THE MAN IN THE MIRROR:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF MEGAMUSCULINITY

by

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Abstract

The inextricable link between muscularity and masculinity has been increasingly accentuated over the past forty years, resulting in behaviours that can become unhealthy from a variety of perspectives. Gender is often enacted through manipulating and altering morphologies which can ultimately affect the way one perceives her or his own body. This thesis introduces the term megamusculinity, embodying the links between corporality, muscularity and masculinity. Primarily affecting men, megamusculinity is an exemplar of gender performance where one follows strict dietary and exercise regimens in the pursuit of (gross)muscularity. Much of the academic discussion of gender and body perception focuses primarily upon body size. Shifting the emphasis from body size to regimes of the self, this analysis posits megamusculinity and eating disorders as parallel pursuits, not antithetical realms of extreme morphologies.

Foucauldian logic will be blended with Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory to examine megamusculinity as gender performativity with a multitude of social underpinnings. In a world where rules and resources (following Giddens’ articulation of structures) shape everything individuals do, what is occurring in the case of megamusculinity is individuals are actively creating a hypertrophied reality by negotiating their way through the disciplinary constraints of various social structures. This thesis builds upon the psychological construction of muscle dysmorphia as a clinical disorder and introduces megamusculinity, situated not as a “personal trouble of milieu” but a “public issue of social structure” (Mills 1959: 8). In doing so, this thesis will demonstrate that the body perception disturbances of certain men are influenced by experiences with particular social factors/institutions, and positions megamusculinity parallel to eating disorders by focusing upon the regimes of the self involved in altering one’s morphology.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Altering and manipulating morphology is intimately connected with gender constructions and performance, which can ultimately affect the way one perceives her or his own body. Psychological and sociological analyses of women’s body (dis)satisfactions have been thoroughly documented and have primarily focused upon the psychological and social factors associated with eating disorders. The same academic attention has not yet been accorded to body (dis)satisfaction amongst men; those studies that do exist have largely been psychological in nature, leaving a dearth in sociological literature examining body image/(dis)satisfaction concerns for men. This thesis will focus on the sociological analysis of men’s body concerns by introducing and examining a phenomenon I refer to as “megamusculinity” (which embodies the links between corporality, musculaarity and masculinity).

My interest in this topic began five years ago when I was introduced to the clinical disorder of muscle dysmorphia (MDM) by a professor at Trent University. In my early undergraduate years I was unaware that scholars were examining body concerns for boys and men. I began to research MDM and found that most of the analyses were psychological, stressing individualized explanations for this “disorder.” This prompted me to question why sociologists had neglected such an important realm of study, and while there may be valid reasons as to why men’s body concerns have not been afforded as strong a voice as women’s (e.g. the difficulty in getting male participants to fully open up about such an emotional topic), it is a vital social phenomenon that demands sociological investigation.
I have introduced the term “megamusculinity” as a way of bringing the clinical “disorder” of MDM into the purview of sociology. While only relatively recently recognized in academic literature, MDM (a subcategory of obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder) refers to “an excessive preoccupation with body size and muscularity” (Chung 2001; Pope, Phillips and Olivardia 2000: 10). The desire for muscularity has not evaded the grasp of psychological discourses attaching clinical labels to obsessive individual pursuits. In these psychological analyses of MDM (previously referred to as megarexia or bigorexia), any acknowledgment of social influences is often solely focused upon the media and early childhood socialization (Olivardia 2001; Pope et al. 2000). One of the major findings of this thesis is that, ironically perhaps, in many ways megamusculinity parallels eating disorders; what can be viewed as antithetical realms of body size, are in fact quite similar when one focuses upon the social factors that influence the desire to change aspects about their morphology through regimens of the self.

This thesis will contribute to the sociological understanding of men’s body concerns by introducing the term megamusculinity to account for perceived inadequacies in musculature by examining particular social forces that contribute (or constitute) this phenomenon. Part one consists of chapters two through four and focuses upon establishing the framework and theoretical foundation used to explore the social phenomenon of megamusculinity. Chapter two defines and critically examines MDM and megamusculinity to argue that the psychological construct of MDM can be more accurately analyzed when it is situated within a social context where the various social factors which influence individual self-perceptions are more thoroughly examined.
Adopting the framework of structural interactionism allows this analysis to more explicitly blend micro and macro levels of analyses into a meso realm which accounts for both structure and agency. C. Wright Mills’ (1959) distinction between “personal troubles of milieu” and “public issues of social structure” assist in solidifying megamusculinity as a sociological phenomenon that demands investigation; while Charles Horton Cooley’s (1922) concept of the looking glass self further illustrates the idiosyncratic self-perceptions of individual males as influenced by larger social structures.

In chapter three I explore the body as a project to be worked upon by examining and incorporating Judith Butler’s (1996) understanding of gender performativity to explicate the influence of constructions of masculinities upon self-perception. With varying definitions of masculinities, and viewing gender as a continuum (rather than dichotomous categorizations), this chapter briefly explores cross-cultural masculinities; specifically by tracing Connell’s (2000a) argument that although definitions of masculinity do vary between cultures, the existence of a dominant form of hegemonic masculinity cross-culturally is indisputable. A discussion of the tenets of hegemonic masculinity, set forth by Connell, shows that boys/youths/men are often attempting to prove masculinity through the body: performing gender by displaying adherence to hegemonic masculinity through manipulating morphology. Moving away from the psychological discourse of male body dissatisfaction as muscle dysmorphia, this chapter will show that megamusculinity can be viewed as gender performance through morphology: situating it as a complex social phenomenon that involves much more than individual failing.
Using a sociological framework that operates at the meso level of analysis (including Mills’ and Cooley’s work here) and accounts for the significance of gender as a performance through morphology, helps one begin to situate megamusculinity within the purview of sociology. Chapter four develops a sociological theoretical foundation to further explore social factors that constitute megamusculinity. By introducing this term (megamusculinity) to describe an important realm of study that has been neglected by sociologists, a solid theoretical foundation needs to be established to lend credence to the arguments presented in this thesis. The influential work of Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens is detailed in the first two sections of this chapter. Beginning by interrogating Foucault’s understanding of the macro principles of discipline, regulation, power, knowledge and bio-power, operating under the larger discourse of governmentality, leads into a discussion of his articulation of the body. Here, I shift to examining the more micro realms of the self, identity and individualism through care and practices/technologies of the self.

Giddens’ double hermeneutic approach to sociological research, as well as structuration theory, assists this project in articulating a phenomenon that could easily be explained with psychological terms, from a sociological viewpoint. Rules and resources, which enable and constrain action, shape how one sees the world and is in turn created by the social world around us; this notion, according to Giddens, thus emphasizes the reflexive capacities of human agents. Giddens’ work is incorporated here in an attempt to bridge micro and macro realms, since he has explored the macro domain of structures and how this becomes internalized or operationalized at the micro level of agency and reflexivity. Whereas Foucault brilliantly analyzes the macro realm of power, knowledge,
governmentality and biopolitics as aspects of a disciplinary society, he neglects a thorough investigation of the micro world of agency. Considering that the overall framework of this analysis is structural interactionism, I am concerned with adequately bridging the micro/macro divide and have utilized the work of Foucault and Giddens to assist in this endeavor. Foucault’s insights will be woven through Giddens’ theory of structuration, and in doing so, a theory will emerge that emphasizes both the intricacies of disciplinary society (Foucault) while situating agency at the fore (Giddens) in order to show how megamusculinity is created/produced/reproduced.

The sub-title of this thesis is borrowed from Giddens’ *The Constitution of Society* (1984), as this thesis introduces a new term to apply to a social phenomenon and is interested in examining the social underpinnings of megamusculinity to shed light onto this new domain of study. Part one sets the theoretical groundwork used throughout part two in order to examine selected social structures that constitute, in Giddens’ sense of the term, megamusculinity. It is important to stress that the topics chosen for chapters five, six and seven represent only a few social forces that contribute to this phenomenon and are not an exhaustive representation of all possible social underpinnings of megamusculinity. Chapter five examines how masculinity is internalized based upon one’s class position: specifically the working-class. Several classic texts on working-class youth/adult cultures are examined including Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb’s *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1973), Paul Willis’ *Learning to Labour* (1977) (as well as the updated *Learning to Labor in New Times* (2004)), and Paul Corrigan’s *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (1979), in order to complete a thematic analysis of these texts, examining the disciplinary structure of class (which is inextricably linked with particular
cultures), inherent with particular rules and resources, which enable and constrain behaviour and choices. I am interested in understanding working-class interpretations and internalizations of masculinity as megamusculinists make considerable material investments in the constitution of their bodies, despite the limited financial resources at their disposal.

The material investments needed to obtain the hypermuscular male morphology valorized in the youth cultures examined in chapter five, leads into an analysis of the role of the physical fitness industry in defining what it means to be a man. Chapter six begins by exploring megamusculinity within the contemporary culture of performance by examining the social construction of health, views of the body and discourses of health promotion, while using men’s “heath” and lifestyle magazines to support the discussion of the role of the media in defining popular health (specifically in relation to the construction of “healthy bodies”). Megamusculinists may consult the popular health discourses in these magazines that frame health as something dependent upon fitness.

The focus of this chapter is not upon institutionalized regimes of health education: rather, with popular discourses of what I would call health promotion as demonstrated through magazines geared to men’s “health.” These popular health discourses facilitate bio-power on a more micro level, in the context of megamusculinity, as men consult various popular sources and use the “health” information contained to regulate themselves. Without pursuing an in-depth content analysis, I briefly analyze these magazines (used as illustrative examples) as part of the disciplinary structure of the media drawn upon by boys and men that not only organizes behaviour and choices but also influences the reflexive project of the self. As a disciplinary structure, these lifestyle magazines
elucidate how men’s bodies are subject to regulation through the discourses that circulate, which present a commodified masculinity operating under the guise of “health.”

Constructions of health and messages from the media are explored as factors that contribute to the phenomenon of megamusculinity due to their role in constructing ideal types of male bodies (focusing upon musculature and adherence to tenets of hegemonic masculinity), under the guise of “health” and “fitness.” It would be naïve to conclude that megamusculinists are merely participating in health enhancing behaviours. I would argue that they are instead engaging in self-regulation, reflexivity and discipline after internalizing the social construction of the ideal male body. I contend that megamusculinists are drawn into a physical regimen of self-discipline, control and self-reflexivity, but are not adhering to the role of a “good citizen” because the health discourse they pursue is popular in nature. Consequently, megamusculinity appears to be an extreme embrace (rather than a rejection) of popular health discourses that conflate health with fitness and fitness becomes equated with muscularity and fat loss. This chapter argues that these men are adhering to a masculine construction of popular health that strays from esoteric definitions (e.g. that of the World Health Organization) and instead focuses upon the fitness to be a man.

Conflating health with fitness is crucial to the messages of ideal male bodies portrayed through the media. An important realm of the physical fitness industry is the institution of sport. Chapter seven briefly examines sporting culture, and the endeavours of professional athletes, to argue that the pursuit of megamusculinity is parallel to the general tenets of sporting culture, while quite distinct from professional athletes, due to the intention and motivation that guide particular choices and behaviours. Sport is
conceptualized as a disciplinary structure (as defined in chapter four) as it is governed by particular rules and resources that enable and constrain behaviour and instill a sense of self-regulation, reflexivity and discipline within individuals. As an institution, sport glorifies particular discourses of hypertrophied male morphologies as well as conventions of hegemonic masculinity, and serves as a mode of further characterizing the motives of megamusculinity within Cooley’s “looking glass self”: as compensating for a perceived inadequacy. The spectacle of sport is paralleled with the spectacle of megamusculinity which focuses upon, and occurs through, gender performativity. The corporal performance of megamusculinity is influenced by the disciplinary structure of sport as another means of disseminating gender norms and involves the reflexive action of attempting to compensate for a perceived flaw in morphology.

I have become quite passionate about studying megamusculinity as a multifaceted social phenomenon due to its contemporary significance and understudied nature. Introducing the term megamusculinity is a necessary first step in beginning to understand a social phenomenon that has evaded sociological attention. This thesis is largely analytical and conceptual in nature, which is why it does not contain a methodology chapter/section, as one cannot begin to interrogate a “new” sociological phenomenon without a solid theoretical foundation, the focus of this analysis. The empirical work I refer to has been drawn from other sources, used to illustrate arguments with concrete examples, while noting that this is not nearly a systematic analysis of this topic; rather a preliminary step towards contributing to the dearth of literature in this area. The goals of this thesis are threefold: to introduce a new term to describe a social phenomenon not yet recognized in sociological literature, which demands sufficient academic attention; to
form a theoretical foundation for analysis of this topic, by blending the work of Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens; and to apply this new theoretical approach to megamusculinity by examining some of the social underpinnings of this phenomenon.

This thesis has framed megamusculinity as gender performance through manipulating and altering morphology: the three realms of working-class youth culture, constructions of health and fitness in the media and sporting culture operate as a triad - connected not only through their involvement in enforcing notions of gender performance, but their roles as disciplinary structures which disseminate tenets of hegemonic masculinity (specifically muscularity) and are comprised of rules and resources which impose notions of self-regulation and reflexivity upon individuals - of social forces that constitute megamusculinity where men are attempting to display their fitness to be men.¹

¹ Again it should be emphasized that these social forces are not the only means of constituting megamusculinity. Due to the length of this thesis, I have chosen to explore all three forces in order to make this a more encompassing investigation, as opposed to completing an exhaustive analysis of merely one realm.
Part One: Building a Sociological Foundation

Chapter 2: What is Megamusculinity?

The continuum of gender has been falsely construed as a dichotomy between femininity and masculinity. As a result of this dichotomy, gender is continuously re-inscribed and reinforced. This re-inscription and reinforcement is rendered intelligible by the contemporary focus on performance, specifically the ways in which individuals perform gender within a particular social context. Gender is often enacted through manipulating and altering morphologies, which can ultimately affect the way one perceives her or his own body. Although the experience of body dissatisfaction affects women and men in a somewhat similar way, women’s concerns have been afforded a stronger voice in the social, cultural and political literature – given voice through various feminist scholars such as, but certainly not limited to: Bartky (1990), Battersby (1998), Bordo (1993), Butler (1993, 1996) and Wolf (1997). These feminist inquiries about women’s bodies have prompted my interest in extending the sociological analysis in order to articulate the effect that gender performance has upon men’s body dissatisfaction, specifically regarding the clinical disorder of muscle dysmorphia, and what I refer to as megamusculinity. Embodied in the phenomena of MDM and megamusculinity are the entanglements between corporality, muscularity and masculinity. The majority of academic discussions of men’s body dissatisfaction (specifically MDM) shed light onto particular psychological dimensions while neglecting a thorough sociological analysis.

Drawing upon the notion that masculinity is socially etched onto the body, Glassner notes that “muscles are the sign of masculinity,” which is an impression that
becomes ingrained in children early in life (1989: 311, emphasis in original). As a result, there is an inextricable link between musculature and masculinity (Maguire 2008; White and Gillett 1994) – one that has been increasingly accentuated over the past fourty years resulting in behaviours that can become unhealthy from a variety of perspectives. Thompson and Cafri (2007) indicate that there are youth and men who pursue almost “obsessively” (although not necessarily in the clinical sense of the term), strict dietary and exercise regimens in the pursuit of “the muscular ideal.” To properly capture this type of behavior and to avoid reducing it to a psychological perspective or disorder, I am introducing the term “megamusculinity.”

The term is somewhat self-explanatory: “Mega” referring to the hyper, or gross exaggeration of particular traits; attributes like physical power, aggression and a particular morphology connoted by masculinity; and musculature as this analysis is interested in the intersection of musculature and masculinity. As a result, “megamusculinity” emphasizes the pursuit of and condition of achieving attributes like physical size and a particular (hyper)muscular morphology. To further clarify, this term not only refers to individuals with extreme, hyper-muscular morphologies, but also those young boys/teens who are struggling to make sense of their own distorted reflections. Scholars who investigate eating disorders focus not only upon the unhealthy body size of extreme thinness, but investigate the progression that one must take in order become ill; similarly, megamusculinity also operates as a spectrum, extending from the preliminary stages of boys feeling inadequately muscular, to those who have worked strenuously for years to “perfect” an already hyper-muscular morphology.
While both MDM and megamusculinity highlight the relation between corporality, muscularity and masculinity, there are striking differences between the two concepts that will be explored more fully later but it is important, at this juncture, to highlight some of these differences to indicate why megamusculinity is best conceptualized as a sociological issue. This is followed by a short discussion of several aspects of how a sociological analysis would begin to examine megamusculinity as a social phenomenon.

The Predominant Psychological Discourse of Muscle Dysmorphia

Psychological discourses have attached clinical labels to the obsessive pursuits of individuals and the pursuit of increased musculature has not escaped such classification: it is referred to as muscle dysmorphia (Pope et al. 2000). Currently, psychological discourses dominate academic analyses of this topic and there has been surprisingly little sociological study of the phenomenon. Existing analyses have predominantly focused upon individual manifestations of MDM and largely neglected major social factors which are often relegated to a few brief paragraphs which generally fault the media and early childhood socialization (specifically increased musculature in children’s action figures) (Jhally 1999; Olivardia 2001; Pope et al. 2000). In the literature to date, MDM has been located within the parent categories of body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and refers to “an excessive preoccupation with body size and muscularity” (Pope et al. 2000: 10).

It is important to note that BDD, OCD and MDM are all clinically diagnosed psychological disorders with criteria for diagnosis found in the DSM-IV. Forms of BDD have been documented since the 1800s, while MDM has only recently been recognized in
academic literature (Chung 2001). According to Pope et al. (2000: xiv) over one million men have developed body dysmorphic disorder yet it is challenging to quantify the number of men with MDM, specifically those who fit the formal diagnostic criteria from the DSM-IV. They estimate that there are approximately 100,000 severe cases in the United States and acknowledge that this is a rough estimate as many cases go unreported (Pope et al. 2000: 96). This figure does not account for worldwide cases nor the prevalence within sporting culture as clinical studies among athletes have yet to be conducted (Gray, Leone and Sedory 2005: 354). The vital distinction between BDD and MDM must be highlighted as men with BDD are often concerned with attributes like skin, hair, nose or genitals, while men with MDM are concerned with their level of muscularity and in reality, are unusually muscular and large (Phillips and Castle 2001). MDM has been pathologized—along with its parent categories BDD and OCD—as it is said that one with MDM compulsively exercises and follows strict dietary regimens, in an attempt to gain muscle, in order to compensate for the muscularity they perceive they lack.

Pope et al. (2000) discuss MDM as a “new syndrome” referring to the interest they received from the popular press with the development of this term. They mention that “the public—and we along with them—had finally awakened to a serious threat to the health of men and boys, a threat as dangerous as anorexia and bulimia for women and girls” (xv). This reaction is not surprising considering the connotations associated with terms such as “disorder,” or “syndrome,” which contribute to a psychological discourse where behaviours are pathologized, and in the process, individuals become at risk of suffering from a particular disorder or syndrome.
The development of MDM as a disorder embodies the social construction of mental illness and the increasing spread of the medical jurisdiction. In his text entitled, *The Medicalization of Society*, Peter Conrad (2007) notes that professional medicine continuously creates labels for new “disorders”/”diseases” which encompass broad areas of human behaviour. Conrad discusses how medicalization refers to a process where behaviours are defined using medical terminology and require “treatment” from medical intervention. “The main point in considering medicalization is that an entity that is regarded as an illness or disease is not ipso facto a medical problem; rather, it needs to become defined as one” (5-6). The process of medicalization reinforces the authority of the medical profession and fortifies the labels of “normal” and “abnormal” behaviour, where particular actions deemed “abnormal” become pathologized and in need of medical intervention. Medicalization facilitates the psychological focus upon individualization - and the responsibilization of individuals - with methods of alleviating or treating symptoms that fall solely within the realm of individual causes and solutions. This process obscures the vast array of social forces at work in the management of one’s choices and conduct and facilitates a critique of the increasing list of behaviours being identified as “disorders.”

Psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (2010) argues that there is no such thing as mental illnesses which are merely social constructions: “products of the medicalization of disturbing or disturbed behaviors—that is, of the observer’s construction and definition of the behavior of the persons [sic] observes as medically disabled individuals needing medical treatment” (xvii, emphasis in original). Szasz’s stance is aptly described when he states:
My claim that mental illnesses are fictitious illnesses is also not based on scientific research; it rests on the materialist-scientific definition of illnesses as a pathological alteration of cells, tissues, and organs. If we accept this scientific definition of disease, then it follows that mental illness is a metaphor, and that asserting that view is asserting an analytic truth, not subject to empirical falsification (2010: 77, emphasis in original).

He notes that until the mid-nineteenth century illness only referred to “an alteration of bodily structure” (11). The invention of modern psychiatry rested heavily upon the creation of new psychiatric diseases “not by identifying such diseases by means of the established methods of pathology, but by creating a new criterion of what constitutes disease…” (12). Writing this text in the mid 1970s, he notes that mental illnesses do not refer to a class of brain diseases, as the former rely upon judgements about behavior (on behalf of the physician), rather than pathology of the brain. He argues that even “biological” psychiatrists concur that mental illnesses cannot be brain diseases: if the latter is the case it would not be classified as a mental disorder as it is more accurately defined as a bodily disease (xxix-xxx). According to Szasz, both psychiatrists and patients are moral agents where psychiatrists have the authority to define deviance as disease and social control as treatment. The power and authority held by psychiatrists is necessary for the perpetuation of this discipline: if it were exposed that psychiatrists’ judgements of normal/abnormal behaviour “were founded on criteria available to everyone, the basis of psychiatric power would collapse” (Ingleby 1982: 136). Diseases are discovered in modern medicine, while modern psychiatry focuses upon invention through observing not only the bodies of patients but also, and more importantly, their behaviour. Szasz illustrates this with an example: “paresis was proved to be a disease; hysteria was declared to be one” (2010: 12, emphasis in original).
David Ingleby (1982:123) develops Szasz’s original argument that psychiatry is “socially constructed” even further. Ingleby agrees with Szasz that psychiatry is essentially a “moral judgment masquerading as a clinical one” (123). He also maintains that an adequate understanding of the social construction of mental illness has not yet been achieved. He mentions that applying the label of “social construction” to a particular analysis creates the daunting task of providing adequate “proof” and a sufficient critique of a particular institution.

Where Ingleby starts to take Szasz’s argument further begins with his position that many critics of psychiatry employ a reductionist approach to the understanding of physical illness and he cites Szasz’s work specifically. Szasz, Ingleby maintains, held the position that physical illness is diagnosed through objective, scientific standards, whereas psychiatric “disorders” are culturally relative and varied. Ingleby points to David Mechanic’s (1986) conclusion that definitions of physical illness are also culturally relative and thus, “the variability of what counts as ‘mental illness’ does not in itself render the term a misnomer” (cited in Ingleby 1982: 125). While Ingelby’s argument is more radically social constructionist than Szasz’s – that is, all illnesses, physical and mental, have cultural aspects to them – they both agree that psychological disorders are heavily inscribed by social forces and definitions.

This does not mean that there are not any mental illnesses. What it does mean is that they view illness as a “dispositional concept,” which describes regularities of behaviour and “attributes them to a property of the person or thing described – as opposed to the situation in which the observations are made” (Ingelby 1982: 126). This coincides with Conrad’s (2007: 152) argument that medicalization is essentially the
“individualization of social problems.” Drawing upon Conrad (2007), Ingelby (1982) and Szasz’s (2010) conceptions of illness are useful because they help move perceptions of mental illnesses from an individualized, primarily psychological discourse to a more sociological perspective. Conrad (2007), Ingleby (1982) and Szasz (2010) argue that the individualization of social problems impedes adequate, comprehensive developments in attempting to help people with problematic compulsions. An understanding of medicalization is particularly useful to this analysis as it provides insight into the sociocultural construction of the body (Conrad 2007: 26).

While one could argue that the construction of muscle dysmorphia as a clinical disorder is relevant and useful to the institution of psychology, a sociologist must question how much of this psychological disorder is created/reinforced/perpetuated by larger social forces. One cannot deny the relevance of Szasz’s statements about psychiatrists constructing and inventing these labels, specifically in the name of social control. Prior to labeling particular behaviours as a disorder, it is important to examine realms outside of individualized psychology which also contribute – sociology is merely one domain which demands exploration. As stated by Szasz (2010: 8) “. . . just as physical laws are relativistic with respect to mass, so psychological laws are relativistic with respect to social conditions. In short, the laws of psychology cannot be formulated independently of the laws of sociology.” While I recognize that some men manifest apparently extreme, obsessive compulsions in the pursuit of muscularity – as defined by the “disorder” of muscle dysmorphia - the labeling of such behavior as a disorder, without exploring its full, socially constructed etiology, is too simplistic. It suggests that the problem can be solved at the individual level alone.
Although MDM, or megamusculinity, is often accompanied by a severely distorted self-perception, and these compulsions may become excessive and impede routine daily functioning, the problem is more than an individualized, clinical disorder. Due to the socially constructed nature of megamusculinity, my focus in this thesis is upon the western cultural standards of ideal bodies for men, which promote hypertrophied (mega) morphologies, with intense muscular definition (muscularity), and exude attributes such as dominance, physical power and aggression (to name a few tenets of masculinity). Particular social structures/forces construct and disseminate these messages which forge the link between masculinity and muscularity and are then internalized by particular groups of boys, youths, and men. One cannot ignore the potential element of (dis)satisfaction with one’s body as a result of this internalization and as demonstrated through Cooley’s looking glass self, which will be explored subsequently.

A Preliminary Sociological Framework

The theoretical pursuit of this analysis begins with American sociologist C. Wright Mills. In *The Sociological Imagination* (1959: 3) Mills details the “quality of mind” needed for people to grasp the intersection of one’s personal biography and history. Most important to this analysis is the distinction between “personal troubles of milieu” and “public issues of social structure” (8). Mills describes this when he states that personal troubles refer to “the individual as a biographical entity” and the limited social arenas that individuals are aware of, their milieu; whereas public issues transcend local environments and focus upon the overlapping of various milieux which “form the larger structure of social and historical life” (8). Applying this concept to the current topic helps distinguish how the pursuit of hypertrophied bodies differs within psychology and
sociology. First, this human behaviour has been identified as an individualized, psychological “disorder” (muscle dysmorphia) and would be considered a personal trouble of milieu; however, when many people are following the same pursuit of superhypertrophied bodies (or megamusculinity), it then becomes a public issue of social structure and thus, the purview of sociology to articulate what occurs beyond the level of the individual. Mills’ contribution to this analysis is to strengthen a sociological interrogation of a topic that is currently restricted to psychological analyses, by linking human agency to social structure.

Linking human agency to social structure is a task often pursued by sociologists in the hope of not restricting one’s analysis to either a limited macro or micro perspective. Scholars argue that there is a need to blend micro and macro level analyses (Cook and Pike 1988; de la RUA 2007; Silverman 1985). Specifically, Silverman (1985) argues that macro studies should acknowledge levels of interpretation within the realm of social structures, while micro studies need to acknowledge structural constraints that influence particular interactions and interpretations. A merging of the dialectic between micro and macro studies results in a meso level of analysis which refers to the “networks of social relations in which individuals are embedded” (de la Rua 2007: 690). Termed “structural interaction” (687) this theoretical framework will assist in demonstrating that the body (dis)satisfaction beliefs of men are in fact influenced by experiences within particular social factors/institutions, specifically that of gender. Caroline Davis (1997) discusses the process of self-enhancement through manipulating morphology and mentions that these pursuits can often become quite extreme, such as obsessive dietary and exercise regimens. She notes that individuals use socially constructed standards of
bodily perfection as templates to evaluate their own bodies. Here, body satisfaction largely depends upon how close one’s body resembles the cultural ideal. Davis’ observations closely resemble Kath Woodward’s (2002) discussion of how the West views the body as a project that should be worked on, and thus constitutes one’s self-identity. Woodward (2002: 119) argues that identities are represented through visual media, the body being a prime example, as well as images not only of one’s self but cultural images of ideal body types: “the body is the medium through which messages about identity are conveyed.” Woodward (2002: 118) draws from Sue Benson who discusses the body as a moral project, where a proper “sleek, thin and toned” body projects the notion that one is not only in good physical shape but moral shape as well.

According to George Herbert Mead (1934), the self is not present when one is born (as the body is); rather it develops through various processes of social experience. Mead states that as humans we experience ourselves as subjects and objects, “as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same group or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he [sic] belongs” (135). It is important to emphasize the notion of standpoints here. While satisfaction with various aspects of one’s life initially appears to be quite an individualized process, it occurs from a particular standpoint that cannot be divorced from the larger social context it is situated within. Charles Horton Cooley (1922: 184) develops this logic with the “looking glass self”:

As we see our face, figure and dress in the glass and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another’s mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims and deeds, character, friends and so on, and are variously affected by it . . . the thing that
moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflections of ourselves, but imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another’s mind.

