The drive for the 'perfect body'. A Bourdieun analysis of the body image perceptions and health behaviours among male weight trainers.

Dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Chester for the degree of Master of Science.

4th October 2013.

Abstract

Whilst there exists a small body of literature that has examined male weight-trainers body image perceptions and health behaviours, very few have employed a sociological perspective or a qualitative research approach. The central objective of this thesis, therefore, is to investigate, using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, the body image perceptions and health behaviours among male weight-trainers. To do this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven male weight-trainers who attended weight-training gyms in the North-West of England. The results indicate that male weight-trainers hold specific body image habituses. These perceptions were athleticism, leanness and muscularity. To all weight-trainers in this study, these body image perceptions encompassed a 'perfect body'. The health behaviours of weight-trainers revealed that their diets are structured and organised. There was evidence to suggest that weight-trainers consume particular foods, including a diverse source of protein foods, all of which were to complement their weight-training goals. Supplementation was widespread among weight-trainers. However, few health concerns were considered when using them. The results of this study indicate that supplementation use was guided on one principle, trial and error. All in all, the study provides evidence to suggest that the social fields (e.g. weight-training gyms) that weight-trainers engage in help to construct and develop their body image perceptions and health behaviours. Those that possessed a physique that represented the dominant habitus, were inclined to possess high levels of cultural capital, in this case, trusted and valued knowledge regarding weight-training, nutrition and supplementation.

Declaration

I can confirm that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or examination. I have read and understood the University's regulations on plagiarism and I declare this as my own original work.

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Chapter One. Introduction

While research concerning body image has mainly focused upon women, there is a growing emphasis on the body image of men (Murray & Touyz, 2012). The reason for this is that research increasingly suggests that males are suffering similar body image dissatisfactions compared with females (McCreary & Sasse, 2000). This body image dissatisfaction among men is said to have been caused by a number of factors. These factors include the stigmatisation associated with excessive weight and thinness (Pampel, 2012), and western society's increasing fixation with the male physique appearing muscular (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 1999). It appears that the western media have created this fixation on a male body looking muscular. For example, studies have demonstrated that the mass media increasingly portray images of male bodies that show a specific, stereotypical muscular and fit individual (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Lin, 1998; Morrison & Halton, 2009). This immense pressure to conform to this stereotype has led some men to adopt health compromising behaviours and strategies (Baghurst & Kissinger, 2009). These can range from bulimic eating behaviours, an eating disorder characterized by binge eating and purging (Goldfield, Blouin & Woodside, 2006), and body dysmorphic disorder, more specifically, muscle dysmorphia, a condition where an individual is fixated on the idea that he is not muscular enough (Chung, 2001).

According to Pickett, Lewis and Cash (2005), because of the emphasis on the muscular body, many men have chosen to weight lift to achieve the 'desired' male physique. This has led a number of scholars to research both male bodybuilders and male weight-trainers (Lantz, Rhea & Cornelius, 2002). Research suggests that both these sub-groups suffer greater preoccupations

with their body image and are far more likely to engage in health damaging behaviours than the average male (Mangweth et al. 2001). Whereas male bodybuilders who train for bodybuilding competitions have appeared to have extensive scholar attention, male weight-trainers who do not train for competitions are generally an underresearched sub-group. Most research on male weight-trainers has tended to focus on body image perceptions and health behaviours by using a quantitative research approach with little sociological analysis. Whilst past studies have informed us that male weight-trainers have a strong drive for masculinity (Robert, Chandler & Gammage, 2009), and meet the clinical criteria for eating disorders (Pickett, Lewis & Cash, 2004), few studies have sought to examine systematically the body image perceptions and health behaviours of male weight-trainers from a sociological perspective. Furthermore, few studies have employed a qualitative research approach, in particular interviews, to acquire personal responses from male weight-trainers regarding their body image perceptions and health behaviours.

The aim of this study, therefore, is twofold: First. to examine in-depth what male weight-trainers body image perceptions and health behaviours are by using semi-structured interviews and second, to employ a Bourdieun analysis, drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field and capital to examine how male weight-trainers’ body image perceptions and health behaviours can be accounted for. In doing so, this particular study attempts to provide a deeper understanding of male weight-trainers’ body image perceptions and health behaviours by answering the following research question: The drive for the 'perfect body'. A Bourdieun analysis of the body image perceptions and health behaviours among male weight-trainers.

