The Civilizing Process of Male Physical Fitness Practices:

An Application of Figurational Theory

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Abstract

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This work seeks to explain the civilization process of college-aged male physical fitness participants from a sociological, particularly figurational perspective. Inspiration for the project stems from present literature, which has considered important variables such as culture, social status, and gender perceptions and how these affect the nature of male body image. Concerns over such developments cannot be adequately explained by studying either the person himself or the ideas surrounding body image concerns. Using qualitative methods which consisted of face-to-face interviews and an inductive coding scheme, this research examined the perceptions of male, non-athletes, who were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, and their motivations and influences regarding physical fitness practices. This study found that male participants engage in physical fitness activities through a civilizing process and the ideologies within, which accordingly, can only be fully understood when male physical fitness enthusiasts are located in the figurations they form with each other.

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Writing a master’s thesis is very much like building a fit muscular body; neither is a requirement for individual success in life—they are life choices. In most situations, it is an individual’s choice to enter a training facility and build a muscular body. The same type of choice compels individuals to continue their higher education. While the physical fitness realm provides an established network of gyms and experts to guide an individual in their fitness journey, a university provides the same type of network, in a different regard, ensuring students have access to the tools necessary for academic success. For this reason, it is important for me to acknowledge the Ping student fitness center, in particular, and the health and fitness industry, in general, for the subsidiary assistance it has provided in this research. It is, however, more important for me to thank the mentors, departments and professors that have stood by and aided in my academic journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Not too long ago, I overheard a group of college men discussing a commercial for body wash they had seen on television. The commercial shows a group of men without their shirts revealing their six packs, surrounded by beautiful women, tied up with the notions of what American manhood should be, and should resemble. The group was seemingly in awe of one’s claim that this body wash could effortlessly shape his body into an idealized version of himself, filled with beautiful women and a chiseled physique, just by simply cleansing with the product. This body wash, while certainly not a magic potion capable of turning one’s body into a surfer hunk, underscores the simple reality that men are increasingly encouraged to pursue ways, sometimes innovatively, to commodify their bodies. The commercial advertising of this product and others, demonstrate while at the same time, promote physically fit bodies and services.

These body representations are seemingly everywhere, in fact, to paraphrase Michael Atkinson, ‘grocery stores, hair salons, diet centers, exercise gyms, fashion retailers, and health spas all offer commodities and strategies oriented toward changing our physical bodies and bettering our lives’ (Atkinson, 2003: 3). One is indeed engulfed within a culture of chiseled physiques and products for altering the body to achieve this increasingly presented image. Of course such developments in the culture and media of male body image have not gone unnoticed academically, across critical studies of the male body and masculinity variants, research is continued, however, remains inconclusive (Edwards, 2006).

The findings of face-to-face interviews with male work out enthusiasts enrolled in college will be presented, with an awareness of the vast scope of studies, even sociological, concerning men and masculinities. The intention of the research is to be reasonably inclusive but by no means exhaustive. In particular, the aim will be to explore studies of the male body
and the motivations behind physical fitness practices. These are two dynamics that intertwine, but to date, have not been studied sufficiently. While a variety of literature is spoken to along the way, the research remains a work in the sociology of the body, male body image, and masculinities.

The social construction of the body has been of central importance to the construction of femininities and masculinities, and has formed an enduring theme through much of the research on body image. Historically, research on body image has focused on women (Green & Pritchard, 2003), however, present literature has begun to consider important variables such as culture, social status, sexual orientation and gender perceptions and how these affect the nature of body image concerns (Yelland & Tiggemann, 2003). Among these new findings, it has been suggested that body image anxieties are increasingly faced by men, in contrast to previous theoretical and empirical work that has suggested body image concerns primarily affect only women (Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Pliner, Chaiken, & Flett 1990; Brownell, 1991).

One unique component of studying body image that seems promising is muscularity. In general, females report almost entirely without exception wanting to lose weight. In contrast, males consistently report a desire to gain weight. This common desire to gain weight in males is probably linked to a desire to have increased muscle mass (Pope et al., 2000). Additionally, other studies have indicated increasing socio-cultural messages related to muscularity, certainly suggesting that body image concerns may be increasing for men (Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002; Leit, Pope, & Gray, 2001; Olivardia, Gruber, & Borowiecki, 1999). Evidently, body image concerns for

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1 the physiological state of having or consisting of muscle or having well-developed muscles
men are apparent and identifying muscul arity as an important variable toward understanding male body image is significant.

Various scholars (Park, 1987; Harrison, Pope and Colleagues, 2000; Monaghan, 2002; & Davis, 2002) have noted that there has been a fundamental change in the social pressure on men to look slender and reasonably muscular which happened in the late 1980s. This has been linked with body dissatisfaction in men in Western cultures because of the positive social capital attached to have a slim, muscular appearance (Grogan, 2008).

Still, forming anything homogenous or conclusive has not been the case in regard to the male body and masculinity. This research is, then, structured around two main sociological problems. First, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between male body image and social-psychological physical fitness motivations and then to determine what social value these men get from working out. Second, and together with the first problem, this research explores individual personality structures, what one might call habituses (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990; Elias 1994) or second natures, and how these fluctuate over time. Specific attention is given to how physical fitness practices develop within sociogenic changes in Western culture and correspondingly how physical fitness contributes to the psychogenic development of male identities.

For those possessing an experience or familiarity with physical fitness practices, this work encourages you to reflect back on your own physical fitness experiences and those of others, to see yourself linked within the complex web of individual interdependencies who shared your interest. A paradigm commonly associated with sport sociology (Coakley, 2000) and tattooing (Atkinson, 2003), figurational theory attempts to make sense of the motivations and
personality structures behind physical fitness by developing an understanding of weight training, cardiovascular exercise, and nutrition among men at Ohio University.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

What is Figurational Theory?

Figurational theory (Elias, 2002) serves as the analytical framework for this thesis. This will provide a more adequate explanation of the emergence and development of the relationship between male workout enthusiasts and body image. This research will use several concepts that are integrated within a symbolic interactionist perspective and more concisely, a figurational approach. Most notably, the ideas of figurations, civilizing process, sociogenesis and psychogenesis will be fundamental throughout this study. With an emphasis placed on research historical developments as a process, figurational theory is fundamentally referred to as ‘process sociology’, however, for the purposes of this investigation and for consistency, the term used will be figurational theory. Before clarifying in detail, the abovementioned concepts, one needs to understand what is meant by ‘figurational’ or ‘process’ sociology.

A perspective associated from the literature of Norbert Elias (2002) figurational theory has three interrelated aspects. (1) It attempts to overcome the false dichotomy of agency and structure, by arguing that individuals are located and understood in terms of enduring social configurations of relationships. (2) It rejects the artificial distinction between the individual and society, by demonstrating that the rise of the individual is itself a social process. And (3) the long-term developments taking place in these figurations have been and continue to be largely unplanned and unforeseen.

Likewise, this theoretical viewpoint not only looks to evaluate society by examining the present but, also by researching historical developments. Therefore, to understand the present we must also investigate the past. Elias focused on the dynamics of relationships between people and groups of people, and for figurational theorists, ‘life’ should be examined as a
process. The ‘figurational’ framework looks not only to explore micro-sociology behavior (focusing on the individual) but, also, the macro-sociology impact (focusing on society as a whole) as a long term ‘process.’ In this regard, the perspective attempts to bridge the gap between micro and macro sociology. Mennell affirms that figurational theory is ‘inseparably a microsociological and macrosociological theory’ (1998, p.94) As a consequence, much of the work done in the name of this approach has examined the connection between changes in psychology and personhood, on the one hand, and changes in macro social structures on the other.

First, one may draw on Elias’s (2002) notion of a ‘figuration’ to highlight that working out occurs as a social process within groups of interdependent actors. Elias described a figuration as a complex web of social relationships based on individual and group interdependencies, such as a family, a school, a workplace, a community, peers, an economy or a political sphere (p.208) Elias explains in the following passage:

The concept of figuration . . . makes it possible to resist the socially conditioned pressure to split and polarize our conception of mankind, which has repeatedly prevented us from thinking of people as individuals at the same time as thinking of them as societies. . . . The concept of figuration therefore serves as a simple conceptual tool to loosen this social constraint to speak and think as if "the individual" and "society" were antagonistic as well as different. . . . By figuration we mean the changing pattern created by the players as a whole—not only by their intellects but their whole selves, the totality of their dealings in their relationships with each other. It can be seen that this
figuration forms a flexible lattice-work of tensions. The
interdependence of the players, which is prerequisite of their forming a
figuration, may be a interdependence of allies or of opponents.
(1978:129-130)

Essentially, rather than seeing individuals as independent of one another, society can only be understood through the evolving networks created by independent figurations. Additionally, by considering social structures as developmental, the processes at work within them both past and present can be analyzed.

Elias (2002) further promoted the concept of “civilizing processes” which consisted of an extended exposition of sociogenesis. Sociogenesis, refers to the ongoing social influence of relationships among individuals and how social structuring processes are the organizational patterns of social life. For instance, a figurational sociologist may begin research on forms of body behavior, lifting weights for example, by analyzing how body commodification ideologies are formed through ongoing sociogenic processes.

Elias’s research on civilizing processes is centrally concerned with how a historical shift (spanning several centuries) has had a cumulative impact on social behaviors and individual personalities. Such that social life has become safer, rationalized, status-oriented, and predictable, while individual behaviors are more linked to the activities of other individuals, sensitive to socially aroused feelings of shame and guilt, and reflective of a common dislike toward outwardly uncontrolled affect. Elias maintained that much can be learned about the form and content of a historical era by observing the prevailing body norms and practices within a given figuration of individuals (Atkinson, 2003).
Today’s research of middle-class masculinity in North America has linked a wide scope of men’s body image research to a series of sociogenic changes (Connell, 2005). In particular, one dominant form, which Connell calls hegemonic masculinity (pg. 77) where men seem to embody, by being heterosexual, from conventional families and working in career-structured, highly skilled positions. Moreover, Atkinson (2003) stated that middle-class white men, in Canada, have vocalized an identifiable doubt regarding the ability to exercise hegemonic masculinity. These men felt as if their position, for instance, as hegemonically dominant in familial clusters, economic work structures, educational streams, and political offices had been challenged by gender rights, race rights and sexual lifestyle rights movements.

Authors Nathanson and Young (2001) offer similar remarks. Following compilation of wide ranging evidence based on daytime talk shows, primetime newsmagazine shows, comic strips and cartoons, greeting cards, sitcoms and movies in Canada. They conclude that securing equality across a range of misandry – the dehumanization and trivialization of men – is now more pervasive in popular culture than its gender counterpart, misogyny. Furthermore, experimental evidence of self-objectification can be found in both men and women (Roberts & Gettman, 2004), thus, this research contributes to the long term influence of media on self-objectification in both genders.

Consequently, to make sense of the objectification of male bodies one must therefore search the history of the social behavior. A contemporary social behavior, such as weight training, through a figurational analysis would thus inspect how such behaviors are formed, transformed, and understood over time, mainly as a result of shifting social interdependencies between people (Mennell, 1998; Salumets, 2001). To elaborate on this point, the longer the
chain of interdependence or, wider the web of figurations, the more dependant individuals become. Therefore, it becomes more unlikely an individual will have absolute power.

Elias goes on to affirm that ‘power balances, like human relationships in general are bi-polar at least, and usually multi-polar’ (1978, p.74). To put this component into perspective, one can assume that a campus recreational center director has power over those lifting weights, but the weight lifters also have power over those ‘in charge’, in proportion to the fact that without people using the recreational centers facilities, the director cannot be employed. Also, more indistinctly, those who lift weights and those who influence others to lift weights impact one another at various points in the “getting in shape” process. For that explanation even though these examples refer to ‘bipolar relationships’ or ‘two-way’ relationships, Elias openly suggested that power balance in wider society and culture are always ‘multi-polar’ meaning that they involve complex figurations of interdependent individuals (Dunning, 1999). Essentially, according to Dunning, what Elias suggests is twofold: A) that power is ‘polymorphous’ and inherent in all human relationships; and (B) that the key to understanding power lies in the interdependency of people (1999, p. 191).

Moreover, according to Atkinson (2003) one can only understand a given social behavior if it is contextually embedded within long-term social processes. For this thesis, I will attempt to argue that any attempt to understand and interpret social interests in male physical fitness, must begin by reviewing the history of physical fitness in our society, as well as the current sociogenic changes that are influencing how males view their bodies and the act of being physically fit to change ones appearance.

Examination of psychogenesis or the development of “personality structures” within specific, historically contextualized figurations is also emphasized by figurational sociologists. A
central principle that figurational sociologists offer to explain social behavior is a belief that individual and collective personality are largely products of the social environment. Due to the socialization process, individuals start to rely less heavily on biological or emotional impulses in guidance of their actions, and more on those lessons about specific behaviors acquired through social figurations (Atkinson, 2003). Through analysis (Elias, 1994) of the body as a text of sociogenic and psychogenic change, it was presented as shifts in cultural orientations toward the body and its display are ultimately products of social interdependencies between people (Kemple, 2001).

As a result, the structures of human psyche, the structures of society, and the structures of human history are complementary and can only be studied in conjunction with each other (Atkinson, 2007) It is vital that social scientists analyze the tissues of interdependency connecting individuals in social figurations (e.g., family, school, peers, media, and society) and the anticipated or unanticipated impact of these connections on personality structures (Atkinson, 2007). For Elias, while humans are born with certain innate drives and definite desires (such as love, anger, aggression, fear, sexual desire and happiness) these drives are highly influenced by an individual’s social position and biography in a figuration (Elias, 1994). Unlike other sociological theorists who tend to show these biological tendencies as low-key or constant after a certain point in their life course (e.g., Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; as noted by Atkinson, 2007), Elias argued differently. To him, both learned and unlearned personality characteristics are mouldable.

Studies (Simpson, 1999 & Featherstone, 2000) done recently, predicted that social forces would perpetuate psychogenic pressures and influences. For example, Simpson (1999) predicted that with the sociogenic “queering” of urban, male body style and aesthetics, affluent
straight men would feel emotional pressure to respond by “prettying” their bodies.

Featherstone (2000), on the other hand, has contended that middle-class men, in particular, are exposed to persistent and diffuse consumer orientated sensibilities that encourage body commodification and aesthetic refinement.

In addition, Paul Campos defined men in the middle-class as the primary interpreters and definers of contemporary body problems, such as obesity. While the basis for judging obesity is highly questionable, according to Campos (2004), emergent cultural and moral concerns about health and obesity as an outcome of middle-class consumption was still identifiable. Furthermore, maintaining weight-loss strategies amongst middle-class men reflects a common anxiety about their lifestyles of conspicuous consumption. According to American Sports Data, a research firm, the number of men with health club memberships has soared to 8.5 million (Neimark, 2008), one could argue this increase is an indirect measure of such anxiety.

Furthermore, sociologists such as Connell (2005) who research in the area of masculinities also noted vague definitions of the sexually acceptable male body and style. As Connell points out, there has been an explosion of work in men's studies in the last ten years and some new thinking has emerged. Some common themes are: the construction of masculinity in everyday life; the importance of economic and institutional structures on masculinity; the significance of differences among masculinities; and the dynamic character of gender. Thus, in the current research, to understand how men’s thoughts, emotions, feelings, and actions in regards to weight lifting and physical appearance are created, first recognition of the ongoing social influences on the psychogenic development of individuals is needed.