The “looking glass self” essentially refers to how individuals get a sense of who they are by imagining how they appear to others – be they important people such as family and friends (part of what Cooley refers to as primary groups) or more impersonal ties within general society (secondary groups based on these impersonal relations). Integrating the “looking glass self” within the realm of structural interactionism provides a more fruitful analysis of men’s body (dis)satisfaction (operating within megamusculinity), as people form conceptions of their self through reflections from wider society (as others in society see them). These reflections are undoubtedly influenced by social pressures of gender performance and the media’s dissemination of images of ideal bodies, and are not merely restricted to the domain of constructs of the individual psyche. It is here that one can truly see the parallels between eating disorders and megamusculinity: both groups are viewing a distorted reflection of their morphology, prompting them to engage in particular behaviours to “correct” this “inadequacy.” When the focus is shifted from examining morphological size (as megamusculinity is in fact the extreme opposite of the size pursued by individuals with eating disorders), to articulating the motivation and regimes involved in this body work, these disparate groups of people are in fact engaging in quite similar pursuits.

This analysis is interested in articulating several social factors involved in constructing and disseminating notions of hegemonic masculinity in order to investigate how men negotiate their way through these social relations through the means of interpretation. This will be explored in subsequent chapters after first discussing gender performance and thoroughly setting the theoretical foundation of this project.
Chapter 3: A Brief Exploration of Gender Performance

Body dissatisfaction has been a longstanding issue for both women and men, where the manipulation of morphology is intimately connected with gender constructions and performance. Judith Butler (1996: 190, emphases in original) prompts one to consider gender “as a corporeal style, an ‘act’, as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.” The notion of people as performers is aptly captured in Shakespeare’s, *As You Like It* Act 2, Scene 7 (Hattaway 2000: 124-125):

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All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress’ eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon’s mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper’d pantaloon
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
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This quotation is an almost obligatory piece for memorization in the school system and students rarely reflect on what it implies, but upon reflection, the citation is rich in the manner in which it constructs gender. First, the quotation ignores gender – or assumes that the male gender is the only reference point of importance – Shakespeare may begin by noting that all men and women are players but his actor is only a male (with the passive mistress). Second, it suggests that the roles are there for people to inhabit – performativity is somewhat one-sided and while the dominant social construction of “appropriate” role following is important, there is some latitude within each role which allows for performance to simply reproduce the dominant role, expand or exaggerate some aspects or challenge, reduce and redirect the role set in a new direction. But, and this is the third point, Shakespeare, like Butler, is correct in emphasizing that we perform on the social stage and respond to how others interpret our interpretation of the roles “assigned” to us within a given social context.

Thus, as Jhally (1999) notes, masculinity can be viewed as an act and the performance of masculinity involved in megamusculinity entails an expression of gender that is enacted through manipulating morphology. Here, the social significance of gender is indisputable, especially when it is recognized as a social institution integral to the lived experiences of women and men who engage in performing gender through the flesh. The process of “doing” gender refers to establishing differences between women and men (as well as girls and boys), which are not natural, essential or biological (West and Zimmerman 1991: 24). Individuals are the ones “doing” gender, however this process operates within specific social contexts and through various social relations that serve “as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society” (14). Gender
refers to a *process*, albeit one significantly influenced by social relations, rather than specific traits or roles inherent to particular individuals. Today, the impact of gender categorization is inescapable and many still consider gender as something inherent, *almost* biological. Gender assumptions have become normalized to the extent that it takes a blatant disruption to our assessments in order to recognize the gendered discourse we routinely engage in (Lorber 1994: 13-14).

While one’s sex category is determined by specific biological criteria, gender involves the management of one’s conduct (whether in relation to how one dresses, speaks, moves, acts etcetera), while negotiating the normative conceptions of what is appropriate for a particular sex category (West and Zimmerman 1991: 14). Rebecca Coleman (2009: 1) discusses “the becoming of bodies” as a notion that describes bodies as processes or projects which are constantly in motion – constantly changing, not only at the biological level but also at the morphological level. The focus on corporality, and one’s physical appearance, is significantly influenced by gender norms as to appropriate physical manifestations of femininity and masculinity: the body is a medium used to display adherence to particular gender norms. At an early age, the sex category becomes gender status as children are first assigned a sex category based upon genitalia, and are dressed by parents in attire to display the gender status associated with that sex category (Lorber 1994: 14). From the moment of birth, we sift through human qualities and categorize them: for example in the 1920s there was debate about which colour to assign to which sex. Prior to this, red was for boys as it signified blood and guts while blue was for girls as it connoted being “dreamy” (Kaufman 2007). Michael Kaufman (2007) argues that we create gender through interaction and being in a world saturated with ideas
of appropriate gender behaviour. In Kaufman’s (2007) lecture he described the process of gender being embodied and used the example of boys who walk with their arms stretched from their sides, as though they have muscles large enough that their arms cannot sit flat against their abdomen. “Masculinity refers to male bodies (sometimes directly, sometimes symbolically and indirectly), but is not determined by male biology” (Connell 2000b: 29, emphasis in original). It becomes apparent that gender is accomplished not through purely individual means, but operates within a larger social arena characterized by specific social discourses on the production and maintenance of gender.

According to Dana Rosenfeld and Christopher Faircloth (2006: 12) masculinity is a fragile, social construction that depends upon structural reproduction within particular social contexts. Interest in masculinity in the social sciences began around the 1970s, peaking in 1987 (Hearn 1996: 202). Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985: 568) state that during the 1970s, writings on masculinity emphasized the oppression of men, arguing that it was similar to the oppression of women as men were being oppressed by the “male role.” According to George Mosse (cited in Petersen 1998: 42) the physical body was an integral component to masculinity near the end of the eighteenth century, corresponding with the rise of the new bourgeois society. While the concept of masculinity is a few hundred years old, various definitions of masculinity have specific relations with one another and operate within a particular milieu of class and race (Connell 2005). The notion of masculinity, or even that of “manhood,” is socially constructed and enforced through various influences such as parents, schooling, peers and the media. It is a normative and culturally specific standard located in institutionalized structures of power (Hearn 1996: 203-206). West and Zimmerman (1991: 24) list sport as an institutionalized
structure where qualities of manliness or masculinity (specifically, endurance, strength, competitiveness) are celebrated. These societal pressures contribute to the constantly changing definition of masculinity as there is nothing concrete about the definition of this fluid categorization.

One definition of masculinity is provided by psychologist Robert Brannon (as cited in Kimmel 1994: 125) who defines manhood in four phrases: first, masculinity is the repudiation of the feminine; second, masculinity is measured by power, success, wealth, and status; third, masculinity depends on holding emotions in check; fourth, masculinity requires one to exude an aura of manly daring and aggression. This supports the notion that identity (and in this case gender identity), is relational and is partly about not having aspects of some other kind of identity (Hopkins 1992). Many scholars would agree that the first phase is the most crucial as masculinity is defined more by an anti-feminine sentiment focusing upon what a man is not, rather than what he is. Alan Klein (1993: 269) uses the term “femiphobia” to refer to the fear of appearing female, or effeminate which, he argues, is the most important element of hegemonic masculinity. Viewed another way, Kimmel (1994) argues that a boy’s life is devoted to proving that he does not have the same traits as his mother. Various feelings, needs and emotions (e.g. empathy, compassion, receptivity) are currently associated with femininity and are suppressed in a masculine discourse (Kaufman 1994). Accordingly, women struggle more with being excluded than whether they are “feminine enough” (127). Since women have been disregarded in such a manner, men need to acquire approval from other men, which operates within a realm of intense criticism and critique. Kimmel (1994: 122) describes the process of constructing masculinity going through a cycle of being proved,
then questioned, proved again and so on: the quest for proof in this process becomes meaningless (as it is “constant, relentless, unachievable”) as Kimmel equates it with the characteristics of a sport.

Connell (2005) argues that gender organizes social practices and is a relational concept, existing in contrast to femininity. He struggles to adequately define masculinity without essentializing or reifying the term and mentions that it “is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (71). Borrowing the concept “hegemony” from Antonio Gramsci, Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as, “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77).² Connell uses the term “hegemony” in an historically relational sense which, as with the varying definitions of masculinities, is subject to change at any point in time when particular groups want to challenge dominant ideals. Masculinity has evolved historically through social contexts operating in a structure of power relations where men are advantaged through the subordination of women. Hegemonic masculinity encompasses a variety of masculinities that subordinate others, namely homosexual men as well as men who are effeminate (Carrigan et al. 1985: 587-588). Connell (1987) pursues an analysis of how hegemonic masculinity is the cultural expression of the ascendancy of men over women, and uses this to explain why many men consent to this hegemony even though few live up to its fantasy ideals. There are some men who overtly acknowledge their

² Connell (2000b: 30) states that hegemonic masculinity does not mean that there is only one, most common pattern. He contends that many other masculinities may co-exist with hegemonic masculinity, specifically subordinated, marginalized and complicit patterns of masculinity.
reluctance to associate with hegemonic masculinity, but somehow are in a constant state of tension with this dominant form (Whitehead 2002: 92).

While definitions of masculinities vary through different cultures (albeit with quite significant differences) the existence of a dominant form of hegemonic masculinity cross-culturally is indisputable, according to Connell. Although these definitions of masculinity can and do vary cross-culturally, Connell (2000a: 52, 55) uses the term “globalized masculinities” to refer to a standardized, institutionalized form of masculinity across specific locales. The purpose of this, argues Connell (2000a), is to serve as a means of organizing and legitimizing men’s domination in the gender order. The world gender order operates on a global scale to connect gender regimes and orders of institutions and local societies. Those who control the dominant institutions in global markets, as well as political executives, are associated with the definition of the current form of hegemonic masculinity in the world gender order.

Connell (2005) contends that there is a need to refer to multiple masculinities as gender is constructed in different ways through various historical periods and social contexts. Hearn (1996: 209) emphasizes the historical variation of the term masculinity and wonders to what extent it is an ethno- or Eurocentric notion. He refers to a study by David Gilmoure (cited in Hearn 1996) who conducted an exhaustive cross-cultural review of manhood from Africa, North and South America, Asia, Britain and the Middle East (to name a few locales), as he did not want his study to have geographical or linguistic boundaries. Through his research, he expected to “rediscover the old saw that conventional femininity is nurturing and passive and that masculinity is self-serving, egotistical and uncaring” (209). Instead, Gilmoure discovered that the ideologies of
manhood, from a very diverse array of cultural backgrounds, focused more upon a nurturing, “selfless generosity” where men attempted to give as much as they possibly could (209). Connell (2000b: 10) also illustrates the multicultural differences between definitions of masculinity and emphasizes that the variation of this concept is a result of diversity not just between communities, rather within particular settings. Within these settings, a range of definitions of masculinities may exist, and they often do so hierarchically with dominant and subordinate rankings. Variations within masculinity, as well as within femininity, demonstrate the gender continuum at play, rather than the inaccurate portrayal as dichotomous categorizations.

A prevalent theme within constructions of masculinity is that of fear and anxiety. Ultimately this fear is manifested through the promotion of heteronormativity, and the stigmatization of gay identities, as well as violence/aggression and a particular muscular morphology. Men have an abundance of insecurities and are always trying to live up to the expectations of the watchful eye of masculine evaluators. They want to hide this insecurity for fear that it will become apparent to outsiders and affect their masculine evaluation (Kimmel 1994: 130). Kimmel (1994: 131) argues that a secret of American manhood is that men are afraid of other men: “homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men.” So while men look to other men to affirm their masculinity, they also fear the judgements that can be made by these “gender police.” Men fear that they will not be able to maintain their masculine identity in the eyes of others due to the epithets and labels that threaten those who deviate from hegemonic forms of masculinity. At an

3 It is important to acknowledge the affect this may have upon the reflection one sees in the “looking glass self” as one must process and internalize the image presented to others, ultimately framing the reflection one sees of oneself.
early age boys learn that it is insulting to be called a “girl” because it signifies a failure of masculinity (Hopkins 1992: 112). While the majority of men live in tension with hegemonic masculinity, and many will never live up to its “fantasy ideals,” men do not escape the contemporary gendered discourse that easily: a failure to live up to the standards of hegemonic masculinity may provide the grounds for one to be viewed as deviant and labeled according to the various epithets associated with homosexuality, femininity and other traits marginalized by hegemonic masculinity. Thus, heterosexuality has also served as a method of social control due to its naturalization and normalization, as it constructs homosexuality as threatening and marginal (Clarke 1998). It could be argued that social institutions “reward” heterosexuality (through the normalizing process) as a method of power used to persuade more people to conform to heterosexual hegemony, present in contemporary definitions of masculinity.

According to Kaufman (2007), masculinity is a fear-based construction as attributes of masculinity are associated with having power (though these attributes do change between different cultural groups and time periods). This power leaves men fearing whether they have lived up to their own ideals, of not being a “real” man or of others finding out about these peculiar insecurities. Kaufman questions how men deal with this fear of not being “real” men and argues that they often act out through violence to oneself or others, immerse themselves in work, engage in dangerous driving or overall dangerous behaviours, etcetera. Ultimately this fear leads men into a vicious cycle of feeling the need to prove their masculinity. A starting point for one to “prove” masculinity is by working upon the most obvious and noticeable part of oneself, the body.
“Masculinity is not inherent in the male body; it is a definition given socially, which refers to characteristics of male bodies” (Connell 2000b: 76). Hegemonic masculinity generally promotes an ideal of heterosexuality and physical fitness (Anderson 2005) and Connell (1987: 184) argues that “indeed the winning of hegemony often involves the creation of models of masculinity which are quite specifically fantasy figures ….” The disparity between actual men and the image of men presented through the complexities of hegemonic masculinity is significant; this has implications for those who work strenuously to live up to these unrealistic standards and accept it uncritically. Ultimately, masculinities become inscribed upon male bodies and are manifested as both illusion and as materiality (Whitehead 2002). In Brian Pronger’s (1990: 155) study of masculinity, various comments were made by participants regarding muscularity and physical build: “For me, because I didn’t have [muscles] when I was a kid, I didn’t perceive myself as being that kind of man. I didn’t think I’d ever be that way, it was an unreachable goal, so it’s part of the mystique about it, something to worship from afar.” Another participant, who is a runner, cites the attractive aspects of hegemonic masculinity being “strength” and “virility.” The first participant demonstrates the hierarchy present between distinctions of masculinity: some men struggle with its standards while others, such as sporting heroes, are taken as examples of it in its finest form (Connell 2000b: 10). Pronger (1990) also demonstrates the significant effect that morphology has upon displaying attributes of masculinity, specifically muscularity. He quotes a participant who states that “the appearance of masculinity is exciting to him” as a muscled body portrays the image of masculinity, even though the individual “could be a total wimp” (155). Thus, masculinity is often performed through manipulating
morphology in an attempt to display certain characteristics outwardly that one may not possess internally, as stated by Pronger’s respondent. Klein’s (1993) study of masculinity within bodybuilding supports this sentiment as he argues that bodybuilders are desperately trying to attain the hegemonic form. “Masculinity is socially etched onto the body. When . . . masculinity is successfully integrated, one’s gender appears to emanate from the body in what is often perceived as ‘natural’” (17). From its size and its muscularity, to the way it occupies space and carries itself, the male body is a moving object of gender construction.

The structural component of gender is often neglected in terms of lay discourse, as individuals are expected to possess gender accountability. “Doing” gender does not mean that one is going to adhere strictly to dichotomized categories; rather it refers to individuals engaging in specific behaviours at the risk of gender assessment (West and Zimmerman 1991: 23-24). West and Zimmerman (1991: 33) further support this argument by stating, “if we do gender appropriately, we simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on sex category. If we fail to do gender appropriately, we as individuals – not the institutional arrangements – may be called to account.” Men who are preoccupied with megamusculinity are striving to attain hegemonic masculinity and at the same time are performing face work to uphold their image. This contributes to the difficulty for men to seek help independently: “Many men would far prefer to disavow their worries – thus internalizing their self-criticism – rather than risk the “loss of face” that would come with disclosure” (Pope et al. 2000: 25). As the title of the film states, the “Tough Guise is a front that many men put up that’s based on an extreme notion of masculinity that
emphasizes toughness and physical strength. . .” (Jhally 1999, emphasis in original).
Masculinity has largely been associated with dominance and control, which could partly contribute to the growth in size of male body images through the decades. Images of women used to be large but have now grown smaller, depicting a less threatening picture: the situation is reversed for men (Jhally 1999). Stout and Wiggins (2004) argue that expectations will remain the same until muscularity and masculinity no longer go hand in hand.

Embodied in the phenomenon of megamusculinity are the inextricable links between muscularity, masculinity and corporality. This analysis is ultimately interested in the embodied meanings of morphology and muscularity, as influenced by interpretations of masculinist discourses within social structures, in order to investigate how seemingly disparate groups of men have interrelated bodily preoccupations (megamusculinity). An appropriate theoretical foundation for further analysis of the effects of gender performativity upon male body (dis)satisfaction will be explored subsequently. According to Steve Robertson (2007: 32) an adequate theory of masculinity needs to fully recognize diversity and the interplay of structure and agency. The following chapter uses this notion of megamusculinity as gender performance through morphology to develop a theoretical framework that adheres to the tenets of structural interactionism, encompassing both structure and agency, in order to investigate the role of particular social forces in the production and reproduction of norms of masculinity.
Chapter 4: Rules, Resources and Reflexivity Meets Disciplinarity and Care of the Self

Michel Foucault

It is within the writings of Michel Foucault that sociological analyses of the body are brought to centre stage. Foucault states that his project involves examining the “history of bodies’ and the manner in which what is most material and most vital to them has been invested” (1990a: 152). Foucault’s academic career began with an interest in philosophy (and was significantly influenced by the work of Friedrich Nietzsche), though he shifted his focus to psychology as he spent time observing the workings of mental hospitals and asylums. Foucault utilized Nietzsche’s genealogical method to pursue an historical investigation of the relationship between knowledge and power. This genealogy facilitated examining issues of concern in the present, by tracing particular historical arguments; thus Foucault was embarking upon an history of the present. The limits of this analysis do not permit an exhaustive review of the entirety of Foucault’s work; instead I will focus upon definitions and discussions of pertinent concepts (explicated through examples relating to megamusculinity) that Foucault provides for scholars interested in issues of, broadly, the body. The first section will cover themes of bio-power, discipline, regulation, power and knowledge, understood through the overarching theory of governmentality, while the second section uses Foucault’s understanding of the body to move into an analysis of the interplay of the former concepts with elements of the soul, regimen, care and technologies/practices of the self.

Section One: Macro discourses

Foucault perceives the government as a separate entity, regulating from afar. When looking at such topics as the welfare state, health care and criminal justice system,
a double taxonomy occurs: the state is relieving itself of duties in some aspects while at
the same time hyper-regulating others (promoting regulation to a heightened degree,
namely through the identification of an abundance of factors that “need” to be regulated),
such as the extended public health discourse around healthy bodies for women and men.
The transition from welfarism to neoliberalism shifted the state’s role as overtly coercive,
to a more covert means of regulation by stressing the significance of neoliberal ideologies
of self-regulation, responsibilization and governance.

Throughout Foucault’s genealogical analyses, he depended most upon the theory
of governmentality, the art of government (Foucault 2008: 2). Governmentality is
comprised of a triad between sovereignty, discipline and government and focuses upon
practices of government. It emerged in the eighteenth century with a focus on using
security, prosperity and the health of individuals and populations to manage subjects.
There is no longer a ruthless dictator, condemning individuals to a life of exploitation and
oppression. Within governmentality, power is not a top-down application of coercion as
this art of government consists in governing at a distance, through normalization and
regulatory constraints as a subset of discipline. Governmentality serves to connect
“technologies of the self (self-subjection) and technologies of domination [government]
(societal regulation)”⁴ (Petersen 1997: 202-3), and aids in an understanding of the
regulation of the self and society through various techniques of discipline. Individuals are
subjected to processes of moral regulation where they are turned into docile bodies,
constantly under surveillance and discipline. The question of how the state governs the

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⁴ It is within governmentality that scholars (Dean 1994) have argued that Foucault is attempting to bridge
the micro-macro divide examining the impact of macro practices of governing upon the micro technologies
of the self.
population here is crucial, as the sovereign focus was upon instilling fear whereas the nation state governs through discipline and bio-politics.

If governmentality arose out of a shift from coercive repression to governing from afar, bio-politics focuses upon various means of creating order within populations. In *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (1990a), Foucault introduces the notion of bio-power stating that disciplining the body and regulating the population were two facets of, what he referred to as the “power over life” (bio-power). He clarifies these poles stating:

> The setting up, in the course of the classical age, of this great bipolar technology—anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying, directed toward the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life—characterized a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through. The old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life (1990a: 139).

Foucault argues that there was an explosion of techniques of power used to manage and control individual bodies and the population: and he marked this as the era of bio-power (Foucault 1990a). Rather than adhering to the ancient right to “take life or let live,” the role of bio-power was to preserve life (Foucault 1990a: 138; Harwood 2009:16). Bio-power utilized the knowledge-power dynamic as a means of inducing transformation in human life and brought life to the forefront of explicit calculation and management (Foucault 1990a: 143). It was through this process that power was granted access to the corporal subject. This is not to say that bio-power operates through the domination of subordinate groups; rather bio-power is a means of linking the micro and macro domains of the individual and social body.

Foucault envisioned bio-power as being deployed through a variety of techniques, specifically two poles: first is bio-politics, which held the function of disciplining and
regulating the population; second is anatomo-politics that focused upon “the body as a machine” (e.g. docility and usefulness as ways of integrating individuals into aspects of economic and social life) (Gastaldo 1997: 115-116). The focus upon the former, and shift away from the latter, is quite evident today. Here, we see the government moving away from the direct control of individuals and instead is focused upon managing populations. The state has relieved itself of the duty to coerce individual subjects and has stepped back, using a variety of institutions to take its place (e.g. education, medicine, public health), that have the task of producing self-managing and self-regulating citizens.

Taking Foucault’s conception of bio-power as a “subtle, constant and ubiquitous power over life” (Gastaldo 1997: 115), one must be clear about his definition and use of the term power.

In *Power/Knowledge* (1980: 38), Foucault notes a shift that occurred within the history of repression: moving away from inflicting penalties and punishment of the body (Foucault 1995) to modes of generalized surveillance (more rational, efficient, scientized bases of therapy, medicalization etcetera). Foucault (1980) states that he is moving from his earlier focus upon repression and war as now citizens are regulated, not repressed or oppressed. Foucault provides a relational conception of power in order to see how power constructs knowledge relations. It is important to see power, knowledge and subjectivity as linked. This subjectivity refers to people themselves as well as acknowledging that people are subjected, products of power relations. Foucault was interested in describing how power works, operates and is organized: he is not interested in why it exists so much (as Marx was) as he suggests that in order to explain why it exists, one needs to begin by understanding how it works in the first place (97).
Power is a relational system between human beings and the practices they use. It is not held in the hands of the bourgeoisie, or some dominating influence, but it exists as a set of force (or net-like) relations and is something that can be expressed or exercised, rather than possessed (Foucault 1980). It can be employed as an invisible force, as a capacity embedded in social practices, penetrating the depths of society as power is everywhere.

But in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. The eighteenth century invented, so to speak, a synaptic regime of power, a regime of its exercise within the social body, rather than from above it (1980: 39).

According to Foucault, individuals circulate between the “threads” of power: “The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation” (Foucault 1980: 98). Everyone is caught in the grasp of power, even those who exercise it: “power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes a machinery that no one owns” (156). We must also think about power in relation to knowledge: “the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power” (52). If power extends to the depths of society it means that knowledge is constituted by power. What we know about who we are is a product of power relations.

“Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1990a: 93). Power is no longer restricted to means of sheer violence: now human life is characterized by disciplinary power where the imposition of the logic of governmentality and bio-power enforce surveillance and regulatory practices
upon individuals who are expected to discipline themselves. Thus, “Power – or at least the forms of power constituting liberal practices of government – comes to operate on the conduct of the governed” (Dean 1994: 177). Discursive power produces this disciplinary society through normalization and self-regulation (similar to the tenets of neoliberalism) that become internalized by individuals.

Central to Foucault’s theory, and the underlying facets of governmentality, is the shift from sovereign to disciplinary rule (Foucault 1980). In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault wanted to show how, “from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards, there was a veritable technological take-off in the productivity of power” (Foucault 1980: 119).

Modern society, then, from the nineteenth century up to our own day, has been characterized on the one hand, by a legislation, a discourse, an organization based on public right, whose principle of articulation is the social body and the delegative status of each citizen; and, on the other hand, by a closely linked grid of disciplinary coercions whose purpose is in fact to assure the cohesion of this same social body (1980: 106).

According to Foucault, “discipline ‘makes’ individuals; individuals are objects, and instruments of this specific technique of power” (Gastaldo 1997: 125). This disciplinarity functions to train individuals in order to render them docile. Jeremy Bentham’s vision of the panopticon aptly demonstrates this disciplinary technology as Foucault states, “Bentham is one of the most exemplary inventors of technologies of power” (Foucault 1980:156). While Foucault is often cited for his discussion of Bentham’s panopticon, it is important to note that Foucault alters the way Bentham originally envisioned the panoptical structure. Foucault was fascinated by Bentham’s vision as he felt that this technology of power would solve problems of surveillance (148). Foucault’s interest in the panoptic structure began when he was studying clinical
medicine where he realized that these systems of surveillance could also be found in hospitals, and were even used before Bentham (such as the 1751 dorms of the Military School in Paris) (146). Foucault refers to this structure as: “a diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form,” which affects every aspect of human life (Foucault 1995: 205). The architecture of this prison has a watchtower at its centre core, which is surrounded by a ring of cells housing madmen who are observed and supervised by the authority in the center. The observation of all inmates is possible due to the architectural angles of the building as well as efficient lighting techniques set in relation to the watchtower core. This authority has the power to constantly judge and alter the behaviour of those imprisoned as well as impose disciplinary techniques they consider useful.

Foucault contrasts this mechanism to the confinement of a dungeon, as the panopticon uses visibility to enforce and regulate those in its cells and as a result, reinforce its own power (Foucault 1995: 200). The inmate here cannot communicate with “neighbours” and is aware of the constant gaze imposed upon them. To Bentham, this supervisor was a lone person (though no one person could truly replace the role of the King) (Foucault 1980: 158); for Foucault, the watchtower symbolizes not only one individual but an entire system of power relations which are not restricted by numbers. The constant gaze enforced by those in the watchtower (to use Foucault’s depiction) creates a sense of self-regulation within the individual. Using this schema, power is carried out efficiently because the number of those in power is reduced (although Foucault does not restrict it in the same sense Bentham does), while at the same time there is an increase in those this power is imposed upon (Foucault 1995). The panopticon
is essentially a metaphor for the internalization of the gaze of the other, the means by which bodies are rendered “docile” and “useful.”

Today, society is the panopticon as it is organized and structured around generalized surveillance: normalcy is about submission. “Panoptic disciplines produce an intensification of aptitudes and abilities while they also increase subordination by self-controlled mastery of the body” (Turner 1984:164). An abundance of applications of panoptic discourse to contemporary society could be provided here, specifically the role of this internalized surveillance in bodily practices. Julia Twigg (2006: 23) notes that in order for individuals to obtain the “slim, toned physique that modern culture demands” one must engage in a variety of body techniques which require “control” and “the assertion of dominance over the body.” These body techniques operate within the biopolitical discourse of “healthy” bodies (bodies that citizens “should” strive for), as well as the panopticon (as one is subjected to the constant gaze of others), and disciplinary practices (specifically the self-regulation required to adhere to the regimens devised when striving for the often unhealthy images of bodies portrayed).

The individual body came into focus in the early eighteenth century where the governing of populations depended upon obtaining adequate knowledge of individual bodies (Gastaldo 1997). “The techniques of bio-power analyse, control, regulate and define the body, its disciplinary gaze constructing the body as an object of knowledge” (Twigg 2006: 20). Foucault’s discussion of the body is brought to the fore in the volumes of The History of Sexuality (1990a, 1990b, 1988a) and Discipline and Punish (1995) where he regards it as an object of knowledge. As Bryan Turner (1997: xv) states:
...the body and populations played a continuous role in the analytic structure of his [Foucault's] work. The body was the focus of military discipline, but it was also subject to the monastic regulation of medieval Catholicism. The body is the target of the medical gaze and governmentality. Generally speaking, health is a form of policing which is specifically concerned with the quality of the labour force.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault began by discussing the use of torture in punishment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and argues that a shift occurred during this time where torture was no longer used as a public spectacle. Foucault focused exclusively on the genealogy of punishment for men, and neglects the wider social impacts that these theories of power and discipline have upon issues of gender or sexual difference. It is important to note that this thesis is merely using the theories presented by Foucault and is not engaging in a critique of this neglect.

Punishment shifted from being a spectacle to a concealed part of the penal process where the judge was no longer held publicly responsible for punishment and the executioner was not viewed as shameful. Torture disappeared as a public spectacle and as a result the criminal body was no longer held in the same regard. This sparked a shift in the focus of discipline no longer being the body, but directed to the soul: the position of the body needed to be reframed here as it now became an *instrument* of power, as opposed to the target of it.

Foucault argues that the body is involved in politics and prompts a political economy of the body, specifically “the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission” (Foucault 1995: 25). The political economy of the body illustrates how power relations inscribe various meanings upon the body and invest it with notions of discipline and domination. A particular knowledge of the body (not merely its functioning) and mastering its forces constitute the political technology of the body, which is localized within the individual rather than any institution or state apparatus. This body politic is a means through which the operation of power becomes

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quite visible. It invests human bodies with power and knowledge relations, ultimately “turning them into objects of knowledge” (28).