To address the objectives of this study, this thesis is broken down into several chapters. Chapter Two reviews the relevant existing literature on the subject. Chapter Three provides details and reasons for the research design, the research methods and the research process employed by this investigation. Chapter Four explores sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital which form the theoretical framework for this thesis. Chapter Five presents and discusses the main findings of this thesis which focuses on male weight-trainers' body image perceptions and their health behaviours; in particular, their dietary and supplementation behaviours. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the thesis by reflecting on the significance of the results found, its contributions to the existing literature, its limitations, and suggests some future recommendations that new research may cover.

Chapter Two. Literature Review

The aim of this chapter is to review what is currently known regarding male weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours. To do this, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section outlines findings from a number studies of that have addressed male weight-trainer body image perceptions. The second section outlines the findings from different studies that have addressed male weight-trainer dietary behaviours.

2.1. Body image perceptions among male weight-trainers

Currently, only a small body of literature has been published on male weight-trainers' body image perceptions. This lack of investigation is surprising because the body image perceptions among men have had considerable analysis by scholars. It is clear that the body image perceptions of men are an extremely important area of examination because research shows that men are under increasing pressure to conform to a stereotype. For example, images of male bodies in the mass media have come, increasingly, to take on a specific, stereotypical form of a particularly fit, muscular individual which is putting pressure on males (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Lin, 1998; Morrison & Halton, 2009). This has led a number of investigators to report that men have the desire to make their body image appear more muscular (Launder, & Edwards, 2000; Standford, & McCabe, 2002; Bottamini, & Ste-Marie, 2006). This desire to attain a media or culturally driven ideal physique has led some men to adopt unhealthy behaviours and strategies (Baghurst & Kissinger 2009). Whilst male

weight-trainers' body image perceptions have been given limited attention by past scholars, even though past literature has suggested that men are more pressurised to conform to a particular muscular look than in the past, it is the intention of the rest of this section to outline what past literature has found regarding the body image perceptions of male weight-trainers. It appears that key themes that have been afforded the most attention in the literature are body weight, body shape, and perceptions of body image

2.1.1. Body Weight

Research suggests that male weight-trainers are dissatisfied with their body weight (Hallsworth, Wade & Tiggemann, 2005; Pickett, Lewis & Cash, 2005; Goldfield, Blouin & Woodside, 2006). More specifically, it has been found that some weight-trainers are dissatisfied because their body-weight is not high enough (Pickett, Lewis & Cash, 2005; Hallsworth, Wade & Tiggemann, 2005). In a study by Hallsworth, Wade and Tiggmann (2005), they suggest that some weight-trainers desire a higher ideal body weight because they have greater levels of body consciousness. They argue that weight-trainers are more body conscious and suffer greater body shame due to an over-emphasis on body appearance in the environments that they operate in. However, this notwithstanding, specific explanations as to why some weight-trainers want to increase their body weight are absent from current research. It appears that scholars have not identified precisely why some weight-trainers want their body weight to be higher. The findings would have been more thorough if scholars had asked weight-trainers directly why weight-gain was sought. This would allow a more contextualised understanding of their thought processes. A

potential reason for this lack of explanation is due to the methodology applied by the researchers. Their use of self-report questionnaires did not allow their weight-trainers to elaborate on their answers, therefore recognising the weight-trainers' motivation was going to be lost.

