

Cardiff School of Sport
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 Empirical ¹

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Comments	Section		
	Title and Abstract Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.		
	Introduction and literature review To include: outline of context (theoretical/conceptual/applied) for the question; analysis of findings of previous related research including gaps in the literature and relevant contributions; logical flow to, and clear presentation of the research problem/ question; an indication of any research expectations, (i.e., hypotheses if applicable).		
	Methods and Research Design To include: details of the research design and justification for the methods applied; participant details; comprehensive replicable protocol.		
	Results and Analysis ² To include: description and justification of data treatment/ data analysis procedures; appropriate presentation of analysed data within text and in tables or figures; description of critical findings.		
	Discussion and Conclusions ² To include: collation of information and ideas and evaluation of those ideas relative to the extant literature/concept/theory and research question/problem; adoption of a personal position on the study by linking and combining different elements of the data reported; discussion of the real-life impact of your research findings for coaches and/or practitioners (i.e. practical implications); discussion of the limitations and a critical reflection of the approach/process adopted; and indication of potential improvements and future developments building on the study; and a conclusion which summarises the relationship between the research question and the major findings.		

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CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

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EXPLORING BODYBUILDING
SUBCULTURE: THE ACCPETANCE
OF A SPORT IN MAINSTREAM
CULTURE



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Abstract

This ethnographic study aims to give the reader an insight into the subculture associated with the sport of bodybuilding. The research explores themes of subcultural fragmentation and style, masculinity, gender and identity. The research entails a review of the literature, where the concept of subculture is explored and clearly defined to enable its proper application to the sport of bodybuilding. A review of the current literature on the sport and subculture is presented and the drawing on Klein's (1993) claim that the sport is marginalised in, but there is hope for it to become accepted into mainstream culture, a research thesis is proposed, aiming to confirm or reject whether this has occurred in the twenty years since Klein's study. Interviews are conducted with amateur bodybuilders, which provide data for the discussion of the research question. The oppositional and deviant nature of this subculture contrasted with an increasingly high interest in health and fitness in broader society, makes for an interesting study into where bodybuilding's position is in society.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This study aims to analyse the subculture surrounding the sport of bodybuilding and in doing so, develop an understanding about the relationship between bodybuilding and society. The study focuses on the identification of 'subworlds' within the social world of bodybuilding and how the subculture relates to identity construction for its participants. Sociological concepts including the body and identity, gender, sexuality and issue most prominent in this sport, drug abuse will be explored. It is important to clearly define the sociological concepts which will be involved in the analysis, most importantly, the terms subculture and subworld as these concepts have become ambiguous and less definitive due to their broad employment within ethnography (Crosset and Beal, 1997). A review of the literature will highlight the areas of this topic which require further research and enable a thesis to be generated and a method to be suggested which will give further insight into the subculture of bodybuilding.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Subculture: Definitional Clarity

Subcultures are groups of people that are in some way represented as non-normative and/ or marginal through their particular interests and practices, through what they are, what they do and where they do it (Gelder, 2005, p1).

As this definition implies, the term 'subculture' was adopted by sociologists as a means of classifying groups of people. It is important to consider the implicit meaning of the prefix 'sub' in the term subculture in relation to what level of society is being analysed. Attempting to give the term definitional clarity, Carrabine (2006) suggests that the prefix signifies that the analysis does not focus on the macro level of society but more so on an intermediate level of society as the groups being studied are subordinate subversive or subterranean and thus viewed as beneath but still within mainstream society. A key point when grasping this concept is that subcultures are always viewed in terms of their relationship with broader society. Crosset and Beal (1997, p82) provided a definition of subcultural analysis, which is consonant with this notion;

Generally a subcultural analysis focuses on a structurally subordinate group and their responses to their marginal position within a broader culture. New modes of social relations and cultural expression are as a result of the subordinate group negotiating with the dominant value system to gain some cultural space.

An Evolution of the Term

The term 'subculture' obtained this sociological application in the early 1940s, however as Gelder (2005, p1) states, subcultures have been around for some 'considerable time'. This is illustrated by accounts of marginalised groups in sixteenth century England, given the 'vagabond' label, which lived on the edge of early modern English society. Example of these social types which were highlighted in the rogue literature of the period included pickpockets, doxies, walking morts, discharged soldiers, apprentice actors and brothel keepers. Salgado (1972, p13) describes the differing perspectives of the social outcasts and normal citizens in Elizabethan society;

Seen through the disapproving eyes of respectable citizens they were nothing but a disorderly and disorganised rabble, dropouts from the social ladder. But seen from within, they appear to be nothing so much as a mirror image of the Elizabethan world-picture: a little world, tightly organised into its own ranks and with its own rules, as rigid in its own way as the most elaborate protocol at court or ritual at church.

This passage, although not referring directly to subculture is indicative of a relationship between a subordinate group and a dominant group within society. It also shows how this notion, for which the term 'subculture' was coined, has transcended through time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago pioneered sociological theory and practice and by no coincidence, it is here where subcultural studies formally began (Gelder, 2005). The University focused on urban anthropology, for which the city of Chicago served as an incredibly insightful subject due to its diversity and large size. The Chicago school's subcultural studies focused on 'marginal' or 'deviant' social types; delinquents, immigrants, gang members, and the homeless. Empirical research was conducted through field studies and participant observations made by sociologists like Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, who were interested in social norms and deviance from these norms, and specifically the reasons for divergence from social normality; Park (1925) documented his findings in his seminal book, *The City*.

Milton M. Gordon and Albert K. Cohen were influenced by the work of earlier Chicago School sociologists in their respective contributions to subcultural studies, and it was through their work that the concept has evolved into how it is interpreted today. Gordon (1947) recognised the way in which American society was becoming increasingly segregated, however he argued that this was not exactly synonymous with subculture and urged sociologists to look beyond the conventional and obvious social categories of ethnicity, class, and nationality, to more subtle social groupings. He also coined the phrase 'marginal subcultures' inspired by a famous phrase from Park (1925), 'marginal man', shifting the subject of marginalisation from the individual to the social group. Gordon was also keen to devalue the importance of place in subcultures, referring to 'worlds within worlds' as opposed to Park's prior notion of 'cities within cities'. Considering the fractured society that was being observed, Gordon suggests that subcultures labelled deviant in society weren't necessarily deviant from the established norms of some groups in society, and in some cases it would in fact be considered deviant not to conform to the subculture.

Cohen (1955), similarly to Gordon, puts an emphasis on the social aspect of anomie, meaning that in certain social settings the deviant action would be not to conform to the subculture deemed deviant by broader society. There is also a parallel between the two sociologists in terms of their focus on lower classes, delinquency and criminal groups. In reference to street gangs, Cohen sees delinquency, not as individualistic, but the actions of its members as 'deriving their meaning and favour from the fact of togetherness and governed by a set of common understandings, common sentiments and common loyalties' (Cohen, 1955, p178). Cohen (1995) also talks about 'powerful incentives not to deviate' which implies that there is little freedom of choice to join these unassimilated subcultures, rather it is inevitable. Cohen (1955) brought about the notion of subcultural identity, purposefully linking the sociological concepts of subculture and identity which subsequently enhanced the understanding of both.