According to Foucault power is enacted upon the body/produces the body through discipline, which is “a machinery of power that explores [the human body], breaks it down and rearranges it” (Foucault 1995: 26), operating upon even the most minute aspects of movement, gesture and appearance, which Foucault refers to as the “micro-physics of power” (138). Discipline is enacted through a process of regulation, as Foucault demonstrates in the examples of the organization of prisons, educational institutions and hospitals, which are themselves created in accordance with specific disciplinary discourses (135-194). Foucault holds the idea that physical bodies represent the ways in which power and knowledge have come to manipulate bodies over time. Power and knowledge, create the subject, which is the vehicle of power. The body, to Foucault, is something to be controlled through disciplinary practices of governance and regulation. For Foucault, power is exercised (as relations of power are at the centre of his analysis, not relations of different subjects), it is productive (power operates through the creation of knowledge, which entails the normalization of certain ways of being and the construction of other ways of being as abnormal), and it circulates. Power is a productive force operating through discourse and discipline, as an effect of power is in the construction of “docile,” or socially useful, bodies.

Docile bodies are what truly fueled the rise of this disciplinary society. Docile bodies “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” and signify a new form of control (Foucault 1995: 136). Foucault argued that docility is characterized by three elements, or changes in previous understandings of the term. The scale of the control -
the body was worked on individually and was subject to increased modes of control; object of the control - “the only truly important ceremony is that of exercise,” specifically the efficiency of movement; modality of control - “it implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the process of the activity rather than its result . . .” (137). Foucault refers to these methods of meticulously controlling the operations of the body as “disciplines.” Not only did the disciplines produce these practiced docile bodies but they prepared them for social utility: here, the docile body is quite a passive entity.

**Section Two: Micro practices**

The macro principles examined above - discipline, regulation, power, knowledge and bio-power - operate under the larger discourse of governmentality. Beginning by interrogating Foucault’s understanding of these macro elements, his articulation of the body bridges this discussion into the more micro level of the self, identity and individualism through his work in the *History of Sexuality* volumes.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault was concerned with the body in relation to medicine and practices of the self within Christianity (Turner 1997: xv). His project involved using a genealogical method to explore particular subjugated knowledges, by returning readers to life in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in order to reflect upon the present. In attempting to account for why sex is spoken about, Foucault defines the linkages between power, knowledge and sex to sustain a larger conversation about the discourse of human sexuality.

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure* (1990b), Foucault introduces the idea that bodies derive some pleasure from discipline, regimens and sexuality. He notes a preoccupation of defining the use of pleasures as “dietetic,”
meaning “a matter of regimen aimed at regulating an activity that was recognized as being important for health” (98). While adherence to discipline and regimens, in accordance with a dietetic concern of relations to health, may be pleasurable for some, if pursued to an extreme it can become quite damaging. Likewise, a man adhering to notions of hegemonic masculinity and pursuing a particular disciplinary regime to attain a certain level of muscularity, may take excessive measures and end up engaging in destructive activities. I would argue this is the case for megamusculinists: their pursuits of muscularity have taken them to an extreme (just as those with anorexia pursue thinness to an extreme) and their disciplinary tactics ultimately become self-destructive.

Foucault refers to a regimen as a “way in which one manage[s] one’s existence, and it enable[s] a set of rules to be affixed to conduct . . .” (Foucault 1990b: 101). A proper regimen would cover anything that should be “measured” such as exercise, food, drink and sexual relations. Foucault draws a distinction between natural exercises such as walking, and violent exercises, such as wrestling. These types of exercise vary with regard to the intensity to which one practices, and when they should do so. The violence and aggression provoked by these types of “violent” exercises only facilitates the tenets of hegemonic masculinity. Foucault also notes that violent exercises are often performed in the dust or with a freshly oiled body. These exercises serve to promote corporal preoccupation (and potentially corporal obsession) among participants and even viewers as the dust or oil is yet another way to draw attention to one’s physique and level of muscularity.

Regimen is also defined through good health maintenance and care of the soul. “When you take care of the body, you don’t take care of the self. The self is not clothing,
tools, or possessions. It is to be found in the principle which uses these tools, a principle not of the body but of the soul” (Harwood 2009: 25). Foucault defines a dynamic relationship between the body and the soul where the soul is ultimately the regulator of the body – it develops a regimen for the body but can only do so once the soul has participated in some labour upon itself. Foucault emphasizes the somewhat harmonious nature of this relationship as there should not be a struggle between the body and soul within a regimen. Work on the body involves a greater purpose such as the sense of fulfillment, satisfaction, pleasure and accomplishment. The soul regulates the imaginations and desires of the body; in cases of megamuscularity it appears as though the soul has not regulated the imaginings sufficiently as the minds of particular men are often consumed with the preoccupation that one is not muscular enough. Thus, megamusculinists seem to be caught in a struggle between the soul and the body as the soul is not adequately controlling desires and imaginings, and leads the body astray. This struggle is exactly what Foucault argues should not occur within this dynamic (Foucault 1990b: 134). The soul needs to adjust itself to guide the body in order to adhere to the regimen established, but this is not occurring in the case of megamuscularity.6

Foucault argues that a physical regimen must not be undertaken purely for its own sake, as it must work in tandem with the desires of the soul. Foucault uses the term “athletic excess” which is due to “repeated workouts that overdeveloped the body and

6 Foucault offers an explanation for this issue when he discusses the role of the psyche in constructing self-images. He argues that the psyche acts more like a mirror than an archive: the problem here lies in the fact that the psyche will only project the images that have already been fabricated by the individual. “Our gaze is led not toward the substance of our beginnings but rather into the meaninglessness of previously discarded images of the self” (Hutton 1988: 139). If the psyche acts merely as a mirror, then it is not surprising that, in the case of megamuscularity, the soul leads the body astray. This notion also lends support to the application of Cooley’s “looking glass self” to this topic: the images one sees through the looking glass (as one is seen by larger society) are internalized by individuals and become fabricated by the psyche.
ended by making the soul sluggish, enveloped as it was within a too-powerful musculature . . .” (Foucault 1990b: 104). Here Foucault acknowledges that too much musculature in the body causes the soul to “malfunction” and not perform its necessary tasks. As discussed above, I would argue that the disconnect between the body and soul does not occur after one has accumulated “too much” musculature. Rather, as in the case with megamusculinity, the soul misguides the body which is what prompts one to pursue an intense dietary and physical regimen to attain a certain degree of muscularity.

Foucault discusses the notion of “valetudinary” excess where people apply constant vigilance to their body and health “to the least ailment” (1990b: 104). Megamusculinity could be considered valetudinary as these men demonstrate an extreme case of bodily discipline.

In *The History of Sexuality: Volume 3: The Care of the Self* (1988a) Foucault builds upon his discussion of the body and soul as he examines the process of caring for the self, particularly through the cultivation of the self. The cultivation of the self occurs “wherein the relations of oneself to oneself were intensified and valorized” (43).

Dominated by the notion that one must “take care of oneself” the scope of this was, and is, quite general. The notion of tending to oneself can be traced to ancient Greek culture where it was a widespread imperative. Foucault discusses a shift that occurred in Western moral principles: “There has been an inversion between the hierarchy of the two principles of antiquity, ‘Take care of yourself’ and ‘Know thyself’. In Greco-Roman culture knowledge of oneself appeared as the consequence of taking care of yourself. In the modern world, knowledge of oneself constitutes the fundamental principle” (1988b: 22). The operation of this within governmentality is explicit here: Rose (1994: 363) notes
that “governmentality is a way of problematizing and intervening upon conduct that is intrinsically dependent upon knowledge and knowledgeable persons.” Governmentality enforces the internalization of norms (through normalization) upon citizens charged with the task of “knowing oneself.” Foucault argues that it is here that relations of the self occur, when one takes oneself as a field of action to transform and correct (1988a: 42-43).

The care of the self “came to constitute a social practice, giving rise to relationships between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at times even to institutions” (Foucault 1988a: 45). Julia Twigg (2006: 20-22) notes that according to Foucault, humans are made into subjects in three ways: first, through institutional dividing practices whereby power is spatialized and people are ordered; second, through classificatory practices that “order and define subjects”; and third, technologies of the self which are “active forms of self-formation in which individuals apply disciplinary techniques to themselves,” for example diet and exercise regimens as means of controlling the body. “Diet, exercise and weight control are also clearly among the ‘technologies of the self’ that Foucault presents as central to the constitution of modern subjectivity” (2006:117). At its most elementary level, megamusculinity is a process of a transformation of the self as well as caring for the self. Foucault notes that this is a social process which prompts the development of various institutions; in the case of megamusculinity it is apparent that the care of the self and the transformation of the self (as manifest through the strict, excessive exercise regimes required) may have prompted, or at least contributed to the rise of institutions of exercise and public gyms - many open 24/7 and provide nutritional supplements to purchase. Caring for the self takes both time
and labour and is a social practice that occurs in institutionalized structures. Foucault (1988a: 51) notes that “there is the care of the body to consider [when examining the care of the self], health regimens, physical exercises without overexertion, and the carefully measured satisfaction of needs.” Physical exercises where people overexert themselves (characteristic of megamusculinity) transgress Foucault’s boundaries of self-disciplinary tactics and categorize them as valetudinary.

Foucault’s analysis of the regimen of pleasures discusses how sexual acts must be regimented (Foucault 1988a: 125). The body and soul must be conditioned for procreation, specifically by creating an image of the child one wants to have. This type of conditioning can be paralleled to the conditioning that occurs with megamusculinity. With the pervasiveness of the media’s construction of ideal bodies, men in pursuit of megamusculinity often have an image of muscularity they strive to achieve. This image is hardly reflective of a level of muscularity attained naturally; rather it is composed of an unhealthy musculature attained through various (often illicit) substances and a strict regime of mental and physical discipline. Just as Foucault notes that one is not obliged to engage in intercourse strictly for procreation, many men pursue a certain level of muscularity and adhere to hegemonic masculinity to varying degrees that do not elevate them to the extreme of megamusculinity.

As will be argued in a later chapter, the self-presentation and body maintenance of megamusculinists is often done in the name of “health” and requires an individual to be self-regulating, operating under the larger discourse of discipline. Individuals must utilize technologies of the self to adhere to the varying definitions of “healthy” lifestyles. Foucault has assisted in examining megamusculinity within disciplinary society where
individuals are subjected to a vast array of external techniques of power and must actively negotiate their way through this quandary. The work of Foucault will be integrated into Giddens’ structuration theory to give, not necessarily primacy, but at least more importance to, agency.

**Anthony Giddens**

Through his critique of what he terms the “orthodox consensus,” British social theorist Anthony Giddens sought to refocus social theory on overcoming the duality between micro and macro, and agency and structure. Giddens mentions his discontent with the discord between micro and macro projects when he states: “All so-called ‘quantitative’ data, when scrutinized, turn out to be composites of ‘qualitative’ – e.g., contextually located and indexical – interpretations produced by situated researchers, coders, government officials and others” (Giddens 1984: 333). This analysis agrees with his contention as I am attempting to conduct an investigation that bridges these two realms and accounts for structure and agency. In *The Constitution of Society* (1984), Giddens discusses his frustration with sociological theory that focuses upon epistemology (the justification for knowledge production) and prompts a shift, which he engages in, towards ontological claims about the nature of social life. Giddens is concerned with sociological ideas as well as those generated within the social sciences, as he is essentially interested in the constitution of social life.

Giddens theory of structuration strives to link subject and object, agency and structure. He has presented structuration theory as a remedy for the dualism, existing in

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7 While Giddens only uses the terms micro and macro when discussing his discontent with the approaches of previous sociological research, this analysis will continue to use these terms to solidify my position at the meso level of analysis (de la Rua 2007).
most social theory, and argues that one needs to reconceptualize this as a duality of structure (Giddens 1984: xx-xxi). \(^8\) According to Giddens, “the basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time” (2). Giddens’ social constructivist view of reality guides his analysis of “the social world.” He claims that social structures exist within the minds of individuals as one cannot attribute/give a concrete reality to these socially constructed entities. However, the rules and resources which form the composition of social structures do have concrete realities. The theory of structuration is centered upon the notion that structures are rules and resources, which enable and constrain,\(^9\) and are built into particular social relations. Structures have “no existence independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity” (26).

Giddens emphasizes the role of agency throughout his theory and argues that while structures do constrain, he conceptualizes constraint as the “active involvement” of individual agents who are not merely passive dupes (289). The theory of structuration is particularly important to this project as it is a theory of structure that fully engages agency. This allows one to probe how and why people internalize various sets of behaviour, occurring within particular frames of meaning, which are often taken for granted.


\(^8\) “One of the main propositions of structuration theory is that the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction (the duality of structure)” (Giddens 1984: 19).

\(^9\) Though Giddens makes a point of stating that one cannot attribute unitary meaning from the term “constraint” in social analysis (Giddens 1984: 283).
agents who are capable of providing a rationale for particular actions, though this knowledgeability also involves particular unintended consequences of actions. He devotes considerable attention to agency in structuration theory and speaks to the knowledgeability of agents when he states: “There is no mechanism of social organization or social reproduction identified by social analysts which lay actors cannot also get to know about and actively incorporate into what they do” (284). There is a necessity to articulate the workings and reproduction of institutionalized practices/structures through examining day-to-day life, specifically routines, the context of interactions and social identities, as structural principles are of utmost importance. Even more significant to Giddens is the study of power as “power is the means of getting things done and, as such, directly implied in human action,” and is explored through the operation and reproduction of structures (283).

Giddens argues that power operates through reproducing “structures of domination” (Giddens 1984: 258) which are comprised of resources. He defines resources as “structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction” (15). There are two types of resources, allocative and authoritative: allocative resources “which stem from the control of material products or of aspects of the material world” (e.g. accessibility), while authoritative resources exist through “the co-ordination of the activity of human agents” (xxxii). Giddens shifts away from the conventional emphasis upon allocative resources (as favoured by evolutionary theorists) and argues for the need to emphasize the importance of authoritative resources. Central to his articulation of resources is the notion that all resources require some method of storage and retrieval capabilities. Resources may be
stored in a variety of media (he specifically mentions notches on wood, written lists, books, files, films and tapes as examples) and depend upon individual agents’ abilities not only to retrieve necessary information but also their skills in interpretation.

As structures enable and constrain, there is constant interplay between rules and resources since they need to be continuously produced and reproduced (the duality of structure). Giddens provides an example of the legal system which is constructed by people and is essentially a set of rules and resources. People internalize these rules and resources which state that if one breaks the law, particular sanctions will apply, which could discourage an individual from committing an unlawful act. Figure 1 depicts Giddens’ clarification of the term “rules” drawing the distinction between those that are formal and informal. He notes that formal rules (such as the law) are generally deemed most important, when in fact they are quite shallow. He stresses the importance of informal rules where, in the case of megamusculinity, tacit acceptance of perceptions of the self (particularly through social images of ideal male bodies) become all-consuming.

![Figure 1 (Giddens 1984: 22)](image)

Here, rules refer to either the process of creating meaning or sanctioning conduct (Giddens 1984: 17). “By rules that are intensive in nature, I mean formulae that are constantly invoked in the course of day-to-day activities, that enter into the structuring of much of the texture of everyday life” (22). Intensive rules apply to those engaged in the pursuit of megamusculinity as their everyday lives are often structured around strict dietary and exercise regimens. This process starts with one’s interest in beginning an
exercise routine at a gym, where there is the potential to build social relations to foster the exchange of ideas and advice and observe other workout routines. Here, the rules of the gym are much more important than other rules governing activity as they become an integral part of everyday activity for men in this pursuit.

While structuration theory is the foundation of this analysis, Giddens’ notion of the double hermeneutic is also adopted by this project and is particularly relevant when examining the duality of agents and structures. He presents this in *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976: 60), stating that hermeneutics “is directed to understanding the participation of actors in an intersubjective ‘form of life’, and hence to an interest in improving human communication or self-understanding.” He notes that sociology deals with a “pre-interpreted” world as social life “is produced by its component actors precisely in terms of their active constitution and reconstitution of frames of meaning whereby they organize their experience” (79). He argues that the social sciences engage in a double hermeneutic\(^\text{10}\) as sociology specifically “deals with a universe which is already constituted within frames of meaning by social actors themselves, and reinterprets these within its own theoretical schemes, mediating ordinary and technical language” (162). Giddens attributes a high level of knowledgeableability to these social actors (agents) and refers to them as “social theorists” who assist social scientists in the observation of lay actions (Giddens 1984: xxxii). This analysis will be engaging in a double hermeneutic beginning from a meso level of analysis (de la Rua 2007: 690) attempting to highlight the interplay of macro levels of social structure with micro levels of interpretation. This is particularly useful to examine how men negotiate their way

\(^{10}\) Giddens notes the appropriateness of this term as the double hermeneutic involves “the double process of translation or interpretation” (Giddens 1984: 284).
through social relations by means of interpretation and internalization, which result in the construction of particular frames of meaning. The double hermeneutic here involves reconstituting these lay frames of meaning (regarding masculinity and corporality) within new frames of meaning using Giddens’ theory of structuration.

Within the discourse of structuration theory, Giddens argues that the social world and structures within it tend to be relatively stable. Of concern to this project is the question of what rules and resources youth and men draw upon to organize their lives and how does this subsequently impose constraints? One explanation (which will be explored in chapter five) would be an examination of socio-economic class, particularly working class ideology, which socializes boys into jobs in manual labour, a realm imbued with masculinist undertones of physical strength (as many jobs in this field are physically demanding), aggression and the subordination of women (Corrigan 1979; Sennett and Cobb 1973; Willis 1977) The intricacies of masculinity are internalized within particular social classes differently as a result of the frames of meaning that arise from one’s class position. Working class boys and men are often forced to enter the instability of their class position and begin to internalize general notions of hegemonic masculinity; this results in attempts to perform gender through controlling and manipulating one of the few things they have complete control over in their lives, their bodies.

This leads into Giddens’ important discussion of human agency which refers “not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place,” which is why agency here implies power (Giddens 1984: 9). While actors are aware of, and continuously monitor their own behaviours and activities, they do the same for the larger cultural and physical context of the social world they are
situated in. In Giddens’ discussion of consciousness he introduces the term reflexive monitoring of conduct which is integral to the practices of agents. Figure 2 depicts the “stratification model of the agent” to clarify the processes involved in human agency and to further solidify the duality of structure and agency.

![Figure 2 (Giddens 1984: 5)](image)

There are particular unacknowledged conditions of action that reflect rules and resources that youth/men use to define the self, which come from social sources such as the media. In forming self-definitions they do not actively consider the influence of such forces as the media, which conflates images of masculinity with a particular morphology. These unacknowledged conditions influence the reflexive monitoring of action which has both intended and unintended consequences, and in turn reinforce particular sets of practices. As well, the motivations for various actions are both implicit and explicit.

Giddens faults much of social theory for not attributing agents the level of knowledgesability they deserve. He believes that this knowledgesability – the rationale behind an agent’s actions – operates through practical consciousness. Practical consciousness refers to lay actor’s understandings of their own social conduct without explicit expression. Giddens defines consciousness as “the reflexive monitoring of conduct by human agents” and states that it is fundamental to practical consciousness (Giddens 1984: 44). Where agents do not express the meanings behind conduct in practical consciousness, discursive consciousness requires one to provide a coherent
account of the rationale kept tacit in the former (45). While knowledgeability involves primarily the awareness of social rules, Giddens attributes significance to how this knowledge becomes operationalized through actions, by articulating the individual meanings (whether explicitly stated or not) through these forms of consciousness. Whether practical or discursive consciousness, this process involves the reflexivity of individuals in order to utilize one’s knowledge to reflect upon conduct.

According to Giddens, reflexivity is not merely being self-aware or self-conscious but refers to “the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life” (Giddens 1984: 3). This accounts for explanations of motives as more than mere individualized rationalizations and instead requires an examination of agency within social structure. It involves continuous monitoring of conduct (by oneself and is also expected of others), which is influenced not only by particular social relations but also the more routine aspects of daily life. Reflexive monitoring requires autonomy in order to clarify motivations and reasons, as it is expected that actors will be able to explain most of what they do. For example, exercise would be considered a conscious, reflexive activity where individuals could explain their motivation for pursuing (in the case of megamuscularity, excessive) exercise regimens.

Reflexivity has particular importance for understandings of self-identity, as the self is undoubtedly a reflexive project: “a more or less continuous interrogation of the past, present and future. It is a project carried on amid a profusion of reflexive resources: therapy and self-help manuals of all kinds, television programmes and magazine articles” (Giddens 1992: 30). Self-identity is continuously re-created and re-inscribed through the reflexive activities of individuals (Giddens 1991: 52). Giddens mentions that the self
gives human beings reasons for acting the ways we do, as we are expected to know what we are doing and why. “Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent” (53, emphasis in original). The self not only encompasses an individual’s corporal structure but also the conscious and unconscious motivations that prompt agents to engage in particular routines and lifestyle activities.

What Giddens refers to as the “reflexive project of the self” occurs within particular social milieu whereby individuals have a multitude of choices, specifically regarding leisure and lifestyle activities (Giddens 1991: 5). The notion of lifestyle is crucial to Giddens’ articulation of reflexivity within structuration theory. He acknowledges the oft held view that lifestyle refers solely to consumption, as purported by various media output, but argues that there more to it than this.

In conditions of high modernity, we all not only follow lifestyles but in an important sense are forced to do so – we have no choice to but choose. A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity (1991: 81).

Following this notion that individuals are channeled into following particular lifestyles, Giddens acknowledges the influence of one’s class position upon this endeavor which involves much more than mere consumption: as the act of rejecting particular consumptive behaviours (by choice or necessity due to severe material constraint) is in itself a lifestyle choice (Giddens 1991: 6). In the case of megamusculinity, one’s lifestyle has an important class dimension as the pursuit of increased muscularity often involves
tremendous time commitments, expensive gym memberships and dietary regimens. As will be explored in the following chapter, megamuscularity is not restricted by class as those with “severe material constraint” can still be engaged in this pursuit.

For Giddens, a prime component of lifestyle (and central to his theory of structuration) is routinization which refers to routines (that which is done habitually) which are central components of day-to-day social activity. “Routinization is vital to the psychological mechanisms whereby a sense of trust or ontological security is sustained in the daily activities of social life. Carried primarily in practical consciousness, routine drives a wedge between the potentially explosive content of the unconscious and the reflexive monitoring of action which agents display” (Giddens 1984: xxiii). While routinization often connotes repetition, Giddens conceptualizes routines as reflexive in the sense that they are open to change in “light of the mobile nature of self-identity” (Giddens 1991: 81). Routinization is important to articulate as it operationalizes the duality of structure and sheds light onto an important process of socially managing anxiety. According to Giddens (1984: 282), “routine, psychologically linked to the minimizing of unconscious sources of anxiety, is the predominant form of day-to-day social activity.” These habitual practices provide individuals with a sort of security in that routines are closely tied to trust relations in everyday conduct and provide a predictable means of protecting oneself against uncertainty. The notion of routines as socially managing anxiety is also important for the purpose of this analysis as it prompts one to question the source of anxiety that is socially managed through the routines involved in megamuscularity. Can one accurately state that the main source of anxiety (which prompts individuals to pursue megamuscularity in the first place) is that of not feeling
like a man? Are the vast amount of images of ideal male bodies portrayed through various mediums, depicted as grossly large with unnatural levels of musculature, contributing to this anxiety? One cannot deny the role of 24/7 gyms, protein supplements/foods, energy drinks, and the entire bodybuilding industry acting as somewhat structural modes of socially “managing” this anxiety.

Reflexivity, routinization and lifestyle are all components of Giddens’ structuration theory which influence self-identity and rely upon the body as the “‘locus’ of the active self” (Giddens 1984: 36). In Giddens’ discussions of the body he emphasizes that individuals must be continuously in control of bodily gestures and actions, and this routinized control of the body acts as protection for agents. One must constantly self-manage the body and as such, the body is much more than a passive entity for Giddens: it is essentially an “action-system, a mode of praxis” that is integral to the creation and re-creation of one’s self-identity (Giddens 1991: 99). Giddens focuses upon four aspects of the body - bodily appearance, demeanour, sensuality and regimes – and argues that appearance is one of the most central elements to self-identity (one cannot ignore the implications this has for men pursuing megamusculinity and their formations of self-identity). Regularized control of the body and the focus upon bodily appearance demonstrate that, according to Giddens, the self is constantly on display through morphology. Giddens borrows the term “bodily idiom” from Erving Goffman which refers to the process whereby one is continuously communicating through the body where there are normative expectations of appropriate conduct: this communication consists of both intentional impressions as well as those inadvertently or unknowingly conveyed. While verbal communication can cease at any moment, the same cannot be said for
messages and information conveyed about oneself through the body in bodily idiom (Giddens 1984: 80). With the self and body so closely intertwined, messages conveyed through bodily idiom never terminate, which carries significant implications for one’s self identity as well as the looking-glass self.

Control of the body is often achieved through particular bodily regimes which link the institutional reflexivity of the social environment to the cultivation of the body (the parallels to Foucault here are obvious and will be explored subsequently) (Giddens 1991: 100). These regimes become habitual behaviours as well as self-discipline, “organized in some part according to social conventions but also formed by personal inclinations and dispositions” (62). The body’s role in self-identity is made explicit through regimes, as corporal appearance displays the self-discipline and control of the body one must engage in, in order to adhere to bodily regimes. In post-traditional social contexts, individuals are held responsible for the designs of their body. Here, the reflexivity of the body can lead to feelings of shame over appearance: for those megamusculinists, shame of one’s body can provoke agents to pursue excessive work upon it.

Giddens continues to discuss the impact of shame anxiety upon corporal manipulations in his analysis of anorexia. Here he highlights the interplay of one’s control of bodily regimes with the growing imperative for agents to be responsible for their own health. He argues that in the 1920s, the term diet became primarily connected to controlling one’s weight, which prompted personal responsibility (or self-responsibility) for health. Being on a diet is merely one facet of a pervasive and imperative phenomenon: “the cultivation of bodily regimes as a means of reflexively
influencing the project of the self” (Giddens 1991: 105). Anorexia is a prime example of what can happen when this control of bodily regimes becomes excessive – anorectics are engaging in “compulsive mastery,” which Giddens makes quite distinct from “authentic reflexive monitoring” (107). Having agency necessarily implies self-reflexivity, part of which would naturally involve corporal manipulations through particular bodily regimens. The problem arises when reflexive monitoring slips into the realm of compulsive mastery of the body, where bodily obsessions are situated. Giddens wrongly asserts that there is more social pressure for women to strive for certain types of attractiveness than men, though mentions that - at the time of his writing in the early 1990s - he could see that this imbalance was changing (106). “Anorexia can be understood as a pathology of reflexive self-control, operating around an axis of self-identity and bodily appearance, in which shame anxiety plays a preponderant role” (105). For Giddens, anorexia would be considered a very complex response to the pressures of high modernity. It is through this example that one can more accurately see the relevance of structuration theory to the topic at hand; specifically through examining the role of regimens of the self, which connects the disparate morphological realms of megamusculinity and eating disorders, into parallel pursuits. In attempting to show how these endeavours are in fact quite similar, it is important to note that megamusculinity should not be subject to the psychologized discourses discussed in chapter two. The nature of eating disorders as clinical “disorders” is not the focus of this analysis; instead I am focusing upon the regimes of self engaged in by both groups of people who are influenced by norms of gender performance and constructions of ideal bodies. These
agents are often motivated by a distorted self-perception from the “looking glass self,” and engage in reflexive practices of regimens of the self.

The body is a reflexive entity and Giddens offers valuable insight into the nature of what is often referred to generally as bodily (or appearance) obsessions: “What might appear as a wholesale movement towards the narcissistic cultivation of bodily appearance is in fact an expression of a concern lying much deeper actively to ‘construct’ and control the body. Here there is an integral connection between bodily development and lifestyle – manifest, for example, in the pursuit of specific bodily regimes” (Giddens 1991: 7). Applying this logic to individuals with anorexia nervosa, Giddens successfully uses structuration theory to explain this phenomenon without relying on a psychological discourse. I would argue, that the same extensions can be made to articulate megamuscularity, not as the clinical disorder of muscle dysmorphia, but as a phenomenon with particular social underpinnings which is thus, inherently social. Agents who pursue megamuscularity are knowledgeable, skillful and reflexive as they compulsively follow routinized, structured, daily schedules involving dietary and exercise regimens; these result from frames of meaning which involve the internalization of social messages of what it means to be a man. Thus, it would be incorrect to consider megamuscularity an individualized personal trouble as this neglects the reflective capacity of human agents who are situated within particular frames of meaning and social structures, which constitute the essence of social life.