2.1.2. Body Shape

There appears to be a lack of investigation by scholars as to what weight-trainers' body shape dissatisfactions are. Only a handful of researchers have reported the body shape dissatisfactions among weight-trainers. In a study by Mangweth et al. (2001) they reported that a lack of muscle and a lack of leanness were two factors for weight-trainers' being dissatisfied with their body shape. A study by Pickett, Lewis and Cash (2005) on the other hand, observed more specifically that some weight-trainers are less satisfied with their abdominal area than their lower and upper torso. Whilst both investigations, to a degree, shed light on weight-trainers' body shape dissatisfactions, neither provides a comprehensive analysis to explain why weight-trainers have body shape dissatisfactions. Both findings would have benefited from examining the opinions of weight-trainers'. By observing weight-trainers' opinions, we can learn whether there are wider social processes that contribute to their mindset regarding body shape. A possible reason for this lack of comprehensive analysis is the theoretical perspective employed. Both studies appear to have used a psychological perspective. Whilst a psychological approach studies the behaviours and mental processes of individuals (Nevid, 2009), its study of human behaviour is arguably one dimensional, meaning it does not comprehensively examine the wider processes that may explain why particular

behaviours are employed. A much more systematic approach to studying why weight-trainers are dissatisfied with their body shape would be to apply a different theoretical perspective. A sociological approach, for instance, takes a comprehensive, critical and rigorous outlook of our lives in order to provide detailed justifications for why we act as we do (Giddens, 2009). Acknowledging this point, future studies should begin to adopt a sociological perspective, rather than a psychological one.

2.1.3. Perceptions of Body Image

Despite psychology being a prominent theoretical perspective in explaining weight-trainers' body image perceptions, a small body of scholars have applied a sociological perspective. In a study by Smith and Stewart (2012), they used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital to explain weight-trainers' body image perceptions. By analysing messages and conversations on a weight-trainer internet forum, they found that weight-trainers hold three body image perceptions: size, strength and leanness. These three perceptions formed what the authors called the "holy trinity" or more sociologically, the dominant habitus. Each perception was highly respected and valued among the weight-trainers. The authors observed that the field, the internet forum, contained hierarchical social positions, whereby weight-trainers who embraced and possessed the dominant habitus dominated the field. A weight-trainer was given high social status within the forum if the messages and conversations that were posted reinforced the dominant habituses. Weight-trainers who had high social positions within the forum dominated. They dominated in the sense that they were able to scrutinise other weight-trainers who did not embrace the habitus.

Having the ability to scrutinise other weight-trainers meant that you were recognised and accepted as being a role model. To increase one's social position within the internet forum, weight-trainers had to attract different forms of capital. The authors discovered that accumulating forms of capital established a connection between fellow weight-trainers and improved one's position within the forum. To acquire capital it was essential that weight-trainers posted messages or photos on the forum. For example, cultural capital, i.e., knowledge, could be acquired by posting nutritional or supplementation advice. In sum, embracing the internet forum's habitus, collecting different forms of capital improved the social standing of weight-trainers amongst other weight-trainers on the forum.

From summarising Smith and Stewart's (2012) investigation, the use of a sociological theory provided a richer explanation as to why weight-trainers' perceptions regarding body image emerge. However, whilst Smith and Stewart (2012) have provided a richer explanation behind weight-trainers' body image perceptions, their study does suffer from some limitations. Their use of unobtrusive observation (ethnography) and content analysis is a problem because they are not interacting with the participants. This is potentially a major drawback as the researchers are relying on their interpretation of what messages and posts mean. Therefore, without asking the participants directly, it will be difficult to clearly understand or explain the phenomenon (Gratton & Jones, 2004). The second issue is that their sample is arguably all hypothetical. There is no evidence to suggest that the users of the forum were indeed weight-trainers. This is because the internet forums are globally accessible, therefore precise participant involvement can never be upheld. Furthermore, internet

forum identities can be manipulated and fabricated, therefore obtaining precise sample criteria can always be potentially challenged.

2.1.4. Issues with Weight-trainer Body Image Studies

From the literature, a theme that appears to be emerging is that researchers investigating weight-trainers' body image perceptions are relying on particular methods to collect their data and are not applying a theoretical perspective to explain the results. The studies outlined so far have primarily used a quantitative approach employing questionnaires using Likert scales. Whilst this approach can provide large amounts of data, it can suffer from data generalisations (Bryman, 2012). Because this area has been characterised by this particular approach so far, it is therefore appropriate to engage in a different, complementary approach that might shed more light on the body image perceptions of weight-trainers. Scholars have not explained their results in relation to a theory. The lack of a theoretical perspective means that the findings within the literature cannot be critically questioned as to why such data emerged. As Gratton and Jones (2004) note, a theoretical framework is needed to not only make sense of the data collected, but also to allow the researcher to analytically review and critically explain the findings. Taking these points into consideration, future studies should begin to adopt a qualitative approach and apply more sociological perspectives to examine the data.

