence of other negative events in men's lives, body image dissatisfaction can provide some contribution to the development of psychopathology causative of significant distress and dysfunction. When considering the possibility of a significant change to their body shape and size, particularly in terms of a loss of muscularity, participants tended to consider that

such a change would in fact likely contribute to the development of more severe and distressing psychopathology for them.

Again, findings highlighted the presence of an interesting nature of relationship between weight training, muscular development and participants' experiences of psychological well-being. While not alluded to directly by participants, it appeared that engagement in weight training activities and the physical results which accompanied this, while also perhaps promoting a number of psychological benefits for participants, may also contribute to a sense of anxiety for men wherein pressure may be felt to either continue along a path of muscular development or risk experiencing a significant level of distress should they lose muscularity and consequently experience a reduction, or at least a perceived reduction, in their level of physical attractiveness.

The next section will include a discussion of participants' views with regard to the factors through to contribute to the development and maintenance of body image dissatisfaction both for them and for men in general.

Part Two: Factors Contributing to Body Image Dissatisfaction

The previous section highlighted the experiential nature of body image dissatisfaction among participants. In this chapter I summarise participants' assessments of the influences they perceived were key contributors to the development and maintenance of their own body image and body image dissatisfaction experiences. Perceived influences are discussed in three main parts in terms of the broad sociocultural pressures which were perceived to influence dissatisfaction experiences, the role of the media in influencing such experiences as well as the role of more interpersonal influences such as peers, family and intimate partners. As in the previous section, these perceived influences are discussed with reference to scholarly literature to allow for comparisons to be made between the perceptions of participants in this study and findings from past literature.

A. Sociocultural Pressure

Sociocultural models of body image disturbance suggest that societal-wide pressure to match strictly-defined body ideals is fostered by a tendency, within Western society, to place a critical value on the importance of appearance, including body shape and size (Tiggemann, 2011). Similarly, there appeared to exist a perception among participants in this study that that their own views of their bodies, as well their choices to engage in muscle building activities, were largely influenced by the impact of societal-wide pressure to match up with body ideals which promoted, encouraged and rewarded muscularity. This section highlights participants perceptions of a growing pressure for men to match up to particular appearance ideals as influenced by the presence of some broad societal-wide trends.

Increased Focus on Male Appearance and Body Image

Research findings have largely supported the idea that women value physical appearance much more than do men, particularly in terms of a contribution to

personal self-worth (Davidson & McCabe, 2005; ; Palladino-Green & Pritchard, 2003; Grossbard et. al., 2009). Findings from the current study however were more congruent with findings from research which has begun to note a trend developing toward a greater focus on appearance and body image among men, particularly over the last three or four decades (Davey & Bishop, 2006; Morgan, 2002; Olivardia, et. al., 2000). Reports from participants in this study indicated that body shape and size was particularly important in terms of their sense of personal identity and subjective sense of self-worth. While it was uncommon for participants to specifically report the degree to which they valued their own muscularity, as was illustrated in the previous chapter and will be illustrated further in the next chapter, participant reports, by and large, indicated a tendency to value muscularity highly as an important personal quality. Not only did muscularity appear to be valued in light of the perceived benefits which were thought to be guaranteed to those who met body-related appearance ideals but value was also conferred in light of particular detrimental outcomes which were perceived to be experienced by those who did not closely match appearance ideals.

In a more broader sense one participant in particular described what he perceived has been a gradual shift in which men within the Western context have begun to consider physical appearance altogether more important in terms of their own self-worth than they once had. Brad considered that the presence of such a shift had meant more and more men were beginning to afford more time and effort to managing their physical appearance through engagement in activities such as weight training, and that this, in turn, was influencing other men to experience a similarly strong drive to manage their appearance.

> *Brad: I've started to feel like guys have become a lot more self-conscious about how they look. I know people always say women are self-conscious about the way they look but I'm starting to think that men are swinging a lot more towards that...just...a lot of guys are starting to go to the gym...and I know a lot of them only go to the gym just to look good...don't really play any sport or anything like that.*

Popularisation of 'Fitness Culture'

Participants tended to partly attribute their own dissatisfaction and a growing sense of pressure to develop a muscular physique to a perceived expansion in terms of the popularity of fitness and exercise culture in Western society, particularly over the last two or three years. More specifically, participant reports offered a perception that a growth in the popularity of fitness-based values had contributed to a more ubiquitous infiltration of muscularity-related norms into mainstream culture, meaning that for the average man, messages about the value of physical fitness were adding to a sense that being fit, healthy and muscular was more the norm than the exception.

> **Stephen:** *Physical attractiveness is tied to muscularity…also the message that we need to do 30 minutes of exercise a day is pretty prominent in our society and the logical progression is that if you're fit then you'll most likely be muscly as well.*

Neil claimed to have recognised a greater level use of fitness related 'lingo' within general conversation, a phenomenon which he considered indicated that fitness and exercise culture was becoming ever-more popular, within Western society at least.

> **Neil:** *I don't know again if this is me just getting more and more into the sort of weight lifting scene and just noticing things more but like…in my opinion I'm definitely starting to see a lot more of the influence on culture. From what I can imagine maybe 20 years ago you'd only talk about gym stuff at the gym but now its obviously sort of spread out a bit and people who really aren't gym goers are starting using a bit of the lingo…I don't know how to explain it.*

While participants tended to vary in the degree to which they considered that they themselves had been influenced by a growth in the mainstream acceptance of these fitness-based values and attitudes, the majority at least perceived an awareness of such a trend.

Influences from within New Zealand's Sociocultural Context

While at least one previous study has been able to provide some evidence that exposure to New Zealand's sociocultural context may influence a drive among men to develop muscularity (Brevis et. al., 1998), it appears that there currently exists an overall lack of research able to identify the many potential factors which might be influencing body image dissatisfaction and a drive for muscularity specifically among men within the New Zealand context. Findings from this study highlight that a number of particular influences, perhaps somewhat unique to the New Zealand context, may in fact be having an important impact upon male body image experiences.

Men's Attitudes in New Zealand

One participant alluded to the influence of what he perceived was a collective trend among men living in New Zealand wherein they generally strived to develop and to flaunt their masculinity.

> **Reuben:** *Kiwi men think they are 10 foot tall…they all work with a swagger…staunch walk and projecting an image. When you go overseas you can notice a kiwi from a mile away from their attitudes. They think they're really tough.*

Within this, Reuben offered his observation of the presence of a much more widespread and pervasive buy in to the idea that muscularity equals power and success among men in the New Zealand context in comparison to men in other, particularly non-Western, countries which he had resided in. Similarly to suggestions by the likes of Yang, Gray and Pope (2005) and Kanayama and Pope (2011), who in their research found muscularity to be considered less of an important indicator of self-worth in Asian countries as it has shown to be in the West, Reuben suggested that he too had witnessed a difference in body related attitudes between men in New Zealand compared to men in other countries he had resided in.

Reuben: I spent a fair it of time in South America and in their culture the general public attitude is 'we don't care what you look like as long as you are a nice person'. So their culture is better I think…more support networks…they don't rely on overseas influences like we do here with American culture. Here in New Zealand we think you have to look like that to be successful…to get rich or famous.

The Environmental Conditions

The environmental conditions and tendency to live an outdoor-based lifestyle was also considered important by some in terms of men in New Zealand feeling pressure to possess muscularity. Reuben, who as may have already been gathered, had spent a considerable amount of time living abroad as well as in New Zealand, considered the way that the environmental conditions may have worked to shape a sort of ethos within the New Zealand context wherein muscularity for men is seen more as a norm than an exception. Reuben described this perception more specifically by comparing New Zealand's environmental conditions to those in Europe.

Reuben: It's more active…the lifestyle in New Zealand…you can do more outdoor training and make the most of it.

Others alluded to the impact of climate-reliant activities such as summer-time music festivals on men's drive for the development of a muscular physique. It appeared from participant reports that while primarily attended for the receipt of entertainment, summer music festivals also existed as a social forum within which young people could congregate and interact, and where young men who were engaged in muscle building activities were provided with the opportunity to present or display their muscular physiques to other festival goers.

Sam: I think definitely in New Zealand it can all come down to Rhythm and Vines or other music festivals where they can all walk around with their shirts off.

The Popularity of Sport and Sporting Figures

In accordance with research which has described the important role of sport, particularly rugby, as an influence for male body image experiences within the New Zealand context in particular (Hokowhitu, 2004; McCabe et. al., 2011; Star, 1999), several participants acknowledged their own perception of a link between the physical nature of the sporting world and their own body image experiences. It appeared that for a number of participants, talent when it came to engagement in sporting pursuits was considered a significant marker of personal value and self-worth. In addition, sporting success, particularly success in sporting pursuits such as rugby which are especially physical, was also thought to be connected to the level of physical strength and muscularity which one held, with those were larger, stronger and more able to exert physical dominance on the playing field thought to be more likely to experience sporting success. As such, sport had reportedly affected the body image experiences of a number of participants through a drive to obtain muscularity in the hope that this would also afford greater sporting successes.

> *Sam: …if you look at all the All Blacks 15 years ago all the back lines were 10 or 20 kilograms lighter than they are now. That wasn't such a dominant factor in gaining an advantage whereas now days because everyone is doing that you're at a disadvantage if you're not. If they're all in that position and that's what's giving them an advantage over others then everyone is going to want to do that and they're going to think that they have to do that to be successful.*

> *Keith: …yeah well I guess like famous rugby players or league players…or the image portrayed by lots of the real top sports people…that does show the image of a real big powerful male. Like in a contact sport…it's like…a big muscular male that dominates. You start to think…if I want to be at that level…I have to look like that.*

Several participants also considered well-known rugby players important in terms of their own body image experiences, particularly members of the All Blacks rugby team whom they tended to view as role models who perceptibly

represented the muscular masculine ideal kiwi men should be striving for. A high degree of positive media representation was observed to occur among All Blacks rugby players which participants considered had helped to solidify these individuals' this position as male role models and as targets for social comparison. Participants' reports tended to show recognition of the fact that while these types of men stood as positive role models, they also promoted dissatisfaction with body shape and size among average, everyday men due to men's tendencies to engage in social comparisons against such role models.