Throughout his study of psychogenesis in the civilizing process, Elias, (1991, 1996) described individual and cultural personality structures as “socially learned through second
natures,” or *habitures*. Moreover, he suggested that through ongoing socialization processes, one learns taken-for-granted ways (i.e. habits) of experiencing, utilizing, and interpreting their bodies. Elias’s (2002) explanation on the habitus formation process outlines how an individual’s conceptions of the body are embedded into everyday physical habits for instance; getting dressed, eating manners, sexual displays and emotional expression. In the study of physical fitness, much can be learned about weight lifting behaviors, cardiovascular exercise and nutrition, and how practices to be physically fit are formed as part of the habitus – a socially learned second nature. Here, a central issue to be evaluated in this research is how lifting weights and cardiovascular training become socially and/or individually meaningful for college-aged, men.

Additionally, according to Elias (1987) the individual actions of people or groups of people encourage the actions of other individuals or groups, resulting in outcomes that no had planned. These unforeseen aspects are the result of the actions of many individuals and the interdependence that exist between them. It is possible to argue, that in certain respects, physical fitness, as a result of undergoing a civilizing process, may have become more supplementation orientated due to the cultural encouragement of increased muscularity, which would perhaps lead to a heightened perceived body image. The study of a complex intertwining of planned and unplanned social processes was central to Elias’s approach (Dunning, 2004). These different dynamics will all be applied in the paper on the civilizing processes of male physical fitness.

Adopting a figurational approach in the investigation of the network of relationships responsible for male body image will facilitate focus on the individual figurations motivational emergence and development. Essentially, the dynamic association between macro structures
(such as the media) and micro structures (such as individual workout enthusiasts) will serve as the framework to explore how each ‘figuration’ was/is involved in workout inspirations. Given the figurational approach looks to investigate the topic at hand as a process, it is necessary to provide a historical, contextual analysis of how the relationship between physical fitness, bodybuilding (lifting-weights), body dissatisfaction, and body image all emerge. Simultaneously, I will also highlight the current literature that exists concerning prior research on these said concepts.

I consider others research on body image as a facilitator for formulating figurational research questions relating to mainstream and non-mainstream physical fitness practices. The questions that guide this research are as follows:

- How, when, and by whom are physical fitness practices constructed and/or interpreted as acts of cultural reproduction and social capital?
- How do cultural and/or individual sensibilities toward body commodification develop over time?
- How are identities of physical fitness enthusiasts created through social interaction?
- How do individuals become involved in physical fitness practices, derive meaning from participating, and apply physical fitness results into the rest of their lives?

While the above questions pertain directly to my sociological interest in male physical fitness, a moderately untouched theoretical framework, figurational sociology, is employed throughout this thesis to address each question in a slightly different manner.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

There is an enormous literature concerning the area of body image (Bergeron, 2007). It should be noted that a significant portion of this literature focuses on female body image and that research on men makes up a proportionally smaller part of this literature (Green & Pritchard, 2003). Interestingly, the general trend when men were in involved in studies was to examine differences between the sexes. Despite this, more recently there have been an increasing number of studies focusing solely on men (Bergeron, 2007). A few male body studies have been physical fitness related while utilizing a figurational framework in their analysis.

Numerous studies exist in the body image literature and giving an overview of the entire concentration would be an enormous task. For the purpose of this review, the coverage of each area will be proscribed and limited to literature concerning male physical fitness and body image. This literature has a few key purposes, initially, to show that body image issues are relevant concerns for males today. Secondly, to discuss the historical analysis or ‘civilizing process’ of previous physical fitness related investigations while likewise placing emphasis on bodybuilding and physical fitness. Third, to explore socio-cultural and media pressures and demonstrate how these concepts may be increasing the salience of the social construction of masculinity today. Fourth, to indicate that body image issues are qualitatively different between men and women. And lastly, to demonstrate how muscularity is an aspect of body image exclusively important to men. However, before illustrating in detail, the aforementioned concepts, it is important to identify meanings behind key terminology that appear throughout the project.
Key Terms

In the following review and throughout the paper, physical fitness will used to classify weight lifting, cardiovascular exercise and nutrition. However, to elaborate further, we have to first understand that the definition of physical fitness is comprised of two separate parts and including both parts makes the definition of physical fitness more accurate. Firstly, the most accepted definition of physical fitness includes a general or health related fitness component, as well as, a specific or performance/skill related fitness component. In other words, the ability to perform specific aspects of sports or tasks, such as being able to lift weights so therefore, a definition falls short when it uses only one component (Holland, 2007). For the purpose of this research, the component of physical fitness involving lifting weights and cardiovascular exercise will be utilized.

The definition of physical fitness has evolved from being focused primarily on athletic performance to include the modern health-related aspects. The reason for this evolution is because fitness or being fit can be multifaceted or intangible even. In consequence, that is the reason for so many diverse definitions. For instance, government health agencies and other organizations define physical fitness differently although they do agree on certain aspects (Holland, 2007).

To elaborate, some argue that physical fitness should be measured through the use of some form of criteria for the health related components of physical fitness (USDHHS, 1996). These components comprise fitness dynamics that exhibit a relationship with a healthy status as a result of regular exercise, proper diet, and nutrition e.g., being in a quality state of health and well-being. Conversely, some argue (PCPFS Research Digest) physical fitness should have distinct measures focusing on a population-based norm defined by specific achievement scores on
various fitness tests that represent desired health standards. Performance/skill related or specific fitness components are a person’s ability to perform a specific activity with reasonable efficiency such as sports or other physical tasks (Holland, 2007). The components are commonly defined as agility, balance, coordination, power, speed and reaction time (PCPFS Research Digest).

Therefore, according to David Holland (2007) a good definition of physical fitness might be, good health combined with proper physical development. Basically, a body that is able to fight sickness with problems while at the same time showing evidence of a proportionally defined physique. However, a better definition could be a set of parts that are either health related or performance related. To make this definition understandable, health related physical fitness components essentially exhibit a relationship with health status while performance related fitness involves those components of fitness that enable optimal work or sport performance.

On a final message according to Holland, most government health agencies and exercise scientists are in agreement that physical fitness can be divided into the following types; known as the 5 components of physical fitness: body composition, cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, muscular endurance, and muscular strength. After stating the previously mentioned criteria in regards to physical fitness, it is needs to be noted that it is not very practical to attempt and define physical fitness as one, all-encompassing definition because of the extensive nature of the concepts involved in defining the concept (Holland, 2007). Before beginning the review, it would beneficial to adequately examine how and why sport sociologists have used figurational theory as a framework for research.
Previous Figurational Studies in the Development of Modern Physical Activity

According to Norbert Elias (1986) the term ‘sport’ can be used in two primary ways. First, in a general sense, to refer to non-work related forms of physical activity, with or without any component of competition, in this regard, the research done here will apply this categorization. Second and more concretely, to refer to a group of competitive physical activities which are distinctively modern today and first began to emerge across the Atlantic Isles in the 18th and 19th centuries. Working with their understandings of a figurational approach the following studies were addressed in regards to sociology and the history of sport.

Figurational theory has been utilized successfully in an athletic context by a number of sociologists such as: boxing and society (Sheard, 1999); physical education (Green, 2006); doping and health related issues in sport (Waddington, 2000) as well as, endurance sports such as the triathlon (Atkinson, 2007) and, consequently, has contributed to the understanding of sport and society. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but provides one an understanding of how figurational theory has been applied in a physical fitness context. It is for these reasons that a figurational approach will be utilized for this research.

Sheard (1999) noted that the pugilists of the 18th and 19th centuries would have difficulty recognizing today’s boxing practices as being the same activity, as the prize-fighting of their own time. Since then the rules and hoopla surrounding the sport have became increasingly complex, the companies controlling the sports organizations have became more powerful, and the violence of the sport has been more protective, controlled, and contained that ever before. Using the framework, developed by Dunning (1973) the modern sport of become he concludes, has become more civilized through a number of interrelated processes.
Additionally, Green (2006) acknowledged the significance of the figurational approach and the work of one figurational founding father, Eric Dunning. Green focused attention to the understanding of Physical Education and sport in schools, which was according to him ‘largely undiscovered.’ He explained the sociogenesis of Physical Education teachers from a figurational perspective. The study provided evidence to suggest that the way teachers thought about Physical Education had been shaped by habitus (or their deep-seated predispositions) in particular, towards sport. He argued that while habitus is formed early in life, it is constantly evolving as networks of relationships becomes more complex and compelling. It is in this regard, that these educators are surrounded by other individual and group interdependencies (figurations) such as: teachers, parents, students, coaches, representatives of various sporting lobbies, government, and the media and correspondingly influenced by each.

Continuing the figurational theme, Waddington (2000) examined ‘doping networks’ or in other words, the network of relationships between those involved in supplying, administering, and concealing the use of drugs in sport. His examination revealed that the development of sports medicine indicating a growing involvement of sports physicians in search for record breaking and sport winning performances, especially since the 1950s, has increasingly encouraged them to not only search for improved nutritional routines or training methods, but also in the development and use of performance enhancing supplements, drugs, and techniques.

Lastly, Atkinson (2008) examined how triathletes learn to physical manage, socially perform, and individually reflect upon the endurance sport of a triathlon as a part of the ‘civilizing process.’ Over 62 subjects were gathered and analyzed alongside ethnographic data which was collected over a three year period in Ontario, Canada. He concluded that through the
process of training, competing, and group socializing, triathletes frame the sport from traditional middle-class orientations. In particular, he highlights the importance of how individual and community tastes and preferences for specific types of athleticism are patently influenced by the life histories people carry into sport.

It is evident from the studies presented here that a concern with long-term processes remains central to many sociologists of sport who have been influenced by Elias. One, of course, would be wrong to suggest that figurational theory or process sociology is unique in this respect, for the interest of long-term processes was central to the work of many classical sociologists (Dunning, 2004). However, while figurational theory may not be uniquely concerned with long-term social processes, it is the case that, more than any identifiable theoretical framework within the sociology of sport realm, figurational theory has facilitated a more consistent and everlasting development approach. Any social process, according to a figurational perspective, cannot be meaningfully reduced to the actions of a single individual. The following section will explore the historical process and importance of physical fitness and supplementation.

Male Physical Fitness

Weightlifting and bodybuilding are used interchangeably, in the following review, however to clarify the discrepancy between the two, authors (Lantz, Rhea, & Cornelius, 2002) state that a weightlifter is an individual who trains to lift as much as possible, while a bodybuilder is an individual who is concerned with muscle development and body shape – aesthetically appealing features. Justification to use the terms synonymously stems from an awareness of individuals who weight lift and individuals who body build both having similar
interests in muscle development and body aesthetics correspondingly. All reasons for lifting weights in this regard, need to be considered

Muscle Dysmorphia is an excessive preoccupation with body size and muscularity and is the belief that some part of the body is too small when in fact it is quite large (Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). This disorder was originally referred to in the medical literature as "Reverse Anorexia Nervosa" because of its similarities to certain aspects of anorexia nervosa (AN) (Pope, Katz, & Hudson, 1993) and involves a pathological preoccupation with one’s degree of muscularity, such as continuous push-ups to increase chest size. It can lead to distress, impairment in relationships and work, and is often related to eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder and mood disorders. Men who find themselves caught up in this fixation soon realize their lives can begin spiraling out of control. Occasionally, some men who are dramatically affected by these obsessions find their careers as well as relationships with friends and loved ones jeopardized due to their fascination with their physical appearance (Maida & Armstrong, 2005).

The term “Adonis Complex” has been utilized to describe a variety of body image concerns which have been plaguing young men, throughout the past decade (Pope, et al. 2000). Recently, the “Adonis Complex” has been seen in a number of men who have become fixated on achieving a perfect body. While studying this phenomenon, Pope, Jr., Katz, and Hudson (1993) learned that “body builders may be at greater risk than most men for body dysmorphic symptoms as a whole, and that socio-cultural factors at a particular time may determine whether they are more into the anorexic or reverse anorexic directions” (p. 408).

This pressure to measure up to iconic images reminiscent of actor Vin Diesel has apparently become a nationwide identity for many men, thus, it is important to examine this
cultural phenomenon. The current cultural ideal of a mesomorphic body\(^2\) became desirable by the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century (Park, 1987). During the era, the arrival of celebrity bodybuilders such as Charles Atlas and Arnold Schwarzenegger encouraged ideal body forms which were followed by the development of magazines such as Playgirl, Men’s Health and GQ who also began depicting the ideal male body. Furthermore, advertising during the end of the 20\(^{th}\) century became progressively more and more mesomorphic in the depiction of men’s bodies (Edwards, 1997). In westernized culture, only a limited range of body shapes are acceptable. For example, clothing lines such as Abercrombie and Fitch and Calvin Klein use very muscular, taunt men in their advertising collections while deodorant, shaving, and soap commercials often show fit and muscular men. Recently, the male body continues to be used as a commodity to increase sales. A “cult of male beauty,” according to Lee Monaghan (2002), has been the trend in the 2000’s, where toned, defined, and muscular bodies have become eroticized and objectified. Likewise, Kathy Davis (2002) has proposed that young men’s bodies are now objectified in a similar way to women’s.

Progress in search of what many consider the “perfect male body” reflects the changing dynamics in American society according to Pope, Olivardia, Gruber, and Borowieki (1998). Their research examined the evolving ideals of male body image as seen through action toys. Measurements were taken of several popular action toys that had been manufactured for the past 30 years. Height, waist, chest, and biceps were measured for these toys, and then the

\(^2\) One of the three classic somatotypes or body types created by William Sheldon. Typically speaking, mesomorphs are strong and have an athletic build. They can develop and build [muscle] mass without much difficulty and can usually eat without too much fear of gaining weight.
dimensions were extrapolated to a height of 70 inches. These measurements revealed definite changes in the figures of action toys. More specifically, action figures have become much more muscular over time. While older toys resemble the average male, many current figures exceed the muscularity of even the largest human bodybuilders.

According to Klein “The projection of ideal images is very important in American culture; it is in the subculture and sport of body building that it gets carried to the extreme” (1986, pg. 112). Klein conducted a 4 year study of bodybuilding at its mecca — Southern California. His research revealed a basic set of discrepancies between what the subculture projects as ideal and what actually is taking place. Examinations of these discrepancies were studied to determine which ones result from changes that have taken place in bodybuilding and which were structural to it. Participants in the sport are likely to get involved because of a poor self-image. For instance, subjects revealed to Klein a few significant points, one respondent stated, “I got caught up in the sport just cuz I was thin, and I wanted to put some body weight on, you know, get big.” Another stated, “I was picked on when I was a kid. There was no support from my parents. I was always wrong in my parents' eyes. “

Accordingly, poor body image also results from emotional and physical handicaps. Dyslexia, stuttering, weight problems, and height issues were all documented as factors contributing to low-self worth among the subjects. Considering these indicators of low self-esteem, Klein surmised that mainstream views of bodybuilders as narcissistic, arrogant, or vain obviously missed the point (Klein, 1986).