The work of John Irwin signified a shift away from the Chicago school's from of subcultural studies which focused on urban ethnography and deviance in this setting. Instead, Irwin (1970, p18) acknowledged that subcultural analysis needn't be confined to these concepts and the term could be applied to a much broader range of social settings, which were becoming more pervasive in society;

The Chicago School's concepts of gangs, subcultures and behaviour systems did not approach the casualness of the worlds I was involved in. All such gangs and subcultures suggested too much commitment, determinism, instrumentality, and stability in membership....Concepts such as milieu, ambience, fad, and craze, on the other hand did not suggest enough permanence, cohesion, or complexity of form.

Irwin (1977) coined the term 'scene' which inspired the title of his, *Scenes*, which is synonymous with 'social world'. A social world is defined as large and highly permeable, amorphous and spatially transcendent forms of social organisation made up of people sharing common interests and sharing common channels of communication' (Unruh, 1983, cited in Crosset and Beal, 1997 p81). Gelder (2006) claims that social worlds are characterised by the shared perspectives of its members, which prompted Irwin (1970) to introduce 'subcultural pluralism' and 'subcultural relativism', proposing that one social groups values may be no better or worse than another's and also, with so many social worlds in America, it was possible to belong to more than just one. He also mentions the subcultural participants growing consciousness of their subcultural status, which in turn leads to them adhering to the subcultural performance which is expected of them. This notion is elaborated on by cultural studies sociologists like Dick Hebdige (1979) who brings forward the notions of subcultural display and the style.

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University had a profound influence on subcultural studies from the 1970's onwards. The cultural studies approach shifted away from methods from the Chicago School's influence of urban sociology, criminology and participant observation fieldwork, and focused on the analysis of popular culture, literature, media and the ideological sense of everyday life (Gelder, 2006). However, the focus was still on lower class groups and youth delinquency in much of this school's work, as Thompson (1980) suggests that working class is itself is a subcultural identity and describes the narrative positioning of this group as 'history from below' which is a common perspective from most subcultures.

Phil Cohen's (1972) work on youth culture in London's East End was influential for other researchers at the CCCS and asserted that subcultures are always working

class in origin and socially subordinated. However he did see subcultures as transitional and recognised that the youth were caught in between a displaced working class community and modern consumer society (Gelder, 1980). Cohen (1972) considered subcultures to be more emblematic forms of social resistance as opposed to having serious potential to impose social change.

John Clarke et al. (1975) drew upon the concept of hegemony within society and make a positive claim for subcultures; suggesting that they can win 'space' back, however they do also make clear that they do not believe subcultures solve working class problems. Importantly for the evolution of the concept, they shift the focus of subculture from territory to style, 'the way subcultures purchase and organise their look and outlook through fashion and related tastes and practices' (Gelder, 2005 p83). This notion of subcultural style was a milestone in the changing nature of the term as it signified distance from the urban sociology of the past and instead moved towards the interpretation of ideologies and semiotics through the groups' practice, giving subcultures their social identity.

Dick Hebdige (1979) produced a hugely influential book titled, *Subculture: the meaning of style*. This work analysed the British punk subculture and recognised subcultures as a means of conveying style, and the subversive implications of style. However unlike previous conceptions of subcultural resistance, Hebdige (1979) suggested they stand more as a refusal or defiance to mainstream society. Gelder (2006, p85) suggests that Hebdige's influence was substantial, as he established various new ways of looking at subcultures and was responsible for elevating the concept of subcultural style. His fixation on this concept is evident in the way he defined subculture, 'the expressive forms and rituals of subcultural groups' (Hebdige, 1979 p1) which is concerned with the way in which a subculture is detected as opposed to the meanings behind it. He saw subcultures as adaptable and suggested that they could borrow from a range of cultural sites (Gelder, 2005). The focus of his study was 'punks', which he claimed were 'active agents, who were aware of their subcultural identity but were also susceptible to incorporation into broader culture in one of two ways; converting their styles into mass produced commodities, or by the labelling of their participants ideologies, for example the mass media labelling punks as deviant. This acknowledgement of the dominant impact of media and mass

culture on subculture was consonant with the notions of Hoggart (1957) and Williams (1958) who had recognised this influence in their earlier work at the CCCS.

Identity Construction and Embodiment

The concepts of identity and embodiment encapsulates a number of key sociological issues including race, gender, sexuality and class, which makes the exploration of the intertwined relationship between subculture and identity an essential part of this research. Young (1990) recognizes how identity can be problematic in relation to these societal issues as the logic of identity enforces binary opposition where there is a positive and the 'other', and subsequently many dichotomies are created throughout society, for example male/ female, or black/ white. The unfortunate reality is that the unity of the positive category is only made possible at the expense of the negative category, 'the second side lies outside the unified as the chaotic, unformed, transforming that always threatens to cross the border and break up the unity of the good' (Young, 1990 p99).

Anthony Giddens (1991), who has pioneered work in social sciences and looked extensively at the concept of identity, claims that the self is not a passive entity and although identity is heavily influenced by external factors in the environment, individuals are active agents in the construction of oneself. Stevenson (2002) concurs with this notion in a sporting context, describing the athlete as an 'active, self-reflexive actor', implying that individuals perform a social role in accordance with their surroundings. Giddens (1991) suggested that for every identity there must be a narrative, which is determined by events and decisions made in the persons' life and the world they live in, making identities dynamic and prone to change throughout the course of an individual's life.

The study of embodiment has been an important focus for sociologists concerned with identity construction and there have been different theories attempting to theorize the body self-relationship; perhaps most notably from Erving Goffman and Michel Foucault. Goffman (1959) was seen as a symbolic interactionist, putting an emphasis on human agency; meaning his interest was in the body as a component of action, concerned with how people present themselves in everyday life and the way in which people controlled their bodies in order to act out a certain role. This theory is evident in subcultures as the way in which individuals express their subcultural identity can be seen through their interactions. Goffman's approach carries three main features; the first of which is the idea that bodies are the material

property of the individual and thus people have the ability to control their bodily performance in order to facilitate social interactions. The second is that the body is not entirely a social product but the meanings accredited to it are as a result of non-verbal forms of communication known as body 'idioms' that the individual doesn't have complete control over. These vocabularies of body idiom are shared and give a means to classify information given off by the body. The third feature, which in a way is the formulation of the first two features claims that the body mediates the relationship between the individuals' self-identity and social identity (Shilling, 2003).

Michel Foucault made a profoundly influential contribution to the way in which the body was viewed in social sciences. The Foucauldian approach was characterised by power and discourse, making the body a substantive entity. He saw the body as a highly malleable subject which could be invested with forms of power. Discourse is the most important concept in Foucault's work, defined as, 'sets of deep principles incorporating specific grids of meaning which underpin, generate and establish relations between all that can be seen thought and said' (Foucault, 1974, cited in Shilling, 2003 p66). His work has been self-labelled a 'history of bodies' and explores the body and the effects of power on it in conjunction with the arrival of modernity. Foucault analyses the relationship between daily practices and large scale organisation of power considering the period of change where the shift from traditional to modern sciences occurred. Foucault claims this resulted in a shift in the target of discourse from the 'fleshy body', the naturalistic view of the body as a biologically produced entity to the 'mindful body', defined through its possession of consciousness, intentions and language and importantly , determined by discourse (Shilling, 2003).