Summary

In summary, men tended to highlight perceptions of a growing sense of pressure to match up to particular appearance ideals as influenced by a number of key societal-wide trends. Participants highlighted what they perceived has been a steady growth in the intensity with which men across Western society have been focusing on, and granting significance to, appearance and body image collectively. While not traditionally being known to, or perhaps even permitted to, take an interest in their own and others' appearances, participants tended to consider that a collective shift in the degree to which men have been self-conscious of their own bodies has led to a kind of normalisation of appearance concern among men and a consequent increase in the prevalence of dissatisfaction experiences. Several participants perceived that a growth or expansion in the popularity of fitness and exercise culture has also contributed to the development and maintenance of their own and others' body image dissatisfaction experiences. The perception was offered that accompanying a shift in mainstream attitudes, wherein a greater degree of value is being placed on health, fitness and physical appearance, is a greater sense of pressure being felt in terms of men feeling the need to be, and look, physical fit and healthy. Participants considered that particularly among men, this type of shift has also contributed to a shift in mainstream standards of the body, in particular toward a point where the possession of a high level muscularity is becoming more the norm than the exception.

A number of factors somewhat specific to New Zealand's social and cultural climate were also perceived to contribute the body image dissatisfaction

experiences of participants, particularly in terms of influencing a drive toward the development of a muscular physique. Participants recognised that an effort was commonly made by men within the New Zealand context to command social dominance through the portrayal a kind of 'tough guy' image alongside which muscularity was considered a key trait. A drive for muscularity therefore, was perceived by participants to be promoted among men generally within the New Zealand context particularly through a tendency to place a high level of value on muscularity not only as a marker of personal power and success, but also as a tool through which power and success could be acquired. The external environmental conditions within the New Zealand context were also perceived to have an impact on men's body image experiences, with participants noting, in particular, a link between muscularity and engagement in an outdoor activities. Finally, the influence of sport, particularly rugby, also appeared to be important to participants' body image experiences, with the popularity of these physical pursuits thought to heavily promote the value of muscularity within this context. Sporting stars were also thought to influence men's body image experiences in particular through their role in influencing perceptions around value and importance of muscularity but also through their standing as key targets for bodily comparison.

B. Media Influence

In concordance with what previous research has indicated, the media were also reportedly a key contributor in the development and maintenance of participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences. While content analytic studies have shown a steady increase in the muscularity of men portrayed in the media (Leit et al., 2001; Spitzer et al., 1999) and experimental studies have shown a significant effect in terms of a link between exposure to such images and the development of dissatisfaction with body shape and size (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Baird & Grieve, 2006; Grogan et. al., 2006), results from this study suggest that, at least among this group, young men are generally aware of both the nature and potential impact of appearance-related media exposure on their own body image experiences. Participants tended to allude to a wide range of influences each of which may come under the label 'media'.

Each of these specific media-based influences will be highlighted in the ensuing discussion.

Advertising Media

The producers of fitness products and the marketers and advertisers whose role it is to sell these products were, according to participant reports, a key party thought to be driving body image dissatisfaction and pressure for men to obtain muscularity. Participants alluded to what they perceived was a commonly misleading quality to many of the fitness advertisements which they had been exposed to, offering their observation of a tendency for advertisers to guarantee men the attainment of unrealistically perfect bodies without providing mention of the time, effort and other extraneous factors which often contribute to the actual possession of the types of body shapes being presented.

> *Grant: …people in the media are often very athletic which can be misleading because people take these things…or buy these products...even things like shoes or athletic equipment thinking that if they had them they would make advances…except…it's all about your participation and effort rather than anything else.*

> *Brad: …like the ab-circle pro advertisements…claiming you can get a particular body by performing a particular exercise. There are a lot of ignorant people out there who would believe that.*

A number of participants also mentioned recognition of a tendency for advertisers of fitness products to promote narrow and unrealistic appearance ideals through the utilisation of male models whose appearances are typically incongruent with that of the average man, particularly in terms of the level of muscularity that they possess. Participants' reports appeared consistent with findings from past research which alluded to a tendency for models with bodies whom were unrealistically shaped to be used as tools for the advertisement of products and services within television and print-based mediums (Leit et al., 2001; Petrie et. al., 1996).

> *Phillip:* I guess they are just showing the crème de la crème...always seeing that…it becomes the norm even though it can't be.

> *Sam:* It's just like with women where they have these size 6 models on show…and most women aren't going to be able to get to that size even if they worked out every day for the rest of their lives.

> *Brad:* …my uncle fell into it...that's where I think the effect comes in from the media. He's all right…but…the media portrays that this is the perfect body and it influenced him to think…like…that he needs to look like that to have better self-esteem.

While some suggested that they personally were largely resistant to this type of influence through their own active awareness of the embellishment used by advertisers of fitness products, others more readily acknowledged that this type of exposure had in fact affected their own values and subsequent behaviour, often leading them to experience a greater drive for muscularity and a drive to engage more intensively in a lifestyle of exercise engagement and supplement consumption.

> *Leon:* It's really an industry that's dominated by these big companies that want to sell you all this stuff…and when you actually go and do the research there are two or three staple things that will help you in the gym and the rest is unnecessary.

> *Brad:* I just think they put that body on the pedestal...I think because it sells. It gets you hooked into that culture. That's how I got hooked in...I started buying all the protein powders...I started going to the gym a lot…I wanted to impress people and stuff like that.

Entertainment Media

Particularly through their tendency to portray an overly muscular figure as the norm, the entertainment media were also considered key benefactors driving the development and maintenance of muscularity-related body image

dissatisfaction among men. As was suggested with regard to perceived trends within advertising media, participants generally perceived that the entertainment media also promoted body ideals which were largely unrealistic and unobtainable for the average man.

> **Sam:** The TV portrays a pretty bad image…it's kind of like false hope. Some people are never going to look like that.

> **Phillip:** You just get so overexposed to all these people who are so big and trim…and everyone seems to look like that…that's the norm.

Neil perceived that the power of this type of media influence was often intensified by the manner and context in which muscular television and film actors were cast, offering the suggestion that while it was perhaps more natural to cast a muscular actor in a role in which the character required, or was known for, possessing a high level of muscularity, he had in fact observed a common tendency for muscular actors to be cast into roles in which they would play average, everyday men. Neil suggested that he felt as though this worked to consolidate ideas about the normality of muscularity for men, and logically also, ideas about the abnormality of men who are not similarly muscular.

> **Neil:** The more into fitness and bodybuilding you get the more and more you notice actors portrayed as normal but they're actually really big. So a particular movie that I've seen recently is Ted. The main guy in that…Mark Wahlberg…he's meant to be this sort of lazy stoner dude who can't rock up to work on time. Then you look at him sitting down smoking his joint and he's massive…like…his arms are huge you know!

> **Neil:** They're not just casting them as a really active football star, they're casting him as the lazy stoner whereas you think realistically…a lazy stoner is scrawny as and doesn't go to the gym.

> *Neil: …even Leonard from Big Bang Theory…he's not your sort of average dude like…he takes his top off and you're like 'yeah…he goes to the gym'…whereas his character would never go to the gym.*

Some also highlighted their view that the entertainment media not only played on, but also fostered and promoted, ideas about body shape and size and its perceived link to personal and social value. Fraser's report indicated that he had recognised a pattern, similar to that which was suggested by Kirkpatrick and Sanders (1978) and Grogan (2008), in which television and film content often portrayed those who more closely matched the muscular ideal much more positively than those who differed significantly in physical terms from society's definition of the ideal.

> *Fraser: I quite like Never Back Down…the guy…Scooter I think his name is…he doesn't get girls…he's quite small…he's just like the background guy…kind of a side character and then there's the main guy and he's quite big you know…a linebacker…and it was kind of showing that that's kind of what real life is. If you're really big you generally get a lot better social group as opposed to if your small they just kind of beat you up and take the piss out of you.*

Generally participants considered that the entertainment media promoted dissatisfaction with body shape and size through the types of performers that they used and the way that these performers were typically portrayed. According to participants' observations, a tendency to employ muscular actors to play average everyday characters worked to normalise the possession of muscularity as something which all 'normal' men should typically possess. Additionally, participants considered that the entertainment media fostered and promoted positive views of the idealised, muscular male physique and negative views of those whose body shape and size did not match up to ideals.

Reality Television

Some considered that reality television in particular played a specific role in influencing men's body image experiences. Akin to suggestions from Dallesasse and Kluck (2013) who discovered a tendency for reality shows to more often than not cast men who possessed muscular physiques, Reuben offered a similar observation, suggesting that in his view, reality television shows were a key promoter of muscular ideals through a tendency to intentionally cast individuals who matched such ideals. In addition, Reuben suggested feeling as though, through clever editing or scripting, reality television shows also often strengthened conventional beliefs commonly associated with individuals who possessed particular appearance characteristics by purposefully portraying characters in a way which played to the way that they looked and the stereotypes which typically accompany particular appearance characteristics. While he considered that those who matched muscular male ideal were often portrayed as popular and successful, he also considered that those whose body shape and size didn't match this ideal often did not experience a significant amount of success, typically being cast-off these types of shows in the early sequences.

> **Reuben:** *You don't see ugly fat people on those shows. They might put one 'token' ugly fat person on but…they never last long.*

Carlos offered his own unique perception with regard to the potential influence of reality television on the body image experiences of men, suggesting that in his opinion, this type of format also came to impact upon men's beliefs about muscularity through a tendency to glorify the experiences of those whose body shape and size closely matched the muscular ideal.

> **Carlos:** *I think one of the big cultural shifts ironically came when Jersey Shore came out and you had these bunch of really tanned muscly guys and they'd go to town and pull girl after girl after girl. And one of the ways they'd pull girls was they'd lift up their top or flex their arms. I haven't really watched the show too much but I was aware of it and I think this*

was the time that I noticed a shift in the way females thought about guys and how guys thought about themselves.

The Role of Celebrities

The role that celebrities played in contributing to men's body image dissatisfaction experiences was also considered significant. Participants tended not only to describe celebrities as aesthetic targets for body-related comparisons, but also suggested that the portrayal of masculinity by celebrities, particularly in terms of displays of strength and physical dominance, was also relevant to their own body image experiences and drive to engage in body change strategies.

In alignment with findings from past research which highlighted a link between exposure to muscular male figures and the development of muscularity-focused body image dissatisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Baird & Grieve, 2006), participants in this study too reported experiencing a more intense drive for muscularity following exposure to material which portrayed celebrities as muscular, strong and physically effective.