In order to achieve competition success, bodybuilders may resort to risky behaviors such as using steroids or other performance enhancing or muscle enhancing supplements. Anabolic-androgenic steroids are psychoactive drugs made of synthetic derivatives of
testosterone. Drugs of this nature affect the user’s mood and cognitive functioning. Muscle enhancing supplements include protein drinks, protein bars (amino acids), glutamine and creatine. In 1996, Bahrke, Yesalis, & Wright synthesized the statistics on anabolic-androgenic steroids and reported an estimate of 1 million past or current users of anabolic-androgenic steroids.

Further research by Bahrke, Yesalis, & Brower (1998) indicated that some men who use steroids do so to improve their body image. In particular, bodybuilders are likely to use steroids and illegal synthetic hormones (Brill & Kean, 1994; Kleiner, Bazzarre, & Ainsworth, 1994; Lantz et al., 2002). Additionally, those who engage in competitive weight lifting are more prone to use muscle-enhancing substances than recreational weight lifters (Lantz et al., 2002). Steroids and muscle-enhancing supplements are risky because they may cause rage, aggression, psychosis, or violence (Bahrke et al., 1998).

Cooper et al., (1996) compared anabolic androgenic steroid users to those who do not use anabolic androgenic steroids in a group of bodybuilders. Given that the sample of only 12 for each group is relatively small, the findings should be viewed with caution. Still, users had significantly more muscle mass than non-users and additionally, displayed abnormal personality traits, such as paranoia, histrionics, narcissism, and anti-social and schizoid behavior. Personality traits were similar among both groups before steroid use began, and were significantly different after steroid use among the user group.

According to Pope and colleagues (2000) muscle dysmorphia tends to be connected to whole body dissatisfaction, as opposed to other body dysmorphic disorders which focus on single body parts. This disorder is also closely related to increased exercise. The primary focus is on exercise with diet as a secondary focus, in contrast to eating disorders where the reverse is
true. This disorder is more prevalent in men than women, and is predominantly widespread among bodybuilders (Pope, et. al., 2000).

To maximize muscle emphasis bodybuilders may also engage in dangerous eating and nutrition behaviors. This is known around the sport as “getting cut.” It has been established that in general bodybuilders take natural supplements, pharmaceutical supplements, use anabolic steroids, restrict eating, and follow rigid diet guidelines in order to achieve a “cut” look (Pope,Jr. et al., 1993; Lantz et al., 2002). The drive to create a muscular, sculpted physique has coincided with restrictive eating (Andersen, Cohn, & Holbrook, 2000; Lantz et al., 2002) and anorexia (Garner, Rosen, & Barry, 1998; Pope, Jr. et al., 1993).

In comparison to non-competitive bodybuilders, competitive bodybuilders hold a higher drive for attaining a “cut” physique, utilize more dieting techniques, and adhere to strict guidelines about how to maintain, lose, or gain weight (Oliosi et al., 1999). This research concludes that bodybuilding may be due to a lack of personal self-esteem and advocates future research in the area to address this issue. Risky eating is a process that many competitive male bodybuilders employ to create a desired chiseled appearance. Such eating habits include restrictive dieting, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia nervosa (Boroughs & Thompson, 2002; Carlat & Carmago, 1991).

Compared to runners and non-athletes, bodybuilders desire a larger chest size (Boroughs & Thompson, 2002). Interestingly, some men in this study had a smaller actual chest than other men, but still, most men strived for a similar ideal chest size. Ideal body size discrepancies between men will be discussed ultimately later on in the review. Sociologically speaking, very little is known about the noncompetitive, recreational athletes’ consumptive networks of “legal” supplement (e.g. designer protein powders, creatine products, energy bars,
ephedrine, amino acids, diuretics, and growth hormones such as androstenedione use). In general, social scientists have overlooked the importance of sports supplementation as a legitimate area of inquiry, despite emergent concerns about and research on the popularity of steroids and illegal supplements in exercise cultures (Monaghan, 2002). The next section addresses media persuasion and details its contribution to body image and body satisfaction.

**Media Influence on Body Image**

Many scholars in the field of body image suggest that media influence plays a vital role for the continuation of a virtually unattainable ideal appearance (Mazur, 1986). Similarly, body image has also been examined in relation to media influences of what is considered attractive (Heinberg & Thompson, 1992). Correspondingly, Rudd and Lennon (1994) developed a model of individual responses to aesthetic ideals of human appearance. Results indicated that highly attractive media images based on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) often automatically serve as a comparison target for many individuals (Lennon & Rudd, 1994) despite their inconsistency from what is considered normal or average.

The role of mass media in men’s body image concerns has not received the same amount of empirical attention as women. However, in recent years, social scientists have begun to close this gap by documenting men’s desire to enhance their muscularity and replicate the muscular build prevalent throughout mass media outlets. (e.g., Hatoum & Belle, 2004; Hildebrandt, Langenbucher, & Schlundt, 2004; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003; Pope et al., 2000) The latter strand is also pertinent to the current study and, thus, will be reviewed briefly.
Similar to women who use the “ideal” female figure promoted by mass media as a referent point when assessing their own attractiveness, men may also be susceptible to examining their figures through the lens of media imagery. Probable implications of doing so are the following: heightened drive for muscularity, elevated body dissatisfaction, engagement in various behavioral practices designed to increase muscle mass such as weight training, protein consumption and creatine consumption (Cafri et al. 2005). Embracing these behaviors may result in men potentially developing muscle dysmorphia as illustrated in a 2000 study by Olivardia, Pope, & Hudson.

As has been documented in females (Lorenzen, Grieve, & Thomas, 2004), the cumulative effect of media exposure to idealistic bodies may perhaps lead men to experience a standard normative discontent with their physique. Research (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996) suggests that the muscular mesomorphic body may be the most frequent one appearing in mass media. For example, it was reported that less than 10% of men appearing in unaccompanied advertisements (without the presence of a mesomorphic individual) in six male oriented magazines possessed either ectomorphic\(^3\) or endomorphic\(^4\) bodies. Additionally, the researchers found that advertisements in contemporary society often portray stereotypical images of the male as the aloof, lone cowboy figure.

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\(^3\) One of the three classic somatotypes or body types created by William Sheldon. An ectomorphic body type is centered around the brain and nerves. These people are slim and possibly underweight.

\(^4\) One of the three classic somatotypes or body types created by William Sheldon. An endomorphic body type easily becomes obese.
Expanding on the previous research by Kolbe and Albanese (1996, 1997) by analyzing advertisements from Details, Esquire, GQ and Playboy, an understanding of whether advertisements perpetuated this stereotypical male figure could be gained. McRee and Denham (2005) examined whether males appear to be objectified in the same manner and to the same degree as females within the context of advertisements. Interestingly, in terms of nonverbal communication, findings from the research showed that Playboy featured a noteworthy portion of advertisements where the male models showed no physical contact with the product. Playboy advertisements also contained fewer images of male models making physical contact with one another. Research results suggested that Playboy endorses the image of the aloof, lone cowboy male more than the other magazines do.

In a similar study Lin (1998) implemented a content analysis of 505 commercials from three major television networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) during prime-time hours in the spring of 1993. Results showed that a majority of the male performers appearing in prime-time commercials were muscular (30.4%), while much smaller proportions were classified as skinny (4.4%) or stout (8.7%). More recently research Frederick, Fessler & Haseltion, (2005) on magazine content illustrated a prevalence of muscular male images, particularly in magazines targeting men.

Changes in the ideal body type has also been documented in models from Playgirl magazine (Leit, Pope, & Gray, 2000), and male models in magazine advertisements (Hatoum & Belle, 2004). Leit et al. (2000) documented the increasing attentiveness of muscularity of the male centerfolds in Playgirl. Researchers found that, in some cases, the physiques shown were so large and muscular that they suggested the use of anabolic steroids. Accordingly, Hatoum and Belle (2004) found that men who read more magazines intended exclusively for males (e.g.
Achilles Heel, Esquire, Loaded, and Men’s Fitness) also used more beauty products, took more muscle building supplements, spent more time exercising, were more prone to have a gym membership, more frequently endorsed the positive attributes of muscularity, had a higher drive to appear muscular, and endorsed other attitudes and behaviors related to muscularity and fitness.

It should be noted that media messages directed toward men increasingly endorse an ideal male body that is unattainable for most men to achieve (Hatoum & Belle, 2004). There is a steady increase in media directed towards males such as magazines, television programming, music videos, and film. Thus, it becomes increasingly important to understand how the media affects both male and female body image (Hatoum & Belle, 2004). Whereas women may compare themselves to Jessica Alba, men may long to have a physique similar to Brad Pitt, respectively.

Other research (Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002; Lorenzen et al., 2004) on advertisements supports the Hatoum and Belle’s study. For example, Lorenzen et al. demonstrated that even brief exposure (roughly 10 minutes) to male model advertisements on PowerPoint slides may be related to negative body image evaluation in men. In their 2002 study, Leit, Gray, and Pope examined the effect of media representations of male bodies on men’s attitudes towards their own physical appearance. For the study, 82 chosen undergraduate male subjects were shown slides from popular magazines. The control condition saw either no human images or images not focused on the body. There were ten neutral slides included in the experimental condition along with 20 slides featuring ideal images of male bodies. Participants then took the most widely used measure to access attitudes toward muscularity, the Somatomorphic Matrix (Gruber, Pope, et al., 2001). This experimental evidence allows one to make inferred conclusions
that being exposed to the muscular mesomorphic ideal found in mass media increases body dissatisfaction.

Further research performed by Vartanian, Giant, and Passino (2001) investigated mass media and gender as predictors of satisfaction with body thinness and muscularity. Two-hundred seventy eight females and males participated in the research and women were found to have lower overall scores on average than men on the measure of overall body satisfaction. Most women also reported wanting to be thinner, while men were split between those wanting to be thinner and other individual men wanting to be heavier.

More recently, a significant amount of research has been conducted on the impact of media with respect to promoting “ideals” for physical appearance (Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunne, Gokee-Larose, & Thompson, 2004). Studies published on this subject have primarily focused on characters weight-related status. Research has revealed that electronic media (such as television commercials) and print media (such as magazines) all emphasize what has come to be coined the “thin ideal.” Specifically, the media spreads the message that it is desirable for females to be thin and desirable for males to be in good shape. These attributes are commonly associated with a variety of positive traits such as popularity, likeability, and intelligence (Klein & Shiffman, 2006).

Continuing the trend, in a study of 1018 major television characters which included both males and females, Greenberg and colleagues (2003) concluded that overweight characters were less likely to be considered nice-looking than those who were not overweight. Furthermore, the study stated these same individual actors or actresses were less likely to interact with romantic partners or display physical affection. Additionally, overweight and
underweight males were less likely to commit violent acts, less likely to date, and less likely to engage in sexual relations than those of average weight.

Exposure to these stereotypes perpetuated on television likely replicate and reinforces the association between muscularity in men and characteristics such as physical attraction, desirability, personal self worth and success (Fouts & Burggraf, 1999). Research that was conducted by Lerner and colleagues in early 1970s supports the notion that a muscular male appearance is idealized and is overwhelmingly ascribed personality traits with positive connotations such as attractive, strong and happy. Whereas dissimilarly, obese and skinny body types are assigned personality traits with negative connotations such as lazy, weak, or sneaky (Cafri & Thompson, 2004). Furthermore, evaluations of male figures done by both sexes revealed that having a muscular chest indicated being more assertive, athletic, sexually active, confident, and popular (Thompson and Tantleff, 1992). Just as there are gender distinctions in regard to media representations, there are also differences in other aspects of body image such as body satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-concept.

**Sex Differences in Body Image**

Prior to discussing literature supporting the basis for this research, it is essential to note the extant studies related to sex differences in body image. These differences suggest that body image issues are not significant issues just for men. Early research by Erikson (1968) found that physical attributes play a vital role in identity formation; however, the meaning of these attributes differs between the sexes. According to Erikson, women tend to base identity around attractiveness, or how well they can seize the attention of a mate. Identity for men, however, tends to be shaped around how they act in the world. Essentially, for women body is important
in and of itself, whereas for men, it is not so much their body but how it functions that is important.

Roughly a decade later, Erikson’s claim was examined empirically by Lerner, Knapp, and Orlos (1976). Their research focused exclusively on how body attitudes predicted self-concept in late adolescence. Findings supported Erikson’s assertions by outlining how high perceptions of attractiveness indicated positive self-concept in women. Conversely, the researchers found that high levels of effectiveness indicated positive self-concept in men. Therefore, one can conclude from the research that body image is important for the identity of women in general, but not important to the identity of men. More recently, Brownell (1991) and Rozin and Fallon (1988) compared men and women in terms of self-esteem and body image. Respectively, their research supported the common theme that body image is important for women and not so for men.

It is important to consider the shortcomings of these studies due to the more recent developments in the field of body image (Bergeron, 2008). For instance, the studies of Lerner et al. (1976) and Brownell (1991) focused on individual body parts, such as thighs and chin, and body image elements such as thinness (more likely to be concerns for women). Concerns of body image exclusively for men, such as muscular build and definition, body parts such as biceps, triceps, traps, and shoulders, were not equally evaluated. Therefore, according to Bergeron (2008) the measurement of body image in men is not valid in these studies.

Recently, other studies have implied that the findings of Lerner (1976) and Brownell (1991) are not conclusive. The following studies contradict the aforementioned research and support the conclusion that body image affects men as well as women. Specifically, Betz, Mintz, and Speakmom (1994) examined gender differences in accuracy of self-reported weight. On the one hand, it was reported that women were known to state their weight as lower than it
actually was, significantly more than their male counterparts. On the other hand men reported that their weight was higher than it actually was. It was further reported that average weight women perceived themselves as overweight, whereas average weight men perceived themselves as underweight. These basic findings suggest that there are noteworthy gender differences in the field of body image concerns.

In a comparable study, Drewnoski and Yee (1987) researched body weight satisfaction in both men and women. Their examination concluded that 85% of women wanted to lose weight, in comparison to 40% of men wanting to lose weight, and another 45% of men wanting to gain weight. For all intents and purposes, the same number of men and women expressed dissatisfaction with their weight, but they differed in the nature of their dissatisfaction. Likewise, Mintz and Betz (1986) reported that women were more likely to perceive themselves as being overweight/ slightly overweight and wanted to lose weight, regardless of actual weight. Men, who were dissatisfied with their bodies, showed more of a tendency to perceive themselves as underweight and wanted to gain weight, specifically muscle mass. Findings such as this have also been reported by Abell and Richards (1996).

A later study done by McCauley, Mintz, and Glenn (1988) examined the relationship between self-esteem, body image, and depression. A sample of 176 male and female undergraduate students showed that women expressed greater dissatisfaction than men in every single body confidence category, except the underweight one. However, different patterns emerged with regard to gender comparison, in that men desired to gain weight (average of 2.9 lbs), while women desired weight loss (average of -8.4 lbs). Both genders reported high levels of body satisfaction if they were revealed to have high levels of self-esteem.
This research suggests that body dissatisfaction is an important issue for men, even if women do indeed experience more dissatisfaction.