Foucault and Giddens: Complementary, In Theory

As social theorists who examine issues related to the body, Michel Foucault has shown that bodies are subject to modes of surveillance by technologies of governance,
through discourses of power, knowledge and normalization (including governmentality and biopolitics); while Anthony Giddens explores the fluid nature of structures as rules and resources which ultimately enable and constrain the body, though agency is much more evident here through his discussion of reflexivity. As mentioned above, while Giddens does not agree with using the terms micro and macro to describe a sociological analysis, his work is an attempt to bring these two realms together, since he has explored the macro domain of structures and how this becomes internalized or operationalized at the micro level of agency and reflexivity. Whereas Foucault brilliantly analyzes the macro realms of power, knowledge, governmentality and biopolitics as aspects of a disciplinary society, he neglects a thorough investigation of the micro world of agency.11 He holds that there is a dominant discourse that reflects disciplinarity, or the disciplinary society, but one must question (as he does not sufficiently answer this himself) how is this ever “activated” at the micro level of individuals. Since the framework of this analysis is structural interactionism, I am concerned with adequately bridging the micro/macro divide and have utilized the work of Foucault and Giddens to assist in this endeavor. Foucault’s work will be woven through Giddens’ theory of structuration, and in doing so, a theory will emerge that emphasizes both the intricacies of disciplinary society (Foucault) and holds agency at the fore (Giddens) in order to show how megamusculinity is created/produced/reproduced.

While I contend that Foucault does not adequately bridge the micro/macro divide, nor does he sufficiently account for agency (which will be supported below), it is important to acknowledge scholars who entirely disagree. Silverman (1985: 82, 87)

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11 Scholars acknowledge Foucault’s neglect of agency, specifically Susan Hekman (1990: 190) and Giddens in his analysis of power (1984: 257).
explicitly states that Foucault does address both micro and macro issues, and that he is a prime example of a scholar overcoming the micro/macro divide. “Foucault’s work on the disciplined society provides an analysis of the connectedness of the body, self and society, thus combining the macro and micro traditions of sociological analysis” (Eckermann 1997: 155). Sarah Nettleton (1997: 212) discusses Foucault’s work on the self in explaining the responsibilized nature of individual existence relying upon so-called “experts” for self-care advice. While she claims that Foucault does have work on the self, she argues that instead of viewing individuals as “docile,” passive recipients of health advice, they possess “the capacity for self-control, responsibility, rationality and enterprise” (213-214). Liz Eckermann (1997), Lois McNay (1992) and Paul Patton (1989) argue that Foucault’s work has undergone a shift where, in his early writing he focused upon docility and external constraints imposed upon individuals, but beginning with the History of Sexuality volumes his focus shifted to the active self. These authors argue that those who have criticized Foucault for a lack of emphasis of agency have largely ignored the latter part of this work (McNay 1992 and Patton 1989, as cited in Eckermann 1997: 154).

A relatively simple way to address this accusation is directly from Foucault’s foreword to the English translation of The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (1973) where Foucault mentions the problem of the subject. Foucault sees his work as much more complex than the label of anti-agency yet he admits to decentering the subject. He has explored scientific discourse “not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of
what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the
very existence of such discourse. . .” (xiv).

Can one speak of science and its history (and therefore of its conditions of
existence, its changes, the errors it has perpetrated, the sudden advances that have
sent it off on a new course) without reference to the scientist himself . . . this is not
exactly what I set out to do. I do not wish to deny the validity of intellectual
biographies, or the possibility of a history of theories, concepts, or themes. It is
simply that I wonder whether such descriptions are themselves enough, whether
they do justice to the immense density of scientific discourse, whether there do not
exist, outside their customary boundaries, systems of regularities that have a
decisive role in this history of the sciences (1973: xiii).

Here, Foucault acknowledges that the individual was not his primary focus and questions
whether an analysis of personal biographies will sufficiently contribute to his “history of
the sciences,” a concern that is probably due to his outright neglect of phenomenology.
He is addressing his neglect of the knowing subject and states that he does not want
readers to interpret his focus on discursive practice as a rejection of thoroughly
investigating the knowing subject:

Discourse in general, and scientific discourse in particular, is so complex a reality
that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels and with different
methods. If there is one approach that I do reject, however, it is that (one might call
it, broadly speaking, the phenomenological approach) which gives absolute priority
to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places
its own point of view at the origin of all historicity -- which, in short, leads to a
transcendental consciousness. It seems to me that the historical analysis of
scientific discourse should, in the last resort, be subject, not to a theory of the
knowing subject, but rather to a theory of discursive practice (1973: xiv).

Foucault wrote this foreword as a sort of disclaimer, an explanation of how an ideal
reader would approach his text. He is essentially stating that he wants to focus upon
discourse formation without completely abandoning agency, though he asserts that his
project was not one of developing “a theory of the knowing subject.” Instead of being
ignorant of Foucault’s later work, critics of Foucault’s relative neglect of agency are in fact pointing out what was not part of his overall project.

The approach of this analysis is not to state that Foucault has utterly neglected agency or micro level practices: rather, to address the fact that this domain of Foucault’s work is not nearly as well-developed as that of Giddens. He explains the characteristics of this disciplinary society thoroughly but does not provide enough detail about how it is operationalized at the micro level. To stave off criticism that I have fallen prey to the same neglect criticized by Eckermann (1997), McNay (1992) and Patton (1989), I will be weaving Foucault’s writings on disciplinarity through Giddens’ structuration theory to strengthen the arguments of both scholars.

**Disciplinary structures (rules and resources)**

According to Foucault, power is everywhere as it circulates through society, it is not restricted to a top-down flow; and disciplinary power specifically has its focus upon the manipulation and alteration of the body. He argues that power is embedded in all social practices yet does not relate this discussion to an adequate account of agency and knowledgeability (Giddens 1984; Heckman 1990). If Foucault does not emphasize the role of individuals in mechanisms of power, he does thoroughly investigate macro discourses of power. Susan Hekman (1990: 160) argues that Foucault’s conceptualization of power as everywhere implies that “no particular instance of power is interesting and thus can be the subject of a critical social theory.” This is problematic for Giddens who views the task of social theory, “to expose and criticize instances of abuses of power” (160). For Giddens, power is best understood through the reproduction of structures. The rules and resources that comprise Giddens’ definition of structures are essentially what
Foucault refers to when he discusses knowledge, which is constantly reproduced by power relations. While Giddens refers to structures as rules and resources, Foucault essentially discusses discursive formation as a set of rules and resources. In the micro/macro, agency/structure configuration, Foucault explores structures (rules, resources) and Giddens spends more time exploring agency: specifically, the ways in which people encounter rules and resources that enable and constrain certain action. This is fundamentally what Foucault argues when referring to dominant epistemes, or knowledge discourses, that enable or constrain: enabling epistemes reproduce themselves and new epistemes develop as one episteme begins to be constrained in particular ways. These discourses of knowledge operate within the larger framework of governmentality - the art of government. A new way to examine Giddens’ conception of structures is by situating them within Foucault’s theoretical shift to examining disciplinary society where these structures facilitate the management, surveillance and governance of populations (encompassing Foucault’s governmentality and biopolitics – power over life). Foucault’s focus here was not upon the impact of this imposition upon the individual citizen, rather the purpose of integrating these theorists is to use Giddens to show how individuals cope with these structural rules and resources which enforce notions of self-surveillance, regulation and management.

**Not-so-docile bodies**

The role of the state is emphasized by both scholars: Foucault shows the shift in the modern penal system from punishment of the body to internalized discipline and surveillance; whereas Giddens contends that “the modern state is distinguished by its immense powers of surveillance of everyday activities. . .” (Craib 1992: 28) and credits
Foucault for his analyses of surveillance. This quote aptly demonstrates the different lenses used by each theorist as the focus of their analyses: Giddens emphasizes the surveillance of everyday routines (micro level) while Foucault does not completely reject this but instead chooses to focus upon the larger, structural conditions (macro level) of enforcing disciplinarity among citizens. For Foucault, people are subjected to various conditions of discipline and self-regulate as a result. Giddens asserts that social actors are knowledgeable, conscious agents and, while there are particular unacknowledged conditions of action that agents do not reflect upon, he argues that motivations for actions are both implicit and explicit. It is the latter that Giddens emphasizes through his work, specifically in his discussion of reflexivity, routine, lifestyle and cultivation of the self.

The self is the most micro level of analysis and is thoroughly investigated by Giddens, with some brief mention made by Foucault. For Foucault, the self is manipulated/developed through technologies of the self (practices that may be somewhat similar to Giddens’ bodily regimes), which operate under the biopolitical discourse of self-regulation and discipline. A subtle glimpse at the cohesion between these two theorists is found in Foucault’s discussion of the self in *Technologies of the Self* (1988b: 25) where he states that the “self is a reflexive pronoun” but does not develop this much more than questioning the development and sources used for the formation of identity. Giddens refers to Foucault’s stance when he states:

Foucault’s interpretation of the development of the self in modern societies should also be placed in question in a rather basic way. Instead of seeing the self as constructed by a specific ‘technology’, we should recognise that self-identity becomes particularly problematic in modern social life, particularly in the very recent era. Fundamental features of a society of high reflexivity are the ‘open’ character of self-identity and the reflexive nature of the body (Giddens 1992: 30).
Central to Giddens’ understanding of social actors is the agency involved in the reflexive monitoring of action as well as the reflexive nature of the self and body. Giddens’ reflexivity, and Foucault’s understanding of self-surveillance (specifically of the body) are essentially referring to similar tactics; the main distinction lies in the amount of agency attributed to individual actors. To combine these two perspectives: individuals are reflexive agents, subjected to the practices of disciplinary society, who possess and exercise agency.

Of utmost importance to this analysis is the understanding of the body held by these theorists. Foucault has analyzed the body primarily through examining mechanisms of power that impose self-regulation of one’s body. This disciplinary power produces docile bodies that can be subjected, used and transformed. Accordingly, Giddens argues that “bodily discipline is intrinsic to the competent social agent” (Giddens 1991: 57) as he emphasizes the reflexive nature of agency which allows individuals to navigate their way through various disciplinary mechanisms, rather than passive acceptance. “The body, like the self, becomes a site of interaction, appropriation and reappropriation, linking reflexively organized processes and systematically ordered expert knowledge” (218).

Giddens (1991) notes that in high modernity the boundaries of the body have changed so that it is something to be “worked upon.” He describes the body as “a thoroughly permeable ‘outer layer’ through which the reflexive project of the self and externally formed abstract systems routinely enter. In the conceptual space between these, we find more and more guidebooks and practical manuals to do with health, diet, appearance, exercise, lovemaking and many other things” (218). He argues that bodies are not docile, as they are intimately intertwined with the reflexive project of cultivation.
of the self (identity). In a world where rules and resources shape everything individuals do, at first glance some may appear passive: what is occurring in the case of megamusculinity is individuals are actively creating a hypertrophied reality by negotiating their way through the disciplinary constraints of structures as rules and resources. “Indeed, having critiqued the Foucauldian approach for its Ironically disembodied approach to the human body wrought by its emphasis on discursive power, a new strain of work has called for an examination of the body as an everyday, active entity, not as simply the inarticulate construction of disciplinary forces, à la Foucault” (Rosenfeld and Faircloth 2006: 16-17). I am particularly interested in the embodied meanings of morphology and muscularity (requiring intense self-regulation/discipline), as influenced by interpretations of masculinist discourses within social structures. At first glance it may be argued that these two theorists hold completely divergent perspectives. While Foucault’s work is complex, challenging and can be interpreted in different ways, I propose that through examining his work, rather than positing Foucault as the antithesis of Giddens, the two bodies of work in fact complement each other.
Part Two: Selected Social Underpinnings of Megamusculinity

Chapter 5: Practice Makes Perfect: Megamusculinity and the Working-Class Pursuit for the “Perfect” Morphology

Part one of this thesis has developed a sociological framework used to examine megamusculinity. Chapter five signals the beginning of the second part of this thesis which examines several social underpinnings of this phenomenon in order to broaden this preliminary sociological investigation of a topic largely neglected by this discipline. The relation between morphology and the performance of masculinity occurs within particular social contexts; this chapter specifically focuses upon the internalization of masculinity within the working-class. Taking the theoretical framework explored in the previous chapter, this analysis will utilize the theories of Foucault and Giddens, specifically the disciplinary power of structuration and the micro level of human agency, to articulate how men negotiate their way (by means of interpretation) through the intricacies of class. These working-class interpretations and internalizations are vital to examine as megamusculinists make considerable material investments (in the form of gym memberships, expensive supplements/steroids and strict dietary regimens) yet this phenomenon is not restricted to middle-upper class men (Pope et al. 2000). Connell (2000b) emphasizes the importance of class analyses of masculinities in order to show how masculinities are organized by social power:

Social power in terms of access to higher education, entry to professions, command of communication, is being delivered by the school system to boys who are academic ‘successes’. The reaction of the ‘failed’ is likely to be a claim to other sources of power, even other definitions of masculinity. Sporting prowess, physical aggression, or sexual conquest may do. Indeed, the reaction is often so strong that masculinity as such is claimed for the cool guys, with boys who follow an academic path being defined as effeminate (2000b: 137-138).
Drawing upon the analysis presented in chapter three, gender performativity is pertinent to this discussion of how working-class boys/men manage their class position, inherent with particular rules and resources which enable and constrain behaviour and choices, within the broad facets of disciplinary society. Here, structural components of gender make individuals responsible for presenting their gender “appropriately,” regardless of class distinction. The boys/men examined in the literature below must negotiate their way through the disciplinary constraints of their class position (as a disciplinary structure comprised of rules and resources) which serve to manage, govern and surveil populations; these constraints are not only material and economic but also ideological through norms of appropriate working-class masculinities.

This chapter will review three classic studies of working-class mentality and youth/adults. While these arguments, written primarily in the 1970s, may initially seem dated, their contemporary significance cannot be understated. Connections will be drawn from these arguments and applied to current debates on masculinity and the implications for understanding megamusculinity. I intend to show the dynamic, intricate workings of masculinity and how this is internalized by working-class boys/youth. With lives characterized by their forced entry into the instability of their class position, this internalization results in boys performing gender through controlling and manipulating one of the few things they have complete control over in their lives: their bodies.

**A Brief Review of a Class Analysis of Masculinity Based Upon Adults**

Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb’s *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1973) articulates the male-centered, working-class mentality prominent in the late 1960s-early 1970s within their sample of men from Boston. Using participant observation, in-depth
interviews and group discussions, the authors detail various structural forces within a class-based society focused upon authoritative judgement and categorization, as they examine the hidden injuries of class distinctions. This text begins by documenting the differentiation between classes of intellectuals and workers within a discourse of culture. They utilize opposing voices of labourers and theorists such as Jean Paul Sartre, to introduce the reader to the subordinate position of workers, specifically when contrasted with “men of culture” (e.g. poets, philosophers) (6). These divergent opinions result from a tradition of separating culture from society, which was the departure point for this text.

Themes of freedom and dignity pervade their analysis; this is a destructive notion when examining the social value placed upon knowledge amongst participants interviewed, as tools to obtain freedom generally promote indignity (30). This interactionist account of social class attempts to demonstrate the negative experience of class society for workers who are entangled in processes of being assigned to a particular class: the means (and effects) of this labeling and categorizing involve what they term the “hidden injuries,” where the working-class are most negatively affected by the burden of this label (76).

This text details various instances of conflict within the lives of the working-class participants, from tensions within the confines of the home, ethnic background, work environment, to relations between those of various classes, as well as issues of sacrifice and betrayal, etcetera. This review will focus upon a few structural realms of conflict that contribute to the formation of a working-class understanding of masculinity.

The first structural component central to the lives of workers Sennett and Cobb interviewed is their racial/ethnic background and the challenge of migrating, and often being forcefully integrated, into a new society. There is a moral hierarchy present within
ethnic classifications where Western Europeans hold the highest rank (1973: 14).

“Ethnicity, they said, is a way of preserving some special identity in the midst of an American mass, a way of maintaining distinctive traditions and rituals even after a person has the practical opportunity to ‘melt’ into ‘average’ Americanness” (15). Sennett and Cobb argue that the cultural shelter provided by these ethnic communities dissolves, and workers are then forced to come to the realization that they are relatively powerless in American capitalism. They argue that this provides an opportunity for rebellion through the formation of class-consciousness, as workers are “forced beyond the ethnic village into deprivations caused by living just as workers” (17). These workers are facing the ultimate task of becoming “cultured” within American society in order to fully integrate within these new confines.

The authors stress the link between class and one’s self, as people are responzibilized for their social position. Here, class is a personal responsibility associated with dignity (1973: 97). The notion of “badges of ability” is pertinent here as they document the transformation of the self to an alienated individual. These “badges” promote a sense of belonging (amongst those who share similar ones), which they refer to as “fraternities,” specifically within work and the family. This also exposes one to the realm of authority and judgement within the larger discourse of self-validation: for example, the role of a foreman is to judge performance rather than performing himself (100), and since class and social position are an individual’s responsibility they often internalize this arbitrary judgement as a reflection upon the self (e.g. the looking-glass self). Thus, the only notion of independence for the worker here is independence through ability.
This analysis of class is then extended to its entanglements with concepts of sacrifice (as workers must often sacrifice spending time with family in order to work to provide financially) and betrayal (specifically regarding children of working-class families moving beyond the confines of this class in adulthood). Sennett and Cobb use the example of a working-class father asserting authority within the household in an attempt to compensate for his lack of status in society, though this notion is not restricted solely to the working-class. They argue that members of the working-class sacrifice (which is quite routine), so their children do not become like their father, whereas middle-class fathers do not worry as much about making sure their children become unlike them (1973: 128).

Sacrifice, here, has been linked to notions of self-worth as social positions are infused with moral meanings. Sennett and Cobb argue that this is troublesome as the factors that influence one’s social position are often beyond an individual’s control. They vaguely point to “society” as the main culprit stating, “society forces men to translate social position into terms of personal worth” (1973: 141). This analysis is interested in social forces that influence people’s lived experience: they argue that things like badges of ability, or sacrifices, serve to divert men’s attention from the structural limitations, imposed by class position, upon their freedom (152-3). This system pits people against each other in arguments that appear, superficially to be about general topics, when people are really fighting in an attempt to gain recognition from another of their own worth (148). This is the problem of class in this text as people are pitted against each other and the class system that provokes this is conveniently concealed.

Sennett and Cobb (1973: 118) focus upon external sources of conflict while
emphasizing the internal conflict that arises when men feel torn between asserting their own worth (individuality) and meeting the demands of acceptance into a fraternity. While I have briefly mentioned some sources of conflict detailed by Sennett and Cobb, it is important to acknowledge the far-reaching effects of these conflicts, particularly within gender performance. These effects are particularly evident when examining conflict within the home: with little to no control of their own labour power within work, men often attempt to overcompensate by strongly asserting authority (generally adhering to notions of hegemonic masculinity) within the home. *The Hidden Injuries of Class* has provided a starting point for a class-based analysis of masculinity through its interrogation of particular dynamics that operate within realms of conflict for the working class. This text is quite uni-dimensional as Sennett and Cobb begin their analysis by highlighting the problem of divorcing culture from society yet neglect to thoroughly articulate realms outside of class, specifically cultural realms. For the purpose of this thesis, a simple class-based analysis will not suffice in accurately and thoroughly investigating the social underpinnings of megamusculinity. As a disciplinary structure, class cannot be divorced from the larger cultural context within which it operates; Paul Willis (1977) and Paul Corrigan’s (1979) analyses will be examined subsequently in order to highlight discursive themes within all three texts which assist in a more dynamic understanding of megamusculinity, as opposed to a simple class based model.

**A Thematic Presentation of Working-Class Youth Culture and Masculinity**

Sennett and Cobb (1973) have attempted to show how the working-class system pits individuals against each other (fighting for recognition and personal worth), while concealing its instigating role in this, and the resulting negative experiences for the
working-class. They have illustrated various effects of the realms of conflict amongst the working-class, which build to form a definition of what it means to be a man. Writing before the emergence of cultural studies in the mid 1970s, it is imperative to build upon their analysis in order to move from a simplistic class analysis to one that incorporates youth culture, and culture more generally. Paul Willis’ (1977) *Learning to Labour* and Paul Corrigan’s (1979) *Schooling the Smash Street Kids*, will be integrated (using Sennett and Cobb’s analysis as a departure point) to examine the working-class and culture, not as distinct entities, but inextricably interrelated.

Willis’ (1977) cultural analysis of students’ behaviour and attitudes shows that a particular understanding of masculinity, sexual and labour divisions helps one understand why working-class boys voluntarily choose the least satisfying and least desirable work: manual labour. Willis argues that the model of understanding working-class jobs (at the time of his writing during the late 1970s) is in dire need of revision as working-class kids are not merely “walking corpses” who passively accept jobs handed to them (1). In fact he finds that working-class kids are actively engaged in a process of creating a culture of resistance and opposition to authority as manifest in the counter-school cultures he examines. Here the stigma of manual labour is transformed into something positive: a venue for boys and men to engage in a masculine spectacle, a machismo.

Corrigan (1979) engages in a class analysis of power relations and youth culture; specifically working-class youths’ perceptions of authority. He studied working-class boys’ delinquent beahviour by posing as a writer in their schools. The starting point for his analysis focused upon the importance of understanding the culture in which particular social phenomena take place. He wanted to understand the culture of students studied and
mentioned that the most important finding from his research was that one cannot understand individual behaviour apart from discourses of power. His project began by analyzing the workings of school culture, then shifted to youth culture as he realized that his research would be incomplete by neglecting important aspects of their lives outside of school. For the boys, education does not only occur within the concrete walls of the formal school, but is a process that continues all the time (93). He investigated the particular working-class youth culture which involved pop music, football, school culture and involvement (or lack thereof, due to financial constraints) with commercial organizations. He was interested in the development of working-class boys’ identity formation and status acquisition, which is centered upon various leisure activities, specifically the large amounts of time they spend “doing nothing.”

Understanding Culture

The scope of this analysis needs to be narrowed as I focus upon understanding masculinity within working-class culture, specifically youth culture: here I refer to cultures of social groups and not those of particular ethnic or racial groups. As Raymond Williams (1961) notes, culture is not a simple concept to define. In Culture and Society: 1780-1950 (1961), he depicts culture as a way of life, a socially constructed, historically located way of looking at the world. He notes that the working-class is stronger than the bourgeois as the working-class does not think in terms of the masses (as this depersonalizes) and instead focuses upon creating a community culture. This “community culture” can be seen in the counter-school cultures created by “the lads” in Willis’ (1977) study as well as the camaraderie within the groups of youth studied by Corrigan (1979). These youth cultures operate within the larger working-class culture
where they internalize messages about what it means to be a man (which often involve entry into manual labour) and actively work to assert their masculinity.

Willis’ work in the 1970s emerged from an interpretive, ethnographic tradition where “ethnography is a way at getting at . . . cultural complexity, a way to reflect on experience in ways that go beyond easy categories and distinctions” (Dolby and Dimitriadis 2004: 5). This quote demonstrates Willis’ reflection that youth identity is more than merely categories of class, gender and ethnicity; rather, it involves a multiplicity of factors including the way one lives, how well one “fits in” etcetera. Dolby and Dimitriadis (2004) document Willis’ findings of the working-class boys created culture, based upon opposition to authority, resistance and an aggressive assertion of white working-class masculinity. Criticized for neglecting gender and race while focusing primarily upon class, Willis’ work details important findings such as the significance of youths’ agency and the notion that working-class work is often an irreversible passage as the shopfloor becomes a prison, with education (and the goal of attaining credentials) as the only escape.

Willis views culture as a “product of collective human praxis” (1977: 4) and is not merely a passive imposition of dominant ideologies from particular structures. In an attempt to answer his initial question, why do working-class kids choose to work in certain jobs, Willis details their active involvement in creatively transforming aspects of dominant culture. It is this created culture, Willis argues, that prepares boys for their work in manual labour. Willis focuses upon situating “the lads” counter-culture within the dominant working-class culture. When completing fieldwork in factories where many “lads” were employed after school, he found striking similarities between their counter-
culture and the working-class culture they became immersed in: particularly on the shopfloor where masculine chauvinism dominates informal groups of workers. The boys interviewed by Willis identified themselves as “the lads,” which was a label they attached to their counter-culture based on opposition to authority and a rejection of the conformist, particularly within the school setting. These boys are often those who fail classes, or school in general; Willis offers a new perspective to understand this as he argues they are not merely passive victims to the educational system, but are in fact active participants in creating their own counter-school culture which attempts to resist the core facets of schooling. The main conformist group studied by Willis was identified by “the lads” with the derogatory label “ear’oles,” referring to their eager compliance with the authority figures that “the lads” aggressively resist and rebel against. The findings in this text were obtained through participant observations of “the lads” at each of their jobs, interviews with foremen, managers and shop stewards and case studies of interviews with particular conformist and non-conformist boys from other schools, including a high status grammar school (5).

**Thematic Analysis**

While these texts were written in the 1970s, their arguments are quite relevant today as they help understand class and youth culture as disciplinary structures, comprised of rules and resources of which boys/men must draw upon to organize their lives. The working-class has particular conventions of acceptable and appropriate behaviours and choices specifically regarding definitions of masculinity. Madeline Arnot (2004: 24) cites Connell (1995) who argues that since Willis published *Learning to Labour*, few doubt that “the social construction of masculinities is a systematic socially
negotiated process,” and that there is a complex interplay between social structures and culture. What we learn from Willis, Corrigan and Sennett and Cobb’s analyses is that working-class youth/men form distinct “communities,” “fraternities,” or groups of individuals that operate through the use of discourses enforcing particular norms of behaviour: specifically, masculinist discourses where aspects of hegemonic masculinity are not only expected, but celebrated, and ascribe particular meanings to the male body.

The various (youth)cultures analyzed within these texts are characterized by particular overlapping themes which will subsequently be explored. Upon examining all three texts in conjunction, one finds that the main theme that ties not only all three together, but certainly connects the arguments within each analysis, is the emphasis placed upon masculinity. It is this working-class construction of masculinity that will be analyzed by exploring several interrelated themes, of which conventions of masculinity, and musculinity, are fundamental.

**Masculinity, Power and Control**

These texts detailed the importance of a general masculinity to the working-class at the particular time of writing; this must be acknowledged as contemporary depictions of masculinity consist of a multitude of different masculinities, thus the existence of a gender continuum rather than dichotomous categorizations. Connell (2002: 77) emphasizes the importance of articulating the different internalizations of masculinity according to class, as there is significant variation such as business masculinity versus manual craftsmen’s masculinity. Carrigan et al. (1985) analyze the influence of masculinity upon particular economic classes. They note that in upper classes, women are not generally physically subordinate to their husband; they are instead subordinated by
the fact that family life is centered upon the husband’s career while the mother’s task is that of a dutiful housewife. They juxtapose the image of an upper-class husband with a working-class husband who does not have a “career” and instead often chooses to assert authority and gain self-esteem from other means: a common way to assert this authority is through the oppression of women. Neglecting an analysis of the middle-class sector, the authors note that both husbands are performing hegemonic masculinity in different social contexts, both characterized by heteronormativity.

Today, the most pervasive form of masculinity is hegemonic masculinity where particular traits/characteristics are glorified/exaggerated resulting in hypermasculinity. Whether talking about working-class youth, or adults, there are particular ways masculinity is demonstrated within particular cultures.

By inverting the classification between class cultures, Bourdieu argued, working-class men celebrate their masculine sexuality and their physical (manual) culture by punctuating their language with ‘coarse’ and ‘crude’ words and ‘broad and spicy stories’—a theme that also emerges strongly in *Learning to Labor* and, interestingly, in contemporary poststructuralist research on boys’ laddish behavior in schools (Arnot 2004: 27).

Language as a way of asserting masculinity is evident in Corrigan’s (1979) articulation of the way boys talk to each other when hanging out on the street and when referring to people in positions of authority, as well as Willis’ (1977) discussion of “the lads” labeling of the “ear’oles” due to characteristics considered effeminate, their offensive language used when taking about female teachers, and discussing their relationships as they solely focus upon their own sexual gratification and neglect that of their partners (who are generally female). This oppressive language directed towards women is often extended to the working-class home which is characterized by male supremacy.
Masculinity is heavily infused with notions of power and control, which are easily internalized by the cultures examined. “The real impact of class is that a man can play out both sides of the power situation in his own life, become alternately judge and judged, alternately individual and member of the mass. This represents the ‘internalizing’ of class conflict, the process by which struggle between men leads to struggle within each man” (Sennett and Cobb 1973: 98). Sennett and Cobb mention the struggle for working-class individuals who wield little control over “transforming the conditions of his or her life [and instead] simply moves from one set of circumstances to another. Circumstances, the structure of society, remains and you move; and as a result, you leave situations, classes, structures, as they are” (1973: 271). This lack of control felt by working-class parents is undoubtedly passed along to their child(ren) who are forced into the instability of the working-class position. Willis (1977: 53) notes that a theme found within the shopfloor culture was a “massive attempt to gain informal control of work process,” and parallels this with the youth counter-school culture where they attempted to substitute their own timetables, create their own routines and life spaces. Individuals are held responsible for their class position, regardless of the power and/or control one wields over transforming their circumstances (Sennett and Cobb 1973: 39).