The change from the physical body to the mindful body was evident in Foucault's 1979 study of contrasting forms of punishment. In this study, he compared the past monarchical systems which entailed public punishments of criminals where they would be beaten, burned and dismembered, depicting the body as a highly visible target of visible repression with the nineteenth century prison system, where space was managed for the surveillance of the prisoners in order to gain access to the minds of the criminals, epitomised by the panoptical system; a surveillance disciplinary technique enforced to encourage prisoners to monitor themselves and exert self-control (Shilling, 2003). The arrival of modernity induced a transition in the

powerful institutions like the government's concerns for people's lives and well-being as opposed to their death, which led to repressive forms of control to be replaced by stimulations of desire. This allowed governments to assert a greater degree of power and control of populations (Shilling, 2003). The 'Foucauldian' approach will be integral to the research into identity construction in bodybuilding.

Sport Subcultures and Globalisation

An array of sports including rock climbing (Donnelly and Young, 2001), skateboarding (Beal and Wilson, 2004), boxing (Wacquant, 2003), windsurfing (Wheaton, 2004), rugby (Donnelly and Young, 2001), surfing (Booth, 2003, Pearson, 1979, Ford and Brown, 2006) as well as bodybuilding (Klein, 1993, Brown, 1999, Denham, 2008) have been the focus of subcultural analysis in past research. It has been noted in subcultural analysis (Beal and Wilson, 2004, Keiwa, 2002, Wheaton, 2003) that participants involved in sports such as windsurfing, skating and climbing appear to have more stable and shared notions of their subcultures and forms of status and identity. Crosset and Beal (2007) concur with this notion stating that subculture is especially applicable to segments of 'off-beat' sports, adding that members of these sports relish the distinction from larger society, which leads to two interrelated questions for research; is sport oppositional? And do participants want to construct a marginalised, oppositional identity and subculture?

Surfing is a popular area for subcultural analysis and will serve as a useful example of how a sport subculture can be fragmented and illustrates how a sport and subculture can be globalised and subsequently 'glocalised'. This fragmentation within a subculture creates an interesting perception of the participants' identity and status, which relates to the essential sociological concepts of agency and structure, and the way in which participants exercise their agency by conforming to one of the fragmented sub worlds within the subculture. The subcultural styles identified in surfing range from the Hawaiian beach boys, who characterised by hedonism justify surfing by the pleasure they take from it, to the highly structured and regimented lifestyle of Australian lifesavers, where surfing was implemented by occupation. There is also the carefree fun lifestyle exemplified by surfers in California and the spirituality of soul-surfers, who surf because they feel a real sense of connection with the ocean. The nihilism and aggression characteristic of the punk-rock generation and the success driven, health conscious professional surfers who compete on the ATP world tour (Ford and Brown, 2006).

The differing subcultural styles raise interesting sociological issues about the sports' relationship with dominant culture, which will be applicable to the analysis of bodybuilding subculture. Some of the styles are portrayed as oppositional, like the

nihilism and aggression of the punk-rock generation surfers which will only serve to keep the sport and subculture marginalised, whereas the professional surfers who endorse products and act as role models can hardly be perceived as oppositional to mainstream society (Crosset and Beal, 2007). It is important to consider the effects globalisation has on subculture and vice-versa; most of the different subcultural style identified by Ford and Brown (2006) are typified by a place or time, but the amalgamation of these differing subcultural styles comprise the overall subculture (Wheaton, 2007, p288).

They illustrate that lifestyle sport cultures can be thought of as taste cultures in which the specialist subcultural media play a central role in disseminating information about their activities to their members and the creation and circulation of the symbols and meanings of subcultural capital.

Bodybuilding Subculture

In order to fully understand bodybuilding in contemporary society, it is important to grasp and consider its history and the way in which it has evolved into the sport and subculture that it is today. Wiegers (1998) attributes bodybuilding's origins to the concept of 'muscular christianity' and sport in the nineteenth century. The notion that building a strong, disciplined body made an individual a good disciple of god was prevalent at this time and despite the social phenomenon that bodybuilding has evolved into, it has retained its emphasis on moral devotion, hard work and spiritual transcendence of the uncontrolled and unrestrained physical body (Whiston, 1990). During this era, professional 'strongmen' would display their strength in circuses which led to one of these performers, Eugene Sandow becoming the first recognized bodybuilder thanks to what people considered a perfect combination of muscular development and attractiveness, which signified the growing importance of the aesthetics of muscularity (Chapman, 1994). Bodybuilding boomed in the 1970s as it became fashionable and more pervasive in society, which Wiegers (1998) accredits to the emergence of the health and fitness industry and also, more specifically the release of the award-winning documentary Pumping Iron, which provided mainstream society with the first real insight the sport's subculture. Subsequently the two main subjects of the film, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Lou Ferrigno went on to become Hollywood actors, which helped in legitimising and adding popularity to bodybuilding. During the 1990's bodybuilding's popularity was unprecedented, making the sport a worldwide multi-billion dollar industry (Prokop and Neveux, 1994). Stovik's (2006) article, 'The Emancipation of Bodybuilding' looked into why the history of bodybuilding is segregated from histories of sport and physical education and even neglected by historians. The research concluded that the sports' disreputable past in the eyes of the prevailing middle class and the links to the subculture had to homosexuality were accountable for this; which is ironic considering the desired masculine stigma that bodybuilders aspire towards (Monaghan, 2001).

Exploring the body-self relationship is a prominent topic in many sport sociology studies and will be greatly important when conducting research on bodybuilding subculture. Sparkes (1999) acknowledges this link, suggesting that bodies are essential when analysing the narratives of sports people as athletes tell stories about

and through their bodies which in turn uncovers things about their culture. Shilling (1993) refers to 'body projects', a notion becoming increasingly prevalent in western culture, where a high value is placed on an aesthetically pleasing physique. The body is seen as 'an entity which is in the process of becoming; a project that should be worked at and accomplished as a part of the individual's self-identity'.

Wieggers (1998) argues that bodybuilding has become a popular means by which people, particularly men can assert their self-identities through the development of healthy bodies. Fussel (1991) agrees with this notion and believes that by constructing unnaturally large and striated muscles, bodybuilders are able to make 'powerful public and personal statements about who they are'. Bedarnek (1985) claims that bodybuilders have a more positive body-image than that of other sports, and that this improves self-esteem of its' participants. White and Gillet (1994, p20) propose that bodybuilding is a response to the uncertainty of how to live up to the expected masculine traits in society and the increased muscularity allows them to compensate for this and in effect validates a masculine identity;

Bodywork provides men with a site- their bodies and a cultural practice- the disciplinary regiments and discourses of bodybuilding- with which to redress personal anxieties through the pursuit of a muscular image that embodies normative masculinity”

Bodybuilders have a very distinct visual identification and it is easy to distinguish a successful bodybuilder from a person with a 'normal' physique. This is due to the nature of the sport which is essentially the judgement of appearance after working towards it through weight training for muscular hypertrophy, a specified diet and adequate rest (Hansen, 2005). Considering this, the question arises as to why an individual would desire such an 'abnormal physique' and subsequently achieve this identity, which moves the discussion on to a range of social issues including gender. Aspiring bodybuilder's may want to assert their place in the gender order. The gender order suggests;

...that men do benefit from the oppression of women, but at any given historical moment, there are also competing masculinities, some hegemonic, some marginalised (e.g. black or lower class), some stigmatized (e.g. gay). Hegemonic masculinity, the form dominant today, is defined in relation to

various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to femininities. The gender order is thus a system that is constantly being created, contested and changed both in the relationships and power struggles between men and women and in the relationships and power struggles between men (Messner, 1992, p18).