A 15-item Drive for Muscularity scale (McCreary & Sasse, 2000) was created to research the drive for muscularity in both genders. One-hundred one girl adolescents and 96 boy adolescents participated in the study and the drive for thinness among girls was repeatedly supported by research, and the presence of a desire to increase muscularity was continually exhibited in males.

Another factor to consider is how invested an individual might be in his or her appearance. Cash, Winstead, and Janda (1986) using a subject pool of 2000 respondents found that 93% of women were judged to have a high orientation towards appearance, while only 82% of men demonstrated high appearance orientation. Furthermore, this study reported that men had higher levels of investment while 67% percent of men, in comparison to just 57% of women exhibited high fitness orientation. Overall, these findings suggest gender differences related to body image. The next section will explore the recent research findings exclusively on male body image.

**Men’s Body Image**

Investigation on body image has tended to focus on women because the pressures to obtain and maintain the ideal body shape are perceived to be less pronounced for men than for women (Lorenzen et al., 2004). Therefore, although male body image research pales in comparison to that of females, it is important to not overlook recent developments in the assessment of male body image. Several measures focusing on men’s perceptions have been developed in the past few decades. For example, the Swansea Muscularity Attitudes
Questionnaire (Edwards & Launder, 1999) and the Drive for Muscularity Scale (McCreary & Sasse, 2000) are new instruments created to focus on male body image evaluation.

Cafri and Thompson (2004) present a summary of current methodology and highlight the important criteria for measures in this area. According to the summary, evaluating a muscular appearance is vital to understanding male body image. Additionally, all measures indirectly related to male body appearance, such as exercise, must be somehow related to muscularity. Moreover, they mention several methodological weaknesses in extant measures, and although measures do exist related to male body image, the criterion of many of these measures debatably rules out substantial findings. Obviously, scale development is still an important objective in this area.

Cohene and Pope (2001) reviewed body image research on adolescent boys. In general, boys have been found to have less body image concerns than girls. Still, many boys report body dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction is associated with lowered self-esteem and increased distress. Additionally, they noted that boys tend to be concerned with getting bigger, while girls want to be smaller.

The preferred female body type has gone from the voluptuous endomorphic look of the 1950's and 1960's, to a lankier, slimmer look of today which is very hard, if not impossible to obtain for most women (Grogan, Williams, & Conner, 1996). Men too, have also felt the change of time from a more rugged and tough yet lean and relaxed outdoorsman type, “Marlboro Man” look of the late 1960s, 70s and early 1980's (Kluger, 1996), to a time where washboard abs, silky skin, and massive muscles have emerged as the forerunner in body shape distinction (Jestes, 1999).
Pope, et al., (2000) examined body image perceptions among men in three countries (Austria, France, and the United States). The Somatomorphic Matrix, a computerized test designed by the creators (Gruber, Pope, et al., 2001). Height, weight and body fat were measured for each participant, and then they were shown random selected pictures and asked to chose the body image that they felt was representative of their own body, their ideal body, the average body of a man their age, and the body most preferred by women., was utilized in this study. This test utilizes photographs that represent images on all axes of muscularity and fatness.

The actual measurements of the men were then compared to that of the images they chose. In all three countries, men chose an ideal body with a mean of 28lb (13kg) more muscle than themselves, and males estimated that women preferred a male about 30lbs (14kg) more muscular than themselves. By contrast, the authors conducted a pilot study where they found women preferred an average built male figure, neither too overweight nor too underweight. Therefore, there appears to be a strong misconception among men in what they believe women consider as an attractive male body.

The experimental group displayed a significantly greater discrepancy between their current and ideal fat free mass index (a measure of muscularity), suggesting higher body dissatisfaction in the experimental group. A few limitations of this study should be noted. First, no significant differences were found for body fat. Second, the sample in the research solely consisted of college-aged men, so the researchers were not certain whether they could generalize the findings to men of all ages. For instance, older males may possibly be less susceptible to body image because they base their self worth on features other than outward appearance (Lynch & Zellner, 1999). It should be noted; recent studies (Cafri, Roehrig, &
Thompson, 2004) have found that the test-retest reliabilities for the Somatomorphic Matrix fall under a commonly acceptable level of .70, suggesting that steps need to be taken to improve the psychometric properties of this instrument before results from it can be taken meaningfully.

In a similar experiment (Agilata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004) which seems to support the results of the Leit, Gray, & Pope (2002) study, 158 men were exposed to television advertisements containing either ideal male images or neutral images that were inserted between segments of a television program. The subjects were blocked on dispositional body image factors and attitudes toward appearance variables to investigate moderating effects. Results indicated that participants who were exposed to ideal image advertisements became significantly more depressed and had higher levels of muscle dissatisfaction than those who were exposed to the neutral advertisements. No dispositional factors were noted to demonstrate any effect on the results.

Olivardia et al. (2004) examined the relationship between body image and self-esteem, depression and eating disorders. 154 heterosexual male college students aged 18-30 years were recruited for the research. Subjects completed the Somatomorphic Matrix, Beck Depression Inventory, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Eating Disorders Inventory and the Confidential Behavior Exercise Survey. Results indicated that college aged men displayed substantial levels of body dissatisfaction. Additionally, this research showed that body dissatisfaction was associated with eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression. In conclusion by the authors, muscle belittlement, the perception by men that they are less muscular than they actually are, is an important issue in the body dissatisfaction of men.
Today there is an evident male preoccupation with physical fitness founded on the belief that modern men have fallen into a beauty trap, comparable to the beauty myth women have traditionally experienced, which was so long to be assumed the special burden of only women (Luciano, 2001). In *Looking Good: Male Body Image in America*, author Lynne Luciano affirms that a man will risk his actual health for the appearance of health, which in this cultural moment is largely intertwined with a youthful appearance and a chiseled physique.

**Summary**

Taken as a whole, the research on sex differences in body image tends to suggest that there are distinct differences between men and women. Men tend to have a more positive evaluation of their bodies in comparison to women. The presence of negative body image has been shown consistently for women, resulting in a tendency to desire a thinner shape. The review of men and body image, however, has been mixed.

For the past several decades’ body image has been an increasingly researched and debated area. Studies in the area examine a number of aspects of an individual's feelings about his or her physical self, such as their overall satisfaction with their body, or their opinions on various body parts (Abell & Richards, 1996). It is a combination of these things, in addition to how the person envisions others as seeing his or herself, which leads to the development of his or her body image. This image will have an enormous effect on the life of an individual ranging from self-esteem, personal happiness, and health problems (Jestes, 1999).

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5 A term coined by Naomi Wolf in 1991, it suggests that women in Western culture are focused on being as thin as possible, often to the point of endangering their health.
Most findings do suggest the presence of body image anxieties in men and contest the earlier literature that suggested otherwise. Research consistently shows that when significant body dissatisfaction is found for men, they desire to gain weight or increase muscul arity (Erikson, 1968; Lerner, Knapp, and Orlos, 1976; Brownell, 1991; and Rozin & Fallon; 1988). This difference between men and women appears to be increasing at a disturbing rate, according to Feingold and Mazzella (1998) who conducted a meta-analysis over the past 50 years of body image.

Another crucial stride in the development of a stronger knowledge of male body image is to establish sound measures that assess body image issues relevant to strictly men. Currently, the body image literature is dominated by measures specifically designed for female population (Cohane & Pope, 2001) such as the drive for thinness scale (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Tailored measures developed for the concerns of females, reflect theoretical models of female body image. Conversely, there is a noteworthy lack of male body image measures, indicating few measures exist designed upon the conceptual models of male body image. Additionally, few extant measures have been derived empirically from the study of males. This indicates past studies have often used measures designed for women, with no or minimal modifications for male subjects (Cafri & Thompson, 2004). Despite the research signifying key differences in the nature of body image in men and women, comparatively little sociological exploration has focused on the distinctive factors vital to understanding male body image.

This deficiency in male body image literature is fascinating when you consider such statistics detailing men spending on an average, 90.8 days a year (over 2000 hours) in the gym (Neimark, 2008). That's nine days a year more than women. The cultural emphasis on a specific
male body has men in the gym more so than ever before. Consequently, I believe there is a significant gap in the literature and that the next important step is to examine what specifically is motivating males to work out at such incredible rates. In other words, is having a negative body imaged tied to specific workout motivations? What keeps a male motivated and dedicated when working out? Certain extrinsic trigger exist keeping men in the gym, but is it safe to argue the common perception that surrounds a work out enthusiast is just one in search of a healthy lifestyle? If not, what inspires these men to lift weights and to participate in cardiovascular exercise? At the moment, these are largely unanswered and unexplored questions.

Overall, most research has focused on body image as simply a single dimension – the evaluative aspect. Today most researchers are focusing more on the multidimensionality of body image, including such as aspects as appearance investment, physical fitness and muscularity (Tsukada, 2003). Taken in their entirety, these various studies suggest common themes. First of all, body image issues are real concerns for men. Secondly, societal pressure, for instance media outlets, may be increasing the body image consciousness for men. To combat this body image anxiety many men are taking performance enhancing supplements. And lastly, muscularity is an aspect of body image that is exclusively central to men. As a result, this study seeks to examine body image and its practical implications in regards to the goals and motivations of non-intercollegiate participating, college-aged males to take part in regular weight lifting and cardiovascular exercise. By utilizing a figurational approach, the web of interdependencies influencing the men in this research will be examined.
Chapter 4: Methodology

In order to investigate the previously articulated research questions, in-depth face-to-face interviews were carried out. Van Manen (1990) states that the interview “may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of human phenomenon” (66). In this regard, the interviews for this research focused on collected narrative resources in order to understand the relationship between age, body image, and workout inspirations.

Through the interviews, data for five major questions was collected: 1) how the interviewees felt about their current physical condition and body shape 2) in terms of body commodification, what was their ideal physique; 3) how and why did they believe these feelings developed over time; 4) how they stayed motivated while working out, and 5) why they believe most men their age work out. These interview questions were created in order to acquire rich data to further investigate these five major questions.

Research Population

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995) interviewees must clearly experience the phenomena that the researcher wants to investigate. To explore how college-aged males engaged in physical fitness activities, the research population was university students from a large Midwestern university, 18-25 years in age, who do not participate on a collegiate athletic team.

I focused on males in their college years, partly because of my experience with men in other gym settings across the region. With the increasing population of males working out (Neimark, 2008) I had a readily available pool of subjects to choose from. The research focused
exclusively on men to fill a void in the male body image literature. Given the potential theoretical implications of a figurational approach to male college-aged, physical fitness this process was employed.

**Research Site**

I chose Ohio University as a tactical research site. This institution of higher learning is an efficient site because of the large number of men available who could potentially fit my research selection criteria.

**Sampling**

After I acquired permission from the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University, I attempted to contact the desired participants, by posting advertisements (SEE APPENDIX A) as recruitment tools. These advertisements were placed in public places, primarily in fitness centers, across the Ohio University campus. My contact information was provided on all fliers and the subjects were able to contact me either via telephone or email if they wished to participate in the project. The target criterion was simple and consisted of: 1) Male students, 2) who are 18 to 25 years old, 3) who engage in physical fitness routines on a regular basis, and 4) do not belong to university sports teams. Upon receiving contact from a potential subject, I then determined whether the subject met the criteria set forth required for participation.

I have clear reasons for this categorization. There are perhaps age differences in the field of male body image concerns, which have not been adequately examined. Establishing a specific age frame to conduct research is an essential step in the direction of understanding the modern male body image literature. The first category, male students, is the population where
insufficient body image analysis has been conducted. The second group, 18 to 25 years old, represent the target population defined as young, college-aged men. The third category, individuals who participate in physical fitness activities will be examined thoroughly to determine each individual’s fitness purpose. The final condition to participate, not belonging to a university sports team, ensures that no individual would be influenced to work out solely for sports performance. This condition was an attempt to establish a theme beyond athletic competition as a workout motivator.

Additionally, because of my experience in other gym cultures and the fact I was a male, college student, like my target population, I felt I could gain the trust of potential subjects easier than an outsider to the group.

After the first contacts were established I performed snowball sampling in order to gather more interviewees. Although I initially tried to adopt all interviewees through posted fliers and the snowball sampling process, due to time constraints, I asked students, friends, and colleagues to introduce other interviewees. As a result, three potential participants contacted me which in turn, resulted in a sufficient sample. Overall, sixteen men contacted me and all the sixteen contacts met the criteria to be included for the research. It should be noted that the men interviewed ranged in age from 18-23 (a mean of 19), a majority were not involved in a romantic relationship (75%) and all were currently enrolled at Ohio University.

**Interviews**

From March, 9 to April 15th, 2009 16 interviews were conducted; each session lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. According to the requirement of the university, I prepared an informed consent form (SEE APPENDIX B) and asked each interviewee to read it before the
interview began. Most were not apprehensive about the interview, but some were a bit surprised at the seriousness of the research. Each time, I explained that the interview was private and confidential, and that the requirement for informed consent is mandated by the academy.

I conducted my interviews primarily in a conference room at the University’s Sociology department. However, in accordance with his request, I interviewed one male at my house. With the consent of the participants all interviews were recorded and field notes were taken both during and after the interviews. These notes and taped interviews were then transcribed onto computer files as I conceptually analyzed the texts. All the participants were interviewed once and no one was shown the transcripts of the interview sessions. There were no interruptions during the interviews, aside from the occasional chatting outside the conference room door.

As set forth by Gubrium & Holstein, (1997) I adopted a style of active interviewing with the men in order to examine the social meaning of physical fitness for them. In line with the active interview style, attention was given to the use of specific rhetoric techniques. This included open-ending questioning to tap into a range of individuals’ narrative resources or basically their ways of recognizing and describing personal experiences based on the statuses and associated roles they possess (Gubrium & Holstein). To solicit responses, I highlighted my own insider status as a male-workout enthusiast in order to encourage participation and more in-depth conversation in interviews.
Introduction of the Interviewees

The following table shows summaries of the interviewees. For the protection of privacy, I used personal identification numbers instead of actual names of interviewees. I used identification numbers from 1-1 to 1-16 in order to express the 16 men I interviewed. I then assigned each number a pseudonym. The description of each interviewee written after the tables, will further clarify characters of the interviewees.

Table 1: Male Physical Fitness Enthusiasts, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1 “Leroy”</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 “Alan”</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 “Jake”</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 “George”</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 “Earl”</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6 “Jason”</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-7 “Wilson”</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-8 “Drake”</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9 “Tommy”</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 “Christian”</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-11 “Frank”</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-12 “Seth”</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-13 “Jonathon”</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-14 “Ben”</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15 “Mark”</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-16 “Kent”</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All taped interviews were numbered (1-16) with no other identifying information and stored in a locked file on the computer of the researcher, during the entire duration of this research. In order to ensure confidentiality, at no time were the real names of the participants ever used in the interviews or ever associated with the respective number that was used to identify each specific interview. I transcribed all contents of each interview verbatim and analyzed them from March 21, 2009 to April 30th, 2009. According to analytic coding, I extracted several important issues from the contents of my interviews.