> **Stephen:** *The whole Arnie action movie stereotype…breaking peoples necks with their bare hands and punching through walls…it's all a hyperbole but it does influence you…especially when you're younger as something to strive for or something to look up to if you can be bothered.*

> **Brad:** *…it's funny watching some movies…like badass action movies…the guys kickass and they're really muscly…it makes me think 'man…I want to go to the gym now!'*

Both Carlos and Neil also offered observations of the existence of a gradual shift in terms of the size and shape of men portrayed within the media, generally in a direction in which men were thought to be becoming more and more muscular. This mirrored previous research findings (Baghurst et al., 2006; Leit et al., 2001; Pope, et al., 1999; Spitzer et al, 1999).

> *Carlos: Thirty or fourty years ago there was James Dean…you look at him and he looked just like a regular guy in terms of body size. I imagine girls think he's a good looking guy in terms of appearance but in terms of body size that guy is not ripped…he doesn't have abs…he's just a normal kind of guy. That's kind of changed a lot, girls now seem to find guys like Sonny Bill Williams or Richard Kahui attractive…or you can go a step further with guys like Vin Diesel or Paul Walker from Fast and the Furious. The body image of guys in the media has changed substantially over the last 30 to 40 years and this has impacted on us.*

> *Neil: …you go back and you look at the old movies big guys were cast as big guys back then but you could have had an average guy playing an average role back then. Now guys casted as your average guy are actually way bigger than your normal person.*

Print Media

While the print media tended to have been seen as one of the key drivers for male body image dissatisfaction according to past research (Baird & Grieve, 2006; Leit et al., 2001; Spitzer et al., 1999), findings from the current study perhaps reflect changing trends in terms of media output. While several participants acknowledged print media as an influence for body image dissatisfaction and a drive for muscular development, across participant reports it appeared that this type of medium was less commonly acknowledged as an influence than other forms of media such as television, film and Internet-based social media.

For at least a few participants though, print-based media, magazines in particular, were in fact thought to have an impact upon their own body image evaluations. It appeared that for these few participants, fitness magazines exerted an influence particularly through their tendency to employ models whom exemplified the lean, slender yet still inherently muscular aesthetic that appeared to be desired by a large percentage of interviewed participants.

> *Fraser: You see quite a lot of people on the cover of fitness magazines and they seem to be the kind of level that I'll be looking to be aiming at.*

> *Neil: Obviously the pictures you see in magazines only show you the perfect physiques, they've got the v-taper…their arms are the right width compared to their body…yeah…you look at those people and you're like 'that's what I want to be!'*

Digital Media

While the frequency and intensity of digital media consumption was not specifically discussed with participants, it appeared that for many, digital media, particularly Internet based media and social media platforms such as Facebook, was particularly important for men's body image dissatisfaction experiences in terms of allowing for the propagation of appearance ideals and the facilitation of social comparison behaviour.

Facebook

While no one participant reported making regular contributions to Facebook-based groups or forums specifically associated with weight training, a number considered that the exposure that they experienced to various images and body-related messages within this social network platform had in fact come to have some influence on their own views of their bodies. Neil suggested that his own subscription to weight-training related groups on Facebook resulted for him in some unexpected and perhaps unintended consequences in terms of then becoming regularly and repeatedly exposed to muscular male images.

> *Neil: I've found with Facebook, the more I've started getting into weight lifting the more groups that I'd follow and then I'd look and every third update is showing you some guy's massive arms or some guys massive legs.*

Neil also suggested that in his view, Facebook existed as a key pathway through which body-related ideals and values could spread from person to

person without a great deal personal effort or purposeful intent. Neil explained that given the nature of Facebook and its tendency to expose an individual's own personal interests and activities to those whom they are connected to, those interested in muscle development activities are able to quickly, very simply and most often unintentionally, influence others in terms of fostering a sense of interest in the body and muscle development.

> *Neil: You meet people that go to the gym 5 or 6 times a week that are real into weight lifting, then you start seeing the Facebook groups that they're joining and you go and have a read and like...then it sort of spreads.*

Others noted the role that Facebook played in the facilitation of comparison to weight training peers with whom they were connected. For some, comparisons made through this type of medium appeared to contribute to an increasing sense of dissatisfaction with body shape and size particularly when participants considered that their muscularity did not equal that of those with whom they were comparing to.

> *Fraser: I'm reminded that there are a lot of people who have done better than me in a shorter space of time…so…that does affect me a little bit because it makes me wonder why they are doing so well? I'm trying really hard…why can't I get to that level?*

> *Sam: You see different pictures of people...you see they're a certain shape and how cut they are…and then see the girls flocking over them...that's a definite influence.*

> *Carlos: You inevitably end up looking at other guy's physiques…not in a homosexual way…but you see their results and look at the way they're training.*

Internet Celebrity

It appeared that, similar to reports made by participants with regard to the impact of television and film-based celebrities, Internet celebrities, or one particular celebrity at least, were also important in terms of participants' body image experiences and motivation toward the attainment of a muscularity.

Aziz Sergeyevich Shavershian, or 'Zyzz', was a name raised by a number of participants who suggested that as well possessing a physique which many men aspired to, Zyzz was also significantly influential in the rise in popularity of a particular weight training subculture which participants considered many, typically young men, had adopted themselves into. 'Zyzz', who rose to fame around 2011 as a kind of Internet phenomenon whose body formation journey and engagement in weight training activities were well documented on websites such as Youtube, appeared not only to have promoted engagement in muscle development activities, but also reportedly promoted a set of related behaviours and attitudes related to the process of muscular development which participants considered many men had adopted.

> *Leon: Zyzz…he was Internet celebrity. He never had media attention until he died. I didn't know anything about him until he died and then people were talking about him so I jumped on the Internet and learnt a bit about what he did. From what I understand he's influenced a lot of people to get in the gym and train and improve themselves and improve their bodies. He's been a really massive influence especially on younger kids. There are kids in the gym and they're 18 to 20 year olds working hard…in there all the time. He's been a massive influence on the younger generation anyway. It was never really mainstream in New Zealand until the last 18 months or so. In the time that I've been training its exploded. I've got a couple of mates who have started in that time period. I don't know if Zyzz had anything to do with it but the timing is quite coincidental. The fact that he had this massive following and died and a lot of people have been learning about him and as I said when I first started I used his programme and was influenced by the information in that interview that I read so I guess he did influence me in some way*

but there are guys that almost worship him…and he was just this 22 year old Aussie guy.

Jordan: It's exactly why a whole bunch of people joined the gym. When he was still alive there were people joining the gym because they thought he was cool but since he died there's been a huge influx of kids joining the gym…like…a few of my friends who are really big now are only in it because this dude died. They didn't touch the gym before he died. They even change their mannerisms to try and be like him…they change their vocabulary…use all the words he used and change their day to day mannerisms…use his catch phrases…his poses… there's a whole bunch of kids who feed off that.

Interestingly the Internet appeared to be a unique medium through which the celebrities could exert an influence on men's body image experiences. Participants' reports tended to indicate that unlike more traditional media-based vehicles such as television, the Internet appears to allow for a much closer following of the actions and activities of celebrities, allowing men to more frequently, actively and deliberately expose themselves these types of influences than appeared to be allowed through more traditional mediums.

Summary

In summary, the media were considered a central influence in terms of participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences. Participants highlighted the existence of a wide range of platforms, including advertising, entertainment, print and digital mediums through which they considered that the media promoted particular ideas and notions associated with the male body. Across these platforms, a number of common tendencies were observed which participants considered were key to influencing male body image dissatisfaction experiences.

The media were perceived to promote narrow appearance ideals through a tendency to employ models, television stars and movie actors whom, though often portrayed as the average, everyday individual, were actually frequently

much more muscular than the average man. Celebrities were thought to play a key part in the promotion of appearance ideals, typically through their role as targets for appearance comparison. Participants also noted the exertion of celebrity influence not only through the mediums of television and film but also through digital and social-media platforms.

Trends in terms of the way in which individuals with different body shapes and sizes were portrayed in the media were also considered to impact upon men's body image experiences, particularly their drive to obtain muscularity. Participants noted an observation wherein those whose bodies matched general appearance ideals were often portrayed positively in the media, while those who did not match up to such ideals were typically portrayed less positively. This was reportedly especially apparent within the mediums of television, film and in particular, reality television, which some considered was often produced and edited in a way which purposefully portrayed those whose bodies matched appearance ideals positively, while portraying those whose bodies differed from such ideals in a more negative fashion.

Interesting trends were also perceived with reference to the degree to which the various aforementioned forms of media output were thought to exert an influence on participants' body image experiences. While print media had traditionally been a key focus of previous research which has attempted to understand the relationship between media exposure and body disturbance, in this study print media appeared to exert much less of an influence than more modern forms of media such as social media. Generally, participants' reports suggested that social media platforms such as Facebook in fact influenced their own body image experiences to a fairly significant degree, allowing not only for the promotion of particular appearance ideals but also acting as a host for appearance-focused comparison and discussion.

C. Interpersonal Influences

More intimate influences, namely peers, family members and intimate partners were also highlighted by participants as acting as important contributors to their

own dissatisfaction experiences. The ensuing discussion will highlight participants' perspectives with regard to the role of these more personal influences on their own body image experiences, with particular reference to the way in which the provision of appearance feedback and engagement in social comparison behaviours were thought to impact upon participants' body image experiences.

Appearance Feedback

Participants considered the provision of appearance-based commentary, particularly that received by peers in the form of teasing, particularly influential in terms of their own body image experiences. Several participants acknowledged experiences of bullying and teasing during childhood, and appeared open to considering, as past research has also suggested (Eisenberg et al., 2006; Gleason et al., 2000; Paxton et al., 2006), that these experiences were central not only to the dissatisfaction that they experienced at the time of the bullying, but also to their own long-term body-related attitudes. Interestingly, while negative appearance commentary from peers very rarely in fact focused specifically on a participants' lack of muscularity, it appeared, at least for few participants, that the development of muscularity was considered the most sound method of choice for avoiding further antagonisation.