All told, it is clear that some male weight-trainers are dissatisfied with their body shape and weight. Weight-trainers are dissatisfied with not being heavy enough, not having enough muscle, and lacking leanness. From the literature outlined,

new investigations need to examine male weight-trainers' body image perceptions in greater depth and more critically. The studies reviewed in this section reveal that there is an overreliance on quantitative research methods and a lack of a theoretical perspective to explain the data collected. Future studies should try to fill this gap in the literature.

2.2. *Health behaviours of male weight-trainers*

2.2.1. Dietary behaviours of male weight-trainers

Similar to the depth of literature regarding male weight-trainers' body image perceptions, the range of investigations examining the dietary and supplementation behaviours of male weight-trainers is limited. Nevertheless, while the scope of research is small, scholars have made some interesting insights into the dietary and supplementation behaviours of male weight-trainers. Research indicates that some male weight-trainers are worried about their diets (Mangweth et al. 2001; Goldfield, Blouin, & Woodside, 2006). Specifically, it has been found that weight-trainers worry about their diets when they are not strictly followed (Mangweth et al. 2001). Despite these findings, the existing accounts fail to fully explore why some weight-trainers are worried about failing in their diet plan. We could assume that weight-trainers are worried about diet lapses because it will affect their weight-training and body image goals. This assumption could be true as nutrition is seen as a vital part of weight-training. As Slater and Phillips (2011) state, one's nutrition plan is crucial for the fuelling of the body for resistance training, promotion of body recovery after a training session, and the encouragement of body adaptations,

such as muscle hypertrophy (Slater & Phillips, 2011). Nonetheless, whilst the use of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual can identify mental disorders, in this case apprehensions regarding diet plans (Mangweth et al. 2001), these types of questionnaires do not provide the personal explanations of weight-trainers' worries over not following a diet plan. These personal explanations of a weight-trainer's diet plan may offer a greater insight into how reservations over a diet plan are formed. Without this, explanations for their attitude will remain speculative.

Despite this apprehension over what they eat, it has been found that some weight-trainers have a 'do whatever it takes' attitude (Atkinson, 2007), and have a 'learning by doing' approach with regard to their diets (Bailey, 2013). These mindsets have led a number of scholars to report unhealthy dietary behaviours (Oliosi, Grave & Burlini, 1999; Pickett Lewis & Cash, 2005; Goldfield, Blouin, & Woodside, 2006; Atkinson, 2007; Probert & Leberman, 2009; Smith & Stewart, 2012; Bailey, 2013). Goldfield, Blouin and Woodside (2006), for example, found that some weight-trainers' diets were strict in the sense that they met the criteria for an eating disorder, in this case bulimia nervosa, while Oliosi, Grave and Burlini (1999) reported that some weight-trainers use anabolic androgenic substances and synthetic hormones to support their weight-training program and goals. Furthermore, Smith and Stewart (2012) found that some weight-trainers over-consumed food to such an extent that it was reported that weight-trainers' were force feeding themselves. The reasons why these observed dietary behaviours occur are absent in the current body of literature. Nevertheless, different dietary behaviours can perhaps be explained by the different weight-training goals that weight-trainers want to achieve. For

example, it could be said that weight-trainers binge eat and purge to maintain a set body weight, while over-eating maybe to promote weight-gain. As scholars have reported, male weight-trainers have preoccupations over their body weight (Pickett, Lewis & Cash, 2005; Goldfield, Blouin & Woodside, 2006), therefore in order to contend with this, binge eating and purging may be a necessary behaviour.