To begin the analysis process, I first transcribed all of the interviews, and then analytically coded themes. I initially wrote down small memos beside each sentence. Afterward, I read the interviews again by focusing on analytic memos. As a result, I found similar experiences and statements among my interviewees. I categorized similar experiences and statements, and created three important themes for the purpose of this thesis project.

Although a number of themes emerged through analytic coding, I primarily focused on three themes. They are: 1) role of figurations; 2) sociogenesis or the role of social influence; and 3) psychogenesis and more specifically the development of personality structures motivating men to engage in physical fitness. Although all themes are important and are often interrelated, during analysis the figurations theme arose from the data as being the primary issue in understanding the process of being motivated to partake in physical fitness activities.
Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter is a topical analysis of the dialogue and motivational experiences of 16 men who work out regularly. It is an attempt to better understand the role of family, friends, neighbors, media, and society in the daily lives of these men during periods of maturity and growth. From transcribing interviews, while analyzing and working with their narratives, dominant themes began to emerge, ones that were consistent among the majority of the 16 accounts. These men told stories of their fitness routines, how these fitness routines developed, why they developed, and why they continue to lift weights and/or perform cardiovascular exercise. Their stories will not only describe how others motivated them into fitness routines, but also how their community and a larger society participated in said inspirations.

Here three distinct components of college-aged men’s experiences will be discussed in order to highlight the web of motivations that encourage men to work out. First, I will examine the role of individual and group interdependencies in an attempt to better understand its efficacy as a product of the larger social figurations. Second, I will consider “civilizing processes,” which consists of an exposition of sociogenesis, often indicated by the men as a social influence in their University setting. And third, I will look at the role of psychogenesis and, more specifically, the development of personality structures to better understand their part in motivating men to engage in physical fitness.

Figurations

Norbert Elias introduced the concept of ‘figuration’ in order to place ‘the problem of human interdependencies into the very heart of sociological theory’ (1978, p. 134) and to transcend an essentially mistaken opposition between ‘individual’ and ‘society.’ While this
exploratory study is the first known attempt to look at the role of figurations impacting college-aged men who work out, the limited literature that does exist on male body image consistently points to societal pressures increasing body image consciousness and that muscularity is a feature of body image that is central to men.

Derived from the term configuration and used occasionally in Elias’s *The Civilizing Process* text the term *figuration* is intended to suggest a number of significant insights. First, that human beings are interdependent, and can only be understood as such. In other words, their lives develop in, and are significantly shaped by the social figurations they form with each other. Second, that these figurations are constantly in flux and changing, some changes profound while others, temporary. And lastly, that dynamics alone are present in the processes of each figuration – dynamics in which individual motives and intentions play a part but which cannot possibly be reduced to individual motives and intentions alone. The dynamics also affects the inner person, changing them in various ways. Thus, the boundary between individual and society becomes hazier. Rather than connecting people with established and stable characteristics, the figuration provides the person with those characteristics.

A complex web of social influence based on both individual and group interdependencies was described by the men in this study. These figurations included, but were not limited to the family, peers, the school and also the media. For the purpose of illustrating a concise scope, only these four figurational interdependencies will be analyzed comprehensively.

*Family*

Conceptually speaking, given that the family is regarded as the primary and debatably, the most important agent of socialization, especially for children, the role of relatives was
significant in this research. Elias (1991, 1994) suggested that the family is the primary social group where children learn inner control, foresight and mutual recognition. Atkinson (2003) proposes that “parents and siblings are the chief role models for any young person who learns how to move limbs, protect the body, and understand the social benefit of exhibiting inner restraint through corporeal performance” (245). With instruction at home, a child learns to use the body in everyday life. Throughout the research, the power of family in physical fitness socialization among the male students was evident. For example Jason, an 18 year old freshman, discussed a noticeable difference between his prior interests in working out, to his new found interest, proceeding his family moving due to his father’s work promotion. When asked how important he felt their influence was, a junior Jason explains “My family played a huge role in getting me started.” Other participants also discussed the significance of familial influence.

Drake, a senior, spoke of the noticeable influence of his brother in his search of what he believed to be the ideal body,

“It was a long time ago, actually when I got started working out. I went to visit my brother, he lives in San Diego. Well, yeah anyway, I was there and my brother had just got on this huge workout kick. So basically, I saw all the progress he had made and it made me want to make the same, I guess...He was like all cut-up and tone and just ripped I guess, and that is the body I wanted and so I asked him how he did it.”

Drake also acknowledged noticing differences in his dietary regimen after returning from California that he tied to the influence of his brothers. Additionally, he used his physical
appearance as a cornerstone of body image judgment; which also provides a tangible way to determine his muscularity. He says,

“Diet is huge; I always check my diet when I see myself gaining weight or whatever. Without the proper diet plan by brother gave me I don’t think I’d get results...I mean, not results I want to get.”

Twenty year old Leroy, a muscular guy who boxed recreationally, reflected on the beginnings of his body transformation. A once skinny kid, he claims, saw tremendous improvements in his strength from the help of his father:

“My Dad, my Dad was huge on why I was motivated to lift weights. I used to be so skinny, like... you have no idea, like just skinny. And well, I was never really into football or anything and my Dad was also pretty big, like muscular and stuff...Well, I umm I remember the day I decided I wanted to just change, just change who I was and I guess just change how I looked. So, yeah, he was the person I went to first... He got me on a diet, and creatine and some protein and I guess that is it. Then, he showed how to lift and how to lift properly, so I am glad of all that.”

In these examples, which are representative of other men’s experiences, one can see that family influence is evident in getting men initially interested in physical fitness, nutrition and lifting
weights. According to my sociological exploration of male physical fitness at Ohio University, the experiences noted here indicate the parents and siblings provide a set of influences on the enthusiast’s physical fitness habits.

While one must consider the family’s role in socialization, it is important to remember, however, that these men are not ideologically neutral and thus, other figurations contribute to the body commodification process. Therefore, although the family was mentioned as an indicator of work out motivation, and 25% (4 of 16) mentioned this important component, other interviewees mentioned the importance of other figurational interdependencies.

**School**

In school we typically move beyond the more sheltered confines of our family and learn to become members of larger social groups to which we belong. Like the family, schools have an explicit mandate to socialize individuals, especially in the United States into the norms and values of our culture. The school is fundamentally responsible for socializing young people in particular skills and societal values. In addition, schools open doors for us as individuals. Through the school we are exposed to new ways of thinking and acting that allow us to make new choices about our future. Typically this involves training for new careers, exposure to new cultures, ideas, practices and possibilities; however, it can most certainly also include nutrition, physical fitness and weight training. The school, therefore, is included in the web of social figuration influence impacted these men.

In addition, one of the ways schools socialize children is through what Phillip Jackson (1968) called the hidden curriculum. Examples of the hidden curriculum might include an emphasis on: timed and formal instruction, an arranged schedule to accommodate an agrarian
society; encouraging students to sit up straight and to remain quiet; students standing in line silently; students raising their hands to be called upon; the continuous competition for grades, and so on. Could the hidden curriculum also include emphasis on how to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle? Certainly, and several of the male students participating in this research mentioned feeling increasingly influenced to eat healthy and to stay in good shape by the personal education system.

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) observed that schools produced teachable students who became manageable workers. To them, schools have less to do with transmitting academic content than with socializing students into the appropriate attitudes and behaviors of the workplace. The students who internalize the skills of the workplace best are rewarded with opportunities, while others are left behind. It could be argued for the sake of the current research, that the male interviewees who internalized any nutritional teachings of the school are rewarded with a healthier lifestyle.

When asked where he learned the foundations of his diet, 19-year old Alan replied:

“Umm, well awhile back I guess I always remember that Food Guide Pyramid thing that was taught to us in school, like in junior high or whatever. That was probably like, I guess, the first time I heard about diet guidelines and stuff like that. Umm, so I guess that is where I first remember hearing about a proper diet. “

While Alan should be applauded for following a suitable diet in middle school, it should be noted, however, that the Food Guide Pyramid Alan he was utilizing before 2005 was
“inaccurate” and “flawed” (Disabled World, 2007). Nevertheless, on the one hand Alan and other male students, like freshman Jake, were encouraged to follow a healthy diet because of the Food Guide Pyramid information provided by their respective schools. However, on the other hand, while the school attempted to encourage Jake to eat healthy at an early age, the social institution did not achieve the same success as it did with Jake. He was less encouraging of this nutritional guideline, but still recognized its existence in his school. He said:

“The first time I ever remember being encouraged to follow a healthy diet was...um, in elementary school I guess. *(Laughs)* I remember the Food Pyramid pamphlet they passed out to everyone and told us to give to our parents. I never followed it, and now I don’t think it is very accurate, at least that is what I heard...No, I don’t use it.”

The influence of the school was also discussed by Frank, a college senior, who developed a fresh hobby after the opening of a new fitness center at his high school:

“My school got me going. I didn’t play sports like anything just lifted weights for the look. But yeah, my school got a new weight room my freshmen year in high school and like everyone started going after that... Yeah, I think a lot of the reason people went was because it was new and everyone was doing it. My buddies and I lifted weights every day after school like for two hours each time.”
Frank explained that he feels that due to his high school weight room development, it contributed to not only his personal fitness regimen, but also to that of many other students with whom he attended school.

Similarly, George, a college freshman, suggested being influenced in high school with regard to fitness. However, his description had less to do with proper nutrition, but more in regards to the weight-lifting aspect of physical fitness. He explained that during his high school tenure, the construction of a weight room on his high school campus brought many new faces to engage in weight training activities, he stated:

“The school, my school played a role in getting my friends to work out. Not so much me though, I already did it. But I remember a bunch more people working out and crap after the school built a new weight room. Like, all kinds of people started to work out and like even girls...I didn’t like it, no (laughs) not at all. I had to wait for machines and crap that I didn’t have to before because there were just so many people in the gym working out like every day...Yeah, I guess my best friends and I were pretty pissed. (laughs) “

In this section, one has seen how the research participants were impacted by the school in their motivation to become involved in a healthier lifestyle. While some men were encouraged to employ dieting strategies as early as elementary school, others indicated being encouraged to begin lifting weights primarily because of their educational institution. The men interviewed mentioned “the school” as a physical fitness figurational influence in 31.25% (5 of
of the discussions I held. As a result of school influence focusing on physical fitness, almost half of the male students interviewed in the study felt at least some pressure to eat healthy or lift weights. The next section will explore the peer influence on weight training, how these motivations are developed, and the resulting advantages of having a close association with friends who encourage health and physical fitness.

Peers

While families and schools do shape us, if you ask any 18-year old who matters most in his or her life, the likely answer will be “friends.” As children grow older, inevitably the family becomes less important in social development and the peer group begins to take over. The relationships with an array of peers play an ongoing in the creation of personal preferences for physical fitness practices. Continuing the web of interdependencies paradigm, peer figurations influenced participants in the research similarly to the family and the school.

Ten of 16 individuals in the current research stated they worked out with a friend currently and that said friends play an important role in keeping them motivated. Earl is vociferous in his praise of such practices. He believes that a strong friend nucleus is essential to keeping him interested in working out on those days he is feeling lethargic.

“My two friends and I go everyday pretty much... Yeah; it really does help to have friends to get you to work out... Well, like sometimes I get lazy or I just don’t feel like going and they encourage me to go and I do, so that is nice. There are also times that I got them to go as well and so well it was good to
have kinda like a buddy system for those reasons. We kept each
other in check and motivated. It helps to have a spotter, you
know, and stuff like that as well. “

Another participant echoed Earl’s assertion. Jake believed that encouraging words
offered by his friends helped keep him motivated.

“I go with a friend, mostly just like my best friend, but
sometimes in like groups of three, but never anymore than
three, that would be too many people. So when I struggle to
stay motivated by friends keep me motivated, like by saying
stuff like “C’mon Spring Break is coming up and you have to get
in shape” and other things like that. We do it for each other,
and when we are there we try to lift more than each other, and
I think, that um helps like to keep you working hard and not just
going to go, like just goin and not lifting but chatting.”

Mark, an 18 year old freshman, who preferred to run over lifting weights, spoke of the benefits
of having a running partner.

“My friend Cory and I run...Yeah, we expect each other to be
there, umm, you know, frankly speaking if he wasn’t there, uh
well I probably wouldn’t run as much. He is a very motivated
person, he helps me a lot, umm he helps everyone...Like
sometimes, uh we will run 5 or 6 miles in groups of people, and
like he has a facebook page for people interested in running on
campus. So, umm yeah without him I would not be in good
shape, I doubt...well in not as good of shape. “

All participants who indicated they ran or lifted weights with a partner agreed that this practice
was beneficial. These benefits ranged from direct consequences like having a spotter available
while lifting heavy weights to indirect ones like being positively encouraged to be physically
active.

When asked who or what initially encouraged them to lift weights seven of sixteen
(43.75%) interviewees mentioned a peer. Twenty-one year old Wilson alludes to the presence of
a friend in his hometown that motivated him,

“My neighbor got me interested...Yeah, he had asked me to go
one day and I was bored so I did, and I liked it, I guess. Well sort
of, then it was just something to do, to pass the time.”

Tommy, a freshman, offered a more moving account illustrating how his weight lifting
behaviors were largely impacted because of his friends. In an instance that can most definitely
be described as group conformity, he recalls:

“It was like my senior year, yeah it was last year and all my
friends got on this huge workout kick. Like all of em’... It...It just
sort of happened. Before I knew it I was lifting weights every
day after school with them. I wanted to fit in and you know, I
guess have something to do... And now thinking about, this
didn’t happen until my senior year...And I guess I kind of have stuck with it ever since.”

Christian, a sophomore, however, expresses his dissatisfaction with his peer influence. Noting the constant miscommunication he experienced when dealing with this friend, he says:

“My friend Stew I guess got me going, or interested... Well, he started me on it and all that, and then like he just stopped going or he would say he would give me a ride and never come or like we would go and he would just not lift, like he would just try and chat with me...No, I wasn’t too happy with that at all, so I didn’t lift with him much because I just got umm, aggravated and it put me in bad mood, (Laughs)...Now, yeah I just go by myself and I keep myself motivated, so yeah it works for me.”

Christian was an exception within the research. Others all pointed to the benefits of having a solid peer network. Drake for instance felt he and his friends Robby and Justin all enjoyed an open channel of communication with their weight lifting routines, supplement research, and dieting habits. Drake explains that his entire fitness regimen, which he learned from his brother, was being utilized by his roommates/friends.

“Well, you know my brother told me what do and so I guess I motivated my friends to do the same (laughs)... Actually, when they started to see the results I was getting and also some
comments I was getting...Comments from girls and stuff, like they became interested and like started asking me questions about how I do this and what I eat and other stuff like that”

When asked if he had learned anything from his friendships with his roommates, he continued, “Yeah, I have learned stuff from them as well, like we all live together, so well that helps, a lot. Like my roommate, Robby also reads bodybuilding.com and gets information from there about supplements and work outs to try. Oh, and sometimes we go to crossfit.com, I don’t know if you have heard about it...Yeah, so they have this Workout of the Day (WOD) and sometimes we do that to change things up a bit.”