> *Grant: …it's definitely a social acceptance thing…you were bullied because you weren't socially accepted as a fatty so now will you accept me as a fit athlete?*

> *Fraser: Yeah…I found that it quite helped...I seemed to be better off with the gym.*

Appearance feedback from family members was also reportedly influential in the development of body image dissatisfaction and a consequent drive to develop a muscular physique for a number of participants. In alliance with previous research findings which appeared to indicate that family members, particularly parents, were a key influence for male body image experiences particularly during childhood and adolescence (Ricciardelli et al., 2000; Stanford

& McCabe, 2005), participants reports also tended to indicate that body related feedback or commentary received via family members, particularly fathers, influenced upon the development of body image dissatisfaction and a drive for muscularity among many.

> *Stephen: I guess when I was a lot younger my dad was a fair bit skinnier than me and sometimes he would say 'you've got a bit of a belly...you should go for a run'. I think that probably had an effect…I'm not sure to what degree. I guess that is a deeper motivating factor for me...maybe living up to what I see are his expectations.*

> *Brad: My dad's a manly man and if you can't do something he'll call you a girl or something like that. Also now that he's gotten older and obviously he's not getting stronger he's getting weaker and I'm getting stronger…it makes you feel better that you're more physically able than him.*

Participant's reports tended to suggest the presence of a sense of pressure felt to live up to others', particularly fathers' expectations. For both Stephen and Brad, the development of muscularity appeared to act as a means through which they could secure a sense of masculinity of which their fathers' would approve.

Sam offered his perception of the specific nature of body commentary, offering his view that in fact negative appearance based commentary was often much more detrimental to body image experiences than positive commentary.

> *Sam: I think that negative comments are far more powerful than negative comments… one comment can just change your entire mindset about something…like…you're pretty satisfied but then if someone was to say 'oh really…you work out?' or tell you part of your body isn't looking good then you switch and be straight back to dissatisfied.*

Intimate Partner Rejection

Intimate partner rejection also appeared to be a significant driver for body image dissatisfaction for at least one participant. For Carlos, whose body image dissatisfaction and consequent engagement in regular weight training, as has already been mentioned, was spurred predominantly as a result of rejection from an intimate partner, dissatisfaction with body shape and size did not appear to become a significant issue for him until the point wherein his partner provided negative commentary related to his bodily appearance.

> *Carlos: To me it felt like she wasn't attracted to me in the body I was in…which I guess is kind fair because people have their own things…but for me the way it was kind of heartbreaking and I didn't feel loved at that point…so that triggered me to change.*

The Role of Mediating Processes

Social Comparison

As indicated earlier, in concurrence with past research (Diedrichs et al., 2011; Morrison et al., 2004; Myers & Crowther, 2009) participant reports highlighted a tendency for men to base personal judgments about their own appearance on comparisons made against others around them, particularly their weight training peers and others at the gym, but also occasionally those whom they would encounter outside of the gym environment.

> *Grant: …you're always comparing and measuring…measuring either against yourself or the guy next to you.*

> *Brad: You do look at other guys and think 'they've got a pretty good looking body' and you think 'damn I should train harder to get a body like that.'*

> *Jordan: I saw a few of my mates making some progress and getting quite big and I thought I better start getting into it otherwise I'm going to be left behind. That's a big part of it…when you see close friends going*

hard and getting results, you want to get big as well otherwise you start feeling a bit left out. I started with one friend who I wanted to match up to and as I started going to the gym I started to meet new friends who were training and would think 'oh…I need to train harder to keep up with these guys.'

Phillip: I want to be the best I can be and seeing people who are able to get into the condition they're able to get into it makes me think 'why I cant I do that?'...'I should be able to match up.'

For Stephen, engagement in this type of social comparison was considered a largely unhelpful phenomenon, and he explained that his own natural inclination to engage in social comparison meant that he actually chose to train at home rather than in a gym where there were others whom he could make comparisons against.

Stephen: …that's another thing that I didn't like about the gym was being surrounded by other people and you know...you look at someone and think 'shit they're really muscly, how long have they been training?' I'd prefer to be doing it at home where it's just me and my goals aren't being influenced by anyone else's training…. cause I think I would definitely be doing it whether I wanted to or not. I think it's one of those things which I think is automatic...you don't really have a say in it your brain just makes comparisons and judgments.

Results tended to indicate that social comparison was a key factor in participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences, with comparisons being shown to be made not only against peers, particularly weight training peers, but as noted earlier in this discussion, models, celebrities and sporting figures also appeared to be key targets against which social comparison processes would occur.

Internalisation

Participant reports also indicated that participants might in fact have engaged in a degree of internalisation in terms of the appearance ideals communicated through the media and other vehicles. While participants varied in the degree to which they felt they were striving to match up to any particular body ideal, the fact that the majority were experiencing a drive for the development of a significantly more muscular physique did provide some degree of indication that they may in fact, whether they recognised it or not, have internalised communicated appearance ideals.

Summary

In addition to broader societal and media influences, participant reports also highlighted the importance of a number of more intimate influences for their own body image experiences. In concert with findings from past research, appearance feedback or commentary was considered a key promoter of body image dissatisfaction among participants (Ricciardelli et al., 2000; Stanford & McCabe, 2005; Vartanian et al., 2001), and for several participants teasing associated with their appearance experienced during early developmental periods reportedly continued to influence body image experiences a significant period of time after such experiences occurred. While those who had experienced this type of teasing noted that the feedback offered was in fact more often aimed at the fact that they were overweight than the fact that they lacked muscularity, it appeared that participants were not content just to lose body fat in order to escape these types of negative experiences. Instead it appeared that participants tended to see the development of a muscular physique as the most effective way of avoiding these types of experiences in the future. Feedback from family members, and more specifically parents, was also found to be influential in terms of participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences. In concert with past research findings which tended to suggest that male family members were the primary providers of negative appearance-based feedback (Ricciardelli et al., 2000), several participants highlighted the significant role that their fathers played in providing appearance based assessments which contributed to dissatisfaction experiences.

Finally, while not commonly mentioned as important to men's body image dissatisfaction experiences according to sociocultural conceptualisations, intimate partner influence was also noted to be particularly important for at least one participant's body image dissatisfaction experiences wherein rejection appeared to spur both dissatisfaction and a strong drive to develop muscularity.

In terms of potential mediating factors linking projected sociocultural ideals to experiences of body image dissatisfaction, both social comparison and internalisation processes appeared potentially influential. While the existent research has typically focused on the impact that comparison to universal targets, celebrities represented in the media for example, have had on male body image dissatisfaction experiences, findings from this study suggest that comparison to more proximal targets, particularly weight training peers, contributed also to the development of body image dissatisfaction for a number of men. The internalisation of appearance ideals was also apparent among participants despite varying degrees of recognition of personal engagement in such a process among participants themselves.

Taken in their entirety, participants' reports did tend to provide support for the framework which the sociocultural model has provided to explain the development and maintenance of body image dissatisfaction experiences, indicating that in fact, the media, peers and parents, with the addition of a few additional influences in this study, and potentially mediated by social comparison and internalisation processes, are essential contributors to men's body image dissatisfaction experiences.

The next section will explore the relationship between weight training engagement and body image dissatisfaction experiences, with a primary focus on the nature and impact of this activity not only upon the body image dissatisfaction experiences of participants but also upon other aspects of their well-being.

Part Three: Weight Training and Body Image Dissatisfaction Experiences

In this section I summarise participants' reports with regard to the relationship between muscular development through engagement in weight training activities and body dissatisfaction experiences. To begin however, a more general description of the experiential nature of recreational weight training engagement is delivered in the hope that this provides some useful background to further understanding the role of weight training for men's body image experiences. Within this, the impacts, both positive and negative, of engagement in weight training activities on a wide number of aspects of well-being are discussed. A more specific exploration of the relationship that engagement in weight training and muscle development activities may have with participants' experiences of body image dissatisfaction is then discussed.

A. The Nature of Weight Training Engagement

The Meaning of Engagement

The first useful step in describing the relationship between weight training and participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences is to highlight what weight training appeared to mean for participants in this study. Perhaps most importantly it is essential to highlight that weight training engagement for many men in this study was not an activity engaged in primarily for the purpose of wanting to improve body image or escape from negative body image experiences. In fact, reasons cited for initial engagement varied widely among participants. While some claimed that engagement began through a drive to improve health, others claimed that they wanted to improve sporting performance, others suggested that they simply saw engagement in these types of activities, at least in the initial stages, as something which would suitably occupy the spare time that they possessed, while a few others indicated that a strong sense of dislike or dissatisfaction with their body shape and size was in fact key in their drive to engage in weight training activities.

Participants' reports indicated that engagement in a process of muscular development often triggered a change however, not only in terms of the goals that these men had for engagement in weight training activities, but also to the way in which participants viewed their own bodies and how this began to affect their body image dissatisfaction experiences. While this will be discussed in more detail at later stage, it appeared that engagement in weight training activities, while also promoting a degree of positive impact in terms of participants' satisfaction with their own body shape and size, also promoted an opposite effect, increasing the potential at least for the experience of body image dissatisfaction through triggering changes not only to the way that men viewed their own bodies but also to the nature of the goals and motivations that participants had in terms of their muscular development

The Impact of Engagement

Subculture/Community Induction

Weight training engagement, for many of the men interviewed, appeared to have resulted in an induction into a type of 'culture' or 'community' wherein they had come to adopt, whether intentionally or unintentionally, a number of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours which others also engaged in this type of training at a similar level, also embraced. Similar to what was described in the literature review chapter with reference to the work of the likes of Klein (1993), Andrews and colleagues (2005) and Roundtree (2005), who alluded to the existence of a discrete subculture within competitive bodybuilding circles, recreational weight trainers in this study, like competitive bodybuilders in previous research, also appeared to exist within a discrete sub-culture wherein a sense of community was fostered, and a number of shared attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours were adopted. While the nature of this subculture held many similarities to the competitive bodybuilding subculture, some dissimilarities were also apparent as will be discussed further in this section.

Klein (1993), in his study, noted a tendency for competitive bodybuilders to experience a positive sense of connection to other bodybuilders. Through the existence of a range of mutually shared health and lifestyle-based values and

attitudes, particularly those associated with the importance and value of muscularity, a sense of connectedness to others was fostered. While for the majority of recreational weight trainers in this study, weight training was considered a fairly private activity wherein they entered the gym with a strict agenda and were often intolerant of distraction, some similarly described a sense of connection, predominantly to other recreational weight trainers through engagement in weight training activities.