According to Corrigan (1979) the working-class school promoted the value of education as wielding hope for getting better jobs, and complying with rules and sanctions were central: “If you behave yourself, you are more likely to do well at school; if you do well at school, you will get good qualifications and a good reference; if you get a good reference, you will get a good job; if you get a good job, then you are likely to get lots of money” (50). The power dynamic within school culture is crucial to understand
not only regarding enforcing rules and sanctions but also the role of teachers as opposed to students: where the former attend because it is financially compulsory while the latter attend because it is legally compulsory (52). Corrigan states that the most important idea he learned from his research is that you cannot understand individual behaviour apart from the discourse of power it is situated within (58). After detailing four main ways schools attempt to control students’ behaviour (the most important being constant surveillance as a form of panopticism imposing constant self-regulation at the fear of being watched or caught), he argues that schools are “civilizing” agencies: instead of teaching boys to solely respect school administration, these values are transferred to imposing a particular view of their actions within the community as a whole (66).

Figures of Authority

A Marxist cultural theorist, Willis details the significance of the concept labour power (often utilizing Marxist terminology when articulating the role of manual labour within the capitalist structure) which acquires various meanings within different societies as it is subjectively understood (1977: 2). This process of understanding is important for the construction of class identities as there is a specific subjective sense of manual labour and thus, manual work, within working-class culture, and the counter-school culture he examines. Willis provides an excellent analysis of culture and labour power within the working-class in general, but within the school environment specifically, as he brings a much-needed cultural dimension to students’ behaviour. In a discussion of masculinity, class and manual labour Willis elaborates upon his view of masculinity as he states:

Masculinity must not…be too simply posed. It has many dimensions and edges. In one way it is a half-blind, regressive machismo which brings self-destructive
violence, aggression and division to relationships within the working class. In another way imparting something of what lies behind it, masculinity expresses impulses which can be progressive. Behind the expression of masculinity lies an affirmation of manual labour power and behind that (though mediated and distorted) a sense of the uniqueness of the commodity of labor power and of the way in which the general abstract labour unites and connects all kinds of concrete labour. The masculine disdain for qualification, for all its prejudice, carries still a kind of “insight” into the divisive nature of certification, and into the way in which mental work and technicism are mobilised ideologically primarily to maintain class relations rather than to select the most efficient or to increase productive efficiency (1977: 151-2).

This “masculine disdain for qualification” and the “divisive nature of certification” is evident in both Willis and Corrigan’s analyses of the contempt student youth cultures have towards the educational institution. The primary importance of labouring for “the lads” is the positive and active exclusion of the “ear’oles” as “the lads” feel they would be incapable of performing the strenuous manual work they do. This is partly influenced by the school as “the lads” build resistance to the mental work of education (and the jobs pursued by the “ear’oles”) which Willis links to their resistance to authority within the school. To Willis (1977: 103), “the specific conjunction in contemporary capitalism of class antagonism and the educational paradigm turns education into control, (social) class resistance into educational refusal and human difference into class division.” Here, class division is a product of schooling and the effect of this is undoubtedly social.

Stanley Aronowitz (2004) argues that working-class boys are asserting masculinity through rebellion against school authority figures, particularly teachers. They reproduce male superiority within gender relations and class relations. Acts of rebellion and resistance to authority and power are prominent in analyses of youth culture and their informal groups (e.g. “the lads”). In Corrigan’s (1979) discussion of youths’ leisure activities, he details their engagement with getting into fights, trouble and breaking rules.
“It is disastrous for your informal standing and masculine reputation if you refuse to fight, or perform very amateurishly” (Willis 1977: 35). Corrigan’s (1979) analysis began with a discussion of school culture and the common practice of truancy amongst working-class boys. He illustrated working-class kids’ perceptions of authority and the methods they used to deal with authority figures that involved controlling actions based upon values as they were primarily concerned with the power of the administration within school (24, 58). He found that students were often truant because of a fear of sanctions as they were attempting to avoid attacks upon them by the school (not because they were attacking the school) (28). This form of “protection” is inextricably linked with boys’ concerns about the power of the school system. Corrigan stressed the need to understand why these boys go to school in the first place, prior to any comprehensive articulation of their truancy. He lists four main reasons, including the notion that education is about changing individuals, particularly changing negative cultural traits that have not been successfully eradicated by the family (42). Education, and the school culture, is a means of validating social relationships and solidifying one’s status. The boys viewed education as an imposition and an obligation: school would not be so bad if they did not have to go. He argued that while boys reacted against the positive culture of the school, so too did the school react against the boys:

The structure of the boys’ leisure activities turned out to be as antipathetic to the school as the school’s structure had been antipathetic to the boys. These mutual antipathies were very important, since I quickly learnt that education as a process goes on all the time for these boys: and the antipathies betrayed two very different sorts of ‘education’ and learning going on in these boys’ lives (1979: 93).

This obligation to attend school made their favourite leisure activity, which did not involve any monetary resources, even more enticing. Corrigan devotes an entire
chapter to the most important leisure activity for these boys which consisted in “doing nothing” on the street (hence the title of the chapter) (1979:119). He had to redefine the term “doing nothing” as this, hanging out on the street, was an activity in and of itself, rampant with meanings and values for researchers to deconstruct: such as analyzing why they would choose to “do nothing” over participating in youth clubs, going to friends houses or commercial institutions. Hanging out on the street was always done in groups, which was part of working-class culture. Here they often engaged in fights or got into trouble, which was generally sparked by one of the boys getting a “weird idea” prompting the rest of the group to follow (127). The violent activities they engaged in involved performing masculinity, whether in the physical domain of fighting, or the aggressive language and mannerisms used when confronted by police. At the time of Corrigan’s writing, the pervasive media that saturate contemporary society were not nearly as influential as they are today. While he details youth engagement with pop music, football and “doing nothing” on the street, if the study were repeated today one would find that these leisure activities facilitate even further exaggerated performances of masculinity. Madeline Arnot (2004) argues that the concept of “the lads” has currently been extended, through venues such as the media, to encompass and represent all boys. Today, these boys attempt to cope with the uncertainty of their position by performing a heterosexual hypermasculinity within this culture that “celebrates three F’s—fighting, football, and fucking” (33, emphasis in original).

The Struggle to Develop Self-Worth and Identity

Working-class culture, and conventions of hegemonic masculinity, have implications for self-worth and identity formation, particularly for youth. “The goal
towards which all education is oriented is social productivity, but this is put in terms of a personal development of abilities” (Sennett and Cobb 1973: 268). Class position becomes intimately linked with personal worth as individuals are held responsible for their status; Sennett and Cobb (1973) discuss the association of self-worth with social position as it is imbued with moral connotations. They describe how “certain psychological ideas about ability transform the concept of the self into the concept of the individual” (58). Within a discussion of the search for human dignity, they introduce this individualized notion and elaborate with the concept, “badges of ability,” or ability as a badge (53). The purpose of the badge is to categorize people into a class of few. These badges of ability are integral to the “transposition of class from the world of childhood to that of adulthood” as adults are convinced that these badges should be used to define oneself (97). “The use of badges of ability or of sacrifices is to divert men from challenging the limits on their freedom by convincing them that they must first become legitimate, must achieve dignity on a class society’s terms, in order to have the right to challenge the terms themselves” (153, emphasis in original).

Madeline Arnot (2004: 26) reflects upon Willis’ examination of working-class boys’ realization that credentialism offered little help for them to evade the norm of working-class manual labour. She notes that the “identity work” engaged in by “the lads” involved associating strenuous physical labour with a “narrative superiority of masculinity” (25). She elaborates upon this notion by detailing the struggle faced by “the lads” who are forced into a disadvantage because of their class and celebrate their masculinity by giving derogatory labels to groups such as the “ear’oles,” in counter-school culture. Willis’ discussion of the importance of understanding working-class
masculinity is emphasized as Arnot concludes that “the lads” confirm “respect for their masculine identity, derived from their families and peer group, and see its fulfillment in hard, physically demanding manual jobs” (26). Specifically for the working-class, asserting masculinity is often associated with forming self-worth. The men studied by Sennett and Cobb (1973: 118) not only felt that class and the self are inextricably joined, but the working-class is prohibited from being able to fully develop internally: a luxury relegated to the middle-class. While middle-class men can affirm self-worth through their careers, this is not the case for many working-class men who overcompensate by aggressively displaying masculine qualities within the home.

For most middle-class men, self-esteem and personal identity were derived primarily from nonphysical sources, most notably their roles as breadwinners. It was working-class men who were most likely to feel that they needed to prove themselves through more rudimentary expressions of manhood linked to displays of toughness and raw power—images based on ‘bulging muscles and naked virility’ (Luciano 2007: 43).

The Choice to Pursue Manual Labour

The cultural milieu of working-class jobs, specifically the choice that youth have to enter this workforce, is an important theme that runs throughout these three texts. Sennett and Cobb (1973: 217) argued that working-class men were enmeshed in a “cult of masculinity” which emphasized toughness and hatred of “soft” people. They stressed the lack of control within working-class work and the implications for one’s self perception stating:

In the world of child and teacher, the dominant figure can legitimize his formal position; in the world of man and man, this foreman cannot. He feels the twist of inadequacy created by the union of class and ability even more because he believes that, if he really had the drive and the ability, he ought to have become a
Similar to Willis (1977), Corrigan (1979) was interested in the “choice” boys made when choosing jobs. He defines four categories of job choice and notes that hardly any of the boys he spoke with mentioned occupational aspiration: they were more concerned with being able to pay their bills and support a family, choosing horizontal over vertical mobility. They often viewed jobs similar to the process of schooling where you get in, complete your tasks and overall it is quite boring; what differs is the temporality of it as many of the boys’ older brothers frequently switched jobs in the hope that the next one would be marginally better. These boys are not necessarily choosing jobs or careers as they are “committing themselves to a future of generalized labour” (Willis 1977: 100). The world of work is viewed as boring and full of insecurity: the only promise it provides is financial compensation and an escape from the confines of school. The school built a resistance amongst the youth cultures examined towards mental work, where manual labour was the most appealing option situated outside the domain of school.

The similarities between the youth counter-culture examined by Willis and the working-class world they were immersed in when employed after school, were most evident on the shopfloor which was dominated by masculine chauvinism. This male supremacy was transferred to the home as men are expected to support the household financially while women are relegated to domestic duties, servicing the needs of their family, and only works for “extras” (Willis 1977: 73). Issues of dominance emerge within this setting (juxtaposed with the middle-class family which is predicated upon dependence, not competition) as boys are often in competition with their fathers for dominance over the mother. Here, they do not necessarily become like their father but are
intimately involved in the same working-class world as him (75). The shopfloor is yet another example of an arena for the display of masculinity with the strenuous work and walls lined with calendars of half-naked bikini models. Manual work is paralleled with masculinity while mental work is aligned with femininity. There is a masculine ethos present within manual work as the masculine way of giving labour power is crucially important to “the lads” (102). Willis (1977: 104) noted that:

...physical labouring comes to stand for and express, most importantly, a kind of masculinity and also an opposition to authority – at least as it is learned in school. It expresses aggressiveness; a degree of sharpness and wit; an irreverence that cannot be found in words; an obvious kind of solidarity. It provides the wherewithal for adult tastes, and demonstrates a potential mastery over, as well as an immediate attractiveness to, women: a kind of machismo.

While Willis focused upon working-class culture, he often juxtaposed this with middle-class culture, specifically when discussing the social value placed upon manual and mental labour. He notes that manual labour is imbued with masculine qualities and often refers to the intricacies of the performance of manual labour as an act of machismo (1977: 150). This machismo involves a particular masculine spectacle where men take initiative, make people laugh, do unexpected things, perform heavy, strenuous tasks and “naturally take the active complement to the appreciative passive” (146). “In a more general sense, in the machismo of manual work the will to finish a job, the will to really work, is posited as a masculine logic and not as the logic of exploitation” (150). Boys are eager to escape school and are immediately drawn to labouring work which satisfies the need for instant money as well as cultural membership with “real men” (100). Manual labour is also an opportunity to exclude “ear’oles”: work which “the lads” feel they would be incapable of anyway, as physical labour expresses a certain
masculinity and opposition to authority (104). These boys and men work to uphold a masculine ethos regardless of what their specific job is, as they assume any job they are capable of getting will be unpleasant, and instead focus upon the opportunity for self and masculine expression within work. “For ‘the lads’ all jobs mean labour: there is no particular importance in the choosing of a site for its giving” (101). These “lads” affirm their identity through manual labour whereas boys from higher classes view their superiority in their mental work; the former represents a certain masculinity whereas the latter is associated with the inferiority of femininity (148). The counter-school culture created by “the lads” smoothed their transition to work due to the resistance to mental work formed while in school. Willis argued that counter-school cultures were in fact helping to achieve education’s objective to direct students “voluntarily” to manual work, and prevented a real crisis of working-class revolt (178). The importance in choosing a work site was predicated on “the potential particular work situations h[e]ld for self and particularly masculine expression . . .” (100).

Working-Class Youth Exercising Agency

The final theme that requires discussion here is perhaps the most important, and is drawn primarily from Willis’ examination of working-class kids’ choice to work in manual labour: the importance of agency within these youth cultures. The youths investigated within Willis and Corrigan’s analyses engage in the various activities, belief systems and behaviours examined above, which are integral to the working-class, and youth culture. I emphasize engage here as the construction and reinforcement of working-class culture is an active process; it is not merely a culture created by those in power, disseminated to a lower class and submissively accepted as though they are
passive dupes. In his analysis, Michael Kehler (2007: 108) has shown that masculinities within high schools are processes whereby masculinities “are not restrained or constricted by scripts seemingly thrust into the naïve hands of willing participants. Instead these young men have shown that there are choices to be made as men.” Working-class kids creatively develop, transform and reproduce aspects of dominant culture that, in turn, direct them to certain forms of work and certain forms of masculinity (Willis 1977: 2). Here, “the lads” attempted to adhere to their version of hegemonic masculinity, while the “ear’oles” did not. Willis argued, the working-class “lad” “must overcome his inbuilt disadvantage of possessing the wrong class culture and the wrong educational decoders to start with” (1977: 128 as cited in Arnot 2004: 26). Arnot (2004: 26) elaborates this stating:

To conform, however, would have meant the emasculation of the working-class youth. These English “lads” celebrated their masculinity against school norms of docile, conforming and diligent pupils. By labeling such pupils as effeminate and “cissies”—the ear’oles—“the lads” affirm their pugnacious and physical masculinity in an antischool culture. They thus confirm their respect for their masculine identity, derived from their families and peer group, and see its fulfillment in hard, physically demanding manual jobs.

Both “the lads” and “ear’oles” can be considered docile bodies when one makes minor adjustments to Foucault’s definition, utilizing Giddens to incorporate agency; accounting for the unintended consequences of human agency which inevitably occur within larger social contexts. As stated by Connell (2000b: 37) “the masculinities of the ‘lads’ . . . was certainly not intentionally produced by the school. Rather, school authority served as a foil against which the boys constructed an oppositional masculinity.” While at the outset, “the lads” appear to be actively creating a counter culture within the school, adhering to facets of hegemonic masculinity, it may seem unwarranted to apply the label “docile” to
this group. Upon integrating Giddens’ stratification model of the agent it becomes apparent that through their actions, “the lads” are in fact reproducing the system (an unintended consequence of their rebellious behaviours intended not only to set themselves apart from the “ear’oles” but to place themselves in a more favourable position), and in this sense appear as docile bodies. In the same regard, the “ear’oles” use school as a pathway to careers, not an opportunity to display adherence to the tenets of hegemonic masculinity as purported by “the lads” (which is ultimately why they are ridiculed) (Connell 2000b: 160), and are passively accepting the opposing culture/labels assigned to them by “the lads.” Here the “ear’oles” compliance also carries the unintended consequence of reproducing the hierarchical system of power found within school youth cultures and renders them docile. “The lads” are engaging in self-surveillance in opposition to the norm, while the “ear’oles” self-surveillance occurs in conforming to the norm of a diligent pupil. Unintentionally, both groups reproduce the system of subordination found within this working-class school culture, with varying degrees of resistance/rebellion, and both are rendered docile.

**Contemporary Significance and Relevance to Megamusculinity**

Stanley Aronowitz (2004) highlights Willis’ significant contributions to understanding the dialectic between schools competing for youths’ minds, and the oppositional cultural sites that challenge the facets of schooling. He mentions that now, working-class kids are caught in a primarily technological-based industry where manufacturing is outsourced to countries with good technical and scientific universities. He argues that students often drop out of college because their previous schooling has not sufficiently prepared them for these technical/scientific occupations. The struggle for
these individuals is to find “good” working-class jobs, which are often within “caring” occupations (xii). Dolby and Dimitriadis (2004) also detail the societal changes since Willis’ writing, which occurred within a particular narrative of capitalism: they note that the contemporary narrative is entirely different, more complex, and argue that it is more troubling. For example, white working-class people today are often relegated to low-wage jobs with little opportunity for advancement in this industrialized system, while envious of the jobs that awaited “the lads.”

Willis (2004) reflects upon his ethnographic standpoint and emphasizes the importance of the term “culture” when attempting to make sense of particular groups of people, specifically for his analysis of class. He discusses the relevance of his 1970s analysis to contemporary society, characterized by commodification and industrialization, as he states:

At the level of culture, young people are becoming less defined by neighborhood and class and more defined by these new relations of commodity and electronic culture. Even as their economic conditions of existence falter, most young working-class people in the United Kingdom would not thank you now for describing them as working-class. They find more passion and acceptable self-identity through music on MTV, wearing baseball caps, branded sneakers and designer shirts, and socializing in fast-food joints than they do through traditional class-based cultural forms (2004: 185).

While the texts examined in the literature review above detail important aspects of working-class youth culture at the time of their writing, they neglect contemporary activities that are influential means of disseminating notions of hegemonic masculinity (such as the media) through practices of technologies and care of the self. I would argue that today, exercise and the social activity of going to a gym have become important activities for youth. There is a material investment in purchasing gym memberships as well as the expensive dietary and supplement regimens required to attain unnatural levels
of musculature. This domain is not exclusively for middle-upper classes as working-class youths’ early entry into the workforce gives them the opportunity to devote substantial portions of their paycheques to supporting this endeavour. Even without an expensive gym membership, many young boys and teens begin intensively working out using equipment within the home until they can afford the cost of a membership. Also, many working-class jobs in manual labour could be considered forms of intense exercise and provide opportunities to build musculature.

Applying Sennett and Cobb’s (1973) discussion of badges of ability is especially pertinent to the topic of megamusculinity where one could see muscles as badges of ability. Increased musculature demonstrates one’s ability to follow strict dietary and exercise programs, and for some, intense supplement and steroid regimens. Sennett and Cobb discuss badges of ability within class hierarchies, as one acquires independence through ability. This concept is also relevant to hierarchies within gyms, structured by levels of musculature. The acquisition of muscles as badges of ability does not mean that an individual is awarded some metaphorical trophy that provides immediate self-worth and immunizes him from the gaze of others: in fact, it exposes one to authority and judgement (by others and from themselves) within the discourse of self-validation. It is merely a label attached and “worn” to differentiate oneself from others, and for megamusculinity, it is a means of performing masculinity through manipulating morphologies. “Masculinity becomes a range of practices, a form of performativity that can shift in different locales, occasions, moments, and sites” (Arnot 2004: 34).

Contemporary youth culture still retains important elements found within the classic texts examined, but also involves new activities that facilitate exaggerated
performances of masculinity and attempts at achieving, to borrow the term from Matthew Arnold (1969), human (or corporal) “perfection.” An important element here is asserting masculinity in an attempt to gain self-worth and validation from others. Since masculinity and muscularity are inextricably linked, altering morphologies in the pursuit of corporal “perfection” becomes commonplace in contemporary youth cultures not only for self-validation, also because of the risk of being judged by others. Due to the influence of social factors that promote hypermasculinity within working-class youth culture, it is not surprising to find youth obsessed with their levels of muscularity as megamusculinity is becoming a problem that transcends class barriers.

Matthew Arnold (1969) describes culture as “. . . having its origin in the love of perfection; it is *a study of perfection*” (44, emphasis in original). He clarifies his use of the term perfection: “… which consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances . . .” (48). Human perfection becomes a realm of culture. With the contemporary obsession over bodily “perfection,” the media images disseminated to the public depict ideal, or “perfect,” bodies to which all should aspire. These images are essentially fantasy, constructed for admiration and aspiration. The discussion of youth culture above shows that boys actively rebel against authority and school culture and are drawn to domains of popular culture whether in music, magazines, television or movies. They are constantly exposed to powerful media images that they aspire to, and if their morphologies do not match they may feel that something is wrong with them. Pop culture is central to contemporary youth cultures, as are media representations of ideal male bodies. A quick glance through any *Men’s Health* magazine shows the unrealistic images
readers are exposed to, as well as textual content that is saturated with a heterosexual discourse, and vast quantities of commercial products, including dietary supplements to increase musculature. Contemporary working-class youth engage with various media, from magazines geared to “health,” to hypermasculinized spectator sport such as Sunday Night Football rituals. Constructions of “perfect” morphologies within the media (often fabricated under the guise of “health”) will be explored in the next chapter in order to extend these relevant, but dated arguments about working-class culture, by examining the media as an inescapable realm of influence among contemporary youth cultures.

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12 Take, for example the fourth advertisement in Appendix B (page 175). It depicts the large morphology of football star Jerome Bettis and exacerbates performances of hypermasculinity constructing the entire image around norms of masculinity and “toughness.”
Chapter 6: Commodified Masculinity Under the Guise of “Health”

Health and the Body

Health is defined by the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) (2006: 1) as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” The stated objective of the WHO is to ensure that all people have the “highest possible level of health” as defined above (2). The WHO regards health as more than the absence of disease, injury or distress while many laypeople consider it to be a “state of functional fitness,” vital to their everyday lives (Cockerham 2003: 2). Cockerham (2003) responds to the WHO definition of health and agrees that health is about more than an absence of illness as it also involves a sense of well-being. Health is a social construction that is integral to the functioning of society and the individuals that comprise it. As a social construct, the definition of health “embodies a particular culture’s notions of well-being and desired human qualities” (Thomas 2003: 16). Lupton and Petersen (1996: 138) acknowledge that health is often conflated with fitness, especially in Western esoteric circles. The definition of health presented by the WHO is easily critiqued by scholars; the purpose of using it in this discussion is to illustrate the difference between contemporary esoteric definitions of health (such as that of the WHO) and that of the esoteric realm where “good” health often constitutes an affirmation of a virtuously lived life (Leichter 1997: 359).

Connell (2000b) offers a pertinent analysis of the contemporary concern with men’s health and how it operates within a discourse of “healthy lifestyles” and “health maintenance.” She argues that an understanding of men’s health issues must begin with an acknowledgment of the social relations that produce various masculinities. Thus,
health effects for men “are not mechanical consequences of either the physiological or the social condition of being a man. They are the products of human practice, of things done, in relation to gender order” (2000b: 178). Men generally have more negative health problems (both higher morbidity and mortality rates) in comparison to women. Cockerham (2003: 45) argues that men’s health inferiority is due to first, biology and second, social psychology. According to Connell (2000b), this inferiority is not the result of any inherent physical weakness that is just part of being a man (such as hormones or having a particular physiological “makeup”), it is however related to the social practices that influence one’s health. Therefore, men probably have higher rates of workplace mortality because of the types of jobs they have, they are less likely to go to the doctor and to look after their own health because they are not socialized to take proper self-care measures. 13 Lupton and Petersen (1996: 141) argue that it is often considered “unmasculine” for men to be concerned with their health as “men seem to have a more instrumental view of their bodies and their health, perceiving health-enhancing behaviour as allowing them to actively participate in work or active leisure rather than enhancing their appearance.” If the goal of megamusculinity is to enhance one’s appearance by building unnatural amounts of muscle, then according to this logic this pursuit is not done in the name of health. I would argue that the means of “enhancing” physical appearance by megamusculinists are quite unhealthy.

Contemporary notions of health, especially in popular men’s “health” and lifestyle magazines, conflate fitness with health (discourses which will be examined below). Megamusculinists often utilize the popular health discourses in these magazines

13 It is important to note that this perspective is restricted to Western countries as men do live longer than women in societies where there is a marked difference in how women are treated.
which frame health as something dependent upon fitness. Thus, if men treat this information as wielding authority from an esoteric body of knowledge, they may be more inclined to pursue heightened degrees of muscularity if the fitness required to get to this level is presented under the guise of “health.”

An understanding of human embodiment is pertinent in order to illustrate the preoccupation megamusculinists have with their corporal structure. Our bodies require tremendous time daily to attend to common needs such as eating, washing, grooming, dressing, sleeping and more generally, developing (if “necessary”) and maintaining a healthy body. Turner (1984) notes that bodies are natural and also socially constituted; we exercise sovereignty over them yet we can also experience alienation through chronic illness. Ultimately, “our bodies are an environment which can become anarchic, regardless of our subjective experience of our government of the body” (7). He also argues that it is surprising that sociology had (at the time of his writing the first edition) somewhat neglected theories of the body as “commonsense notions that diet, jogging, fasting, slimming and exercise are not merely essential aids to sexual fulfillment, but necessary features of self-development in a society grounded in personalized consumption” (30). Modern capitalism fosters a sense of desire amongst individuals, prompting them to consume; products and services geared to bodies are not exempt from this as will be demonstrated in a discussion of contemporary magazine content later in this chapter.

Foucault notes that the body is something to be controlled through disciplinary practices of governance and regulation. Turner (1984: 164) supports this sentiment and argues that panoptic disciplines ultimately “increase subordination by self-controlled
mastery of the body.” In order to provoke these disciplinary regimes among individuals, a preoccupation with bodies and a healthy appearance must first be established; a neoliberal society is a breeding ground for such a discourse. Stokvis (2006) traces a preoccupation with healthy appearances to the 1960s, specifically within bodybuilding. Prior to this time bodybuilding was not socially respected and was kept concealed. In the 1950-60s it was a minor spectator and media sport in the United States but was prominent in men’s magazines. Bodybuilding was ranked thirty-fifth in the mid 1970s (behind tractor pulling) by American sports fans, as it was seen as purposeless muscular development (Luciano 2002: 149). Bodybuilding was considered indecent as it was associated with homosexuality, and the eroticization of the male body, for the quarter century following World War II (Stokvis 2006: 470-473). Bodybuilding was also shunned because it was associated with people feeling their appearance was inferior. Stokvis (2006: 476) argues that men no longer need to feel ashamed about their desire to reshape themselves as “the modern fitness industry caters explicitly to their needs and contributes to the normalization of their wishes.” Interest in the muscular male body was prompted by films in the 1970s that attached social importance to muscular bodies and also stimulated an interest in bodybuilding, making it more fashionable (474). Women were used to having their appearances judged, and now the public (women included!) were more openly scrutinizing men’s appearance. Men thus became more preoccupied with developing their physique as they had never before felt such social pressure to instill modes of self-control and regulation. The popularity of bodybuilding among the middle and upper classes in the early 1990s contributed to the rise of the “muscle industry” (Luciano 2002: 174). The normalization of caring for a well-controlled body ensued as
both men and women became preoccupied with physical appearance due to increased social pressures for developing a slender, muscular body through regimes of regulation.

**Discourses of Popular “Health Education” Through Health Promotion**

The notion of “healthy” lifestyles are defined within particular social contexts and, when framed under the discourse of health promotion, instill notions of personal responsibility and self-regulation. Contemporary health discourses also frame men and women as objects in need of self-surveillance (Harding 1997: 142-147). Petersen (1998: 198) notes that “the disciplinary self-improvement demonstrated in the pursuit of health and fitness has become a key means by which individuals can express their agency and constitute themselves in conformity with the demands of a competitive world.” As notions of “healthy” and “unhealthy” have increasingly been conflated with “normal” and “abnormal,” individuals who do not pursue management of their health risks are often viewed (by others and themselves) as lacking self-control and not fulfilling their obligation as citizens (Petersen 1998: 198). Lupton (1994: 11) argues that a socio-cultural analysis of health promotion is imperative in order to understand “health-related knowledges and practices and the development of a more reflexive awareness of the role of health promotion itself within the culture of everyday life.”

Foucault’s notion of bio-power is relevant to this discussion of health promotion as bio-power “refers to the mechanisms employed to manage the population and discipline individuals” (Gastaldo 1997: 113). Gastaldo (1997: 113) argues that health education contributes to the exercise of bio-power as it enforces norms of good “health” which require elements of self-discipline. Populations are governed through knowledge of the individual body, thus bio-power links the micro elements of the individual body to
the macro view of the social body. “Focusing on individual bodies or on the social body, health professionals are entitled by scientific knowledge/power to examine, interview and prescribe ‘healthy’ lifestyles” (116). The authority vested in medical professionals has significant implications for men who peruse men’s “health” magazines where credited writers offer “health” advice. These magazines portray “health advocates” (who are generally labeled medical doctors) as authoritative personnel whose health advice is legitimated by their status as a professional.