There were also some participants, like George, who believed his friend used other male bodies as a tool to measure his own body satisfaction, “One of my friends, he is in the air force and uh, the guy I started working out with. He is always like trying to look at how other dudes are built and so like, he is now trying to like take creatine stuff, trying to get like bigger. (laughs)”

Nevertheless, no matter how the male participants in the study utilized their respective peer groups to assist in the physical fitness process, in general, the participants represented shared attitudes indicating peer influence on weight lifting and physical fitness. Specifically,
friends may be figurations responsible for initiating a male enthusiast into a specific form of body commodification. Likewise, a person’s first exposure to physical fitness may come from interaction with peers who engage in such behaviors themselves.

In brief, as friendship networks both inside and outside the physical fitness figuration change throughout life, a male’s physical fitness habitus becomes a tapestry of previous and current interaction with social networks. For documentation, over half of the participants indicated some type of peer persuasion. Others discussed the co-existence of traditional influences such as their friendship network, whereas others discussed contemporary influences like crossfit.com. In the next section mass media influence will be examined as the final element in the complex web of figurational interdependencies.

**Media**

In the past 80 years or so, media innovations – radio, motion pictures, digital music, television, magazines, and the Internet – have become important agents of socialization. One national survey indicates that 68% of United States children have a television in their bedroom, and nearly half of all youth ages (ages 8-18) use the Internet every day (Rideout et al. 2005). College students are spending more and more time of their time interacting with technology, which has an inevitable impact on our interactions. Through email, cell phones, texting and instant messaging students can maintain close, almost constant, connections with family and friends. Additionally, social networking websites, like Facebook and Myspace, can establish and extend networks with “friends” both known and unknown (Witt, 2008).

The findings of this study suggest that the commitment to working out is occasionally in conflict with technology. A few of the participants indicated struggling to stick to a physical
fitness routine because of media distractions. When asked about the problems he faced staying motivated to workout, freshman Ben responded,

“Having the internet, and like Facebook really hurts me sometimes. At my dorm sometimes I just sit there for hours, just doing nothing and before I know it, like the day is almost over...Sometimes I play video games with people on my floor as well and that is another huge distraction...I’d say the internet is the biggest distraction for me, yeah, like I said (laughs) I spend a lot of time on there, like more than I should. A lot of other people do it too, so I don’t feel as bad. (Laughs)”

Conversely, Mark spoke of how he used media such as the social networking site, Facebook, to encourage other students to get physically fit,

“Yeah, well actually we have this page on Facebook, and it is for all students on campus who like to run...We run every weekend...Like all long runs, and then we do explorations and just stuff like that...It is useful because it gives me something to do and it is fun getting people to join my group. And I guess it also keeps me motivated to work out, since you know I have to assemble these running meetings each weekend.”
Another student indicated that text messaging was used to contact his work out partner. As nineteen year old Seth stated, he would text his buddy after his class to meet him at the recreational center, “I would just text my friend Dan whenever I left my 1 o’clock class and I would meet him at the library and we would just walk over to lift together.” These examples suggest that technology was used as a group gathering tool, as well as a quick communication device between physical fitness participants.

Other methods of technology were utilized by male students in the current research. Many expressed that they used iPod’s or mp3 players while they were working out. Amazingly, all but one student who did not work out with a peer said they utilized a digital music device while lifting weights or running. When asked to explain how he stays motivated to finish his workout after he was already at the gym, George responded,

“I just use music; I have a playlist on my iPod that is for working out. So, umm I just turn it on and I guess get in the zone you could say and like knock out all distractions and just get focused...Yeah, that is the reason I don’t lift with a partner because I would rather just have music in my ear...I don’t know I just concentrate better.”

Voicing similar remarks about iPod use while lifting, Frank stated,

“I never work out with a friend or chat while I’m workin’ out. I get in and get out. I just put my head phones on, turn up my iPod and get going...Yes, the iPod helps me focus. I don’t know how I could work out without it. It is on it is last legs, laughs, I
don’t know how long it (his iPod) will hold up...I don’t go anywhere without it.”

When asked if they read any magazines such as *Men’s Health* or *Men’s Fitness*, surprisingly, the majority (13 of 16) of the interviewees said they never have or did not currently. As was noted previously, however, some students (5 of 16) indicated the use of online forums such as crossfit.com to collect weight lifting information. These responses of the male workout enthusiasts demonstrate that media is an important figuralational interdependency, but some forms (iPod or Internet) are more commonly used than others (magazines). Nevertheless, interviewees were still influenced to work out because of media pressure.

When asked if the individual males were inspired to have a specific body shape after looking at muscular male images on the internet, in commercials, or in magazines most responded with denial (12 of 16). Therefore, only 25% of the men studied indicated being encouraged to have a muscular physique due to media images. One example was from Drake, who noted enthusiastically the presence of a shirtless image of Brad Pitt, in the first drawer of his night stand,

“Actually, *(laughs)* I have a picture of a celebrity in my night stand drawer...It is Brad Pitt...I keep it in there for a motivational tool. When I wake up in the morning and get ready, his pic is in my sock drawer, so when I’m dressing I can look at it and it keeps me motivated and uh, I don’t know. It is just a little thing I do to help.”
Along similar lines of thought, Tommy responded,

“To be honest, I have picture of a really ripped guy in the freezer, and that is only because my roommate loves ice cream, so if I get tempted or anything, I’ll open the door and I’ll see the pic and not want to eat it anymore.”

Further, a sophomore named Kent expressed that he frequently sees “buff” men in television commercials,

“I see big, buff guys in TV ads a lot...Uh, It doesn’t influence me, so no I don’t really pay attention to their looks, I figure those are mostly airbrushed anyways.”

When asked why he felt men used media images to achieve an ideal body, Alan stated,

“Um, I think it is just to achieve that like, ultimate physical standard. And uh, and then everybody seems to be into sports so everybody wants to be like your favorite athlete. Look like them, be big. Um, just be more physical.”
Contrary to previous research, the evidence from the men who did admit to being inspired by muscular media body images indicates no precursor of body dissatisfaction. Previous research has suggested otherwise, however.

As was noted in Chapter 3, prior research tells us that media imagery may be responsible for heightened drive for muscularity, elevated body dissatisfaction, engagement in activities design to increase muscle mass (Cafri et al. 2005) and potential muscle dysmophia (Olivardia, Pope & Hudson). However, according to this investigation it is tempting to hypothesize that the social nature of the situation has a positive effect on body satisfaction. One conceivable explanation for this positive body satisfaction phenomenon is that the internalization of exaggerated body types represented by distant media images might be unrealistic. Peers, on the other hand, provide a more realistic and immediate comparison group. In other words, using an impractical media image as a body shape goal may indeed increase your drive for muscularity, however, if you do achieve that level of ideal physique; certainly you will feel positively about your body, especially in comparison toward your peer group.

Continuing the notion, when asked how the interviewees felt about their current body shape, only two voiced total displeasure. These two, although unhappy with their current physical condition, still were optimistic and cheerful when asked the question. Jonathon for instance replied,

“I feel...I don’t know um... Well I want to get bigger, you know? I like to run and I’m in great shape and all that, but um, just add some muscle mass but I guess I am ok with myself now.”
Kent was a little less confident, but still however, managed a cheerful outlook when asked the same question. He said,

“\textit{I mean, look at me (laughs) I could lose some weight, but it yeah, it is hard sometimes, but I try and yeah...that is what everyone wants, big arms, the chest (motioning towards his chest), and like tight abs, so um it takes time.}”

Advancing the question forward, to the other subjects, revealed a more satisfied body image. Fourteen of sixteen stated they were content with their body shape. Two of the sixteen stated being self-assuredly satisfied with their shape and indicated no inhibition to advance their body shape further. In regards to those two, it can be safe to argue that they were in the maintenance stage of their personal fitness plan. Other interviewees (10 of 16) stated being happy with their body; however, this “happiness” was guarded. To explain, the ten subjects here all indicated pleasure with their current body shape, but all ten said in way or another, that they still had some “work to do.” For instance, Seth responded,

“\textit{Yeah, I am pretty content I guess, I mean I am not exactly where I need or I guess I think I should be, but for me, I am in good shape...Yes, I would say I am satisfied with my body.”}

Along similar lines, Wilson added,

“\textit{Well yeah, you know, I guess I am... I mean I have came a long way since I started college like here, because I used to just go to school in my hometown and was pretty damn lazy, but like I}
said, once um, I came here things changed… Yeah, pretty satisfied, I keep up on it, I don’t know, there is always a little work to do I guess.”

Unfortunately, given the abstract nature of responses, it may be hard to conclude how satisfied or unsatisfied the participants were. As suggested earlier, the majority of the men in the study (14 of 16) expressed positive statements regarding their current body shape. As it turns out, only two subjects appeared to be harmed by images of perfect male physiques, and unsatisfied with their current physical condition and/or body shape.

**Sociogenesis**

To view the college physical fitness students merely in the context of their immediate circumstances would be to make a significant error. The thoughts, as well the students work out behaviors, tended to reveal a representation of their past, as well as present experiences. As was noted, the figurations of which the men have been, and continue to be, a part have long-term significance for their identities and habituses.

Civilizing processes, in this sense, are encouraging body commodification, body satisfaction, and aesthetic refinement amongst men in the current research contingent upon changes in social class, behaviors, and location. For instance, Jason offered an account of how after his father received a promotion his entire family purchased a health club membership:

“I started to go workout when I was about 15 or so. Yeah, it was my freshmen year in high school and my dad got a promotion and we had to move. So the family bought a gym membership
at Cardinal Fitness... And... umm, it was then my mom really got into getting in shape too... We didn’t have any health club type membership before and I didn’t play sports in high school so yeah, umm that was the first time I went to the gym and lift weights.”

Drake enthusiastically mentioned, how large of an impact visiting his brother in San Diego, California had on his body image,

“When I was there, like everyone was in awesome shape, and I don’t know I guess it just somewhat made me feel like I was out of shape. Fitness was so huge out there and the weather was nice and everybody had their shirts off and looked good. And so yeah, I wanted to look good as well.”

Mark highlights the importance of location in regards to weight training. He spoke of how his hometown community aimed to promote physical fitness by increasing fitness center locations for individuals of both genders:

“My town had a huge increase in people wanting to get in shape. Fitness clubs, and walking class, you know stuff like that.... Fliers were posted around town and places like public health centers came up, umm, I guess was when I was a junior in high school And, it was kind of cool in way, you know. Because I was big on cross-country a lot of people started asking me questions about running.”
Another essential aspect of civilizing processes is the impact history has on individual behaviors and personalities. Elias wrote extensively on the relationship between sociology and history, and the study of long-term processes of development (Dunning, 2004). Inspecting how such weight lifting behaviors are formed, transformed and understood over time, was difficult. However, I was able to obtain a few rich quotes which further supported the transformation of desirable male body image literature. Jonathon, an 18 year old freshman, suggested that his father’s physical fitness practices reflected partly, a changing of the times:

“My dad, um, he does triathlons now, and he’s almost sixty. I think my town got him started for the most part. I don’t remember him placing that much emphasis on lifting weights and stuff like running and um, other stuff when I was younger...We um, well I looked at old photo albums as my dad as a kid and he was fat or, err overweight I guess. He also had a moustache. It is funny my sister and I joke a lot and um, we always give him a hard time on that. Like how fat he was then and how in shape he is now.”

Later Jonathon explained how his father influenced his personal workout inspirations:

“In 5th grade my dad got me started running 5 K’s, and doing distance races like that, getting me ready for 7th grade cross country. And then, from that point, I really just did a lot of running and did school sports like basketball and ran cross
country and ran track. Um, and then when I got into senior high
I switched over my junior and senior year to doing sprints and
track and started doing actual weight lifting. And from there on
out I’ve just been doing a lot of weight lifting and stuff like
that.”

One should look back now at some of the broader processes of which the civilizing
process of male physical fitness was a part. In the historical accounts of male body image, noted
in Chapter 3, Erikson (1968) concluded that women based identity around attractiveness
whereas men, it was not so much their body but how it functioned that was important. Other
accounts (Orlos, 1976; Brownell, 1991; and Rozin and Fallon, 1988) supported general
arguments that body image is important for women, and not so much for men.

It needs to be emphasized and considered the deficiencies due to the more recent
developments in male body image. Instead of focusing on individual body parts (Lerner et al,
1976; Brownell, 1991) and others who built on these foundations, a broader range of evaluation
needed to be addressed if a sociologically more adequate explanation of male body image and
more specifically physical fitness practices was to be arrived at. Thus, other researchers (Betz,
Mintz, & Speakmom, 1994; Drewnoski & Yee, 1987; and McCreary & Sasse, 2000) started to
employ all encompassing body image methods to address concerns in males, and as result
reported that body image affect men as well as women.

However, it is unlikely that such a development, on its own, would have led to the
development of body image satisfaction or dissatisfaction, for there were clearly other
processes involved. It might be suggested that role of mass media in men’s body image concerns
as noted by in previous research (Lennon and Rudd, 1994; Lin, 1998; Lorenzen, Grieve and Thomas, 2004; Hatoum and Bell, 2004; McRee and Denham, 2005) could have encouraged the prevalent body image concerns.

The contention is, then, that the cultural ideal of a mesomorphic body becoming desirable by the beginning of the 20th century (Park, 1987) did so because of the historical shift in westernized culture, to where now, only a limited range of body shapes are accepted in the media (Edwards, 1997). Consequently resulting in a nationwide pressure to lift weights, perform cardiovascular exercise, and thus turning your body into a commodity. It would appear on the surface that such a suggestion would be impracticable, however, considering the increase of men engaging in physical fitness activities today (Neimark, 2008), and as noted by Jonathon’s experiences, it is certainly not impossible.

A historical analysis, however, is only one way to address the civilizing processes illustrated by these men. Power balances can also take the form of individuals exhibiting influential persuasions upon other individuals or groups of individuals. An emergent power balance theme arose while interviewing male college students. Apparent differences in power balances between these men and other social groups and how these figurations have affected men’s bodily practices as suggested were discussed in the interviews.

Tommy, another freshman, offered insight into a situation that happened during his hometown summer festival:

“Actually, yeah, umm, there was this stand; well I guess it was like a fitness booth at the town picnic. And yeah, there was a group of guys runnin’ it and gettin’ people to come and sign up to be members at this new fitness center...I think a bunch of
people signed up that probably that never went to that gym after it was done, like the lines were full and I don’t know I never seen that many people at a local gym, except just at a college gym, but like at my hometown I never seen that many people working out. ...Yeah, I bet a lot of people probably signed up to look like they were interested in working out.”

Continuing the power balances premise, Stan often found himself succumbing to the authoritative power of his high school football coach:

“I started lifting weights primarily because of my high school football coach. He was always pressuring everyone to get in the weight room, even soccer players actually and well he is who got me started... It really worked, yeah it did. A lot of us were lifting weights basically every day after school in the winter and spring and just getting ready for football. He was a gym teacher at the school, so he was always there ya know, and I don’t know maybe some of us felt like we would be letting him down if we didn’t work out and stuff?”