> *Grant: I would say it's a social event depending on where you're training. I've just bought my first home and some of the guys at the gym have said 'oh you can have your own home gym now' and I said 'no I'm definitely not going to' because it's got that whole social aspect of it.*

> *Leon: I remember when I first went there I didn't really know anyone but I've met some cool people, I wouldn't call them good friends but…you get to meet lots of different types of people.*

For some, Carlos for example, digital-based mediums such as internet forums within which he could discuss his own, and observe others', experiences of engagement in weight training activities also appeared to allow for the establishment of this sense of connection to others engaged.

> *Carlos: I've been massively consumed by the gym culture. I read bodybuilding forums and stuff again not because I want to be that big but hearing other people's experiences is cool and because I don't have a large group of mates who are into it nor do I want a large group of mates that are into it. I kind of don't feel like I can talk to people openly about it so I can read online and talk to people about it. Because doing it 3 to 4 hours of your life is a big portion of your life and to be able to talk about it openly is kind of cool…so I tend to jump on forums.*

Participants spoke of a reciprocal relationship existing between themselves and the weight training community. With this, the receipt of support and advice when it came to various aspects of their training was common, with men often

reciprocating the same type of assistance when others were in need of similar support or advice. This type of support network appeared somewhat analogous to the 'gossip network' system which was reported to exist in competitive bodybuilding circles wherein information and advice, sometimes with a questionable scientific basis, was seen to be exchanged or handed down through bodybuilders through word of mouth (Klein, 1993).

A drive to contribute back to the weight training community meant for some, providing encouragement or advice to others less experienced than them. In a way this appeared to stand as a form of recompense for the support and encouragement that they had received from others. Leon in particular appeared to value the capacity to give back to others who were new to the activity or less educated about particular aspects of engagement in weight training activities.

> **Leon: ...***a lot of people come to me for bits of advice. Usually about food and dieting and that sort of stuff rather than weights and that sort of thing but I've had quite a few guys…mates off Facebook asking me for advice which would sort of suggest that they see me as having made some positive improvements…or improvements that they'd like to see in themselves.*

Collectively, a degree of homogeneity appeared to exist among participants with regard to their views about the value of physical exercise, particularly weight training. Reports indicated that participants collectively considered weight training a virtuous and honourable engagement requiring commitment, dedication and effort in order to achieve success. While verbal reports did not highlight the same tendency to tolerate mental and physical pain for the betterment of muscle development that has been noted among competitive bodybuilders (Smith & Stewart, 2012), at least a few participants' behavioural reports highlighted tendencies toward engagement in training despite injury, perhaps indicating that this type of ethos may in fact be alive and well in recreational bodybuilding circles.

Particular tendencies were also noted, as has already been discussed previously, where participants tended to view to their engagement in weight training activities as a kind of project wherein the body was viewed as a modifiable object. Within this, it appeared that participants tended to assess the body very particularly and very critically, noticing any particular 'defects' associated with their body shape and size and attempting to alter these to fit their specific preferences.

Shared attitudes also appeared to be held among the majority of participants with regard to the types of body shapes that were considered desirable as target goals for muscular development. Participants as a whole reportedly gave recognition of, and appreciation for, the time and dedication that professional or competitive bodybuilders put into developing their bodies, though the majority considered that the hyper-muscular physique typically possessed by competitive bodybuilders was aesthetically unappealing and the result of pushing the limits of the human body too far.

> *Brad: I don't like the physiques of bodybuilders…I appreciate what they do but…that's too extreme.*

> *Jordan: It's amazing to see what people can get to. It doesn't appeal to me and I don't ever want to look like that because it's gross…but…it is interesting to see how people can get there…I won't put them down. They put a lot of hard work to get there…but they look ridiculous....they look like freaks.*

> *Neil: …they're just massive. Personally I never want to get that big so there is a line. There'd be a point where no matter what the feedback would be I'd look at myself in the mirror and be like "ok…you've crossed the line now…you're too big.*

> *Leon: Yes there is definitely a too big. The guys that bodybuild just for size, they are training for aesthetics but their idea of aesthetics is completely different from mine.*

While participants' notions of the ideal body shape and size varied to some degree, participants' generally tended to report that the physique they desired differed from the hyper-muscular physique desired by competitive bodybuilders primarily in terms of the level of muscularity desired. While there appears to exist little limit to the size of bodybuilders physiques, participants' ideal physiques tended to be described as more lean, more slender and absent of much of the muscle bulk which competitive bodybuilders typically possess.

> **Carlos**: *The name that always gets pulled up when I'm talking to people is the Brad Pitt in fight club physique. They don't want to be really bulked up like Arnold Swartzeneggar or Jean Claude Van Damme but they want to be lean still and really defined.*

Shared attitudes also appeared to exist with regard to those body types which significantly differed from the muscular ideal, particularly the overweight physique. Participants generally viewed the overweight physique as unattractive, unappealing and something that should be avoided at all costs.

> **Grant**: *Looking at family members or members of the public who are overweight…I'm like…'mate…not good'. I feel like those guys got too comfortable. That's not an attractive look…it just looks unhealthy.*

> **Reuben**: *I'm happy with a few jiggles or wobbles, my girlfriend doesn't care, but I've seen my brother and how overweight he is and it doesn't look nice on anyone.*

> **Neil:** *When you're overweight it's not good. But I don't think there are negative connotations when you see a picture of me over summer and I'm not massive. You wouldn't be like oh yeah he's a bit small whereas I'd want you to see picture of me and be like oh yeah he's massive.*

In line with suggestions from past literature that society as a whole has a tendency to perceive overweight people in a negative way (Grogan, 2008), a

number of participants in this study too appeared to hold similar negative perceptions of overweight people.

> *Fraser: I think everyone should go to gym…there's no reason for you to be fat. My dad is slightly overweight but he refuses to go to the gym. My mum's extremely fit and does hikes and stuff but…I still don't think there's any reason why you should be fat.*

> *Carlos: I'm more disgusted by fat people now…and I feel really bad for this because as I said before I've quit an entire course because I didn't like the way that they talked about other people and back then I thought I was very accepting but now I feel almost like a bit of a sizeist because my body has changed in so many different ways and I've controlled that…and to have fat people saying 'I can't do it'…for me I see them as lazy. I've never felt that in the past but now my views have changed.*

Men in this study appeared to value humility primarily out of concern that the strong focus that they or others engaged in weight training had toward their own bodies would bring them to be viewed as vain or narcissistic. A sense of uneasiness around this topic became obvious through participants' reports wherein most largely tended to play down or show caution around any indication of pride associated with the possession of muscularity. There also appeared a degree of animosity toward those engaged in training that did not share this same sense of humility. Often labeled 'posers', these individuals were described as giving the community and other weight trainers a bad image particularly through the way that they paraded their muscularity.

> *Brad: Yeah…I think a lot of the culture is like that here now…a lot of guys are trying to show off.*

> *Phillip: It's just all posers that are doing it because they're trying to get the girls.*

Jordan: At the moment the mainstream is poser wannabes who only go to the gym because they want that look.

Jordan: It pisses a lot of dudes off at my gym because a lot of the dudes at my gym are power lifters and they don't care for this sudden influx of little kids who have decided that they want to get big.

Impact on Identity

Weight training engagement and the process of muscular development which accompanied this reportedly impacted, for some, upon their own identity development processes, influencing both the way that they viewed themselves as well as the way that others viewed and consequently interacted with them. Similar to suggestions from the likes of (Roundtree, 2005) who noted positive changes in the self-held identities of competitive bodybuilders as a result of weight training engagement, particularly in terms of the strengthening of masculine identities, a number of participants in this study also reported positive identity change experiences as a consequence of weight training at the recreational level.

Visibly noticeable physical changes in body shape and size appeared to allow for some participants to escape from identities which they disliked, while also contributing to the development of new identities which not only lead to increased levels of self-acceptance, but also higher levels of social acceptance. Grant spoke about some of his own experiences during childhood, particularly at school, explaining how as an overweight child his body size and shape negatively influenced his popularity and the way that his peers received him. Analogous to conclusions offered by Grogan (2008) who acknowledged the existence of discrimination and marginalisation for those who do not match up to body ideals, Grant described feeling as though judgments made about his self-worth based predominantly on his appearance often lead to negative judgments from peers and a degree of social exclusion consequently. It appeared that for Grant, peer rejection was somewhat internalised to the point

where negative judgments from others prompted him to then judge himself negatively based on the way that he looked.

The development of a muscular physique through regular weight training appeared to allow for somewhat of an escape for Grant from an identity which he felt had led to him to be received so negatively by those around him. While his personal muscle development journey did not begin until many years following these negative body-related experiences, Grant's explanation indicated that the development of a muscular physique had engendered not only a sense of security, given his perception that he would never be teased or bullied in the same way again, but also a degree of satisfaction which arose from a perception that he now possessed physique that many, including those who perpetrated the teasing and bullying he experienced all those years ago, would now consider desirable.

> **Grant:** *I'm very happy where I am today because I'm the complete opposite of where I was when I was being bullied. If they saw me again today they would definitely say I look completely different.*

> **Grant:** *Not only am I never going to be a fatty again but I'll also maintain this to look good for other women and for other people. That I think might be the subconscious reason why I attend the gym so regularly.*

Fraser described an experience of identity reformation as he began to engage in muscle building activities during his final years at school. Like Grant, Fraser too had been the victim of bullying at the hands of school peers, and for him, weight training was a tool through which he was able not only to escape from bullying and ridicule, but also gain acceptance, respect and recognition as someone who others recognised possessed a degree of strength, physical fitness and muscularity that few others around him enjoyed.

> **Fraser:** *When I went to the school gym a lot of the kids…the drop kicks who used to fuck around and beat up anyone that they wanted to…when they saw that I could bench more than them…because I had been doing*

this for 9 months…they kind of just left you alone and stopped being mean and stopped randomly calling me gay for no reason.

Fraser: …so eventually I was well known for going to the gym because one…I went (to the gym) every day…and two…I was the only one at school who did this sort of thing.