Initially, health education to prevent disease was viewed as a personal responsibility (Gastaldo 1997: 117). Gastaldo (1997: 118) succinctly notes that “health education is an experience of being governed from the outside and is a request for self-discipline.” The author analyzes a Brazilian health care system to illuminate the workings of health education in a particular cultural milieu. She argues that health education can be both empowering, as knowledge may prompt patients to self-govern, and it can also be considered subjugation as it involves the imposition of health ideas of which the patient is uninformed. The same subjugation is present when examining discourses of popular health promotion found in contemporary magazines which claim to use professionalized sources of health information. Common laypeople generally view health education uncritically, as something “good” yet it is often about control as it “extends the clinical gaze over the population” (130). Shifting from health promotion in magazines to that of athletic facilities, this gaze is also apparent, especially among men in pursuit of megamusculinity. I would submit that these men often consult popular sources to obtain “health” information, internalize the discourses through means of self-regulation and the reflexive process of the self, and at the same time are left with a critical eye that
scrutinizes fellow “fitness enthusiasts” in gyms. While the clinical gaze is not extended to this situation, a different gaze is present which contributes to the insecurities of megamusculinists as they often view the majority of their competitors (muscular men) at the gym as wielding an influential gaze over their workout and physique.

Jan Wright and Valerie Harwood (2009) move the term pedagogy from confinement within schooling to incorporate Foucauldian logic of bio-power into an explanation of the “obesity epidemic.” They use the term biopedagogy “to describe the normalizing and regulating practices in schools and disseminated more widely through the web and other forms of media. . .” (1). Biopedagogies “can be used to analyze how relations of power influence the formation of the contemporary healthy subject” (Harwood 2009: 19).

Biopedagogies occur in myriad political sites involved in the construction of identities that instruct and form meaning. Biopedagogy then, is the art and practice of teaching of ‘life’, of bios in this ‘biopower mode’. Attention to life in terms of biopower’s two poles demands a pedagogical concern with both the individualized body and with the species (the population). Biopedagogies are practices that impart knowledge writ large, occurring at multiple levels across countless domains and sites. As a concept biopedagogy offers to accomplish two important tasks; it draws attention to the pedagogical practices inhering in the biopolitical (for example, public health promotion) and secondly, it offers a means to formulate an empirical analytic to interrogate the concealed pedagogical practices of biopower (2009: 21).

Biopedagogies are systems of control where individuals are surveilled and regulated to acquire more knowledge about “healthy” lifestyles with the expectation that they will implement this newfound knowledge into their everyday lives. Here, bodies are “pedagogical sites”: “. . . that is, sites that have the power to teach, to engage ‘learners’ in meaning making practices that they use to make sense of their worlds and their selves and thereby influencing how they act on themselves and others” (Harwood 2009: 7). This
useful concept cannot be divorced from the neoliberal imperative of self-regulation as well as the performative culture which enforces the desire for perfection with one’s weight and appearance. Biopedagogies, as a domain of the larger structural resource of “health,” constrain choices and behaviour through their linkages with “the narcissistic care of the self, body management and control” (Lupton 1995: 156).

While bio-power refers to the larger institutional structures that provide health education, it is relevant to this discussion as health systems must use concealed, constructive approaches to manage the population (Gastaldo 1997:130). The focus of this chapter is not upon institutionalized regimes of health education: rather, with popular discourses of what I would call commercialized health promotion as demonstrated through magazines geared to men’s health. These popular health discourses facilitate bio-power on a more micro level, in the context of megamusculinity, as men consult various popular sources and use the “health” information to regulate themselves. At the same time this knowledge (regardless of its unfounded nature as knowledge of “health”) instills a sense of power amongst individuals as they can use it within a panoptic gaze of other men who are engaged or interested in “healthy” lifestyles (such as sports, exercise or fitness). This constant sense of comparison and scrutiny (comparing oneself to others, and others to oneself) prompts megamusculinists to continue regimes of self-regulation, discipline and self-reflexivity as they are trapped in a cycle of unattainable satisfaction with one’s physique.

The Media’s Role in Commodifying Such Health Promotion

While one may argue that the disciplining of bodies functions in order to develop a social body of productive citizens, the argument can be extended to examine how the
disciplining of bodies, under the discourse of “health,” is also about consumption activities. Weber notes that lifestyles are similar for individuals within the same status group; status group refers to people “who share similar material circumstances, prestige, education, and political influence” (Cockerham 2003: 97). Weber’s concept of lifestyle is relevant here as the next portion of this chapter will examine the current discourses of health presented within the media, which ultimately promote a certain “healthy” lifestyle or regimen within a capitalist agenda of consumerism. Weber also argues that one’s lifestyle is ultimately a relationship with one’s means of consumption. “This view applies to health lifestyles because when someone pursues a healthy style of life, that person is attempting to produce good health according to his or her degree of motivation, effort, and capabilities” (97). One’s degree of “motivation, effort, and capabilities” will also shape the products and services he (or she) consumes in this pursuit of “health.”

Accordingly, Giddens mentions that the reflexive project of the self may become commodified, arguing that this project necessarily involves resisting commodified influences, partly due to its relation with narcissism (1991: 200). The media are influential venues often used to convey information about how to achieve a “healthy” lifestyle, which is ultimately centered upon consumption and commodification.

Within contemporary capitalist society, consumption has become a norm as modern lives are permeated with commodities. From the time-telling instruments we use to wake ourselves in the morning, to the more obvious examples of gadgets purchased for entertainment, commodification has pervaded the modern world; and it seems as though nothing is out of its grasp. The mass media effectively disseminate the messages of commodification through their programming and commercial advertisements. As
Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks (2003: 113) note, “it is evident that the media continue to have the power to define ‘what everyone is talking about’.” It is undeniable that the media wield unprecedented power and influence, thus the construction of the messages and images are a means of achieving this dominance. Where previously, many people used to derive their identity from their social groups (e.g. religious affiliation, family, work colleagues, educational colleagues), now one of the few things most citizens have in common is the mass media. Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney and Wise (2006: 220) extend this argument stating that “ultimately, the media’s ability to produce people’s social identities, in terms of both a sense of unity and difference, may be their most powerful and important effect.” In an ever-changing society there are more opportunities for individuals to acquire several identities that transform and change over time (252). As a result, the media must target these diverse identities, often through an endless supply of commodities, in order to thrive economically. The identity of importance here is one in pursuit of a “healthy” lifestyle and garners information about this from the media.

Lupton (1995) undertakes an analysis of various health promotion discourses in the media, specifically advertising. She introduces the concept of social marketing where:

the discourse of meeting the consumer’s needs constructs this individual as an actively choosing subject . . . Yet the approach of social marketing also constructs the consumer as malleable and amenable to persuasion, regarding the health-preserving advice of health promotion professionals . . . (1995: 112).

The media’s role in social marketing cannot be overstated. Lupton (1995: 106) argues that mass media campaigns are often viewed as a form of health education. I would argue that the rhetoric of “popular health education” or “health promotion” is more applicable to the “health” discourses prevalent within the media and social marketing techniques.
“Once health communicators and promoters have discharged their responsibility in disseminating information and promoting awareness, the emphasis is upon the individual to act upon this knowledge to prevent illness” (110). In regards to social marketing and popular health discourses in the media, individuals are responsibilized to adopt this newfound knowledge not in order to prevent illness, but to pursue a “healthy” lifestyle. Lupton (1995: 113) recognizes an important paradox in contemporary popular health discourses in the media. She describes the relationship between health promotional material and the mass media as one of love/hate as the media are often viewed as undermining health messages because of their commercial interests in promoting unhealthy products. The media not only promote blatantly unhealthy products, but much of the advice about behaviours or services constructed as “healthy” are in fact quite the opposite. Lupton (1995: 129) addresses an important political motive for this disguise: “Mass media campaigns are little more than public relations exercises which simultaneously serve to censure behaviours deemed deviant and respond to pragmatic concerns about the economic implications of health care provision, cloaked in the rhetoric of ameliorating the public’s health.”

A Brief Exploration of Men’s “Health” and Lifestyle Magazines

Health is a social construct, presented as a vague, overarching category within the media. Men’s “health” and lifestyle magazines stray from the overarching WHO definition of health, and purport messages of behaviours that are in fact quite unhealthy. The remainder of this section will examine contemporary discourses of popular health promotion in one stratum of the media: men’s “health” and lifestyle magazines. Without pursuing an in-depth content analysis, I will briefly analyze selected issues of these
magazines as part of the disciplinary structure of the media,\textsuperscript{14} drawn upon by boys and men which not only organize behaviour and choices but influence the reflexive project of the self. As a disciplinary structure, these lifestyle magazines will elucidate how men’s bodies are subject to regulation through the discourses used, which present a commodified masculinity operating under the guise of “health.”\textsuperscript{15} A brief exploration of men’s lifestyle magazine content will assist in articulating how theories of health and the body (as discussed in the beginning of this chapter and in chapter four) operate within popular discourses of health promotion. The purpose of this is not only to explicate the popular presentation of \textit{masculinity} (the inextricable link between musculature and masculinity), but to investigate the narratives constructed and presented within the content of magazines.

Giddens emphasizes the impact of media narratives, specifically in their presentation of particular lifestyles to which all should strive (1991: 199). As a structure, one’s engagement with the media involves particular rules and resources which enable and constrain behaviour. Of importance to this analysis is an articulation of the narratives and discourses present within men’s “health” magazines in order to fully comprehend how readers may become enabled/constrained/regulated through this process. As Jennifer Maguire (2008: 113) notes, lifestyle media constitute what Foucault refers to as technologies of the self, where knowledge is constructed and presented (specifically under the guise of “health”) and individuals are charged with the responsibility of

\textsuperscript{14} \textsuperscript{14} Structure here is used in Giddens’ terms of rules and resources which enable and constrain behaviour.

\textsuperscript{15} \textsuperscript{15} As argued by Luciano (2002: 209), “Morality notwithstanding, there is nothing further from health than obsessive dieting, bingeing and purging, and plastic surgery.” I would contend that this sentence could be revised to more accurately apply to megamusculinity: Morality notwithstanding, there is nothing further from health than obsessive dieting and exercise regimens and the use of various supplements (let alone steroids) that transcend the boundaries of what could be classified as “fitness.”
utilizing this knowledge to self-regulate. Authorities govern at a distance here through the disciplinary practices promoted by lifestyle media, which claims to promote a “healthy” lifestyle, disseminated to readers under the authority of the esoteric knowledge of the hired writers.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the western culture of production had shifted to one of consumption (Luciano 2002: 8). According to Lynne Luciano (2002: 5), “a confluence of social, economic, and cultural change has been instrumental in shaping the new cult of male body image in postwar America.” The commercialization of masculinity began in the 1950s but grew rapidly during the 1980s (Beynon 2004). During this time there were several changes in the marketing of masculinity such as male retail outlets, new visual representations of masculinity (men being eroticized and objectified as only women were previously), and style magazines specifically geared to men (202-203). With men at the forefront of a discussion that previously focused solely upon women, men’s lifestyle magazines emerged to address this new men’s health discourse. In the mid-1980s, what we know as modern men’s lifestyle magazines were developed, although the 1990s is where the emergence of “interest” magazines targeting men flourished (Benwell 2003; Stevenson et al. 2003). As an invention of the mid-1990s, Men’s Health is a men’s lifestyle magazine but claims to be more, focusing upon “health” (although the validity of the health discussion within is quite debatable). With the emergence of men’s “health” and lifestyles magazines, men were responsibilized for their own health and well-being under a discourse that presented very “narrow definitions of masculinity,” specifically hegemonic masculinity (Gough 2006: 2478-2479). It would seem reasonable for a man to consult the popular discourses of Men’s Health in order to
assist with this newfound responsibility; however, the content within is not what the title advertises. To make this venture (of seeking good health and well-being) even more challenging, Gough (2006: 2485) remarks that masculinity positions men as “invulnerable, emotionally repressed and detached from health concerns, [meaning] they are incapable of transforming themselves into help-seeking healthy individuals.” Thus, a magazine that claims to offer advice on health issues for men, yet operates within the discourse of masculinity cannot successfully negotiate the two claims. Ultimately, masculinity becomes commodified and is sold under the guise of “health” in order to address this newfound responsibility for men, while upholding economic obligations.

Most writings on men’s magazines focus upon men as consumers, not the constructions of masculinity presented. Stibbe (2004: 34) argues “that Men’s Health magazine is steeped in traditional masculine ideology and fails to challenge the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in the interest of health.” According to Shari Dworkin and Faye Wachs (2009: 66), fitness media focus upon the display of hegemonic masculinity through presenting “large physical size, institutionalized links to sport and the military, and the constitution of hegemonic masculinity as different from and superior to subordinated masculinities and to femininities.” The importance here is not only in the magazine’s reproduction of conventions of hegemonic masculinity, also how masculinity is commodified and sold to consumers under the guise of “health.” Here, the audience must also be seen as a commodity itself as “the media produce an audience for their own media products, and then deliver that audience to another media producer, namely an advertiser” (Grossberg et al. 2006: 229). As well as constructing an audience, Beynon (2004: 215) argues the media continuously construct new “types” of men, disseminated
to the public eye through magazines such as *Men’s Health*. This entire process is carried out through magazines, which in turn reinforces its power and dominance as they have secured their target audience (both for the topics/issues presented and commercial interests), often eager to comprehend their messages.

The *Magazine Handbook* (Magazine Publishers of America 2007b: 44) notes that “reading a magazine is an intimate, involving experience that fulfills the personal needs and reflects the values of the reader, which is one reason the average reader spends 44 minutes reading each issue.” The *Handbook* reworded this statement slightly in their 2010-2011 issue stating, “reading a magazine is an intimate, involving experience, which is one reason the average reader spends 43 minutes reading each issue” (Magazine Publishers of America 2010b: 7). Framing the magazine using these personal connotations reflects the way material is presented to the reader and how the personal realm of health is infiltrated by commodities packaged and advertised in the magazine. If eighty-four percent of adults over the age of eighteen read magazines (Barthel 1992: 137), it is no surprise that large corporations like GM and Philip Morris spend hundreds of millions of dollars on advertising (Magazine Publishers of America 2007a: 7). In 2006 and 2009, *Men’s Health* had a combined circulation sales of over $55 million USD and was ranked forty-first in overall circulation revenue (Magazine Publishers of America 2007a, 2010a). The website for the publisher of *Men’s Health*, Rodale Inc., declares “Rodale is the authoritative source for trusted content in health and wellness around the world.” The magazine adopts this authoritative attitude as its publisher also claims it to be the “largest men’s lifestyle magazine brand in the world” (Rodale Inc. 2008). While the popularity of this magazine has been established, Rodale Inc. makes another claim on
its website that is pertinent to this discussion: “Men’s Health speaks to every aspect of a man’s life, providing its readers with the latest information on health, fitness, fashion, nutrition, relationships, travel, gear and money.” Readers may refer to this magazine because its title claims to be about providing health-related discussions; yet the publisher, and the magazine content itself, portray a different message centered upon the construction and reproduction of conventions of masculinity, specifically hegemonic masculinity.

While Rodale Inc. claims that the content of Men’s Health offers guidance on how to be a man, and I contend that its central focus is not health (as the title implies), rather, commodified masculinity. In order to demonstrate how the magazine accomplishes this, selected representative issues were analyzed regarding the thematic content of the information presented, including advertisements. For this analysis I have used various issues of Men’s Health from the United States from 2000 to 2010, select issues from the United Kingdom (June 2007) and South Africa (January 2010), as well as Maximum Fitness (April 2008) and Men’s Fitness (April 2007). All Men’s Health magazines organize their content around themes which are best described in the June 2007 issue of Men’s Health U.S.: it is about “everything that matters to men.” Fitness, sex, nutrition, guy wisdom and style are the subheadings throughout this portion of the magazine. The British version follows a similar mantra with only a slight difference in the language. Weight loss, nutrition, image, cardio, muscle, sexuality, and money are all sections found in this magazine’s packaging of masculinity. Following the discourse of the buddy, both versions have a section where readers can “ask the girl-next-door” and where men give advice on a variety of topics. Notably, in the latter section, there was an
article titled “Raise Kids Like A Man,” which provided child-rearing tips that often utilized economic purchases to “control” children, all the while maintaining a masculine demeanour. Throughout the magazine there was a constant economic undertone that connected a man’s economic worth to his individual value. Some articles linked financial success to sexuality such as the title “Financial Habits of Highly Laid Men” (Men’s Health U.S. 2007: 148) while others offered tips to become wealthy which apparently increases one’s attractiveness to women. The British edition says it best: “Gentlemen, we can improve you” (Men’s Health U.K. 2007: 71). This is essentially what the magazine attempts to do by presenting an ideal type of masculinity which is commodified - linking all aspects of masculinity to goods and services that can be purchased - and is sold to readers as they believe they are en route to health-related advice which operates through social marketing.

According to Stibbe (2004: 35), Men’s Health is written “for the men who are most exposed to and have the most to gain from the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, and it has an openly admitted agenda of promoting ‘the traditional male view’.” While the hegemonic masculinity portrayed through this magazine is quite pertinent, more relevant to this discussion is the “masculinist agenda of power” the magazine utilizes to convey particular messages (35). As Rodale Inc. claims, the magazine addresses all aspects of male life and does so by promoting such themes as muscle building, fat elimination, alcohol consumption, oppressing women and meat-eating (Gough 2007: 328). The content of the written material, as well as advertisements, address these topics operating as a “how-to-guide” of being a man.
The magazine is able to relate such problematic themes to masculinity by using specific discourses to convey certain information. These discourses frame the magazine as both a friend and an expert (Gough 2007; Stevenson et al. 2003; Stibbe 2004). As Gough (2007: 336) notes, “various strategies such as attributing claims to experts, referencing statistics and making associations with related stories all work to present material as factual and beyond question while suppressing alternative perspectives.” “Experts” assist the magazine in establishing an authoritative position as readers hold more regard for information coming from an esoteric body of knowledge. The American edition of *Men’s Health* includes a section titled “MH Expert Advisors,” which lists numerous individuals and the degrees they have received in order to legitimate the claims made (Men’s Health U.S. 2007: 30). Merely showing a picture of a person and listing her or his academic credentials validates the accompanying messages to the reader. The British version has a similar section but does not mention any academic credentials; apparently the act of *Men’s Health* labeling someone an expert is evidence enough. The other discourse is that of a friend or “buddy” which has been constructed by the magazine to instill a sense of camaraderie with the reader (see Appendix B page 174). Accordingly, this buddy will translate the complicated medical jargon so lay people can understand it (Stibbe 2004). Stibbe argues for the effectiveness of this method:

> Given men’s lack of health care utilization and unwillingness to see a doctor, the buddy can come in quite helpful. If men are less likely to take the advice of a ‘pompous know-it-all’ the buddy can intervene (and promote the interests of science and medicine) but within a more comfortable discourse (2004: 36).

The power of this method cannot be understated. The buddy helps average citizens achieve their health goals, which are often based upon the magazine’s construction of
what it means to be an ideal man (Stibbe 2004). The image of the “buddy” also instills a sense of camaraderie, building a feeling of trust within male readers.

Following from this, it becomes evident that the social relations in this magazine are hierarchical with the flow of information moving from the magazine to the reader, as though the reader is in some need of “expert” advice that is coming from a source that can apparently be trusted (Stevenson et al. 2003: 120-121). This advice also works to facilitate commodified masculinity as “experts” often provide suggestions (for such issues as sexuality, medical disorders, etcetera) involving the purchase of goods and/or services. The interplay between esoteric and exoteric realms is influential here as common laypeople view these “experts” as authorities with the knowledge to prescribe various “health-enhancing” behaviours (regardless of the validity of the health-value in these behaviours). Even more effective is the magazine’s grasp of the reader’s attention by pointing out attributes that people will commonly feel inadequate about (e.g. sexuality, weight, body image), prompting them to make up for the deficit using the esoteric knowledge presented to guide them along their way and provide support (Stevenson et al. 2003: 125). With the threat of not being capable of compensating for this deficit independently, anxious readers continue to purchase the magazine, believing that the support of their buddy and expert, will help them achieve a “healthy” lifestyle.

Belinda Wheaton (2003: 210) cites a comment made by Peter Howarth, the editor of Esquire who stated that, “any good magazine must offer a balance of content, and part of that balance, if it is to reflect the interests of men, will inevitably be articles on beautiful women.” Since Men’s Health/Fitness and Maximum Fitness uphold hegemonic masculinity, it is assumed that the readers are heterosexual with its focus on women and
hetero-sex. As Stibbe (2004) notes, all the articles providing advice and instructions for
the best sex do not ever mention safe sex practices and indeed, portray unsafe sex
positively. It can also contribute to performance anxiety among men, with the
advertisements (usually in the back of the magazine), selling products to boost sexual
stamina, have longer orgasms, etcetera. The second advertisement in Appendix A (page
170) uses an image of a naked woman to promote visiting the British website for the
magazine; the same message can be found in the subscription insert of the September
2010 issue (see Appendix B page 186). If the intent of the magazine was to provide
health advice, and not an ideal type of masculinity, the objectified woman would be quite
out of place. Yet, men’s lifestyle magazines are saturated with sexualized images of
women in order to promote certain products. Another example is found in an
advertisement from Maximum Fitness (see Appendix D page 190), for a drug that claims
to “accelerate and increase muscle hypertrophy and strength modulation, decrease fat
deposition and increase male sexual function.” Not only is the image presented quite
shocking, but the “symptoms” that this pill attempts to address further the anxiety around
the discourse of performance for men (both sexual and physical). The language from the
second advertisement in Appendix D (page 191) is infused with sexual rhetoric yet
claims to be about promoting muscle development where “bigger is always better.” An
older advertisement from 2000 (see Appendix B page 173) is yet another example of the
focus on heterosexuality in this magazine as it is promoting a version of Men’s Health
geared to the desires of “teenage guys.”

See Appendicies A-E (pages 169 - 194) for more examples of advertisements promoting
heteronormativity. With the abundance of examples found in these magazines, only a select few were used
for the purpose of this chapter.
Men have often been portrayed as ignorant of nutrition and proper diet as well as uninterested in eating healthily (Gough 2007: 327): However, the magazine’s discussion of nutrition is contradictory here as it claims to addresses men’s interest in healthy eating. There are significant variations in men’s diet according to social class, and since Men’s Health claims to promote healthy eating, its audience is assumed to be at least of middle-class standing in order to afford the foods it promotes. As well, men’s lifestyle magazines are not inexpensive as the ones used for this analysis ranged from $5.99 to $7.99 CDN. Stibbe (2004) argues that Men’s Health promotes certain foods, often on the basis of their ability to build muscle, which scholars could argue are detrimental to health. Thus, the validity of the nutritional-related claims is questionable, and importantly, the definition of healthy foods can vary tremendously among individuals and groups. The third advertisement in Appendix A (page 171) blatantly speaks to the masculinization of food and diet. While problematic at numerous levels, it presents an oppressive scene of a wife who just cannot keep herself quiet, and the husband controls the scene when it comes time to eat and force the woman to comply. The sixth advertisement in Appendix B (page 177) is common throughout the American edition as it promotes supplements to “fix” the weight problem that seems to be inherent in everyone. In this issue there were countless examples of these advertisements, often multiple ads for the same supplements in the same issue, just with different pictures promoting the product. The April 2008 edition of Men’s Health was not lacking promotional advertisements targeting weight loss, as shown in the seventh advertisement in Appendix B (page 178). More striking is the eighth advertisement in this section (page 179) which conflates age with declining fitness and thus declining health. The man claims that he is more “fit” than the majority of
“guys” his age who all need to lose weight, and thus he is apparently “healthier.” Weight loss is also heavily sexualized among men as demonstrated in the advertisement on page 180. Not only does this advertisement promote weight loss, but it does so with the goal of transforming the body into a “ripped,” muscular physique; excess weight would only impede this process.

Another prominent theme in men’s lifestyle magazines is alcohol consumption. According to Stibbe (2004: 42), “while already presuming the reader loves beer, the magazine encourages even more consumption by extolling the medical benefits of moderate alcohol more than the dangers of excess alcohol.” He also argues that this glorification contradicts the health promotion claims and relates more to reproducing hegemonic masculinity (43). From alcohol to meat-products to supplements and beverages, these magazines use a discourse predicated on commodification to promote a constructed image of masculinity. A section from *Men’s Health* U.S. (2008: 142-149) titled “The Food A Man Needs” lists various foods that contribute to “health.” Interestingly, all the foods noted have increased levels of protein, the ideal food to facilitate muscle development, not necessarily health promotion.

Men’s “health” and lifestyle magazines are promoting muscle building, yet the images of male bodies that one is supposed to “desire” embody a level of muscularity that is often not naturally attainable. Thus one could argue that constructing muscle building as a means of health-attainment is ultimately promoting an extreme health regimen that contributes to megamusculinity. Operating with the notion that the body is a “passport for the good life” (Wheaton 2003: 196), topics of fitness, muscle building and exercise pervade these magazines. Stibbe (2004: 37) argues that the goal of *Men’s Health*
is to increase muscle size while promoting the ideal man as: bodybuilder, meat eater, beer drinker, convenience food eater, sexual champion and television watcher (characteristics that are hardly “healthy”). The centrality of muscularity and “toughness” expected of men is evident in the fourth advertisement in Appendix B (page 175) which declares that a tough man should use this tough oil; however, the toughness of the man has nothing to do with whether that oil is best suited for your particular type of vehicle. The advertisements for such products as supplements and protein powders speak to this link between muscles and masculinity and the need for commercial products to assist in this endeavour (Glassner 1989; White and Gillett 1994). This serves commercial goals as most average men do not look like the models pictured and require tremendous effort using commodities to get there, as well as the support from the magazine (the “buddy”).

In Labre’s (2005: 193) content analysis of *Men’s Health* and *Men’s Fitness* magazines, she coded all textual and image based material and found that both magazines displayed images of men that were very muscular and had low levels of body fat: though, *Men’s Fitness* had more “very muscular” depictions, eighty-five percent as opposed to seventy-eight percent in *Men’s Health*. She also found that the content in both the advertisements and text focused more upon appearance, than health, fitness or physical performance. She argues that the ideal body presented is an “extreme, unrealistic representation, which may also contribute to body dissatisfaction and engagement in unhealthy, appearance-driven pursuits” (199). The extremely unhealthy physique glorified in these magazines is often framed as “perfection” as noted in the third advertisement of Appendix D (page 192). Magazines, and other forms of media more generally, have constructed images of ideal bodies that blur the boundaries between
reality and fantasy, with a more lean and muscular morphology depicted in the past twenty-five years (Labre 2005: 188). If perfection is a particular physique, unattainable naturally, then how is there any validity to using the term “health” to describe the discourses of these magazines? The fitness regimes highlighted within these magazines will not suffice to develop intensely muscular physiques without extra supplements. Thus, an individual who pursues these fitness programs in the name of health will not obtain a degree of muscularity even close to resembling the constructed “perfection.”

**Implications for Megamusculinity**

Contemporary discourses of health-promotion and body-maintenance perpetuate standards of hegemonic masculinity as well as constructing an ideal type of physique for men. Dworkin and Wachs (2009) contend that magazines geared toward men and women’s “health” topics essentially recreate gender differences that men are expected to be big and women, small. Regarding men’s “health” and lifestyle magazines:

> The fundamental assumption that underlies most recommendations to men is that healthy and fit are defined by the image of musculature, muscle size, greater muscle density, and less body fat. All the covers of the men’s magazines featured well-defined, muscular, and almost always shirtless upper bodies. Most male models were not only toned, but large, and often vascular (displaying enlarged veins). Bulging pectoral muscles, biceps, shoulders, and well ‘cut’ ‘six- or eight-pack’ abdomens adorned almost all of the men’s ‘health’ and fitness covers (2009: 74).

These magazines emphasize the moral imperative that men are expected to increase muscle and decrease fat, purporting the message that “size does matter and makes the man” (74).

The implications of this commodified masculinity operating under the guise of “health” become even clearer when referring back to Foucault and Giddens with
disciplinarity and self-reflexivity. Jennifer Maguire (2008: 126) argues that these “health” and lifestyle magazines geared towards men should be examined as technologies of governance and regulation. The messages and narratives contained could also be considered biopedagogies, which not only regulate and govern its audience, but necessarily enable and constrain the behaviour and choices of readers who must negotiate the claims made when engaging in the reflexive project of the self.

Twigg (2006: 20) recalls that “techniques of bio-power analyse, control, regulate and define the body, its disciplinary gaze construing the body as an object of knowledge.” Megamusculinists regulate their bodies through disciplinary technologies of dietary and fitness regimens (White and Gillett 1994: 20), ultimately utilizing technologies of the self – the influence of men’s lifestyle magazines cannot be understated when accounting for the resources men draw upon to organize and construct daily routines to facilitate musculature development. Twigg (2006: 23) argues that body techniques “require denial, control, the assertion of dominance over the body in pursuit of the slim, toned physique that modern culture demands,” and that they are technologies that operate within the panoptic realm of disciplinary practices. She argues that anorexia and bulimia are exaggerated forms of quite common behaviours such as self-control, consumption and bodily perfectionism (102); this is precisely why this thesis has framed megamusculinity and eating disorders as parallel pursuits, when one shifts the emphasis away from body size. Members of gyms, specifically megamusculinists, are subjected to the gaze of what I would call “body police,” who regulate the morphology of other members through their influential Foucauldian “gaze.”