The connotations that 'hyper masculinity' carries, depicting participants in the sport as 'macho' and 'bravado', complies with the able bodied, western, heterosexual, white male view of the world which is dominant in society (Pronger, 1999). This raises an interesting question as to where bodybuilding subculture stands in terms of sexuality and gender. A bodybuilder's obsession with their look, and for that matter other masculine muscular bodies may create an interesting paradox which is contradictory to hegemonic masculinity.

Klein's book 'Little Big Men' explored bodybuilding subculture on the west coast of America and is one of the most widely recognized pieces of literature for this particular subculture. The book presents the findings of Klein's field study into bodybuilding subculture in which he was able to construct a 'social-psychological male configuration that includes narcissism, homophobia, hyper-masculinity and fascism.' These are themes that are associated with the subculture for this sport and therefore need to be addressed as they are issues in wider society. Klein states that the sport is marginalised, however he held out hope that the subculture may have become more accepted in broader society. This generates an interesting thesis; asking whether the sport has become more accepted in mainstream culture?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Justification for a Qualitative Study

The theoretical purpose of this study is to apply a subcultural analysis to the sport of bodybuilding, enabling the research thesis to be confirmed or rejected. In order to determine whether or not bodybuilding has become more accepted into mainstream culture in the past twenty years, an insightful research method must be implemented which will provide the researcher with the relevant information needed to produce a conclusive argument either way. There are two broad categories of research methods; quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research entails the collection of numerical data with the purpose of explaining a particular phenomenon (Muijs, 2004). Qualitative research involves the investigative approaches which focus on a natural setting, have an interest in meanings, perspectives and understandings, place an emphasis on process, and have a concern for inductive analyses and grounded theory (Patton, 2005).

The most appropriate paradigm of research for this is qualitative methodology. Quantitative methods will not be used as they aren't relevant to the research thesis, as the study is concerned with the ontological perspective of bodybuilders. An important distinction between the two research paradigms is that in quantitative research, the data is collected by objective methods, whereas in qualitative research the researcher is an integral part of the investigation (Jacob, 1998). Sparkes (1992) elaborates on this notion, explaining that it is impossible to conduct qualitative research subjectively because we have a social repertoire of assumptions and opinions which influence our outlook. This refers to the ontological perspective of the researcher; the way in which they view the social world, and the implications this will have on the research (Mason, 2002). It is imperative that the researcher recognizes that the alternative ontological perspectives of the subcultural members as it will be extremely useful in determining how marginalised the subculture currently is.

Although it is inevitable that qualitative research will be influenced by the researcher's assumptions, it is important that the researcher attempts to detach themselves from these assumptions in order to eliminate the possibility of the preordained results (McNeil, 2005). In this sense, the researcher should attempt to use an epistemological approach, which entails discarding assumptions and attempting to make objective observations in order to gain a more accurate insight;

If a 'real' reality is assumed, then the posture of the knower must be one of objective detachment or value freedom in order to be able to discover 'how things really work (Guba, 1984, p108).

In accordance with this premise, Ned Polsky (1967) offered developments in the actual ethnographic methodology involved in subcultural studies. He believed that the researcher's job was to understand and document the deviant groups' point of view without a predetermined bias, which entails working dispassionately and from a purely objective perspective (Gelder, 2005).

Considering both ontology and epistemology, and the interrelated sets of societal assumptions that they produce, it must be accepted that this phenomenological research will be of an interpretive paradigm, which states that 'the social world is complex, that the researchers and subjects are fundamentally and subjectively attached to the world and that people define their own realities' (Silk *et al.* 2005, pg. 7). Patton (2002) suggests that qualitative data can be attained by three main types of data collection; in-depth, open ended interviews; direct observation; and written documents. The most appropriate method for this research will be an in-depth open ended interview in the form of a focus group as interviews offer direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge, which will provide the researcher with the data required to inform the research question (Patton, 2002). The research is attempting to gain an accurate insight into the subculture of bodybuilding from the perspective of amateur participants in order to inform an argument regarding the thesis.

Data Collection/ Sampling

Interviewing is probably the most commonly used method in qualitative research and refers to in-depth, semi-structured forms of interviewing. Mason (2002, p62) suggests that qualitative interviewing is characterised by the following common features:

- An interactional exchange of dialogue between the researcher and the participant(s)
- A relatively informal style in the form of a discussion as opposed to a question and answer format.
- The researcher will have a thematic, topic-centred, biographical or topical approach; there will be a series of topics, themes or issues that will be covered enabling the interview to have a fluid and flexible structure and allowing for unexpected themes to be developed.
- Through the process of dialogic interaction in the interview, the relevant contexts are brought into focus and knowledge is constructed and reconstructed as opposed to simply being reported.

The focus group will last approximately ninety minutes and will cover the research topics relevant to the research question. This method of research was chosen as the research requires the subcultural member's thoughts, feelings, opinions and experiences to be portrayed in the appropriate contextual setting. The view of the researcher is that knowledge and evidence are contextual, situation and interactional and thus the typical dynamic of a focus group makes it the optimum choice, as it ensures that participants draw upon social experience or processes, and allows the researcher to explore how situational interactions take place and how issues are contextualised (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000).

Designing and conducting the qualitative focus group interview involved rigorous planning to ensure that the structure and flow of the interview felt like what Burgess (1984, p102) referred to as a 'conversation with purpose'. In order for the focus group to be a success, a substantial amount of intellectual preparation was required to enable the researcher to control the general flow of the interview by developing mechanisms to handle the social dynamics of the group. The purpose of the

research must never be lost in order to generate relevant data and enable intellectually compelling and systematic interpretations and judgements (Mason, 2002). In order to develop these skills, a pilot interview was conducted with one of the focus group participants which enabled the interview guide and the researcher's skills to be tested, scrutinised and improved in order to enhance the interview process for the 'real' focus group, in which useful data must be generated (Mason, 2002).

Sampling was an important process during the research design because the identification and choosing of the research subjects is the means by which the researcher gains relevant data. The purpose of sampling was to attain information about the wider population of the subculture by selecting a small number of the subculture which offers an accurate representation of the overall population (Gratton and Jones, 2010). When determining the sample size it was important to consider the research issues/ topics in terms of the desired depth and breadth of information. Marshall (1996) succinctly summarises this notion, stating that for a qualitative study, a suitable sample size is one that sufficiently answers the research question. Considering this, three bodybuilders who had competed at amateur level and were currently immersed in the sporting subculture was an adequate sample size. When selecting the individuals for the sample, a strategic approach was required, which led to a series of questions regarding the purpose of the sample (Mason, 2002, p123);

- What do I want my sample to do?
- What is the wider universe or population from which I wish to sample?
- What is the nature of my interest in this universe or population?
- What relationship do I want to establish, or do I assume exists, between the sample or selection I am making, and a wider population or universe?
- How can my sampling strategy help me to develop a theoretically and empirically grounded argument about 'something in particular'?