Similarly George offered a comparable account. Illustrating how his football coach encouraged him to lift-weights, insofar as it affected his summer occupation:

“My football coach, yeah he was who got me started. I hated it actually at first too (laughs) but I kept doing it. I do it now and I
don’t play football, but I think he was the person who first got me in the gym... I was in junior high also when this happened... I worked at the pool and all my friends would lift on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 4 o’clock, so I made my work schedule around those times... Well, since the shifts were 7 hours a day, I had to take off Monday, Wednesday and Friday to be able to lift, but yeah, so my parents weren’t too happy about that.

(Laughs)"

As described in Chapter 2, power balances and human relations, in general, are usually multi-polar. Essentially, the individual coach in these examples will never have absolute power. He has observable power over his players, but the players also have power over his career, in regards to the fact that without players performing well on game days, the coach cannot be employed. Seth, for instance said, “Our town revolved around football and our coach was under a lot of pressure... like every Friday night the stadium was pretty much full.” Correspondingly, if the team does not contend for conference championships, attendance will dwindle, and unfortunately, the athletic department finances will suffer. To clarify, the community has complex power over the athletic department, the athletic director and the coach. According to Drake if the coach doesn’t get players “in tip-top shape”, not only will the individual players suffer but so will the team and on a macro scale, so will the entire athletic program.

Developing furthering the civilizing process theme of power balances, Kent, a 20 year old male student, told the story of a of a discussion he had with another student from the University, over whether men today were still able to practice hegemonic masculinity. As noted
in Chapter 2, the hegemonic masculinity process has become more rationalized, status-oriented, and predictable. He states:

“Actually, not too long ago my long time friend was talking with me about why he felt men didn’t need to really be men anymore. And I asked him what he meant by that and he says, “Well things have changed; I don’t care about making a lot of money and shit. I could just golf all day for all I care. Women are just as equal as men and they want to take over the family and the income and do all the work.” Laughs. And I said, “Yeah I mean, I guess I kind of feel the same way. What can you do and... yeah?” And he says, “And with the way things are set up by the school and stuff like that, they teach it as this way. Funny thing is it doesn’t bother me one bit!”

Research on college-aged, male workout enthusiasts might explore how apparent differences in power balances between the sexes or other social groups have affected men’s bodily practices as suggested. Certainly, there are individuals or groups of individuals that will have more opportunities for power than others, however, for Elias, we must understand power as a structural characteristic of a relationship rather than a ‘thing’ someone possesses; ‘we depend on others; others depend on us’ (1978, p.93), which was clearly demonstrated through this research.

Quite simply, male physical fitness habits are reflective of class, location, history, and other group-based ideas concerning body commodification. Taken as a system of
communicating social status and identity to others, male physical fitness practices reflect an individual’s social position and roles in a specific figuration. Elias (1991) argued that the study of sociogenesis must coincide with the study of psychogenesis and the result is a more complex understanding of how social, cultural and biological factors intertwine. Thus, as linkages are made between chains of interdependencies, personality structures and normative forms of specific behaviors, such as wanting to lift weights, are developed and will be explored in the following section.

**Psychogenesis**

The series of examples and interpretations in the third theme show one thing very clearly, which can best be explained by Elias:

The specific process of psychological ‘growing up’ in Western societies, which frequently occupies the minds of psychologists and pedagogues today, is nothing other than the individual civilizing process to which each young person, as a result of the social civilizing process over many centuries, is automatically subjected from earliest childhood, to a greater or lesser degree and with greater or less success. The psychogenesis of the adult makeup in civilized society cannot, therefore, be understood if considered independently of the sociogenesis of our ‘civilization’ (1998, pg. 42).
In other words, the individual, in his short history passes once more through some of the processes that his society has crossed in its long history. Therefore, it is the purpose of the third theme, to make certain processes in the short history of male body commodification more accessible to understanding. We cannot understand sociogenesis without understanding its relationship to psychogenesis. A psychogenetic theme alone, without the closest connection with sociogenetic studies, are hardly suitable for revealing the structures of social processes, thus it is here I expand on the concept of psychogenesis. In my interpretation, sociogenesis and psychogenesis are fundamentally interdependent, mutually constitutive.

Psychogenesis refers to the origin and development of psychological processes, personality, or behavior. Standards of behavior once aroused and firmly established in society are constantly reproduced so the structure of human relations is not fundamentally altered. Parents, therefore, who have accepted the standard of conduct as a matter of course, urge their children, who do come into the world already equipped with these feelings and this standard, to control themselves in accordance with it, and to restrain their inner desires and inclinations. For instance, if a child tries to touch something hot, sticky, or greasy with his fingers, he is told. ‘You must not do that; people do not do things like that.’ Consequently, the displeasure toward such conduct begins, because of the parents reinforcements arises through habit, without being induced by another person. The development of personality structures from which conclusive assumptions were drawn was attained through rich data of an individual’s physical fitness influences.

When asked why the participant believes most college-aged males participated in physical fitness, an overwhelmingly 87.5% (14 of 16) said, in some shape or other, “for the girls.” Alan offered his perspective when asked the question, “Um, I don’t know, women are attracted
to it. “Conversely, only two male students admitted being influenced by the female gender to lift weights, or perform cardiovascular exercise. In light of the responses and contradictions, the *actor-observer effect* theme arose. In other words, for the respondents, the social acceptance of admitting to engaging in physical fitness activities to attract a potential partner, were denied. However, all but two interviewees vocalized that they believed their college counterparts worked out, in order to attract a mate (female).

**Actor-Observer Effect**

A well-known attribution bias, known as the actor-observer effect is tendency to see other people’s behavior as being caused by their personal disposition, while perceiving our own actions due to situational factors (Jones and Nisbett, 1972). When asked why he believed most college-aged men workout, Jake hesitantly replied,

“Um, I think a lot of...some people do it for the women. They just want to look really good without their shirts on.”

Then I asked Jake if this was the case for himself and if a female has ever been part of his personal work out motivations, he responded,

“No, not really. I have now just started lifting, so results are just now in the early stages. So, it really hasn’t been as much of a motivation for me.”

Similar remarks were exhibited when I asked the original question to Tommy. To answer why he believed most college-aged men workout, he added,
“To attract a female, I mean some of it is just too like, you know, be a badass, to be able to fight anyone that you want. But like, but I mean most of it is for like girls and stuff.”

I then asked Tommy the same follow-up question I asked Jake (this was the same follow-up question I asked all participants who stated that college-aged males primarily are motivated to work out to attract females). After asking Tommy if a female had ever been part of his person work out motivation. His answer was the following, “No, not really, maybe some of it, a little bit of it.” Time and time again, the actor-observer attribution bias was exhibited by the men.

George was another participant who follows the trend,

“Definitely my friend, (referring to a previously mentioned friend) he does it for the girls... Yeah, I mean he is like the only one I know. He like I mean, I don’t know tons people who work out but like, a lot of them just work out just to get big and they never like talk about it and brag about the ladies as much...but he does. Tans, he tans too.”

As was seen from others, George responded similarly to the follow-up question, “No, I mean not like him. I don’t work out for the ladies. No.”

Drake added to the analysis of the phenomenon; however, he admitted working out occasionally to grab the attention of his girlfriend,

“Ah, I think a lot of it is to try to look good for girls, you know. They want to look the best they can. If they get bigger biceps,
they think more girls will talk to them and that type of thing. I mean, there are still people out there that are just doing it for themselves, trying to get fit. But I mean, I’ll admit, there’s times when it’s like, if i’m going home to see my girlfriend or that sorta thing, I want to work out a little bit, try to look good.(Laughs)"

The present results give strong support for an actor-observer effect in male work out motivations. The interviews showed, without any prior predictions, that interviewees (actors) admitted their friends (observers) performed physical fitness more frequently to attract potential partners, while the said gender influence was absent in themselves. On one hand, this could possibly be due to the fact that participants were embarrassed to admit working out to attract potential mates. On the other hand, it may be argued that their friends, due to the fact that they were not interviewed did in fact work out mainly to attract partners, while my sample of men did not. Thus, it is plausible that the actors (interviewees) did not work out to attract partners, but the observers (their friends) did. Nevertheless, the actor-observer effect holds strong implications for future research on attribution bias regarding physical fitness motivations.

To a large extent, however, it is unknown why any individual would be reluctant to admit working out to attract potential partners. Perhaps, a negative social label, like a stigma, is attached to those who admit to working out because of gender influence. As was stated previously, under pure speculation, the conduct and emotional life of the young child are established from such demands, as in to not touchy sticky substances. Perchance the young men could have been pressured in adolescence to be individualistic, and not coerced into activities (such as lifting weights) solely for the purpose of attracting mates. To clarify, since the pressure
of parents/adults is allied to the pressure and example of entire society, most children, as they
grow up repress relatively early the fact that feelings of shame and embarrassment are molded
into conformity with a certain standard by external pressure. Thus, all this appears to them as
being highly personal, something inward, implanted in them by nature and therefore, the social
standard to which the individual was first made to conform is reproduced from within the
civilizing process (Elias, 1998 pg. 54).

In essence, the historical standard of working out for health reasons is raised, while the
standard of working out for sexual advantages is ignored or discredited. Regardless, two men in
the research did admit that they worked out in order to attract the opposite sex. Kent said,

Hmm, well actually I guess work out for girls too. Like, there is
this one girl in my door, on my floor and she is smoking, like so
hot...I guess she was in the back of my mind sometimes when I
lifted weights, I wanted to make myself more appealing to her
so I figured going to Ping would be the best way to go about
doing it.

Similarly, Seth offered insight to his own situation, when asked if he worked out to attract girls
as his male college counterparts did, he responded,

Yeah, I think all guys do...For me, I don't know it is just like a
confident thing. If I can you know, like look more fit and be
stronger I just feel better about myself. So, I think it is that
confidence in being in shape that motivates me.
These developments in the gender influence of male physical fitness practices contribute to the web of figurational interdependencies. The aforementioned attribution bias, also theoretically, to a degree, provides suggestion of dramaturgical analysis, or a presentation of self.

Drawing on Erving Goffman’s *Performance of Self in Everyday Life* (1973) and symbolic interactionism, a performance is “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (pg. 15). The form a performance takes is socialized, molded and modified by the understanding and expectations of the society in which it takes place. However, these social expectations, incorporated and exemplified in performance, are an idealized version of society’s values. Therefore, performers or in this case the research subjects, might choose to try to avoid or conceal those actions, such as working out to attract females, which are inconsistent with societal standards and accentuate those actions that follow them. If one accepts that identity is something that is performed if he conforms to the standard he feels appropriate.

Another particularly relevant piece of Goffman’s theory is that an individual fills different roles in different settings before different audiences, thus, perhaps the subjects chose not to be perceived as “un-cool” or “un-masculine” in the front stage performance. The “front stage” in this case being a face-to-face interview, with a male of similar demographics and interests like them. In view of that, the interviewees, perhaps, were more likely to describe their peer’s female gender influences in regards to physical fitness, more so than they would admit themselves in the interview. Conceivably, the subjects might have acknowledged being influenced to work out to attract potential mates, if the face-to-face interview was conducted
with a researcher of a different demographic. The next section will explore a perhaps, unintended consequence, of the male physical fitness civilizing process.

**Supplement Usage**

Norbert Elias (1978) proposed that is difficult for any one person to for a clear picture and control the direction of events that take place in these networks of figurational relationships. He states, “out of the intertwining of many peoples’ actions there may emerge social consequences which no one has planned” (pg. 95). Thus, the interweaving of the conscious actions of individuals, combined with the historical social process of body commodification may result in a social process, developed separately of the individuals who form the web, with an intended or perhaps, unintended outcome.

For instance, since protein is the most marketed supplement today (Nemet & Eliakim, 2007); supplementation organizations are reliant upon funding from various outlets, such as male college students. In order to obtain funding from this demographic, a supplement supplier must then demonstrate that it can provide results in a particular area, such as muscularity, so as to elevate the use and purchase of the product. In regard to the notion that these types of organizations tend to have physical fitness objectives driven by competitive ambition to outsource and outsell other supplement suppliers, they will market their supplement at an advanced rate, which inevitably will lead to an unplanned social consequence of working out, supplement usage by male fitness enthusiasts.

Nearly half of the participants (7 of 16) stated that legal supplementation was used to aid in the physical fitness process, which included supplements such as protein drinks, protein bars, glutamine, fish oil, and creatine. Previous research (Metzl, Levine, & Gershel 2001) has
suggested that younger men aged 16-30 consume 80% of the legal supplements in North America, creatine and whey protein being the most popular. Participants, who admitted to taking over-the-counter supplements, indicated protein powder in all cases and three of the seven admitted to consuming creatine in. Drake responded to questions about additional practices he did to maintain or enhance his physique in this way:

“Protein, for sure. I am always drinking protein shakes, and I really like them also...I buy ON 100% Whey Gold Standard Protein, and it is pretty cheap, and it tastes pretty good, and it is an important dynamic of my diet. Without protein I don’t think anyone can achieve results, at least not in my opinion...I feel that you need to get a gram of protein for every pound you weigh, so like me, I weigh 180 pounds so I try to consume 180 grams of protein a day...I get most of that through protein shakes, about two a day I drink...I also take creatine, after I work out, like within 30 minutes after my lift I take one scoop.”

Clearly, legal supplementation usage is exemplified in Drakes physical fitness regimen.

Surprisingly, participants often found supplements, such as protein, to be an outlet filled with positive reinforcement. According to Alan,

“Protein is what keeps me focused...I don’t know, without it, like when I don’t take it before I lift or if I run out that day I don’t even want to lift. Like, it makes me feel like I’m gonna get big, like make gains, you know? So yeah, when I don’t have my
protein, I don’t feel like even lifting, well um not most of the time.”

Similarly Wilson added,

“I take protein, yeah it helps me a lot...Like, well it is like a psychological thing I guess, like when I buy protein shakes or bars or something like that, I think it is going to work, because of all I have read and what not. So, I guess when I take I think I will get stronger, add mass and then look better.”

Overall, the parallel between sociogenesis and psychogenesis was reproduced in this research. Historically, these same male participants would have been less likely to consume legal supplements twenty or even ten years. Due to society changing from irrational revelations in late 1970’s that protein bars, powders, and cereals provided no significant benefit (Milwaukee News, 1978), it is highly unlikely that college male enthusiasts embarked in such behaviors. Due to the current research, the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for protein is 0.8 grams per kilogram (g/kg) of body weight for adults (Williams 1998), which would have the potential to significantly influence today’s participants to load up on protein supplementation. It is possible to conclude such because the social fabric of legal supplementation and its historical usage possess a clear pattern and structure. In other words, to investigate why male students use protein powder does not mean to study each individual figuration within it, it simply means asking oneself in what way the chains of knowledge and the institutions of society in the 1970s
differ from those in the 1980s or 1990s or of today, and why the former change in the direction of the latter.