Footnote 17: I have borrowed this terminology from Twigg (2006: 102) who uses the term “fat police” when discussing the popular press in relation to the construction and regulation of women’s bodies.
“For some individuals, the imperatives of public health and health promotion around body management and exercise provide them with guidelines for self-transformation, ways of dealing with external and internal pressures, a conduit of agency and self-expression” (Lupton 1995: 143). Regular exercise signals self-regulation here if it is done in the name of body maintenance. This is contrasted to the notion presented by Cockerham (2003: 94), of health behaviour which is defined as “the activity undertaken by individuals for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing their health, preventing health problems, or achieving a positive body image.” It would be naïve to conclude that megamusculinists are merely participating in health enhancing or promoting behaviours. I would argue that they are instead engaging in self-regulation, reflexivity and discipline after internalizing the social construction of the ideal male body. They fall victim to the social marketing techniques of health promotion discourse: the mass media are a key venue in disseminating this ideology. The magazines discussed above lend support to the notion that the contemporary male body is inscribed with various social and cultural meanings which are ultimately situated within a larger system of the governance and regulation of bodies through modes of structuration.

A neoliberal discourse encourages the pursuit of good health in order to be considered a proper citizen. Are megamusculinists merely pursuing this responsibility to be a good citizen to an extreme? Rather than accepting this notion, I contend that megamusculinists are responsibilized into a physical regimen of self-discipline, control and self-reflexivity, but are not adhering to the role of a “good citizen” because the health discourse they pursue is popular in nature. Consequently, megamusculinity appears to be an extreme embrace (rather than a rejection) of popular health discourses that conflate
health with fitness, and fitness with muscularity and weight-loss. There is little congruence between health and images of masculinity, namely hegemonic masculinity, thus what standards are megamusculinists adhering to? I would argue that they are adhering to a masculine construction of popular health that strays from the esoteric definition of the WHO and instead focuses upon the fitness to be a man.
Chapter 7
The Spectacle of Men’s Bodies: In the Sporting Arena with Foucault and Giddens

The previous chapter explored megamusculinity within the contemporary culture of performance, examining the social construction of health, views of the body and discourses of health promotion, while using men’s “heath” and lifestyle magazines to illustrate the role of the media in defining popular health (specifically in relation to “healthy bodies”). Health and messages from the media were explored as aspects that contribute to the phenomenon of megamusculinity due to their role in constructing ideal types of male bodies (focusing upon musculature and adherence to tenets of hegemonic masculinity), under the guise of “health” and “fitness.” As an institution, sport glorifies particular discourses of hypertrophied male morphologies as well as conventions of hegemonic masculinity. This chapter will briefly examine sporting culture, and the pursuits of professional athletes, to interrogate the role of the institution of sport in espousing particular male morphologies, where megamusculinity operates as gender performance due to a preoccupation with perceived inadequacies. The theories of Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens, as outlined in chapter four, facilitate an investigation of the interplay of macro discourses of disciplinarity, the regulating gaze of others and rules and resources, with micro processes of care and technologies of the self and self-reflexivity.

The title for this chapter is borrowed from a section of Connell’s (2000b: 12) The Men and The Boys, titled “Bodies as arenas,” where he states, “men’s bodies are not blank slates . . . gender is the way bodies are drawn into history; bodies are arenas for the making of gender patterns.” This quote aptly captures the role of not only gender performativity but the impact of particular social institutions in the construction and
dissemination of ideal morphologies. The physical culture of sport provides a foundation for beginning this analysis by comparing the pursuits of professional athletes to megamusculinists. According to Magdalinski (2009: 1):

. . . modifying the body through physical culture is not confined to the elite athlete. Even casual participants are encouraged to submit their bodies to the tyranny of exercise equipment. A brief wander through a local fitness centre reveals a profusion of machinery and an excess of programmes to adjust a body’s size, shape or capacity.

Megamusculinity would not arise simply due to groups of men wishing for a more hypermuscular morphology: unfortunately, merely wishing to have a different physique does not in fact change anything. There is a very important (and quite obvious) element of choice here, where particular groups of men make the active choice to engage in certain behaviours (and avoid others) due to a perceived inadequacy. It is perhaps useful to mention Cooley’s (1922) “looking glass self” to avoid appearing as though this is a psychological argument. The “looking glass self” moves issues of personal appearance from the realm of the individual psyche, in order to account for social reflections of one’s body as it refers to individuals forming self-conceptions by imagining how they appear to others. This is where the distinction between professional athletes and megamusculinists becomes quite clear; while both are involved in aspects of physical culture, the practices used are quite different, as athletes are often involved in particular training regimens to make them more toned and prepared for competition, whereas the strict training involved in megamusculinity is not done in the name of competition. Regimes of the self apply to both groups but megamusculinists have very different objectives. It is crucial to recognize that megamusculinity involves a distorted reflection in the “looking glass self,” where one becomes preoccupied with perceived inadequacies, which forms their
intention and motivation for pursuing extreme training regimens. This analysis will show megamusculinity as relational, or significantly influenced by the broad area of sport, while quite disparate from the endeavours of professional athletes: made distinct through intention and motivation.

The Vast Arena of Sporting Culture

It would be an obvious expectation that a thesis dealing with material such as this would have at least brief discussion of sport, since muscularity and sport are so closely intertwined. The very general realm of “sport” is quite complex, to say the least, and deserves some clarification before proceeding. Several scholars (Laker 2002; Snyder and Spreitzer 1989) have noted the frequency of sport studies writers using the term sport without formally defining it. Though quite dated, Snyder and Spreitzer (1989: 18) are one of the few to explicitly acknowledge the problem of defining sport and offer their own definition: sport is competitive and involves physical activity, skill and is governed by institutionalized rules. Magdalinski (2009) also offers several articulations of the meaning or role of sport, beginning by tracing the roots of sport to actively passing the time, arguing that sport enthusiasts would be offended at the thought that sport was nothing more than passing the time: to them it is so much more. She gives an overview of sport as a means of instilling certain social and moral precepts as well as offering an escape from the world of labour as it was feared that the working body “was being disciplined and contained by the requirements of labour, whereas sport was thought to offer a kind of release from industrial tyranny” (28-29). The cultural significance of sport arose in the mid-to-late nineteenth century when the unregulated countryside games were formalized and integrated into the English public school system, making it quite distinct
from other forms of recreation (17). Magdalinski builds upon the basic understanding of sport involving physical activity/competition and mentions that the defining feature of sport is the cultivation and fostering of a natural propensity, free of technological encroachment.

Anthony Laker (2002) mentions that while there is a common understanding of sport, meanings are relative to particular social contexts. Take for example Tony Schirato’s (2007: 138) statement that sport can be conceptualized as “a set of sites which, despite the influence exerted upon it by governments, media and capitalism, continues (necessarily) to value, provoke, and provide occasions for the disposition to play.” Schirato is not using the term “play” simply to refer to recreational activities, but is reminding readers of the values of more traditional views of sport within the contemporary sporting culture characterized by intense training and competition. Sport not only serves the purpose of intense bodily training but allows participants the opportunity to engage in play and recreation as there are quite different levels of sport ranging from mere recreational activities to highly professionalized pursuits: though all levels need to provide a sense of enjoyment amongst participants in order maintain their interest. Laker (2002: 4) discusses various activities and whether they fit under the category of sport: he mentions football, ballroom dancing, sailing a boat and various levels of tennis play to demonstrate that these activities could all be considered sport (albeit for very different reasons) as sport holds different connotations for particular groups and functions more as a spectrum, than dichotomous categorizations of activities.

Utilizing the notion of sport as a spectrum situates megamuscularity as relational to sport as it shares the characteristics that first comes to mind in the common
understanding of sport (as outlined by Snyder and Spreitzer (1989)); specifically the physical training required to attain a certain level of muscularity and “fitness.” While these men will probably never enter the competitions involved in bodybuilding, understanding this helps position megamusculinists as distinct from professional athletes, and relational to particular practices of sporting culture – specifically the physical activity involved in this performance culture which glorifies particular gender norms. Megamusculinists can be viewed as a sub-category of people interested in recreational sport outlined by Laker (2002:4): “there is a sub-category of these recreational sports people; those for whom physical activity is merely body maintenance . . ..” This is essentially the driving motivation behind megamusculinity: the pursuit to increase muscularity through physical activity and dietary regimens, due to a perceived inadequacy.

The role of sport (and megamusculinity) must also be situated within contemporary performance culture, as outlined in chapter two. While one often writes about sport without specifically defining the term, Magdalinski (2009) speaks to the difficulty in adequately finding a singular definition for performance due to the multitude of ways in which this term has been used. She states that the term performance does not solely refer to the literal realm of actions that are theatrical in nature and argues that one cannot contest the notion that contemporary culture is performative. While Roland Barthes (1972) argues that wrestling is not a sport as it is essentially a story unfolding before the audience, a mere spectacle, Magdalinski (2009: 59) argues: “the authenticity of sport derives, in part, from the relishing the unknown, pondering the outcome and appreciating the performance in the moment, which means that sports performances are
valued not for being a staged description but for being unpredictably, and satisfyingly, ‘real’.” Performance, according to Madgalinski, involves self-awareness of the performer: a very basic definition would refer to performance as “human action and behaviour, a bodily experience or a demonstration of acquired skills” (56). While the performance involved in megamusculinity is essentially performing gender through morphology, sport involves different realms of performance, resulting in a continuum, or spectrum, based upon the spectacle involved in the particular performance. Tony Schriato (2007: 104-105) uses Tony Mason’s analysis of soccer in the 1870s to show that the spectacle of sport can be traced to this time, as it was not until the 1880s that soccer games were attracting a moderately large crowd and were becoming “an organized form of mass, spectator-inflected consumer culture.” Roland Barthes (1972) mentioned the importance of the spectacle in his analysis of wrestling, arguing that wrestling is in fact not a sport and is more accurately understood as a spectacle. To Barthes, the audience was not interested in being informed of the scripted nature of the wrestling act and instead was focused upon the story unfolding before them, particularly within the bodies of the wrestlers:

The physique of the wrestler therefore constitutes a basic sign, which like a seed contains the whole fight. But this seed proliferates, for it is at every turn during the fight, in each new situation, that the body of the wrestler casts to the public the magical entertainment of a temperament which finds its natural expression in a gesture (1972: 18).

The role of the spectator, as outlined by Barthes, is similar to Magdalinski’s (2009: 57) argument about the communicative nature of performances, which involve a relationship between performer and audience, where the audience is entertained by the spectacle involved in the performance of a particular sport. Take for example the spectacle and
performance involved in football as opposed to figure skating: both require a certain level of training and adherence to particular rules but the spectacle of football is quite different than the choreographed spectacle of figure skating. Aesthetics are paramount to the performance of sports such as figure skating and bodybuilding where entertainment comes from the choreography involved, thus situating these sports at the more “theatrical” end of the spectrum (60).

**Sport and Gender Performativity**

One of the main elements involved in the spectacle of the performance of a sport is the body. Magdalinski (2009: 19) argues that sport promotes “ideal human characteristics” and I would argue that part of these idealized traits necessarily involve the construction of ideal types of bodies: specifically for this analysis, male bodies. Gender construction is present in most sports, not just the ones considered traditionally “masculine” such as football and hockey. It is not necessarily produced as a result of sport; it is more of a dialectical process where masculinity feeds into sport, which in turn reinforces definitions of masculinities and meaning through adherence to it. Since “masculinism – the gender dominance of men – is organized and achieved by sport,” (Burstyn 1999: 28) it is important to interrogate sport as a social institution where the attainment of hegemonic masculinity is expected and valorized. With the rise of industrial capitalism (in the mid-late 1800s), significant shifts were occurring within the average household as transformations in the roles of men and women arose (Messner 1992). Men were responsible for fulfilling the role of breadwinner, while women were at home, responsible for maintaining household relations as well as socializing children. Men began to spend less time with their family as these role transformations affected
definitions of masculinity and femininity (14). Since women were the primary source of
socialization in the home for boys, men worried that they may acquire feminine traits.
Organized sport arose during this period, which Messner argues served to counter men’s
worries of feminization. In Messner’s (1992: 30-31) study, many participants reported
that they were exposed to sport as something they were supposed to perform (as males)
during childhood. As well, they felt a sense of belonging, community and familial bonds
in sport where it became more than just a game. Situated in this sporting community, men
felt even more pressure to prove their masculinity to their peers. While men used to
derive dignity and pride from exhibiting their strength in work and war, this outlet has
been lost to many in capitalist society, often replaced with participation in sport (168).
The participants also reported that through their childhood they were introduced to sport
as something boys/men “just do.” Boys came to assume that sport was something they
were supposed to do: “through participation in sport, boys and men learn the dominant
cultural conceptions of what it means to be male” (19). Since sporting was viewed as
natural and normal for men, masculinity was heavily equated with competition.

Hegemonic masculinity in sport upholds a white, middle-class, heterosexist
ideology, which serves to reject homosexuality (Parker 1996). Its primary component is
the rejection of other identities, as demonstrated through the heteronormativity within this
current definition. Sport utilizes hegemonic masculinity, which promotes an ideal of
heterosexuality and physical fitness; although, it is important to note that there is not one
definition of masculinity as it varies cross-culturally (Anderson 2005). Giulianotti (2005:
94) defines hegemonic masculinity as, “toughness, and competitiveness, women’s
subordination, and marginalization of gay men.” The main aspect of this hegemonic
masculinity is not to act as a gay man would. It is not about how one feels about oneself, rather the emphasis lies in proving one’s heterosexuality to others. Here, men are expected to dominate others, to suppress their fear and anxiety which will result in securing a position in the sporting hierarchy of competition (Anderson 2005). “Scholars have rightly argued that sport helps nations achieve their hegemonic status as . . . the individual body of the athlete . . . is deployed as a ‘hero,’ who acts as a metonym for the nation” (Abdel-Shehid 2005: 1). It is unquestionable that this hero portrays an image of heterosexual hegemony that is subliminally imposed. This heterosexual hegemony maintains that heterosexual is right; homosexuality is deviant and should be stigmatized (Anderson 2002). Children are told to idolize male athletes for their endurance, physical ability, and ultimately (although unbeknownst to the child at the time) heterosexuality.

The qualities being divided here are heterosexual and homosexual, as well as masculinity and femininity. Adhering to gender norms has long been associated with judgments about one’s sexual orientation. Sport is an institution that is saturated with this assumption, which has essentially normalized certain sexualities and gender characteristics, while stigmatizing others. Not only are men stratified according to their degree of masculinity, their sexual orientation will also affect their social ranking. Heterosexual athletes view homosexuals as weak and emotional, which is why competitive sports are a “great place to hide one’s sexual orientation, as athletes are shrouded in a cloud of scripted heterosexuality” (Anderson 2005: 13-14). Boys learn early in life that being unable to prove their heterosexuality, and having their (hetero)sexuality questioned is unacceptable (Messner 1992). Anderson (2002) commented that different sports enforce masculinity in a variety of ways, but once a
person comes out, they are often treated similarly, regardless of the sport. He also struggled to find openly gay participants for his study as most were not open about their sexuality with their team or the community as a whole. This may cause some athletes to fall into a “culture of silence” as they are victimized by a heterosexual hegemony that restricts discourse on homosexuality (Anderson 2002: 870).

Mary Louise Adams’ (1998) writing further illustrates the presence of hegemonic masculinity in sports not considered “masculine”- namely, figure skating. She argues that when Kurt Browning became the world champion in 1989, he eradicated the stereotype of male figure skaters being effeminate, and after that time “male skaters were taken more seriously” (12). However, Browning would never be regarded as a sports hero because skating is culturally viewed as more of an art than “a real sport” (12) (which is why it would be situated at the more theatrical end of the sporting spectrum). In this context one could argue that art threatens masculinity, which is why male figure skaters need to be portrayed as athletes and competitors instead of artists (regardless of the level of artistry demanded by this sport). Elvis Stojko was a proponent of this as he refused any dance training for fear that he would look too effeminate (14). For a short time, male skaters were able to blur the gender dichotomy in sport, but this is no longer the case. Adams (1998: 15) argues that there is a “macho-ization” process in male skating, which seems to have been productive in recruiting more boys to the sport. Thus, hegemonic masculinity makes it extremely challenging for male skaters to garner respect as sporting figures, the same respect given as a matter of course towards athletes in more “masculine” sports.
Violence has become a naturalized element of sport, beginning from teaching young boys that to be a man means they must be “rough” and “tough” as they push each other around while playing (Messner 1992: 66). In this search for masculinity, the body is sometimes viewed as a machine or instrument that is molded and conditioned to perform a certain task. When the body is not naturally performing to the expectations of the individual, they may turn to other sources to enhance performance. Some may use steroids or performance enhancing supplements to boost athletic ability as well as receive recognition from their peer group, as this often signals a commitment to the sport. In the sporting world, the body is shaped and conditioned to perform a specific job or task as the male sporting body is often considered a “machine” (77-79).

Messner (2005: 315) notes that a “key ideological outcome of sport has been to create the illusion that masculinity naturally coheres to male bodies, and femininity to female bodies . . ..” If these differences are natural why do people invest so much effort into distinguishing and developing the difference within themselves? Take, for example, bodybuilding, as male bodybuilders exemplify the struggle to live up to the standards of hegemonic masculinity, specifically in relation to muscularity. There is nothing natural about the corporality of male bodybuilders, nor female bodybuilders for that matter, (especially when it involves “furtively injecting veterinary drugs into their thighs” to attain the gross musculature required (Magdalinski 2009: 7)).

Femininity is thus externally accessorised through make-up, hair and performance attire, whilst invasive procedures surgically fabricate absent breasts, triggering further anxiety about the naturalness of the female bodybuilder’s body. It is thus not surprising that the rise of women’s ‘fitness’ competitions, oft derided by serious physique athletes as little more than beauty pageants, has come at the expense of women’s bodybuilding, which has declined rapidly through the 1990s. Male bodybuilders thereby retain their monopoly on muscle, whilst female
competitors are reduced, figuratively and bodily, to little more than toned beauty queens (Magdalinski 2009: 98).\footnote{The concept of muscularity (or the inextricable link between masculinity and muscularity) makes it challenging for female bodybuilders to develop extreme levels of musculature and negotiate powerful gendered discourses where the antithesis of femininity is gross musculature (Monaghan 2001: 92). This challenge is an important realm of gender performativity and demands exploration, though the confines of this project do not permit such an investigation.}

It is not only acceptable for male bodies to be grossly muscular (in contrast to female bodies), but almost expected if one wants to adhere to the tenets of hegemonic masculinity as displayed through morphology. Viewing sport as a spectrum allows the behaviours of megamusculinity to be paralleled to sporting activities through the strict training and dietary regimens required. Within sport, as well as megamusculinity, the spectacle of the body is of utmost importance. Using this notion situates megamusculinity as a spectacle in and of itself due to the gender performance that underpins this preoccupation: the spectacle of megamusculinity occurs through gender performativity. This is also where the contrast with professional athletes becomes clear: the athlete performs and is considered a spectacle to the sporting audience (not only through the body, but the competition involved in winning a game, etcetera), while the performance within megamusculinity is focused more upon displaying gendered characteristics as the body is the sole spectacle. This is especially clear when one considers the gross muscularity of megamusculinists and how this may be spectacle-like not only to oneself, but to passersby when they get a glimpse of the hypermuscular morphology through a form-fitting t-shirt or merely by watching one’s actions at a gym. This level of muscularity does not often go unnoticed as it is quite difficult to hide, even though the individual is often unaware of the objective size of their body.
In the Sporting Arena with Foucault and Giddens

Sport can be conceptualized as a disciplinary structure as it is governed by particular rules and resources that enable and constrain behaviour and instill a sense of self-regulation, reflexivity and discipline within individuals. Viewing sport as situated within physical culture, demanding an intense amount of physical training, parallels sporting regimens to the pursuit of megamusculinity. A Foucauldian analysis is pertinent to the spectacle of sport in order to highlight the authoritative discourse and regulation prevalent in sporting culture, while Giddens’ structuration theory demonstrates that men are not merely passive dupes to these discourses as they engage in active processes of self-reflexivity, care/practices of the self. Foucault has provided scholars with a vital understanding of power and systems of knowledge which, when applied to any given topic, elucidate the macro discourses of domination that influence the realm of the lived experience of individuals. This framework allows one to probe the various ways that authoritative discourses serve to control and manage human bodies, specifically in relation to sport, where “the interweaving of cultural images of masculinity with the management and training of bodies has been powerfully effective” (Laker 2002: 19).

Examining sport as a disciplinary structure that enables and constrains human behaviour facilitates an integration of Foucault and Giddens to explore the effects of this macro level, upon the micro practices of self-reflexivity and care/practices of the self. In the most obvious realm of sport, game rules act to enable certain actions while constraining others: “Some of these constraints prohibit certain actions while others

19 Giulianotti (2005: 6) argues that Giddens has not been sufficiently recognized in sporting literature, primarily because he has not written much on the subject. I support Giulianotti’s sentiment that Giddens provides invaluable theoretical breadth to apply to sporting culture, especially when one integrates his work with Foucault to apply a more innovative theoretical approach.
prescribe actions. Together these constraints on athletes’ actions, produce what counts as the skills in a sport” (Shogan 1999: 4). While the rules that athletes must draw upon to organize their behaviour are not the same as those in megamusculinity, revisiting Foucault’s conception of Bentham’s panopticon helps parallel the megamusculinist pursuit with the disciplinarity involved in sporting culture more generally. This provides insight into the constraining aspects of the structure of sport through the macro discourses of control and power that instill notions of self-surveillance and regulation amongst individuals.

Viewing the various arenas of sport as panoptic structures shows how participants operate as though they are always under the gaze of “the watchtower” and regulate themselves and others with the intent of preventing deviation from the “norm.” Sporting events demonstrate this panoptical process as the spectators, coaching personnel and anyone who is not an athlete, harbour an authoritative position premised upon notions of hegemonic masculinity. Athletes are literally housed at the centre of the architecture of sporting events, surrounded by onlookers; the gaze of whom is inescapable. “In gender terms we can see the gaze applied to both women’s and men’s bodies, whereby the discursive subject comes to discipline and manage her/his body as self-surveillance” (Whitehead 2002: 195). Thus athletes are in a process of regulating their bodies through adherence to the tenets of hegemonic masculinity, as a result of the authoritative gaze and impending judgements of outsiders. The regulation of bodies occurs within this panoptical sporting structure due to the intensity of the gaze of spectators, who utilize various cultural and social definitions of masculinity to evaluate how well participants have adhered. The same gaze is present within megamusculinity: though many of these
men do not perform in the competitions involved in sporting events, they are always subject to not only the critical gaze of others, but an even more scrutinizing gaze from themselves, often resulting from a distorted self-perception in the “looking glass self.”

The most obvious constraint of sporting culture and megamusculinity is the development of individuals who feel continuously subjected to the gaze of oneself and others and must regulate themselves and their corporality according.

The enabling components of sporting culture and megamusculinity are found in an examination of the physical culture that rewards physical conditioning, operating as self-reflexivity as well as care and technologies of the self. In chapter four I have argued that megamusculinists should be considered more than mere docile bodies, as the methods of controlling and managing human bodies necessarily involve agency. When one looks more closely at what is required of the human body, within the phenomenon of megamusculinity, it becomes apparent that while megamusculinity involves performativity, as described above, it also involves creating a body that can perform. Here, the body can be viewed as somewhat docile, requiring discipline through strict exercise and dietary regimens, in order for the body to perform – in this sense the body needs to perform through building musculature. Moving beyond the physiological requirements of gaining musculature is where the full extent of agency required in megamusculinity is quite evident. Monaghan (2001: 74) argues that bodybuilding can be understood as, “reflexivity of the self and a proliferation of ‘body regimes’ in late modernity.” When one accounts for the meticulous planning and scheduling required for the management of the strict dietary and exercise regimens needed to attain gross musculature, it becomes apparent that these body regimes, or technologies of the self are
crucial for the perpetuation of megamusculinity. Within megamusculinity, the self becomes a very reflexive project as the motivation to pursue this hypermuscular morphology arises from the desire to address a perceived inadequacy. The accumulation of gross musculature (and elimination of fat) is an obvious, intended consequence of the reflexive, megamusculinist agent; while an unintended consequence (and part of the reasoning for the psychological analysis of “muscle dysmorphia”) is the problem that arises when people get into very serious workout routines and their bodies (and minds) develop a need to continue in this often self-destructive regimen, as this need can easily turn into an addiction. From the imposition of power as a means of controlling the body through self-regulation, to the active component of the reflexive project of the self and care/technologies of the self, megamusculinity is influenced by a multitude of social structures that wield influence over the reflection one sees in the “looking glass self.”

This chapter has acknowledged sport as a realm of gender construction and serves as a mode of further characterizing the motives of megamusculinity within Cooley’s “looking glass self,” as compensating for a perceived inadequacy (as opposed to the different motives required when one attempts to engage in sporting activities). Even though only a small majority of men reach the top of the sporting hierarchy and are considered professional athletes, “the production of masculinity throughout the sports world is marked by the hierarchical, competitive structure of the institution. . . these social relations of gender are both realized and symbolized in the bodily performances” (Connell 2000b: 35, 54). The bodily performance of megamusculinity is influenced by the disciplinary structure of sport as another means of disseminating gender norms and involves the reflexive action of attempting to compensate for a perceived flaw in
morphology. While sport involves an intense level of fitness to slowly climb the hierarchy and be classified as a professional athlete, megamusculinity also involves a certain degree of fitness: addressing a perceived inadequacy in gender performativity in an attempt to display one’s *fitness to be a man.*
Chapter 8: Conclusion

In his discussion of social science as moral theology, Neil Postman (1988) questions the role of particular social science disciplines and how they should not be classified as “science.” He contends that certain scholars were not in fact engaging in science but were “weaving narratives of human behavior” and instead should be considered storytellers (12). According to Postman, scholars are concerned not with improving scholarship but improving social life as “the purpose of social research is to rediscover truths of social life; to comment on and criticize the moral behavior of people; and finally, to put forward metaphors, images, and ideas that can help people live with some measure of understanding and dignity” (18). This thesis is aligned with Postman’s argument (though I am concerned with improving scholarship) as I have engaged in a form of storytelling, attempting to account for the phenomenon of megamusculinity, weaving narratives of various social forces that underpin this phenomenon.

Through this research I have become fascinated with the literature on corporal manipulations, prompted by dissatisfaction as not solely an individual, personal trouble, but one of “public issues of social structure” (Mills 1959: 8). While the psychological literature on body image, dissatisfaction and eating disorders is not only relevant and quite useful, it neglects the “public issues of social structure” that undoubtedly influence the reflections portrayed in the “looking glass self.” “The manner in which bodies are marked, modified, nourished, educated and experienced has long been considered a key to understanding the central characteristics of a society’s culture” (Shilling 2008: ix). Sociology of the body literature is quite useful for articulating what Shilling has pointed out, but has largely neglected an important realm of study: sociological analyses of men’s
body (dis)satisfaction. Prior to the emergence of writing on the sociology of the body, Christopher Lasch (1991) had discovered an historical shift where notions of tending to oneself started to become valued in a culture of individualism and self-actualization. A narcissistic focus on the self arose during the 1960s, according to Lasch, where people became preoccupied with judgements from oneself and others, instilling a focus on physical appearance in this culture of narcissism (Luciano 2007: 51).

While I would not argue that megamusclists are merely narcissistic individuals, their pursuits for muscularity and corporal “enhancement” cannot be divorced from this culture of narcissism where social forces have enforced notions of personal responsibility for attaining certain morphologies, creating “a sense of perpetual unease and unfulfillment” (Luciano 2007: 51). In such a culture it is foreseeable that issues of body (dis)satisfaction are pervasive, with psychological and sociological literature on women’s body concerns extensively researched; while academic work on the same preoccupations for men have only begun to receive worthy scholarly attention. Through this thesis I have introduced the term megamusculinity to move analyses of men’s body (dis)satisfaction solely from the realm of psychology. Megamusculinity is an important sociological phenomenon that is influenced by a myriad of social forces: the triad chosen for analysis in this thesis is crucial to the lived experiences of men struggling to accept their bodies, but are not nearly exhaustive.

This thesis has begun by introducing and defining the term megamusculinity, in contrast to muscle dysmorphia. Chapter two has briefly outlined the psychological literature on body image issues for men and has set a preliminary sociological framework to analyze this topic (through C.W. Mills and Cooley’s “looking glass self”) within
structural interactionism, bridging micro and macro domains. The individualizing
tendencies of psychology is what prompted this analysis, to contribute to the dearth of
sociological analyses on male body preoccupations, arguing that this is not solely the
failing of individual psyche. This is the intended goal of part one: the formation of a
sociological framework and solidifying a theoretical foundation to begin to investigate
this social phenomenon.

Building upon Mills’ distinction between “personal troubles of milieu” and
“public issues of social structure,” Cooley’s “looking glass self,” and the structural
interactionist paradigm, chapter three utilizes this preliminary framework to examine a
social institution integral to lived experience: the vast realm of gender within a culture of
performance. Situating gender as performative helps move studies of body
(dis)satisfaction further into the purview of sociology. Contemporary constructions of
masculinities, and more importantly hegemonic masculinity, are intimately connected
with physical appearance, undoubtedly influencing one’s reflection in the “looking glass
self.” The pursuit of hyper-muscular morphologies can be immediately understood as
gender performance, where gross musculature aligns with tenets of hegemonic
masculinity such aggression, dominance and the subordination of other identities.