Adhering to these points of consideration, the chosen sample consisted of a bodybuilding coach, competitor and owner of a fitness supplement business, a Welsh junior Champion bodybuilder, and a relative newcomer to the sport who has had achieved quick success. It was important that the chosen subjects were competing at an amateur level and were located around the same area in order to

provide consistency in the group in terms of their position within the subculture and establish the relationship between the sample and the wider subcultural population. The research requires a glimpse into the sport's subculture through the lens of its amateur athletes. Accessing the sample was relatively simple and involved the researcher asking the 'gatekeeper' who had various connections within the bodybuilding community to ask individuals if they would be willing to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an essential element in achieving the research objectives. It is an on-going process which involves the researcher being constantly active. It allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic and to refine their interpretations (Basit, 2003). The focus group produced pages of raw material in the form of the interview transcript, which needed to be organised, focused and interpreted (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that the key process in the data reduction stage is the 'coding' of data, which is basically the organisation of data into conceptual categories. It is suggested that 'coding' is the first stage in providing some form of logical structure to the data. Gratton and Jones (2010) explain how each code is effectively a different category referred to as a 'bin' where data is placed. It is important for codes to be valid in terms of them reflecting what is being researched. Examples of codes in this research are 'Subcultural Stlye', 'Identity construction', and 'Bodybuilding and masculinity'. Codes should also be mutually exclusive to avoid any overlapping of categories and provide the themes for the discussion with distinction and clarity; they will often emerge from the conceptual framework which has been established prior to data collection, however unexpected codes may emerge during the data collection. After the initial stages 'coding' have been carried out, it will enhance the research to use the method of selective coding, which will relate the raw data to the aims and objectives of the research. This process involves highlighting cases from the raw data that illustrate the analysis or explain key concepts (Gratton and Jones, 2010). The researcher should look especially for parts of the data which are contradictory or confirmatory, and avoid what is referred to as 'confirmation bias', where the researcher specifically uses data which supports their own ideas (Gratton and Jones, 2010).

Ethical Consideration

It is unanimously accepted amongst research commentators that qualitative research methods such as focus group interviews require ethical consideration in respect of the participants' disclosure of private and personal information.

Any research that involves the participation of human subjects requires consideration of the potential impact that research has on those involved (Elliot, 2005, pg. 134).

There were measures taken throughout this study to ensure that the research was conducted in a morally and ethically acceptable manner. The participants were made aware of the nature of the study and given a copy of the interview information guide, informing them of the purpose of the study, where they figured in the research process, what happens with the results, information about how their privacy would be protected, some useful background information, and a list of the topics which would be discussed in the focus group. The participants were given informed consent forms which stated that they must read the interview information guide, and allowed them to permit the use of the data they contributed to in the interview. Considering the private nature of some of the topics discussed in the focus group, including the use of illegal drugs, confidentiality was essential. This was achieved by the use of pseudonyms, and there will be no information given about participants which could expose their identities. The participants were given the option to view the interview transcript before it was used in the discussion to ensure that the data was accurate and fair. The participants chose the venue for the interview, which incidentally was the natural setting for their environment; the gym. The participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any point.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bodybuilding and the construction of a 'hyper-masculine' Identity

Bodybuilding stands as the existential angst of masculinity because by reducing sport to a battle with and against one's body, bodybuilding strips athletics down to its purely manhood-generating and manhood-affirming functions (Wiegers, 1998, p155).

The concepts of masculinity, and furthermore hypermasculinity are strongly associated with the bodybuilding subculture due to the masculine connotations that are inherent with a muscular mesomorph body type. This is the sought after physique in the sport, characterised by a well-developed chest and arm muscles along with wide shoulders tapering down to a narrow waist (Mishkind et al., 1987). The fact that successful bodybuilders possess the most extreme forms of this physique, subsequently poses questions as to the motivations behind achieving such an extreme physique. Klein (1993) claims that bodybuilding men are neurotically insecure, and engaged in a futile search for a hypermasculine body image, which coincides with the way in which bodybuilders have been depicted in relevant literature; as feeling inferior, lacking masculinity and displaying narcissistic and homosexual tendencies (Wiegers, 1998). Investigating this negative labelling of members of the bodybuilding subculture was one of the key aspects of this research and an important factor for determining the overall thesis; whether or not bodybuilding is gaining greater acceptance into mainstream culture.

Bodybuilding is an intriguing subject for the growing academic interest in the body and its status within the sociology discipline. The theories provided by Michel Foucault on the relationship between the body and society can be usefully applied to the subculture of bodybuilding to help explain what motivates the subcultural members have for participating in this sport. Foucault argues that the body constitutes the link between daily practices and the large scale organisations of power as it becomes increasingly subject to social controls (Wiegers, 1998). The way in which certain institutional values and knowledge are inscribed on the body is evident in bodybuilding. Participants spoke of 'five a.m. cardio sessions', 'strict dieting' and 'training twice a day' to achieve the sought after physique for bodybuilding, which eliminates any claim that the body is an essential, pre-discursive entity, but instead suggests that it a malleable subject which is the target of social control (Foucault,

1979). It also exemplifies the effect which power enforces on 'docile bodies', through the regiment and discipline which characterise members of the bodybuilding subculture. 'J' claims that the most positive impact that bodybuilding has had on his life is the structure and regiment that it has brought him. These active forms of 'practice' show that the participants are attempting to construct a particular body type based on what they feel is socially dominant, 'If you're a guy and you're not a physical person, as far as I'm concerned you're not really filling your evolutionary niche. It's part of our culture for men to be physical...in good shape'. Bodybuilding is a prime example of a 'body project' which is a means by which people can assert their self-identities through developing healthy bodies (Shilling, 1993).

White and Gillet (1994) argued that bodybuilding was a response to a 'crisis in masculinity', where men felt powerless and unsure of themselves as a result of the disparity between masculine traits which they were expected to uphold. This notion was illustrated in the focus group, where the questions of which men are currently considered desirable in society. The participants were keen to clarify their masculine identity, using self-descriptive terms such as 'alpha-male' and 'real man'. However they did acknowledge this form of masculinity may not be perceived as the most desirable and even suggest that their body image has lost desirability since the nineties.

P: Plus there was that whole nineties muscle craze where films with big muscly guys became popular, and acting ability wasn't even important.

J: At that time, these people were what women found attractive, whereas now girls find Justin Bieber attractive.

M: The taste has changed from the big alpha-male to the pre-pubescent teen idol.

This reluctance to conform to what they deem is more socially desirable can be interpreted as an act of deviance and will inevitably add to the oppositional nature of the subculture. It also illustrates Padfield's (1980) theory that social changes that remove power from individuals can lead to a refusal to accept this powerlessness, which produces 'flamboyant displays' of cultural symbols such as muscularity, which

provides a compensatory means by which they can construct and validate a particular muscular identity.