It should be noted that Elias emphasized that the outcomes of complex social processes cannot be explained simply in terms of intentions of individuals. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the normal result of a complex social process, such as male fitness supplementation, involves the interweaving of the more-or-less monetary goal directed actions of the large groups of supplement suppliers and consequently, the increased usage by male college students. To answer these inquiries accurately, knowledge of particular facts and tangible literature review is of course, necessary. But beyond a certain point in the accumulation of material facts, history enters the process. Presented in the discussion section we will examine the ongoing physical fitness civilizing process or what is to be labeled the body commodification process, which we learn from second natures, or habituses.
Chapter 6: Discussion

Rich data was acquired through the qualitative interview process and inductive coding scheme. For this research, the concept of figuration performs the task of representing social structures and the social reality that is motivating and being experienced by the male workout enthusiasts. The concept of figuration provides us with a tangible aspect to evaluate male physical fitness motivations. At the same time it provides us with an analytic tool which does not convert the social reality being experienced into a totally concrete concept.

The concept of figuration expresses the complex chain of interdependencies that constitute the social structure influence on physical fitness. In addition, figurations cannot be reduced to the effects of particular individuals; to illustrate this idea Elias uses an analogy of games – particularly cards and soccer. The more players there are in the game, the more complex the game becomes and thus, social consequences emerge which no one has planned. From the perspective of figurational theory, then, male physical fitness enthusiast’s thoughts and practices need to be understood as aspects of their figurations. As Mennell (1998) affirms, the widespread acceptance of any social structure, such as physical fitness, can only be adequately explained when one takes into account the ‘compelling forces’ impacting upon male college students through the interdependencies in which they are involved. Such interdependencies involve not only other male weightlifters, but also a variety of influential groups within the college setting and beyond; in particular the mass media.

What most sociologists call a ‘structure’ is nothing more, in fact, but the pattern of a figuration of interdependent individual male exercisers who do such because of larger group influence, or in a wider sense, their intercollegiate institution, and even entire American society. Norbert Elias notes, “What we term ‘structures’ when we look at people as societies, are
‘figurations’ when we look at them as individuals” (1998, pg. 101). The scope of the term is vast, meaning it can be applied to relatively small groups (such as coaches and players on a football team) as well as larger groups like an entire city, or even whole societies. The bonds of interdependence experienced by the men in the study are more visible, less complex, and less differentiated than would have been illustrated in a different sample or a longitudinal analysis. Regardless, it is claimed, the way the men in the research view their bodies and their physical fitness regimens, can only be understood if one contextualizes their unique views within their particular figurations of experiences and relationships, while simultaneously tracing the wider social processes impacting each individual.

**Habitus of Body Commodification**

The discussion here focuses upon the way in which cultural and social trends examined in the research have influenced the individual physical fitness structures, or in Eliasian sense, figurations. Here, I will broaden the discussion of habitus and body commodification to reveal how weight training and cardiovascular training become socially and/or individually meaningful for college-aged men. Essentially, the function figurations play in influencing these men to actively participate in body commodification behaviors, such as lifting weights. The relationship between the participants and the figurations were varied, and so were each person’s behavior, experience, and mentality.

The study of habitus has a short history while at the same time a long tradition. The conception of habitus as presented here has been examined in general terms by the classics of modern sociology under the headings of ideology (Marx), milieu (Durkheim) and certainly habitus (Bourdieu). Others such as Comte, Tönnies, Simmel and other social theorists of the
early twentieth century employed the concepts of habit and habitus (Camic, 1986, pg. 1050).

But what is the sociological significance of habitus today? The argument to be defended here is that unlike other conceptions, the concept of habitus provides a promising conceptual linkage between cultural, social, and psychological dimensions of physical fitness.

I approach the concept of habitus from a social science perspective and for Elias; explanation on habitus formation process outlines how an individual’s conceptions of the body are embedded into everyday physical habits, like getting dressed in the morning or eating dinner in the evening. Evaluations explaining individual male motivations to partake in physical fitness will be illustrated, in an attempt to explain how lifting weights and cardiovascular fitness become physical habits and in addition, how these behaviors become individually and socially meaningful for college-aged, men.

One central limitation to the current research on physical fitness motivations among a narrow group of college-aged men is whether their learned habituses, encourage them to turn their bodies into commodities. The influences facing the sample of men are highlighted in the remainder of the paper as a signifier of both sociogenic and psychogenic change in the United States of America. I propose that sociogenic and psychogenic shifts in American culture, previously described, have culminated into a muscularity body crisis among the men for whom body commodification, in search of social capital is one response.

The qualitative study regarding these male narratives about the experiences each lived through physical fitness allows for a micro-sociological inspection of what has been termed body commodification. Critical attention, therefore, is given to how men in the sample turn their bodies into commodities, to in fact give them an identity. These men strategically internalized
the macro-structures of societies influence, internalize this influence and then attached both masculinity and gender ideologies to them.

The conception of habitus presented here provides an example of a conceptual linkage between cultural, social, and psychological dimensions of physical fitness that have proved difficult to incorporate into one general framework or approach. As a result, this paper has identified and conceptually brought together crucial mechanisms at work and at the same time, connected cultural, social, and psychological figurations, a linkage that has never been methodically studied.

Since several elements of habitus are in fact at least partially observable in individual and social body commodification behaviors, it might be useful to start this discussion by identifying some of them. As figure A (below) illustrates, body commodification habitus takes a variety of different forms from basic automatic behaviors such as simply researching a healthy diet to complex forms such keeping your head football coached employed. The forms that a habitus can take in individual male persons as represented in figure A (below) may suggest that the concept of habitus refers primarily to the characteristics of individuals – patterns of thinking, feeling, wanting, lifting, running and interacting – in short that body commodification habitus is an individual thing. However, the theoretical significance of body commodification lies in the fact that habitus is above all a social influence. This habitus emerges in concrete figurations – family, school, culture, socioeconomic class, media images, or a society.
Today’s College-Aged Male Body Commodification Process

*Process Commences*

Core Figurations: domestic, cultural, mass media

Individual Manifestations: obedience, evaluate, research, internalize

In Practice: lifting, running, eating healthy, using supplements, maintaining

Outcome: muscularity: attracting partners, servicing coach/school/community, influencing peers, heightened self-esteem/body image, social capital

*Process is Terminated or Maintained*

Male manifestations of Body Commodification. *Figure A*

From a macrosociological point of view it does not make sense to conceptualize the process as the property of an individual. Instead, body commodification should be seen as the property of a social system. The habitus of body commodification is revealed in different ways in the unique situations and behaviors of the individuals comprising the system. However, it is important to remember, body commodification is generated by the system, i.e. it emerges from the activities and interactions of the individuals participating in the process, not from the characteristics of its individual components. Thus, it is a key conclusion of this thesis that body commodification is the emergent property of a social figuration.

*Limitations*

As was mentioned in chapter 5, the actor-observer effect holds strong implications for future research on attribution bias regarding physical fitness motivations. How can the actor-observer effect be eliminated? It can be possible to interview the friends of the male
participants in the research. More data will decrease the difference in experiences stated between actors and observers, but it is believed that the effect will remain because actors are still acting and other friends will still be “observing.” Another interesting possibility is that observers will be more critical of the actor’s responses, if said responses were presented.

**Future Recommendations**

These findings have considerable implications for public health. If, indeed, men are being motivated to look physically fit due to body image dissatisfaction or possibility to turn their bodies into commodities, from manifestations generated through social figurations, we may observe undesirable public health effects from this trend. For instance, more men may request cosmetic surgery, require treatment for eating disorders and depression, or develop any array of problems associated with muscle dysmorphia.

This research, and specifically the questions that it does not address, provide implications for further research. A longitudinal study of male physical fitness enthusiasts at a Midwestern University, or another American Collegiate Institution, is one avenue of further research that might provide additional data. Another intriguing avenue of research would be to study whether or not collegiate athletes deal with increased or decreased social pressure to lift weights and to engage body commodification practices.

I believe it would be fascinating to do a comparative analysis, using similar research methodology in this, or another American University, to determine whether athletes are reproducing these motivations, exacerbating these motivations, or decreasing these motivations. Potentially, this could be accomplished by collecting data on athletes and non-
athletes at the end of the school year, and then collecting data again at the start of the next school year for two years in a row.

The examination method would be either a longitudinal analysis, which will be study of short series of observations obtained from respondents over the two years’ time or a time-series analysis through the use of a figurational model to forecast future events based on known past events. Both analysis methods would measure cognitive motivations during the school year and athletic season when schools, peers, and coaches have the most influence, against cognitive motivations during the summer months or off-season when schools, peers and coaches may have less influence and the student would be more likely to be influences only by non-school/sport factors such as family or neighborhood. Similarly, I believe it would also be interesting to evaluate men of similar age, but outside of social structure of the university where potential issues of hegemonic masculinity and power may manifest themselves different, using comparable research methods. Repeated studies into the physical fitness figuration across an extended period of time would allow sociologists to study the cultural development of body image project. On that note, changing preferences for physical fitness practices could be contextualized within sociogenic change, and shifts in cultural physical fitness habits.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

While I was working on the project it seemed quite clear to me that I was laying the framework of an empirically based sociological analysis of physical fitness motivations in general and of the development male motivations in particular. The social development studied and presented here through one of its central manifestations – how the physical fitness wave becomes socially and culturally meaningful to the subjects – is a figurational change which, I conclude is noticeable throughout the current weight lifting, cardiovascular exercise, and nutrition process experienced by college-age men.

It is for these reasons that a single male physical fitness enthusiast, I conclude, is conceived as a figuration of figurations. All encompassing but at the same time clear, the systematic conception adopted here rejects the conventional dualism of “individual” and “society.” As a result, an individual interdependency is a component of larger group interdependency, and in turn, that interdependency is part of a larger society. For instance, every male work out enthusiast is an individual component of the larger body commodification process. At the same time, the body commodification process is influenced by many other types of social figurations – family (e.g. siblings), culture (e.g. schools), media (e.g. the Internet) and community. Crucial in this conception is that individuals, like group interdependencies, are not only components of figurations, but at the same time they are figurations themselves.

As I pointed out at the beginning of this thesis, the research presented here speaks to sociology of the body, male body image, and masculinities. This meant that beside substantive contributions, more would be required to establish the fields. Through comparisons of other scholars through divergent, and sometimes contradictory analyses, the integration of theories
about the body would accomplish what Tittle (1995) refers to as synthetic integration – or the interweaving of disparate theories into a unified conceptual whole.

The work done here extends and in some regard, emulates previous work done on male bodies, masculinities, and physical fitness motivations. The framework of figurational theory provides a theoretical grid upon which this contention can be presented. I have proposed that male body commodification is the property of a concrete social figuration, such as the family, a school, a mate or an entire society. This commodity is manifested in individual and collective actions and representations of the figuration in question. A straightforward example is “wanting to make it to the NFL” in the social figuration of American football; feeling good about that dream; researching how to make it there; internalizing that research; believing that it is a realistic possibility; obeying your coaches suggestion; training hard; developing muscularity; and alas using your body as a commodity to sell yourself into that position.

Alternatively, a college-aged male physical fitness enthusiast might depict something similar, but in a different concern. He may perhaps “want to attract the female in the next dormitory” in the social figuration of college; feel good about that dream; research what she prefers physically; think dating her is a realistic possibility; engage in physical fitness; develop muscularity and a heightened body image and then finally, selling his body as a commodity, in a social capital sense, in order to catch her attention.

It is important to bear in mind, that the body commodification process is composed of additional subsystems besides just physical fitness. An interconnected system of attitudes, values, cognitions, and behaviors is at play in each situation, just as they would be in any social process. Regardless, the research suggests that male body commodification practices are manifested at the Midwestern University. These foundations may be strong and evolving (such
as a professional athletic dream), or possibly brittle and dissolving (such as a dorm room crush).

The process can also never be reduced to simply individual choices, though they are certainly involved.
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Appendix A: Thesis Flier

Are you a...

Male?

Student at Ohio University who does not participate in university athletics?

...but still works out on a regular basis?

If so...I’d like to interview you about your experiences!

Please contact:

Luke Castle
(740) 597-2764

lc184107@ohio.edu
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Social Psychological Motivators in Male Workout Practices

Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study of male college students, whom are not intercollegiate athletes that work out on a regular basis. The goal of this research is to better understand your motivations for doing so. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

The purpose of this study is to learn how male college students are motivated to work out. You must exercise on a regular basis to take part in this study. If you agree to be in this study, I will conduct an interview with you. You must be 18 years of age or older in order to participate in this study. The interview will include questions about your fitness routine, and your experiences/opinions about working out. The interview will take about 45 minutes to complete. With your permission, I would also like to tape-record the interview to assure that I get your responses correct when I evaluate the interview date. You are being reassured at this time, that if at any point that they feel they are unable to continue with the interview, or are unable to answer any question, you are not obligated to do so. You may ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time.

Your answers will be confidential and private. All data will be reported in aggregate and I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. After the tape-recorded interview, I will transcribe the interview verbatim and it will be given case # for identification purposes. I will destroy the tape after it has been transcribed, which I anticipate will be within two months of its taping.
The researcher does not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions which you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with Ohio University. You are free to withdraw at any time. Although you will not be receiving monetary compensation for your contributions to this research, you will benefit from participating in an important research project that will help others. In addition, it will personally benefit you to discuss your workout experiences.

Implementation procedures shall rest upon the establishment of the Institutional Review Board, a recognized function of which shall be to provide advice and guidance to investigators regarding the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects. Ultimate responsibility for the rights and welfare of human subjects, however, remains with the investigator; review and approval of a project do not relieve the investigators of that responsibility.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Luke Castle Masters Student at the Ohio University Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at lc184107@ohio.edu or at 567-204-1346. Additionally, you may contact my thesis advisor Debra A. Henderson at henderd2@ohio.edu or 740.593.1382 If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at compliance@ohio.edu or call 740.593.0664. Or you can contact at the following mailing address: Department of Anthropology and Sociology – Bentley Annex 162 – Athens, Ohio 45701.
Appendix C: Interview Questions

Research Questionnaire:

Question #1: Tell me about when you first started to workout. At what age did you begin working out? 
-What is your earliest memory of feeling influenced to workout? Describe.

Question #2: How did you learn to workout? Who or what motivated you to do so?

Question #3: How often do you workout?

Question #4: What is your ideal workout (routine, time spent, location)? Where do you workout most frequently? Do you workout alone? With friends? In mixed groups with women?

Question #5: Is there anything that disrupts your workout routine? If not, why do you think that’s the case?

Question #6: Is there anything that would cause you to stop working out? If not, explain what keeps you motivated/disciplined?

Question #7: How do you feel at this time about your current physical condition? Body shape?

Question #8: What is your ideal in terms of physique? Is that your fitness goal?

Question #9: What experiences have you had that affect these ideal physique beliefs?

Question #10: If you could have the ideal physical shape without working out, would you still continue to do so? Explain.

Question #11: Have you ever had struggles staying motivated to workout? Explain these struggles or the incident.

Question #12: What would you say is the most significant motivator?

Question #13: Explain the importance of working out for people in general.

Question #14: Why do you believe most men workout? Is that the case for you?

Question #15: How do you stay focused once you have started your physical fitness routine?

Question #16: Do you use fitness magazines to help with your routines? Do you subscribe?

Question #17: Do you ever see muscular male images on the Internet, commercials, magazines?

Question #18: Tell me about your most positive experience working out. Most negative?

Question #19: Are there other things you do to maintain or enhance your physique? (i.e. healthy eating, etc.)

Question #20: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about experiences or your opinions of physical fitness?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!