Other participants noted positive changes in the nature of peer relationships as the result of bodily changes associated with weight training. For some, increased muscularity appeared to contribute to a sense of superiority or ascendency over peers and others of the same sex with whom they interacted.

Keith: …just like…being bigger than other people and people that you're around it's like…well you're the biggest sort of thing. Not like in a really arrogant way but sort of that's the image that you have…as bigger than everyone else.

Brad: In a way you sort of feel superior to other guys. You'll be in the gym pumping some big weight and they're pumping some little weight and you feel more masculine or stronger. I'm not a cocky person and don't really go around purposely doing things like that…I think it just gives you a bit of self-esteem.

Similar to what past research has suggested wherein a muscular physique tended to grant competitive bodybuilders a certain level of respect from those around them (Roundtree, 2005), participants in this study also considered that perceived improvements in their own body shape and size, particularly their levels of muscularity, had tended not only to grant them a degree of respect from others, but also to promote a sense of ascendency and dominance over others.

Fraser: I don't like fighting people but I would rather look like you wouldn't want to fight me.

> *Neil: …at least when you're big you kind of...you look bigger so...this is going to sound again quite bad but…you're more intimidating. Whereas when you just get tinier and tinier you don't have that intimidation factor over someone. If there was a fight in town a 70kg dude isn't going to do as much damage to you as a friggin' 120kg rugby player.*

Carlos explained his experiences in terms of a social hierarchy, using the label 'Alpha Male' to describe the level of social standing which he felt his muscular physique had helped him to engender. For Carlos however, much the same as was described as being the case for the aforementioned participants, the power which accompanied this type of status was considered valuable not because it allowed for the denigration or belittlement of others, but because it allowed for the manifestation of a sense of security in terms of his own physical safety.

> *Carlos: One of the things it has helped with is in being the Alpha male. Its become a tool because no one pushes me around in town anymore…whereas if I had gone to town a year ago I used to get trouble from people because I didn't have that muscle mass.*

Improvements in self-esteem and confidence were also noted and as a consequence of positive body and identity change experiences, as has also found been found to be the case in past research (Campbell & Hausenblaus, 2009, Cash, 2004),

> *Keith: It does boost your confidence and self esteem. It makes me feel better about myself knowing that I've changed…knowing that I'm improving and knowing that you're portraying the image that you want to have.*

> *Leon: …whether people actually see you differently I'm not entirely sure but I think in the last year its done a lot for my self-confidence…not that my self-confidence was ever low but I think it has boosted it. I've never had any problems with anxiety or depression but I think that it has boosted it even more. Not to the point where I've developed some sort of*

douchey ego or anything like that but when I'm at the beach or something like...I can take my shirt off if you know what I mean.

For many, improvements in self-esteem associated with body-related changes reportedly had flow on effects in terms of their own behaviour. In particular, increases in self-esteem appeared to be matched by an increased willingness to engage socially with others.

> **Fraser:** *I've become happier from the gym but it also gave me determination and the confidence to do better.*

> **Phillip:** *I'm more willing to get involved in things…just being more extroverted I guess.*

As participants tended to perceive muscularity as being a key contributing factor to their own physical attractiveness, increases in muscularity and the improved self-esteem which resulted from this appeared to result in improved confidence for men, particularly when it came to approaching and interacting with the opposite sex.

> **Neil:** *I definitely feel a lot more confident going up to a girl now I'm a bit bigger then when I was just normal. Obviously there's the personality side but if there's just two random dudes walking up trying to pick up the same girl I'd definitely feel more confident being the bigger more muscular dude.*

Psychological Impacts

A sense of direction and purpose was reportedly propagated for participants as a result of regular weight training engagement. While, as previously mentioned, some participants considered that the routine associated with their weight training engagement possessed somewhat of a sacrificial quality, some also tended to value the ritual-like routineness which accompanied their training,

holding the view that this engendered a sense of direction and forward momentum in their lives.

> *Fraser: One positive of weight training is it gives you a sense of direction and motivation to get out in the mornings and enjoy…you know like…yes I can go to the gym today.*

The setting of goals was a common practice among participants and not only lead to the strengthening of a sense of personal direction and purpose, but also contributed to the development of a more positive sense of self as success was experienced in accomplishing the goals participants' had set out for themselves.

> *Sam: The results you get make you feel like you've accomplished something.*

> *Keith: It's more about self-satisfaction…like oh…I've put on 2 kg in the last month or two so it's like…I feel happy with myself…like…trying to improve and seeing these improvements makes me feel good I guess.*

> *Stephen: Yes it's a good feeling to achieve a goal…and when you have a long-term goal such as getting in better shape or losing weight…there's always a positive psychological pay off for that.*

While the majority of participants did not report personal experiences of diagnosable mental health issues, many however, reported viewing weight training engagement as a tool through which they could not only escape from the stresses of everyday living, but also constructively manage and discharge the stress and other negative emotions which they often carried with them throughout the day.

> *Leon: It's almost like an escape mechanism I guess…not that I'm escaping anything but…you just get an hour to yourself and you get to put the headphones in. It was really good during exam times you just take that hour of the day and forget about the stress and go and train.*

> *Phillip: It actually provides a good break when I'm at uni. I'll be in the lab all morning then I'll go to the gym and freshen up a bit.*

Interestingly, for Carlos in particular, who reported difficulty with the management of his mood, weight training appeared significantly important, perhaps even crucial, to his psychological well-being, appearing to act as a tool through which he could escape from negative emotions.

> *Carlos: …There's a quote by Henry Rollins who said his best antidepressant was the gym…and he said how the iron…meaning the weights…never lies, and that's kind of the way it was. I knew that any day I could go to the gym anytime…because its 24 open hours a day…and it'll be there…and the weights are always going to be the same. You can go there and put your headphones on and no ones going to talk to you and you just do your own thing. And to be perfectly honest that's probably the thing that kept me alive when I went through the worst…probably darkest…days of my life. And you know I'd go there and afterwards the endorphins would be running and I'd feel good about myself for these fleeting moments before I went to bed and then I'd wake up the next day and think oh man my life is over…why have I thrown away everything?*

For Carlos, weight training appeared to stand partly as a form of self-driven intervention. Rather than using substances or formal psychological intervention as a means of managing his psychological distress, it appeared as though Carlos used weight training as a primary tool for the management of such difficulties.

> *Carlos: …the endorphins gave that feeling of happiness that I didn't get anywhere else…and I know that a lot of my mates would get their happiness from smoking weed or whatever but I don't like the idea of using drugs as a tool to cope with stuff like that so I wanted to cope with it myself…and unfortunately at times when I should have asked for help I*

*didn't…but I worked my way through it and the gym became a tool to
deal with that.*

Physical Impacts

Perhaps expectedly, and in concert with previous research findings (Andrews et
al., 2005), a number of participants claimed to have experienced a range of
physical benefits as a result of regular engagement in weight training activities.
Among participants whose weight training participation had been influenced
somewhat by a drive for improved sporting performance, engagement in muscle
development activities was considered particularly beneficial in terms of
improvements in strength, speed and agility.

> **Keith:** *I could be a lot more physical playing rugby and better in contact
> and stuff like that.*

> **Sam:** *…you can just feel that your body is different…like…just going for
> jogs…I could feel that I was way faster just from leg work and running.*

As well as experiencing improvements in sporting performance, improvements
in physical strength also appeared to improve participants' ability to carry out
more general physical tasks commonly encountered in everyday life.

> **Neil:** *It helps like…around work because my work is quite physical so
> like…carrying stuff…it definitely helps when you're stronger than your
> average person and…you just feel a lot better if you watch someone else
> struggling to do it and you're not really struggling that much [Laughs].*

> **Brad:** *not just looking good it helps with everyday tasks. You have a
> physical advantage over somebody that doesn't go to the gym. You're
> more able and I'd rather be more able than less able.*

As participants found themselves becoming more physically capable, this in turn appeared to promote a greater degree of positive self-evaluation and fostered the development of a more positive sense of self among participants

Well-being also appeared to be affected by biochemical and hormonal corollaries which accompanied weight training engagement. Many alluded in particular, to the experience of a 'physical high' very soon after, and in the few hours following a workout, a consequence which tended to be recognised as resulting from the release of 'feel-good' hormones following a period of physical exertion. Sam suggested that weight training made him feel physically healthy, and described that while he often felt fatigued in the immediate hours following a workout, this was actually viewed positively as an indication that he had pushed himself hard enough to make positive advances in terms of muscle growth and strength development.

> *Sam: …you just feel like you have a whole lot more energy and you feel so much better about yourself. I know in the mornings when you've done a big workout the night before you get a mean nights sleep and when you go to work your body just feels good because it's recovering and you know its been worked hard.*

For many, the physical benefits experienced as a result of regular engagement in weight training not only provided benefits in terms of improvements in physical heath and well-being, but there also appeared to exist a sense of connection between the physical nature and consequences of weight training engagement and positive outcomes in terms of psychological well-being.

> *Sam: The physical aspect of working out can improve the mental side of how you feel…like…if you're not working out and you're not doing anything and eating bad then you're not going to feel good…you're not going to have a positive outlook on life.*

Summary

While initially utilised by some participants as a method through which they perceived they could improve their own satisfaction with their body shape and size, this did not appear to be the primary reason, at least initially, for engagement in these types of activities for the majority of participants. As the process of muscular development began however, engagement for many participants did appear to become more about the continuation or maintenance of progress with regard to the process of muscular development than any other cited goal for most participants.

As part of the engagement in weight training activities participants tended to sense the experience of a process of initiation into what many saw was a weight training community or culture comparable to that noted to exist among similar groups such as professional bodybuilders. As a member of this kind of community participants noted a sense of relationship to other members, reporting also the adoption of a number of shared attitudes and values which connected them, and perhaps separated them somewhat, from those outside of the community. Participants noted changes, mostly positive, in terms of their own self-held as well as their social identities, and a number of positive psychological and physical corollaries were also reported.

B. Weight Training Engagement and Body Image Experiences

The nature of the relationship that weight training and muscular development appeared to have with participant's body image experiences was a very interesting one. Perhaps most interesting was the fact that weight training appeared to have both positive and negative, or what might perhaps better be explained as opposing, effects in terms of men's body image dissatisfaction experiences.