Constructions of gender are an influential disciplinary structure, relevant to the entirety of
this thesis. Specifically, the triad of social underpinnings discussed in part two are
inextricably linked not only with constructions of masculinities but gender
performativity. This is why this chapter is included within part one (as opposed to
situating it within the dynamic of social forces explored in part two) as it is integral to
forming a sociological foundation to interrogate megamusculinity.
The sociological framework developed through the first two chapters, is expanded and solidified through establishing an innovative theoretical approach outlined in chapter four. The influence of structural interactionism is quite evident here as Michel Foucault’s proficiency in analyzing the macro realm of study is blended with Anthony Giddens’ expertise at the micro (and macro) level of analysis. In attempting to blend these two, often referred to as quite distinct theorists, this chapter includes three sections: the first two cover the relevant material from each theorist respectively, while the final section builds upon the weakness of each scholar to develop a theoretical approach that blends the strengths of both. In doing so, a theoretical approach emerges which emphasizes the intricacies of disciplinary society (Foucault) and situates agency at the fore (Giddens). As a personal trouble and public issue, megamusculinity demands a theoretical framework that operates at the meso level of analysis, in order to fully account for the influence of macro discourses upon the micro realm of self-perception. This chapter concludes the development of a sociological foundation used to analyze various social forces, referred to as disciplinary structures, which involve active, reflexive social agents.

Part two applies the sociological framework established in part one, to a few social forces that I argue, underpin (or constitute) the phenomenon of megamusculinity. In a society characterized by commodification and consumption it is important to examine class when accounting for the pursuit of megamusculinity as one cannot obtain gross musculature without material investment: whether in the form of gym memberships, a strict diet/supplement regimen, steroids etcetera. Chapter five examines working-class interpretations of masculinity in order to investigate the operationalization
of gender performance within working class culture (as this is not solely restricted to middle-upper class men). Classic texts on working-class (Sennett and Cobb 1973) youth cultures (Corrigan 1979; Willis 1977) provide insight into the construction of masculinities within various youth cultures that stress the value of manual labour and highlight tenets of hegemonic masculinity, including a particular hyper-morphology. This is demonstrated through a thematic analysis of the three classic texts as well as Nadine Dolby and Greg Dimitriadis’ (2004) edited collection updating Willis’ (1977) arguments. Written primarily in the 1970s, these texts are quite relevant to contemporary youth cultures and constructions of masculinities, and lend credence to the argument that the working-class focus on manual labour as integral to masculinity has existed for decades and continues to persist today.

Examining megamusculinity as a social phenomenon that transcends class barriers leads into an investigation of the role of the physical fitness industry in constructing what it means to be a man. Chapter six explores this, beginning by examining the social construction of health, popular discourses of health education/promotion, showing that health is often conflated with fitness, and fitness becomes equated with muscularity and fat loss. These popular health promotion discourses are utilized by various media outlets where masculinity becomes commodified, packaged and sold to consumers under the guise of “health.” Without embarking on a true content analysis to explore this, select magazine issues geared to men’s “health” and lifestyle are utilized as examples of this commodification. As a disciplinary structure, the media convey messages that essentially operate as techniques
of bio-power, drawn upon by social agents, which can then be incorporated into their reflexive practices of the self.

The images of ideal bodies portrayed in the media often depict quite unhealthy, unrealistic, digitally enhanced morphologies that are not attainable naturally, or healthily. This focus on physical appearance is extended in chapter seven which examines sporting culture that not only stresses physical appearance but performance as well. As an important realm of the physical fitness industry, sport is an influential disciplinary structure which glorifies particular discourses of hypertrophied male morphologies, aligned with conventions of hegemonic masculinity. The theme of the spectacle involved in sport is extended to the spectacle of megamusculinity where men must adhere to strict training regimens in order to develop a gross morphology, in an attempt to compensate for a perceived inadequacy. Part two concludes with this chapter, having demonstrated three influential social realms that contribute to the never-ending pursuit for the “perfect” morphology.

This triad of forces that constitute megamusculinity are all disciplinary structures, governed by particular rules and resources that instill notions of self-regulation, reflexivity and discipline within individuals. Gender as a performance is also a disciplinary structure where individuals are expected to be reflexive and self-govern to the extent that they perform gender “appropriately,” and serves to further connect these three general social realms. As mentioned previously, the social structures examined in this thesis are not nearly exhaustive. Through the writing of this thesis it became quite apparent that the institution of education is also a vital social realm in not only identity formation, but also a venue where one can see the display of masculinities quite vividly.
Chapter five briefly mentioned the important role of education in influencing youth cultures, while chapter six introduced Jan Wright and Valerie Harwood’s (2009: 1, 7) conception that bodies are “pedagogical sites,” using the term biopedagogy to “describe the normalizing and regulating practices in schools and disseminated more widely through the web and other forms of media . . ..” In the remainder of this concluding section I will make several expanded remarks about the ways in which education is another social underpinning of megamusculinity, though not the focus of this thesis.

Schools can also be considered disciplinary structures that draw upon “contemporary discourses and various normalising techniques in the social construction of young people’s bodies and the regulation of their lives” (Evans, Rich, Davies and Allwood 2009: 128). As stated by Arnot (2004: 24), Willis has shown that the:

school was the site in which multiple masculinities were generated, often in opposition to school authority relations, curriculum structures, and forms of discipline. Boys were shown that to be actively shaping gender relations as much as social class relations and to be constructing their masculinity within the fluid relations of gender, ethnicity, class, age, and sexuality.

The performance of hegemonic masculinity was a central focus for “the lads,” while the “ear’oles” constitute examples of those who do not successfully adhere to its facets.

Willis’ study supported the sentiment that schools are essentially “masculinity making devices” (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2007: 11), a trend that continues today. The dynamic process of masculinities within schools shows how the school is intimately connected to the larger social discursive power relations (2). “Education is often discussed as if it involved only information, teachers tipping measured doses of facts into the pupils’ heads; but that is just part of the process. At a deeper level, education is the formation of capacities for practice” (Connell 2005: 239). These capacities for practice
are influenced by the formation of masculinities: for example, the assertion of hegemonic masculinity within school sporting culture is celebrated, while ostracizing, teasing and making fun of effeminate boys is also a common practice (celebrated not by administration but the group of youths in control, often done to assert their own masculinity). Thus, Connell (2000b: 164) notes, the masculinizing effects of the school has both intended and unintended consequences. Evans et al. (2008) specifically refer to an unintended consequence of schooling being the performance and perfection codes instilled in children. Without focusing on the masculinizing effects of schooling as Connell (2000b) has, Evans et al. (2008) highlight the significance of these codes of perfection extending from performance in testing and assignments, to all realms of students’ lives due to the contemporary performative culture; these performances rely upon the availability of particular rules and resources of a given social milieu, specifically that of education (Evans et al. 2008: 21).

As disciplinary structures, schools convey notions of body pedagogies (as do the other disciplinary structures examined through this thesis to some degree), as the current concern with physicality does not escape the realm of schooling. These body pedagogies are influenced by the “body-centric” focus of schools where “knowledge about body management in schools is framed against the backdrop of a normative and highly partial vision of corporeal perfection” (Evans et al. 2008: xiii, emphasis in original). To extend Wright and Harwood’s (2009) conception of biopedagogies (focusing on the connection between bio-power and pedagogy), Evans et al. (2008: 17) use the term body pedagogies to refer to “any conscious activity taken by people, organizations or the state that are designed to enhance individual’s understandings of their own and others’ corporeality.
Occurring over multiple sites of practice, in and outside schools, they define the significance, value and potential of the body in time, place and space.” Education expresses “body perfection codes that ascribe value and meaning to particular body types and behaviours embedded in educational practices focused on body matters, for example, physical education and health education” (57). This pedagogic concern with corporal perfection, within the disciplinary structure of schools, contain regulatory mechanisms where youth have a moral duty to “shape the body” (58).

Evans et al. (2008) share a similar framework to this analysis, specifically the examination of a topic largely considered psychological (as they focus on “disordered eating”), arguing for the need to shift analyses to a more social realm moving away from:

treating young women and men as deficit systems or as causes of psychopathology, from conceptualising eating disorders as individual problems towards understanding them as public issues enabling broader consideration of the breadth of cultural practices in education, employment, leisure, health and the family that structure and limit people’s lives (29).

Using Mills’ (1959: 8) distinction between “personal troubles of milieu” and “public issues of social structure,” their work draws heavily upon Foucauldian logic to interrogate eating disorders (though they refer to this as “disordered eating”) by examining educational biopedagogies and moves away from “reducing eating disorders to a pathological condition of individuals . . .” (Evans et al. 2008: 26). This analysis has been quite useful to solidify the pursuit of this thesis in situating megamusculinity as similar to eating disorders, not antithetical. When focusing upon the motivations behind regimes of the self, and the distorted reflection seen in the “looking glass self,” the similarities become quite obvious as both are actively engaged in the pursuit of attempting to address a perceived inadequacy. In turning megamusculinity from the
personal trouble of muscle dysmorphia, to a public issue of social structure, I have focused upon various disciplinary structures that transform individuals from docile bodies to reflexive agents. These same forces occur within eating disorders: this becomes quite clear when one does not solely emphasize the gross morphologies of these corporal polar opposites, and interrogates the motivations behind their choices/behaviours. Here is where megamusculinity and eating disorders should be viewed as parallel pursuits, not antithetical realms of extreme morphologies.

The similarities can also be illuminated through borrowing Bernstein’s (cited in Evans et al. 2008: 80) work on the “totally pedagogised society” (TPS). He prompts for the recognition that pedagogical practices are not confined to schooling as pedagogy has pervaded every aspect of social life. “Individuals are expected to ‘work on’ or refashion themselves routinely and relentlessly, or be ‘worked on’ or refashioned by others in the interests of pre- or proscribed ideals” (80). Both megamusculinity and eating disorders involve working upon one’s body, undoubtedly influenced by a variety of social forces dictating perfection codes of idealized corporal types. When the size of the body being worked upon is not the focus of analysis, the homogeneity between the two becomes ever more clear as both utilize technologies, regimens and care of the self in reflexively working upon one’s body.

Bernstein’s concept of the TPS is aligned with many scholars who argue that education occurs beyond the confines of the schooling architecture. “Though schools are an important area of gender formation . . . teachers are well aware that they are not sealed off. Schools operate in constant interplay with families, communities, and larger institutions” (Walker, Butland and Connell 2007: 126). Education and the triad of social
forces examined in this thesis are important realms of not only gender formation but operate as social underpinnings of megamusculinity. This quote demonstrates the exploratory nature of this research as there are many other important realms of study one must engage with if they want to have a more thorough understanding of megamusculinity. The choice to include a brief discussion of education - and its role in disseminating conventions of hegemonic masculinity and body pedagogies within this conclusion - arose due to the significance of pedagogical practices and the disciplinary structure of education that became apparent through the course of this research. The role of body pedagogies in the construction of masculinities deserves thorough investigation and was included in this “concluding” section (after first narrowing the focus of this thesis) as a departure point to re-open the implications this research has for various intellectual endeavours. The role of formal and informal education demands interrogation, specifically the ways in which the curriculum, classroom culture, the location of different schools within different neighbourhoods etcetera, contribute to the pursuit of corporal perfection and promoting norms of masculinity.

This project has examined the influence of several social underpinnings of megamusculinity instead of a systematic analysis of just one or two. Further research could engage in this systematic analysis of each disciplinary structure outlined within this thesis. Through the research in chapter five, it became apparent that a more comprehensive analysis of class is necessary in order to examine how men negotiate their way through the constructions of masculinities within not only the working-class. What also arose out of this analysis is the importance of youth cultures in constructing, reinforcing and disseminating norms of masculinity (and musculinity). A comprehensive
analysis of youths’ social networks (not in the impersonal technological sense, but that of face-to-face social communities), would be important to examine in a larger project, to account for the informal pedagogical practices that inform youths’ identity and body projects. It is important, in the interpretive realm of qualitative research, to investigate the ways different social groups may be internalizing masculinities and the resultant effects for corporal manipulations.

The men’s “health” and lifestyle magazines, used in chapter six as examples of the media’s role in constructing ideal body types could be further explored in a systematic content analysis (such as that of Philip White and James Gillett 1994): for example, analyzing more recent issues of Men’s Health as well as the online content that Rodale Inc. sends via email newsletters to subscribers of the magazine. Given this discussion about health and the media, it is vital to question who reads these magazines as there are important issues of class, gender, ethnicity, age etcetera here: an opportunity for a more empirical analysis. As well, the discussion of sporting culture in chapter seven could be extended by examining whether connections to different kinds of sporting activities have varying implications for megamusculinity (such as recreational versus professional sports, as well as sports situated at different positions in the sporting spectrum). In this regard, sport is inextricably related to class and it would be fruitful to explore the triad of class, sport and media within an interview setting to empirically examine the interconnectedness of this triad, and the role of gender performativity in joining these elements.

Another aspect of this project that deserves more explicit acknowledgement is whether megamusculinity is positive or negative. This thesis has introduced this term to
describe a social phenomenon that wields the potential for social problems. Carrigan et al. (1985), Hearn (1996) and Seidler (2006) recognize the detrimental impact of constructions of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity upon contemporary men. While they provide various critiques of these terms, an acknowledgement of the impact hegemonic masculinity has upon megamusculinists is left open for interpretation.

Although not overtly acknowledged by these scholars, megamusculinity exemplifies the negative impact that gender categorizations have upon individuals, especially those who devote the majority of their time, effort and energy to attempting to live up to the fantasy ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Megamusculinity represents the hyper-connection between masculinity and muscularity and is best understood as a pursuit parallel to “disordered eating” (to borrow the terminology from Evans et al. (2008)).

Megamusculinity is more than the mere “failing” of individual psyche. This thesis has examined megamusculinity as gender performance through manipulating and altering morphology by examining a variety of social realms that constitute megamusculinity, where men are attempting to display their fitness to be men.

At the beginning of this conclusion I have outlined Postman’s (1988) contention that scholars are essentially storytellers, weaving narratives about particular phenomena. He argues that they are not concerned with improving scholarship, but social life. My aim in writing this thesis was not only the grand task of attempting to improve social life, but scholarship as well by bringing academic attention to an important, neglected realm of sociological study. By introducing the term megamusculinity, my goal was to give a more concrete reality to the phenomenon of male body (dis)satisfaction, which is intimately influenced by particular social forces. By initiating a full, sociological analysis
of this neglected realm of study, I have attempted to weave a narrative about particular male behaviours, by telling the story of megamusculinity.
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Appendix A
Advertisements from Men’s Health U.K. June 2007

• The other page of this ad continued the caption with “Got Britain By It’s [sic] Balls?” (Men’s Health U.K. 2007: 95)

1 Only some of the advertisements in these appendices were directly addressed in the paper but all are quite relevant to the arguments presented.
Find out how to...

- Make her fall for you
- Find out if you measure up
- Pull any woman anywhere, anytime
- Get exactly what you want in bed
- Build your sexual stamina
- Appreciate the naked female form
- Be the best she's ever had

when you check out the new

menshealth.co.uk

THE No1 WEBSITE FOR FOR SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

(Men's Health U.K. 2007: 176)
(Men’s Health U.K. 2007: 82)
Appendix B

(Men’s Health U.S. 2000: 162)
What do teenage guys really want for Christmas?

This is what.

MH-18: the new magazine for teenage guys that’s packed with everything they gotta know about girls like:

- How to ask her out.
- What to wear.
- Where to take her.
- When to make a move.

PLUS: how to make the team, sculpt a rock-hard body, get into any college, land a money-making job, and more!

It’s like MEN’S HEALTH, only younger.

(Men’s Health U.S. 2000: 164)
JUST LIKE A BIG BROTHER

AND IT WON'T HIT YOU BACK

www.MH-18.com
Tons of useful stuff for teenage guys
Plus great prizes and our weekly email newsletter

(Men’s Health U.S. 2001: 43)
Tougher men demand a tougher oil.

Jerome Bettis knows what it means to go the distance. That's why he relies on Mobil Clean 5000. It's as tough and durable as he is, with serious engine protection guaranteed for 5,000 miles. In fact, it's the only conventional oil to make that kind of claim. And with most carmakers now recommending oil drains beyond 3,000 miles, that's a very good thing. Mobil Clean 5000. It's seriously tough oil. Learn more at mobiloil.com.
FACT: Women love a man who can dance.

FACT: This workout shows you how.

Celebrity director and choreographer Jamie King can help you sculpt a leaner, stronger body—and find your rhythm doing it.

The Rock Your Body hip-hop inspired, dance-as-sport workout DVD and book offer a fresh approach to fitness, with Jamie King leading you through every move in this high-energy cardio routine. From the Warming Up and Dance Rehearsal to the Performance portion of the program. Rock Your Body has the energy and the moves to make getting fit fun, helping you to simply dance your calories away.

Order at www.rockyourbodyprogram.com or (800) 265-9719

(Men’s Health U.S. 2007: 150)
SUPPLEMENT BREAKTHROUGH!
Welcome to the only legal steroid alternative for a total body transformation! New BIOGENETIX is the "all-in-one" solution that takes the guesswork out of how to help you rapidly burn fat, build muscle and increase strength at the SAME TIME! Every BIOGENETIX Kit offers the most premium scientifically advanced supplements, straightforward diet and workout programs from the world’s foremost authorities on body transformation. Avoid the confusion and leave nothing to chance with the all-in-one solution - BIOGENETIX!

"One look at my pictures and you can’t deny how BIOGENETIX delivered. The money I paid was worth it! It took only 9 short weeks for BIOGENETIX to help me drop 52 pounds while adding 2 inches to my chest. The changes I’ve made to my body and life are unreal. Thanks to BIOGENETIX I’m living life to the fullest!!"

- Andrew Sinclair

The TOTAL BODY TRANSFORMATION KIT Includes:
- BIOBURN-ĐT™ - Burns fat in record time
- CREATINE-ĐT™ - Pumps on serious muscle size and strength fast
- NO-ĐT™ - Jacks up your pumps inside and long after the gym
- THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO TOTAL BODY TRANSFORMATION™ - The decisive manual that outlines absolutely everything you need to know about diet, training and supplementation to sculpt your physical masterpiece.

NOW ONLY AT
GNC LiveWell.
www.bio-supplements.com

(Men’s Health U.S. 2007: 155)
AMERICA'S #1 SELLING WEIGHT-LOSS SUPPLEMENT!

"I GOT 6-PACK ABS WITH HYDROXYCUT!"

Many guys have been there—overweight, out of shape, and looking for answers. Skip Wood knows it firsthand. That's why he turned to America's #1 selling weight-loss supplement—Hydroxycut—and got ripped fast! "My transformation was the real deal. I got into the best shape of my life with Hydroxycut! That's why it's easy to recommend it to others," he reveals. Make Hydroxycut your number one choice today and get the ripped body you've always wanted too!

"I lost 39 pounds fast with Hydroxycut and got into the best shape of my life!"

Doctor formulated* Hydroxycut contains key ingredients scientifically proven to help you lose up to 4 times the weight than diet and exercise alone*. And, with clinically proven ingredients that help control your appetite and increase energy levels, it's no wonder why millions of Americans have made Hydroxycut the #1 selling weight-loss supplement!

*These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

Before 243 lbs.  LOST 39 lbs. After 174 lbs.

Skip lost 39 lbs. and trimmed 8" off his waist with Hydroxycut! Check out how much more chiseled his chest, arms, and abs are!

Skip lost 39 lbs. and trimmed 8" off his waist with Hydroxycut! Check out how much more chiseled his chest, arms, and abs are!

"The fact that Hydroxycut is the #1 selling weight-loss supplement is an indication of its ability to help people achieve weight loss. I would not recommend a weight-loss supplement other than Hydroxycut to anyone serious about losing weight."

Dr. Joe Marshall, D.O.
Resident Physician
Hydroxycut Success Story

SuperCenters  GNC LiveWell.

Based on IRI, PONPD Nielsen data. "Derived by Mark Banner, M.S., F.A.A.D.T., Chief Scientific Officer, Bator. Ten-bottles-of results in which all groups (placebo) diet and exercise plus subjects using the primary ingredients of Hydroxycut lost, on average, significantly more weight than subjects who were using a placebo (24.0% vs. 10.5% vs. 3.0% lbs). No product tested lost more weight than subjects using the primary ingredients of Hydroxycut. Conclusively read the entire label before use. Regular exercise and proper nutrition are essential for achieving your weight loss.

(Men's Health U.S. 2008: 127)
MY ROUTINE IS ANYTHING BUT

NEW DAY, NEW PATH

MOST GUYS MY AGE NEED TO DROP 15 LBS

I'M NOT LIKE MOST GUYS

My trainer: Forerunner® 405.

I create my workouts and goals. Forerunner keeps score and pushes me to go for more. Time, distance, pace, heart rate, calories burned — this watch records it all and sends it to my computer when I walk in the door. Who needs a personal trainer? Mine’s with me 24/7.

See the new Forerunner 405 with GPS and wireless sync at www.garmin.com
ATTACK BODY FAT AT THE SOURCE WITH AB-SOLUTION PLUS

VOTED #1
TOPICAL FAT-LOSS PRODUCT

Ab-Solution Plus™ gives your skin a leaner, tighter and healthier appearance by attacking subcutaneous fat with a proprietary formula containing:
- AMINOPHYLLINE
- CAFFEINE
- YOHIMBINE
- FORSKOLIN
- OSNIA ACID

If you want to look ripped then apply Ab-Solution Plus™ to your abdominals, hips, glutes, thighs and arms. Ab-Solution Plus™ users report better skin tone and noticeable muscle definition within three days. Ab-Solution Plus™ may also help to reduce cellulite while increasing skin firmness and elasticity.

The light, non greasy lotion is colorless, odorless, absorbs quickly and will not stain clothes. Join the hundreds of thousands of satisfied Ab-Solution Plus™ customers and experience the instant gratification for yourself!

Call Now to Find out how to receive
FREE Bottle and T-shirt!* 866.671.1091

*Offer not available at GNC

Available for Purchase at
GNC Live Well.

(Men’s Health U.S. 2008: 17)
(Men’s Health U.S. 2008: 99)
“PAIN IS TEMPORARY. IT MAY LAST A MINUTE, OR AN HOUR, OR A DAY, OR A YEAR, BUT EVENTUALLY IT WILL SUBSIDE AND SOMETHING ELSE WILL TAKE ITS PLACE. IF I QUIT, HOWEVER, IT LASTS FOREVER.”

-LANCE ARMSTRONG

(Men’s Health U.S. 2008: 111)
THAT LITTLE
VOICE INSIDE YOU

Your physical conscience, that little voice inside you that won't let you slack off. You know the voice: it keeps your diet in check. It drags you out of bed on Saturday morning to train when every last one of your friends is still sleeping. It pounds away at you, demanding the most out of every single workout, and beats you up inside when you fail to deliver your best. It's what separates you from the pack. Bigger, stronger, faster, better, more conditioned—that's your voice talking to you. That's B.S.N.®—the number one selling extreme pre-training energy & performance drink in the world. And the answer to that little voice inside you.

800.215.2105 - BSNONLINE.NET

GNC LiveWELL®

(Men's Health U.S. 2008: 125)
(Men’s Health U.S. 2010: 71)
Evolution Is Inevitable

For years, athletes have turned their workouts to N.O.-XPLODE™, relying upon a powerful formula to fuel their efforts. But, physiques evolve, and so do workout habits. Therefore, BSN™ made sure that the world’s leading performance supplement evolved as well. The all-new N.O.-XPLODE™ NT builds on the legacy of the original, igniting both body and mind and taking you through any performance with unprecedented intensity. "Once you train with it, you will never train without it."
Power Up Your Sex Life.
Men’s Health shows you how.

Subscribe and save 42%
1 year/10 issues ONLY CDN $29.97 (plus $4.97 delivery)
PLUS A FREE GIFT: Drive Women Wild

Name
Address
City Province Postal Code

Send no money now. We’ll bill you later.
Payable in U.S. funds. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

Yours FREE!

DRIVE WOMEN WILD

(Men’s Health U.S. 2010: subscription insert)
Appendix C
Advertisements from Men’s Fitness April 2007

A body at rest tends to stay at rest...
and a body enraged, stays enraged.
When your inner beast sleeps, Rage is the backhand slap that will make it up angry...
and make you feel the fury that you’ve been waiting to unleash.

The pretenders can be put to rest. This advanced thermogenic blend contains 300 mg of Caffeine plus Yohimbine HCl, Taurine and Tyrosine - the state-of-mind altering blend you need to feel the Rage and support your workout goals.

(Men’s Fitness 2007: 127)
That's because, compared to men, women experience orgasms of greater length and higher intensity.

But now, the pleasure is no longer all theirs.

EVER SCREAM LIKE A GIRL? YOU SHOULD.

Introducing Paravol, the revolutionary supplement that enhances the male orgasm to unprecedented levels. Greater Volume. More Powerful Contractions. Dramatically Longer Orgasms. With Paravol, pleasure comes, and comes a lot.

Paravol: Come With It.

GNC LiveWell.

FOR THE ULTIMATE ORGASMIC EXPERIENCE GO TO:
PARAVOL.COM OR CALL 800.965.3198
FOR DIRECT ACCESS TO EXCLUSIVE OFFERS ON PARAVOL.
I’m not lookin’ for a quickie—
I want 12 HOURS of SATISFACTION!

Satisfy Your Hungry Muscles
The World’s First 12-hour Muscle Feeding Protein Bar!
PROBOLIC SR’s amazing candy bar taste will tick your taste buds and satisfy your entire body. A 12-hour supply of the highest quality protein available. If you’re looking for a bar that tastes like candy and packs on muscle, PROBOLIC SR is for you!

Chocolate Marshmallow Chunks: A layer of soft marshmallow covered in rich chocolate with chocolate chips spread throughout.

Triple Peanut Butter: A rich peanut butter center and a creamy peanut butter topping both wrapped in a thick peanut butter coating.

Call Now or Go Online to Order Today!
1.888.763.8844 - www.getMHP.com

(Men’s Fitness 2007: 151)
Appendix D
Advertisements from *Maximum Fitness* April 2008

(Maximum Fitness 2008: 115)
INCREASES STRENGTH BY 30% 
INCREASES LEAN MUSCLE FAST 
ENHANCED WITH BETA-ALANINE

ENCHARGE is a dietary supplement used by male and female athletes during training, competition and recovery to immediately enhance endogenous (natural) phosphocreatine levels in skeletal muscle.

ENCHARGE makes creatine work “faster and bigger.” The SYNERGY complex makes creatine work faster enabling your nervous system and muscle cells to re-charging with high-energy compounds faster both during and after exercise. The MYOCHARGE complex makes creatine work bigger because the unique creatine amino acid peptide molecules in ENCHARGE enhance muscle protein synthesis, strength and size.

More info: www.rivalus.net or call 1-800-220-6177

© 2007 RIVALUS Inc. “In a 6-week official trial, athletes consuming ENCHARGE and following a structured strength training program increased strength by 36%, and increased muscle mass by up to 10 pounds.” These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.
What is Perfect?

Perfect is...
... achieving massive power and strength.
... feeling your skin tighten as your muscles swell.
... fulfilling your muscle building destiny.

... ORYX™, The World’s Perfect Protein™

- ORYX™ The Whey of the Future
  Protein is your tool for building lean muscle. Goat’s milk is nature’s most perfect source of complete protein. VYotech Nutritionals has united modern science and nature’s nature for the development of ORYX™, The World’s Perfect Protein™. ORYX™ Goat Whey is the industries first and only goat milk whey protein blend with muscle building and digestive properties superior to all other proteins available.

- Rapid Absorption & Superior Bioavailability
  ORYX™ Goat Whey has shorter chain peptides which are more readily absorbed to help you build and repair muscle tissue faster. Short chain peptides provide higher absorption, digestibility and gastrointestinal safety with no bloating, gas or stomach upset. No gas and no stomach upset. Now that’s perfect

- Higher BCAAs, BV (Biological Value) & 100% Lactose Free!
  ORYX™ Goat Whey contains the highest concentration of BCAAs (branched chain amino acids) and a high Biological Value (BV) of 104, which is higher than whey (109) and lactose (88). It is also estimated that nearly 70% of the world’s adult population experience varying levels of lactose intolerance. Don’t worry because ORYX™ Goat Whey is 100% lactose free.

Go Goat!
In the days when we used to walk the cow path it’s time to switch lanes over to the goat superhighway. ORYX™ Goat Whey has arrived and it’s already starting a revolution. If you want to make your muscle building dreams a reality then it’s time to kick the cow and Go Goat!

ORYX™ Goat Whey is now available in delicious Swiss Chocolate and French Vanilla flavors. It mixes perfectly with your favorite protein powders. Use this best part of what you’ll soon begin to see in the media – new muscle, power and strength that can only come from ORYX™, The World’s Perfect Protein™

Call Now to find out how to receive
FREE Bottle and T-shirt!
800.883.5141

*Free offer not available at GNC.

(Maximum Fitness 2008: 67)
Appendix E

Men’s Health South Africa, January 2010

(Men’s Health Z.A. 2010: 34)
(Men's Health Z.A. 2010: 35)