Identifying the Subculture: Subcultural Style

Subcultural style is an imperative means by which a subculture is identified and then analysed. One of the most notable commentators on subcultural style is Dick Hebdige (1979), who suggested that the portrayal of style in any subculture has four main purposes; as intentional communication, as bricolage, as homology, and as signifying practice. These forms of style were apparent in the research conducted on bodybuilding subculture and make important contributions to the insightful analysis of this subculture.

Style as Intentional Communication

Style as intentional communication refers to the distinction between visual ensembles of spectacular subcultures from those favoured in mainstream culture. Eco (1973, p125) suggests that it is important to observe style of people in mainstream culture as it provides a normative form of style for which subcultural style can be compared to, 'not only the expressly intended communicative object...but every object may be viewed...as a sign'. For example, the conventional clothing worn by 'normal' people on the street are significant as they convey a series of important messages; the outfit has been chosen within the constraints of the person's financial capability and taste preferences, which in turn adhere to a corresponding set of socially prescribed roles and options (Hebdige, 1979). These outfits represent normality as opposed to deviance. Intentional communication is different; it is meant to be separate from social norms, it has been consciously constructed and directs attention to itself. This is largely apparent in the observations of bodybuilding subculture and was discussed in the focus group.

M: Well, I think the obvious thing which is quite unique to our sport is the physique thing...the general shape and size of a bodybuilder is quite obvious. Guys who are using (steroids) tend to be more vascular and you can tell by their appearance... and there are certain brands which you see a lot of bodybuilders wearing...you know 'Muscle-tech' or 'Musclepharm' t-shirts and stuff like that.

J: I think because we're big guys, it's more comfortable to wear training gear...

It was evident, from the appearance of the focus group participants that they were not concerned with conforming to the conventional modes of sartorial discourse. They were all in 'training gear', with different bodybuilding brands printed across their clothes, two of the three subjects brought with them a protein drink inside a 'shaker' which is a popular accessory amongst bodybuilders as it provides an easy means for their high demand of daily supplements. An important point was made by 'M' in the focus group; that the distinctive physique of members of their subculture was unique to their sport, possibly more so than any other, and it played a major role in the intentional communication of style. This possession of what Fussell (1991) refers to as 'unnaturally large and striated muscular bodies' is the most obvious form of their subcultural style. It was absolutely evident, by the appearance of these men that they were expressing the same style and thus, adhering to a set of norms within their subculture.

It is through intentional communication that bodybuilders convey their subcultural style and it is through his means that the negative stigma associated with the sport is created. Birrell and Donnelly (2004) commentate on Goffman's theory of problematic interactions involving the socially stigmatized. The theory suggests that in certain situations, we do not grant individuals with the deference they deserve. The most common examples are with people with physical or mental conditions that are judged as visibly deviating from the norm, but can also be used to explain cultural treatment of members of unapproved groups. The bodybuilders from the focus groups felt they had been subjected to this treatment and it was brought up by them when asked about their negative experiences as members of the bodybuilding subculture.

P: ...the other negative experience is the stigma which is attached...a lot of people talk a lot of rubbish about you and they spread rumours about the negative stigmas attached to the sport for example steroid use and stuff like that, and people just don't understand it...they call me 'roider boy'...

The admittance to knowing about the negative stigma attached to the sport prior to becoming involved in the subculture tells the researcher an interesting message

about the individuals' pursuit of a subcultural identity which is perceived as deviant and oppositional by broader society.

Style as Bricolage

Hebdige (1979) suggests that it is the way in which commodities are used in subculture which marks the subculture off from the more conventional forms of culture. This helps in understanding what makes bodybuilding the subculture that it is; what does it use to show its unique subcultural style. The anthropological concept of bricolage is useful to explain how subcultural styles are constructed. In this context, Hawkes (1977, p131) gave this definition of bricolage;

[Bricolage] refers to the means by which the non-literate, non-technical mind of so called primitive man responds to the world around him. This process involves 'a science of concrete' (as opposed to our 'civilised science of the abstract') which far from lacking logic, which in fact carefully and precisely orders, classifies and arranges into structures the minutiae of the physical world in all their profusion by means of a 'logic' which is not their own. The structures, 'improvised' or made up (these are rough translations of the process of bricolage) as *ad hoc* responses to an environment, then serve to establish homologies and analogies between the ordering of nature and that of society, and so satisfactorily 'explain' the world and make it able to be lived in.

This theory of structured improvisations can be used to explain a system of communication used by subcultures. In a sense, subcultures use bricolage to adapt, subvert and extend prominent societal discourse, to give a specific meaning. Clarke (1975, p75) explains;

Together, object and meaning constitute a sign, and, within any one culture, such signs are assembled, repeatedly, into characteristic forms of discourse. However, when the bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when that object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed.

Examples of this theory arose throughout the research where bodybuilders displayed acts of bricolage through their transformational use of different commodities; changing or subverting their original meanings. The most obvious way in which the participants functioned as bricoleurs was their use of anabolic steroids and importantly, the purpose of this use. This was a prominent topic throughout the focus group discussion, but was specifically talked about in relation to this theory when the question was asked about whether bodybuilding is a sport plagued by drug abuse;

M: People will class steroid use as abuse, because it's abusing what their intended form is... the medication for the treatment of severely ill patients, not to improve the look of people and to increase muscularity, lower body fat and prepare people for stepping on stage at a bodybuilding show.

Eco (1973) describes these subversive practices as 'semiotic guerrilla warfare', although the members of this subculture are not necessarily conscious of the meanings portrayed by these acts, this form of subcultural style is seen an intentional form of communication. As 'M' points out, in the bodybuilding subculture, steroids are not used for their intended purpose, which creates a visible rupture between the natural and constructed context (Hebdige, 1979). In this case, the use of anabolic steroids, which in this country are illegal, contributes to the argument that this subculture is oppositional and deviant.

Style as Homology

Subcultural style can be observed in the form of homology. This concept was first applied to subculture by Willis (1978) to describe the fit between the values and lifestyles of a subcultural group. This aspect of style concerns itself with correcting the misconception that subcultures are chaotic, lawless and lack order; it suggests that subcultures are characterised by internal structures, within which each part is integrally connected and it is through this connection that members of the subculture are able to make sense of the world (Hebdige, 1979). Clarke et al (1993) believed that the members of a particular subculture were either intrinsically or in their adapted form, homologous with the focal concerns, rituals, practice, structure and collective self-image of the subculture (Hebdige, 1979).

This thesis is true in bodybuilding; there is a homological relation between the individual and the 'freaky' and 'unnatural' physiques, the widely acknowledged and somewhat accepted use of anabolic steroids, the desire to be viewed differently and the ability to achieve things that other people can't, the pursuit of a 'perfect' physique and the vanity which comes with this process, the addiction to the hard-core training involved, and the determination and necessary discipline and regiment required to achieve success in this sport. These themes were resonated in the focus group as the subcultural members were reflective of these core values through the way they became involved in the sport and their motivations for involvement.

P: ... So yea, I just needed that competitive nature and that target really to go and do something productive ...I couldn't compete anymore in wrestling as I'd broken my hand, hurt my shoulder ... so it got to a point where I was like 'I need a training focus' and that's what it gave me because I was always going to lift anyway.... I see myself doing this sport for a number of years now because I want to achieve what I can with it because it's something that fits around my lifestyle and interests.