Whilst the studies mentioned provide an element of scope regarding weight-trainers' dietary behaviours, such as having unhealthy dietary behaviours, they fail to provide wider explanations and detailed analysis into how these attitudes and behaviours arise. However, investigations from Smith and Stewarts (2012) and Atkinson (2007) are two notable studies that try to go beyond making generalised analysis. Both use a sociological perspective to help provide deeper justifications for the reasons why and how dietary behaviours are pursued. Smith and Stewart's (2012) investigation found that some weight-trainers were willing to sacrifice their health and suffer 'hideous' side effects and discomfort in order to accumulate different forms of capital. According to the authors, 'hideous side effects' included kidney damage, growth of breast tissue, hair loss, testicle shrinkage. These side effects were linked to forum posts that indicated over-consuming protein foods and using anabolic androgenic steroids. In contrast to Smith and Stewart's methodological and theoretical approach, Atkinson (2007) interviewed weight-trainers and applied Elias's notion of figurations. Atkinson (2007) found that fellow weight-trainers were the most independent actor for most weight-trainers supplementation behaviour. Responses from interviews revealed that weight-trainers had acquired particular beliefs regarding supplementation. For most weight-trainers, supplementation

use was associated with “getting fit” or staying “healthy”. In sum, Atkinson argues that weight-trainers deeply ritualised the advocating of supplementation, as well as embedding a culture of supplementation.

2.2.2. Issues with weight-trainer dietary behaviour studies

The one identified criticism of both Smith and Stewart’s (2012) and Atkinson (2007) work is their sample criteria. There appears to be no benchmark as to what constitutes a weight-trainer, therefore, there is no clear indication that the sample being examined are actually weight trainers. Future studies should put in place sample criteria which limit these past weaknesses. Nonetheless, by using a sociological perspective, these two particular studies seem to suggest that places (real or virtual) in which weight-trainers engage, and the interactions that weight-trainers have with other weight-trainers, have an influence on their dietary and supplementation behaviours. These two studies provide a contextual explanation as to why such dietary behaviours may be followed, as well as which potential ‘actors’ may be involved in this process. Both investigations show the complexity of weight-trainers’ dietary behaviours, in particular, the factors that may contribute to these dietary behaviours. This is because of their theoretical framework. As Gratton and Jones (2004) state, data on its own is of little value. “Only when the data is related to an existing theory we can explain the findings, and take our understanding beyond the basic descriptive level” (Gratton & Jones, 2004, p.72). It is important to point out that whilst the majority of studies appear to use a theoretical framework, psychology appears to be overused as a framework for explaining the data collect. Future

studies should continue to apply different theoretical perspectives to provide a contextualised and balanced analysis of weight-trainers' dietary behaviours.

To summarise, though the breadth of the literature is limited, it appears that weight-trainers' dietary behaviours are potentially health damaging. Reasons for these dietary behaviours seem to be related to the environments that weight-trainers move in. Indeed, for Pierre Bourdieu, it is the physical and social spaces that one occupies that structures one's perceptions, which gives rise to actions and practices (Maton, 2008). Further research should examine the extent to which social spaces have an influence on weight-trainers' dietary behaviours. Though theoretical explanations are somewhat scant, the use of theory, in particular a sociological one, has shown to be a valuable tool to provide rich and deep explanations into the dietary behaviours of weight-trainers.

2.3. Concluding points

From the entire literature outlined in this section, there appear to be a number of gaps. The first is the research method approach. Methodologically, there is an overreliance on quantitative research to acquire the data. This makes it difficult to obtain richer, deeper data. The great majority of the literature uses questionnaires with closed-type questions, such as Likert-scales. This prevents detailed opinions, attitudes and experiences of people from being obtained (McNeal & Chapman, 2005). A more systematic approach to identify the perceptions of body image and health behaviours would be to use a qualitative research approach. This methodology would allow the researcher to

contextualise and analytically apply meaning behind the data (Bryman, 2012). The second gap is the over reliance of a psychological perspective. By depending on psychological framework to explain a phenomenon, it fails to fully appreciate the wider and deeper complexities that may develop and maintain a weight-trainer's body image perception and health behaviour. The literature in this area would benefit from adopting different theoretical frameworks to try to combat this failing. As some studies have shown, by using a different theoretical perspective, in this case a sociological one, findings can be critiqued and explained in greater depth. The result is that complex and diverse dimensions in the nature of men's body image perceptions and health behaviours can be found and analysed. The final gap is the breadth of literature conducted on weight-trainers. New investigations into weight-trainers would add to current literature available, but also provide new insights into an area where little interest has been shown by scholars.