Positive Impact

Participant reports tended to suggest that to some degree, muscular development through engagement in weight training was a method through which satisfaction with body image could be improved. Consistent with findings from past research which found improvements in body satisfaction due to the bodily changes which occurred for individuals regularly engaged in weight training activities (Depcik & Williams, 2004; Lepage & Crowther, 2010; Williams & Cash, 2001), participants in this study also reportedly experienced some degree of improvement in their own sense of satisfaction with their bodies as a consequence of the increases in muscularity experienced through regularly engaging in weight training activities.

> *Brad: When you look in the mirror and you're satisfied with your body it really makes you feel good…you praise yourself for getting where you wanted to be.*

> *Sam: I think one of the reasons I stick and at keep going hard is because you can see the results. When you see the results you just want more.*

> *Fraser: There's nothing better than seeing yourself in the mirror when you're pumped. And the ability to touch your shoulders…when you can't do that it's a pretty good feeling.*

Negative Impact

As was highlighted in parts of the previous discussion however, while weight training engagement did appear to have a positive effect in terms of participants' body image satisfaction experiences, an opposing negative effect also appeared to be present, due in particular, to the way in which engagement in the process of muscular development seemed to influence how men viewed and experienced their own bodies.

As has been highlighted previously, appearance focus, particularly a focus on muscularity, appeared to be magnified to a significant degree as muscular

development became a central focus in participants' lives. With this, men in this study, who were all engaged in regular weight training activities, also appeared to possess a tendency to objectify their own bodies and to assess their body shape and size in a very intensive, critical, and sometimes even distorted manner. This, in turn, appeared to increase the potential for negative judgments and consequent dissatisfaction with body shape and size.

The nature in which improvement in body shape and size through weight training was desired also appeared to have a potentially negative impact on participants' body image experiences. A tendency for muscular development to be viewed as an ever-continuing process which did not include a specific end goal appeared to mean that there was no specific point at which men would cease feeling at least some sense of dissatisfaction with their body shape and size. As highlighted in at least one participant's reports, the possibility of this drive pushing participants to the point where those around them began to view their muscular development as abnormal or excessive did appear to be a very real possibility for men engaged in weight training at this level.

> **Keith:** *"In the last year I've had heaps of friends…even my own family and some for my close friends…even my girlfriend saying like…'you're probably getting too big you should probably just stop'…like… 'you're probably getting too big'… but I'm just like 'nah'…I just want to keep improving and keep getting better."*

Summary

To summarise, it appears possible that engagement in weight training, while also resulting in a number of benefits for participants particularly in terms of a degree of improvement in satisfaction with body size and shape, may also pose some potential risks for men in terms of potentially contributing to both the development and maintenance of body image dissatisfaction. Due in particular to the body evaluation tendencies which men appear to adopt as they begin the process of muscular development, even for those for whose engagement did not begin as a method of improving satisfaction or reducing dissatisfaction with body and size, muscular development appeared for some men to in fact foster a

continuing sense of dissatisfaction through the nature of the focus on the body that engagement in the process of muscular development reportedly influenced

The next chapter will provide some concluding comments with regard to this research project. Key findings will be explicated and the implications of these findings for relevant parties will be highlighted. A number of limitations of this study are discussed and some suggestions for future research are offered.

CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion

Key Findings and Implications

This study set out to explore the body image dissatisfaction experiences of young adult men regularly engaged in recreational weight training within the New Zealand context.

Previous research, typically undertaken internationally, has tended to indicate that body image dissatisfaction is an experience growing in prevalence among men. This experience has been shown to negatively affect well-being not only at the non-clinical level but also at the clinical level. Findings from this study provided mixed indications with regard to the true impact of dissatisfaction experiences for men. While, according to verbal reports, participants' body image dissatisfaction was generally described as being experienced as not much more than a mild annoyance, behavioural reports of avoidance behaviours and tendencies toward continuing to train despite injury highlighted a tendency for participants to downplay the actual impact of these experiences. In addition, for at least one participant, while not the single causal factor contributing to his mood difficulties, dissatisfaction with body shape and size was shown to have a significant impact on the development of more severe clinically diagnosable mental health difficulties.

Society as a whole, but more specifically health care professionals and the families and friends of young adult men need to be aware of the growing prevalence of body image difficulties among men, the potential impact that body image difficulties can have for men, as well as the tendency for men not to talk about, or to minimise the actual impact of, such difficulties. The promotion of a greater degree of openness among men to talking about such difficulties may help in the prevention of further and more severe downstream difficulties associated with this phenomenon.

Previous research, again, typically undertaken internationally, has highlighted the importance of a number of key influences in impacting upon the

development of body image dissatisfaction difficulties among men. The most well supported framework for explaining these influences, the sociocultural model, has provided an understanding wherein body image dissatisfaction among men is thought to be influenced primarily by the media, through their unrelenting endorsement of a muscular male physique which is typically unobtainable by the large majority of everyday men. Families and peers have also been highlighted as instrumental in the development of dissatisfaction for men, particularly through the provision of appearance-focused feedback. Social comparison and internalisation processes have also been explicated as key intermediary mediators in the development of this type of dissatisfaction for men. Findings from this study provided support for the sociocultural model as a framework through which the influences for the development and maintenance of men's body image dissatisfaction could be explained. Most apparent was the influence of the media, who, through a number of different mediums, were seen by participants as the key drivers of societal-wide messages about the need to possess a muscular physique in order to be both happy and successful. Participants considered that advertising media influenced their own dissatisfaction experiences primarily through the use of unrealistically shaped models whose physiques they promised men could obtain through the consumption of their advertised products and services. A greater awareness of the effect of this type of marketing on men's views of their own bodies is needed, particularly among advertisers and marketers, as well as among government policy makers who have the power to promote the employment of more positive and realistic advertising figures. The entertainment media too were found to project to men images of atypically muscular figures against whom they compared themselves and consequently experienced dissatisfaction with their own bodies. Again, recognition of the impact of the quality of this type of media exposure is needed among those who produce this type of entertainment who with a greater awareness of the negative impact of the use of significantly muscular figures on men's body image experiences may be able to reduce this impact through working toward a greater level of diversity with regard to the types of entertainers being presented. A greater level of awareness and/or education is perhaps needed among men themselves who, with an increased awareness of the exaggerated nature of the body shapes and

sizes being projected to them, may be able to minimise the degree to which they internalise unrealistic figured as something they should be working towards. The Internet, particularly social media, appeared to have a very significant influence on participants' body image experiences. This platform exists as an agent for social comparison, both to universal targets and to peers. The interactive nature of engagement with this medium also tends to encourage individuals to actively seek out material, be it pictures, forums or feedback, which can alter appearance evaluations. This characteristics appears to make this a unique form of influence for men's body dissatisfaction definitely worthy of further research. Peers, family members and intimate partners were also found to be an influence for the development of body dissatisfaction among men, particularly through their role in providing negative appearance feedback. A greater level of education or awareness appears to be needed among these aforementioned parties in order to highlight for them the actual negative impact that appearance commentary can have on both the short term and the long term body image experiences of men.

Only a very small amount of research appears to be able describe the relationship between engagement in weight training activities and the body image experiences of men. Research which has explored the experiential nature of engagement in competitive bodybuilding has found this this type of engagement to be a largely positive experience. Typically, men engaging at the competitive level are thought to engage with a specific subculture or community with which a sense of connectedness and relationship develops. Benefits are also seen to be experienced linked to identity, body satisfaction, self-esteem and many other aspects of well-being. Findings from this study also appear to indicate that men's engagement in weight training activities at a more recreational level is also a largely positive experience. Some more negative implications were also highlighted however. As in bodybuilding circles, recreational weight trainers reportedly existed within a community wherein a number of shared values, attitudes and behaviours are fostered. While the process of engagement and the muscular development which results from engagement appears to produce some benefits for men, both physical and psychological, some negative corollaries were also highlighted in this study

particularly with regard to the way in which men viewed and experienced their own bodies, and consequently, how dissatisfaction with body shape and size was experienced. Findings suggested that engagement in weight training activities promoted dissatisfaction with body shape in size through the promotion of the development of a number of tendencies for men associated particularly with appearance evaluation. Men were found to objectify the body. This in turn appeared to result in a tendency toward very specifically, and often very critically, scrutinising the shape and size of their own bodies. In addition, men highlighted a tendency to view their own bodies in a distorted manner, reporting that they often perceived their bodies as less muscular than others did which in turn led to the experience of dissatisfaction. These findings have implications for a number of parties including health professionals, those working in the fitness and leisure industry, the families of men engaged in recreational weight training activities and men who are themselves engaged in these types of activities. For all of these parties awareness needs to raised as to the potential impact of engagement in weight training activities for men's wellbeing. While a wide range of positive benefits tend to result from regular engagement in these types of activities, some more potentially detrimental corollaries may also be experienced related particularly to the way in which the process of muscular development may impact upon men's views of their own bodies.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations of this study which need to be highlighted. Firstly, recognition must be given to the small number of participants interviewed in this study, as well as to the narrow geographical location within which men were recruited. While a great deal of consistency existed across participants' experiences, findings cannot, and should not, be interpreted to represent the collective experiences of all men in New Zealand. Additionally, the qualitative methodology chosen for this investigation was nominated with the aim of allowing for an in-depth exploration rather than a widespread and general enquiry. Consequently, this research is able to provide very specific details of the experiences of a small number of men but is not able to explicate

broadly the experiences of all men.

It is also important to recognise the gender of the participants and, as has been previously mentioned, the potential tendency for men to be reluctant to discuss their own body image concerns with others. Being male and possessing some similarities to participants in terms of prior personal experience both with muscularity-focused body dissatisfaction and with engagement in weight training activities may have helped to improve the comfort of participants in speaking about their body image experiences. Conversely, it is also possible that my own gender may have negatively influenced participants' willingness to share their own experiences through heightened concern about displaying weakness or distress to another man. The researcher's attempts at developing rapport with participants prior to enquiring into areas which were more personal in nature were aimed at increasing comfort among participants when it came to speaking about such experiences. Despite the researcher's efforts it is possible that he was not able to capture completely the exact nature of participants' experiences due to some degree of reluctance on the part of participants' when it came to sharing their own personal experiences.

Also important to note is the fact that participants were men who chose to contribute towards a discussion of their own body image dissatisfaction. Participants interviewed in this study therefore, may differ somewhat from men who did not take part. This fact is unavoidable and is a function of the nature of fair and ethical research. The implications of this however are important to acknowledge when coming to recognise the utility of the research findings.