J: I injured my shin splints which meant that I couldn't do the cardio, which then meant I was carrying on with the weights, which got a bit addictive... within the space of a about six months I did my first show as a junior and haven't looked back to be honest.

M: ...when rugby sort of got taken away, I had to find a replacement for that goal... with rugby you're always sort of competing with people being either bigger, faster, stronger in some shape or form and then that competition was taken out, so I guess going to the gym, weight training and bodybuilding where you're competing with yourself everyday suited my background.

A common theme amongst all focus group participants was their gateway into the sport; as a way of filling a void left by their inability to partake in other sports at a high level, due to injury. The nature of the sports that they had previously been involved with is also notable; wrestling and rugby are both contact sports in which participants aim to assert physical dominance over their opposition. They all refer to their love for training, and how the sport suits their lifestyle, they are goal-seeking, motivated

people with a desire to attain a physique which is considered abnormal and goes against the grain of mainstream culture, which is conveyed through their practice.

Style as Signifying Practice and the Fragmentation of the Subculture

Analysing subcultural style as signifying practice allows the researcher to gain a more holistic understanding of the subculture as it examines the subtle and complex differences between marginal and mainstream cultural formations. Analysis of subcultural style should favour polysemy; the potential for each sign to have multiple related meanings (Hebdige, 1979). This allows the subculture to be internally analysed and allows for the exploration of the various subcultural styles within a subculture. This notion is closely related to the theory of having different subworlds within a social world, which in the case of this research is the specific subculture of competitive bodybuilding within the social world of gym or fitness culture.

Acknowledging that the different styles represent different signifying practices allows for a closer look at the relationship between experience, expression and signification in subculture, and at the way style is read (Hebdige, 1979).

This notion partly pertains to the fragmentation of a subculture, and in the case of this research, the different messages conveyed by practice is illustrated by the varying groups' subcultural styles. In the focus group, participants described internal groups within the subculture, often leading to dualistic relationships, including professional and amateur, competitors and non-competitors, and 'natural' and 'users'. The geographical location of where the bodybuilding groups are based also determines subcultural style. Each of these different subcultural groups carry differing subcultural identities, which can become problematic within the subculture as it enforces binary opposition where there is a positive category and the other category; where the positive category is only made possible at the expense of the other (negative) category (Young, 1990). These various dichotomies are apparent in the fragmentation of the bodybuilding subculture and were spoken about in the focus group, starting with the participants keenly distinguishing between people who have actually competed at a bodybuilding show and people who haven't.

J: Then there are those people that don't compete which include those people we were talking about that irritate us. They're the ones that have to earn our respect in that sense, but then when they become part of the circle they're in.

P: It's like with fighters who get that automatic level of respect from getting in the ring, win or lose. It's all well and good in MMA culture to say you train MMA, but until you actually get in the ring, it's that rite of passage you have to go through to be considered a certified member.

This form of hierarchy is not exclusive to bodybuilding and is common in all sports, which leads to another similar distinction between two groups; amateur and professional bodybuilders.

J: ...the competitive bodybuilders have this level of respect amongst them and this fraternity. They are going to feel superior; because they are...they do it professionally.

This reference by 'J' to superiority in the subculture felt by one group over another coincides with the binary opposition of two different identities. The professional athletes will feel they have a different subcultural identity than those in the amateur ranks and this will be apparent in their practice, and thus subcultural style. This concept of superiority of certain members/ groups in a subculture was acknowledged by Hebdige (1979, p131) who claimed that the 'distinction between originals and hangers-on is always a significant one in subculture'. What he is referring to here is people who are partially submerged in the subculture but lack authenticity; the examples he uses are 'weekend hippies' or 'plastic punks'. These unauthentic subcultural members exist in bodybuilding subculture;

J: But then there are those guys, who act like they are involved in the sport, but they have no intention of ever competing, they just want an aesthetic physique and like the idea of what they see this sport as. They don't eat eight meals a day; they don't dedicate their lives to the sport. They aren't bodybuilders, they are glorified gym goers.

This distinction is an important one, as it illustrates a rift between the subculture and broader gym culture. It also suggests a level of superiority felt by the 'authentic' competitive bodybuilders. This was evident in the opinion that the focus group

participants had of the late Aziz 'Zyzz' Shavershian; an Australian bodybuilder, internet celebrity and model, who famously died from a steroid related, aged twenty-two. Zyzz, who has become renowned in bodybuilding/fitness culture for pioneering a new breed of bodybuilders known as 'The Aesthetics' who eschewed competition and directed their entire focus on attaining admiration on social media sites, viral videos and ubiquity at public events where they could be topless and display their physiques (Gagliardi, 2011).

M: Yea, you get the guys who want to look aesthetic and want to look like Zyzz or whatever his name is, where in fact Zyzz died from a heart attack due to consumption of large doses of anabolic steroids and stimulants as well as thyroid medication.

J: And a poor regulated diet

M: Well yea, he openly never used to eat very well at all. He used to take compounds and drugs to mask his piss poor diet and eventually it caught up to him in a sauna in Thailand where his heart gave way. Then, he was more of a party boy, looked good, there were all other sorts of class-A recreational drugs involved in his death as well.

There seemed to be a lack of sympathy for the death of 'Zyzz' from the members of the focus group, which can be attributed to the dislike for the bodybuilding subcultural style which 'Zyzz' was promoting which diverges from the sport's core values of discipline, diligence and hard work. The members of the focus group also seemed to be rather resentful of the way in which Zyzz abused anabolic steroids as they believed that it is people like him who give knowledgeable careful users like themselves a bad name.

J: It's just the people with the lack of knowledge that bring us down I think.; people that are doing it for the wrong reasons.

Globalisation and 'Glocalisation' of Bodybuilding Subculture

Another determining factor for the different subcultural styles displayed in bodybuilding is place/ location. This notion was apparent in Ford and Brown's (2006) work on surfing subculture, in which the differing styles were often accredited to a location. The subjects in the focus group claimed that American bodybuilders felt a level of superiority over them due to the USA being the sport's country of origin and producing the largest number of professional athletes in the sport than anywhere else (IFBB).

M: There's a community in the UK, in Wales and even locally down here is probably a mirror image of the some in places in America... to be fair amateur and national level competitors would easily turn pro in this countr ...Some of them might have a superiority thing but for me who has friends in the sport in both countries, it's just much more accessible and easy to fit bodybuilding into your lifestyle out there...it's just the opportunity is greater out there and there are more of them.

P: It's the 'mecca'...Southern California, Muscle Beach

This shows that an understanding from 'M' and 'P' of why a group from the same sporting subculture may feel a level of superiority over them as they acknowledge that the place in question is where the sport and subsequent subculture began and thus, they are attempting to emulate this subcultural style in a different location (South Wales). The specific details of how the subcultural styles may vary from one another is also mentioned here in reference to it being 'much more easy and accessible to fit bodybuilding into your lifestyle out there; more gyms, better gyms, more supplements, better supplements, cheaper food.'