Finally, and with specific respect for the portion of the research which investigated the nature of participants' body image dissatisfaction experiences, a lack of objective criteria through which the actual degree of distress experienced by participants associated with their negative body image experiences could be specifically measured meant some difficulty with clearly explicating the exact nature of this experience. Given the exact severity of this type of experience may be easier to illustrate through the use of an objective measure rather than through verbal reports, future research may choose to

combine qualitative interviews with the use of an objective measure in order to gain a more specific understanding of the nature of participants' experiences.

Suggestions for Future Research

There were a number of key aims for this study. The first was to understand the nature and quality of men's body image dissatisfaction experiences. The second was to highlight the influences thought to be important in the development and maintenance of body image dissatisfaction experiences. The final aim was to investigate the relationship between engagement in body development techniques, weight training more specifically, and experiences of body image dissatisfaction. Future research may focus on developing a more in depth understanding of any one of these more specific research areas in order to both validate and/or extend on to findings from this study. Specific suggestions for future research include:

- Investigating male body image dissatisfaction experiences during childhood and adolescence. Research, both past and present, has shown that negative body image experiences may begin for men as early as childhood or adolescence. An understanding of the nature of male experiences during this time may therefore help to explicate any risks, psychological or physical, related to body image difficulties for boys during these development periods.
- Identifying men from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and exploring how they understand and experience body image dissatisfaction.
- Examining the attitudes of those responsible for media production, i.e. media advertisers, to gain an understanding of their perspective on the issue of body image dissatisfaction among men and their views on the potential role that they themselves may play in this type of experience among men.
- A more detailed investigation of the influence of the media on muscularity-focused body image dissatisfaction among men. Given that Internet-based social media forums such as Facebook were shown in this study to have an important, and somewhat unique, influence on the

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body image dissatisfaction experiences of men, a more in-depth investigation into the role of newer forms of media for male body image experiences is required.

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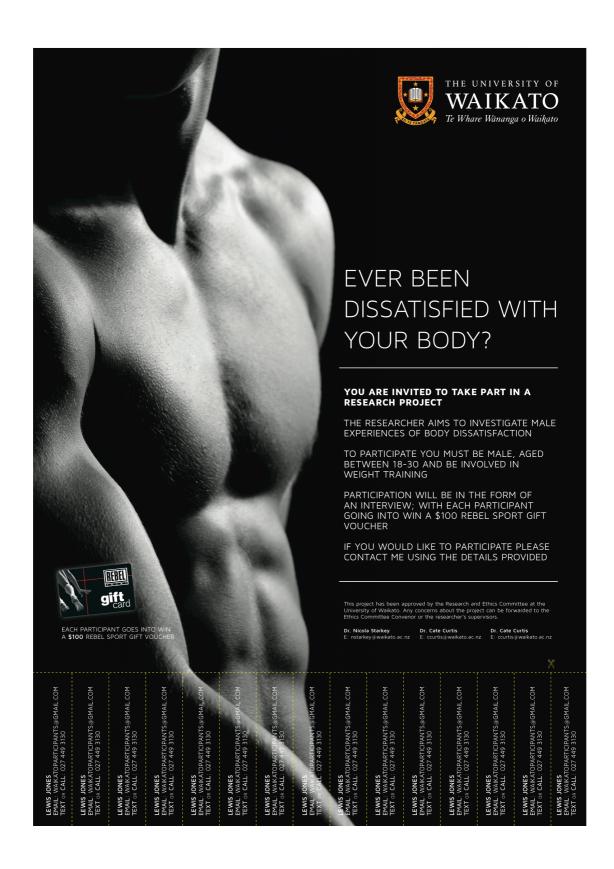Stern, B. B. (2003). Masculinism(s) and the Male Image: What does it mean to be a man? In. Reichert, T. & Lambiase, J. (Eds.) *Sex in Advertising: Perspectives on the erotic appeal.* London; Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

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Appendix A – Poster Advertisement

Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet

School of Psychology
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

Participant Information Sheet

Who is the researcher?

My name is Lewis Jones, I am a Clinical Psychology student undertaking Master's research through the University of Waikato.

Who would I like to talk to?

I would like to talk to young adult men, aged between who 18 and 30, who are involved in weight training and are currently, or have been at some point in their lifetime, dissatisfied with their body shape or size.

What am I hoping to understand?

• How young men who are involved in weight training understand and experience body dissatisfaction

• Whether body dissatisfaction might be linked to other difficulties

• What factors men think might influence body dissatisfaction i.e. media exposure, comparison to weight training peers or comments from friends or family

•

What do I require from you?

I would like to interview you about your experiences. As will be explained in more depth a bit later, all information will be anonymised meaning that your thoughts or feelings will not be linked to you personally. The length of the interviewing process can vary, but I am expecting that this will take between 30-60 minutes to complete. Breaks can be taken whenever they are required.

Will your information be kept safe and confidential?

Yes indeed! All data will be anonymised and no data will be linked to any names meaning that no one, other than myself, will be able to identify who said what. Only myself, as the researcher, will have access to any data gathered, and when not in use this data will either be kept in a secure electronic file (if it is electronic data) or in a locked filing cabinet (if it is physical data).

Can you withdraw from the research?

Yes of course. As a participant within this research project you have the right to withdraw at any time, and please do not hesitate to speak up should you not feel comfortable answering a particular question or talking about a particular area. All the data collected from you is your property and will only be used with your permission. Following the interview process you will have two weeks to inform me if you would not like your data included further in my research.

Where can you access the thesis findings?

A summary sheet containing the main research findings will be emailed to each participant. Additionally, an electronic version of the full written thesis can also be emailed to you, please let me know if you would like a copy. Any specific questions about the research findings can be directed to the researcher through email at: waikatoparticipants@gmail.com.

Where can you access psychological support?

Lifeline Waikato are a free telephone counseling service who can be contacted should you be feeling down, distressed or anxious following the interview processes or at any other stage. These telephone counsellors are trained and experienced in working with individuals with difficulties ranging from mild life problems to severe mental health problems. Lifeline Waikato can be contacted at 0800 543354.

The University of Waikato also offer free counselling services for students of the University. If you are a student of the University and feel that you would like someone to talk to then these counselors can be contacted on (07) 838 4037.

What will you get out of the process?

By participating you will go into the draw to win a $100 Rebel Sport voucher. You will also have the opportunity to provide valuable insight into an area in which fairly little is known. You may also learn something valuable about yourself!

What should you do if you'd like to take part?

Get in touch with me and we can organize a time and a place to talk. I can be contacted through email at: waikatoparticpants@gmail.com. Alternatively you are welcome to text or call me on 0274493130

This project has been approved by the ethics committee within the School of Psychology at the University of Waikato. If you have any concerns regarding this project please contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr. Nicola Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail

nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz). The researcher's supervisors may also be contacted if you have any concerns (Dr Cate Curtis, e-mail: ccurtis@waikato.ac.nz or Dr. Tess Moeke-Maxwell e-mail: tessmm@waikato.ac.nz)

Appendix C – Consent Form

Consent Form

Ψ School of Psychology

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

PARTICIPANT'S COPY

Research Project:

Name of Researcher:

Name of Supervisor (if applicable):

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant's Name:_____Signature:_____Date:_____

Consent Form

Ψ School of Psychology

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project:

Name of Researcher:

Name of Supervisor (if applicable):

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee.

Participant's Name: _____Signature:_____ Date:_____

Appendix D – Interview Guide

1. Introductions and formalities

Introductions

Introduce myself

Ask if they know what the research is about - Refer to the participant information sheet if necessary.

Introduce the agenda for the interview process

- General information about you – the participant
- You and your experiences with weight training
- You and your experiences with body dissatisfaction
- Your ideas about the types of things that might influence body dissatisfaction in men in New Zealand
- Conclusions and de-brief

- Interview length – 1 hour to 1 hour and a half
- Talk about recording the interview
- Confidentiality & Privacy – no personal identification
- Do not have to answer anything not comfortable answering. Can withdraw from the interview at any time
- Explain the transcription and revision process
- Ask if there are any more questions that the participant has.
- Get participant to sign the consent form and also consent verbally.

2. General demographic information

Can you please tell me a bit about yourself firstly?

- How old are you?
- What do you do for a job?

- Where are you from?
- Where do you live?
- What do you do in your spare time?

3. Weight training information

"Can you please tell me a bit about your weight training experiences? How long you've been training, where you train, reasons for training etc…?"

- How long have you been involved in weight training?
- Why did you begin weight training?
- What influences your training? Sports? Strength? Aesthetic appeal? Health?
- Where do you train?
- When do you train and how often
- Do you train alone or with others? Do you have friends or a partner who train?
- How do you train – what body parts do you work out (all or specific parts)
- Experience with supplements/steroids?
- Diet and eating?
- Does training take time out of other activities?
- Training and relationships? Positive effects (Friendships). Negative effects?
- Any experiences of not being able to train for any reason? How did this make you feel?
- What do you think are the positives of weight training?
- What do you think are the negatives of weight training?

4. Body dissatisfaction experiences

Your experiences of body dissatisfaction?

- Happened in the past or still happens?

- Any dissatisfaction with muscle building progress?
- What are/were you dissatisfied with? General muscularity or particular body parts?
- How would you feel if one day something happened and you were no longer able to weight train? How would this make you feel?
- Do you think that body dissatisfaction is related to self-esteem and confidence, depression and anxiety? Any personal experiences?
- How would/did you feel when you look in the mirror? What were/do you think when you see yourself?

5. Perceptions of factors influencing development and maintenance of body dissatisfaction

What factors do you consider most influence body dissatisfaction in men in New Zealand?

Prompts:
- Media
- Western culture
- NZ culture
- Rugby culture
- Your own cultural background
- Social comparison
- Parent feedback
- Peer feedback
- Self-discrepancy

6. Conclusions:

- Thank participant for their time and for agreeing to participate
- Talk about draw to win prize, when this will be drawn etc.
- Talk about fact that we have been talking about some personal issues, ask how participant is feeling and explain where they can go if they'd like to talk to someone (lifeline, university counseling services)

- Talk about what will happen with audio recordings and when and how they will be contacted to review transcripts