Contradiction in Bodybuilding Subculture

The distinction between 'natural' bodybuilders and the majority of bodybuilders which use some form of anabolic steroids makes for an interesting dichotomy. The use of anabolic steroids is pervasive in bodybuilding and has been since it began, which naturally has led to it being a prominent theme in the subcultural analysis of this sport. The overt use of these illegal drugs make considerable contributions to the argument that this sport is oppositional and that the subculture is deviant in nature. It also creates one of the major contradictions in the sport as it contrasts two seemingly opposing philosophies; drug abuse which is detrimental to health and well-being, with bodybuilding's connection to the health and fitness industry (Klein, 1993). Klein (1993) explains the relationship between the sport and the health movement, which has dovetailed with western society's cultural obsession with aesthetics and a healthy lifestyle;

A crucial factor in the public acceptance gained by bodybuilding since 1975 has been its connection to the contemporary health movement. Attempting to piggyback on the rising tendencies of exercise consciousness in North America...the sport's ideologues periodically claim that they spearheaded the movement...

However when you consider that this sport accepts the use of anabolic steroids and makes no substantial attempt to eradicate their use from the sport, the wholesome, health-related portrayal of the subculture seems tainted and the way in which bodybuilders are touted as proponents of a healthy lifestyle seems inconceivable. This is due to the scientifically proven serious health risks which consumption of these drugs can cause to the body; including detrimental effects to both physiological and psychological health (Moffat, 1990). This topic was discussed extensively in the focus group, where participants suggested that in order to compete with everyone else in the sport, taking anabolic steroids is a necessity.

M: It's a level playing field, if you don't enter in the natural competitions; you need them to keep up with the other guys

P: Like we've said it's under the carpet but everyone accepts it...

The point made by 'P' here is consonant with what how Klein (1993, p149) viewed the same issue back in the early nineties claiming that despite the International Federation of Bodybuilding (IFBB) actively promoting the sport and subculture as wholesome and healthy, 'most people both inside and outside the subculture understand that steroid use is pervasive in subculture.' The IBFF established a policy on drug testing in 1990, which has transcended down to the amateur ranks, but much like at the professional level, the bodybuilders I spoke to do not feel that the testing is credible and there is no real attempt to stop the use of anabolic steroids in the sport.

P: Well yea they do listen, but I think the promotional aspect is something where people don't really want to promote it and a lot of stuff is swept under the carpet in regards to the negative aspects of stuff and not talked about which makes the whole thing seem shady

J: ... they do have a problem with it. They can't be openly seen to be acknowledging the fact that people are using stuff like that purely because of the stigmatism that comes along with it. At the final they will actually bring along a testing team but the people who are tested are hand-picked and it is only don't because the organisation needs to be seen as actively testing their athletes. Open talk and discussions of steroid use will actually cause for you to have a ban, so in that sense it's kept hush-hush, even though the judges know it happens and the athletes know it happens...

The participants in the focus group candidly admitted their consumption of anabolic steroids but were appetent in justifying their use as they were knowledgeable about the effects which the drugs have on the body and blame the ignorance and lack of knowledge of certain groups of 'users' combined with the poor quality of the drugs on the illegal 'black markets' for giving consumption of steroids and subsequently the sport a bad reputation.

P: If you're talking about 'gym rats' that take copious amounts of all kinds of crap they can get their hands on and is terrible stuff then yea, probably a true statement. But in fact, the higher you go through the sport, the more educated people are and the less it can be deemed abusive.

M: It's not helped by the criminal markets that are just out there to make money and mix that with the lack of knowledge some people have and it isn't going to go well... the danger come from the underground labs where they put dodgy compounds in it.

The participants were sceptical about the 'natural' world of bodybuilding, implying that the individuals who claimed to be natural most of the time weren't, and even if they were they couldn't compete at the same level as the majority of bodybuilders who do 'use', which in essence denotes a level of superiority over 'natural' bodybuilders. This relates to the theory from the Chicago School, where Gordon (1947) suggested that within certain subcultures, to not conform to acts of deviance, which in this case is taking illegal drugs, is in fact a deviant act itself.

J: Natural bodybuilders...what are they? Most guys, who claim to be clean, really aren't.

M: And if they are, they can't compete at the same level as other guys. They can't keep up. I mean there are natural competitions...

Conclusion

It can be argued that bodybuilding culture is oppositional to the values of mainstream culture. After Klein's (1993) extensive ethnography of bodybuilding subculture in the early nineties he described the bodybuilding community as 'marginalised' and 'insulated', but made clear that he does hold out the possibility that one day the subculture may be accepted in mainstream culture. The thesis of this research is to determine whether or not the sport's subculture has become more accepted in mainstream culture since the time of Klein's study.

It is important to understand what is meant by oppositional in this context. Crosset and Beal (1997, p6) suggest that 'it is tempting to view all sport as oppositional or resilient subcultures. Sport is an institution that stands outside of everyday life, a distraction from the daily grind.' However they claim that other sociologists may have overestimated the oppositional potential of sport and claim that 'the everyday reality of sport which does not ensure that its outcome will support these dominant cultural expectations it itself a comfort in the highly regulated society which promotes autonomy and individualism.' Bodybuilding is definitely a sport which promotes autonomy and individualism, however unlike many other sports, there are obvious oppositional aspects of this sport which can't be ignored; namely the intimidating appearance of the athletes and the overt consumption of illegal drugs. There is a sense that individuals who partake in bodybuilding are happy to be detached from mainstream culture, and are intentionally constructing a marginalised and oppositional identity and subculture.

Interviewer: Do you consider the sport as oppositional?

P: I think it is. The part of you that wants to be different is the part of you that wants to achieve things that other people can't do, that 'normal' people can't do.

J: I think the reason that we tend to try and separate ourselves is for the reason that people don't understand. I think if people were a bit more accepting then we would be less inclined to be enclosed in what we do and wouldn't try to keep ourselves to ourselves.

It is clear from the participants of this focus group that they see the oppositional nature of their subculture as a positive thing which separates them from what 'normal' people can't do. It is also suggested that the reason for their marginalisation is as a result of the dualistic relationship between them and mainstream culture, which doesn't accept them. One of the most interesting findings from this research was that participants were adamant that the sport has made no progress in becoming incorporated into mainstream society since the nineties, claiming that it was more accepted then than it is now, suggesting that it has become more marginal. When asked if bodybuilding had become more accepted in broader culture, the participants did not think so;

M: Not into mainstream society

J: Maybe within the gym fraternity they are well-known

P: I think it's easy to get misled with that, because a lot of people are involved in gym culture now, especially students, and so they will know who these people are, so they think it's acceptable but actually in the broader spectrum, once you get out of that gym environment you start to realise that most people don't know about it,

J: I think it was different back then, people appreciated what they did much more than they appreciate what we do these days.

P: I think it's that the media battle has almost been lost; you've talked about the media perception of things. If the sport was willing to change and appeal more to the masses then we could have gone that way...

The general consensus is that the subcultural members of bodybuilding are not concerned with trying to make the sport mainstream, as they feel that in order to achieve this; the focal values of the sport would have to be altered. The subculture is unique and marginal, but this is not being contested by members of the subculture; they are not trying to impose the sport on mainstream culture. However there is a feeling of stagnation in the sport, with not many iconic professionals leading the sport, so this may be a concern for within the sport. In conclusion, the bodybuilding community have no aspirations to evolve into an entity which appeals to the entire population as this would in turn destroy the subculture itself.

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