Chapter Three. Theory

The theoretical framework for this thesis is that of sociology. More specifically, the chosen theoretical framework for this particular investigation is habitus, field and capital, which are concepts attached to the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The main objective of this chapter is to provide a concise summary of Bourdieu's habitus, field and capital concepts. As well as this, this chapter will illustrate how these concepts have been successfully applied to other sociological studies of male weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours. The final section of this chapter will attempt to explain why Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital were chosen for this thesis.

3.1. Habitus

The most commonly cited work of Bourdieu's is his concept of habitus (Maton, 2008). However, according Maton (2008) habitus is the most misinterpreted and misused of his ideas. Whilst acknowledging Maton's point about the misunderstanding of what habitus is, in regard to this thesis, it will be argued that the most appropriate definition of habitus should first derive from the concept's inventor, Bourdieu himself. In the words of Bourdieu, habitus can be defined as "…systems of durable, transposable dispositions, [which are] structured...structuring structures…" (Bourdieu, 1977, p.72). At first glance, Bourdieu's definition of habitus may seem rather perplexing. It is the intention of the following paragraphs to summarise and make clear what this particular study perceives habitus to be by dissecting Bourdieu's definition.

Bourdieu (1977) mentions that habituses are "…systems of durable, transposable dispositions…" (p.72). It has been suggested that dispositions

may not mean more than ‘attitudes’ (Jenkins, 2002). However, Jenkins (2002) argues that this is an inadequate understanding of the notion. He suggests that dispositions should be considered more broadly, taking into account a range of cognitive and affective factors. In sum, Jenkins (2002) claims that dispositions comprise thinking and feeling. In essence, then, dispositions may be seen as perceptions. Perceptions, broadly speaking, can be viewed as someone’s thoughts, beliefs, or notions. All told, in regard to this thesis, habituses (dispositions) are an individual’s perception, or in simple terms, an individual’s state of mind. For Roberts (2009), these habituses are not outside but within us, they exist within our minds.

Bourdieu explains that habituses are “durable” and “transposable”. In this thesis, the idea that habitus is durable, in one sense could mean that habituses are long-lasting. Long-lasting, in the sense that habituses are persistent and enduring, throughout the course of one’s life. A further explanation behind this notion of habituses being long-lasting is Bourdieu’s use of the term “installed” in relation to habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). This study makes a case that habituses are also long-lasting because they are inserted or implanted within one’s mind. This ‘insertion’ of habituses is acquired through experiences, interactions, and explicit socialisations in one’s early life (Jenkins, 2002). In short, habituses are ‘learnt’ early in life through a number of channels, in particular socialisation. Because of these experiences, habituses become “installed” within one’s mind and become durable in the sense that they become a persistent part of ones mind-set. In regard to transposable, what Bourdieu may mean by this is that habituses are subject to change. Indeed, one’s habitus can change, however, only by building on existing predispositions (Roberts, 2009).

Bourdieu (1977) mentions that habituses are "…structured...structuring structures (Bourdieu, 1977, p.72). (p.72). In this thesis, habituses are "structured" or more simply, organised in a sense by one's past and present conditions, such as one's family background and upbringing, and educational experiences (Maton, 2008). It is "structuring" in that one's habitus helps mould one's current and future practices and actions (Maton, 2008). The "structures" consists of a "system" of one's dispositions which produce perceptions, judgements and habits (Maton, 2002). Conversely, what Bourdieu is outlining is that a habitus is organised (structured) through socialisation; habitus shapes one's present and forthcoming practices (structuring); and habitus comprise systems of dispositions which construct one's views, opinions, and practices (structures).

In general, habituses, "…comprise durable perceptions, understandings and predispositions to action" (Roberts, 2009, p. 20). They are durable in the sense that they are formed from the beginning of one's life and become "installed" within our minds through experiences, interactions and socialisations. Furthermore, they act as a vehicle for the production of individuals' practices and actions (Bourdieu, 1977). This study employed Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a theoretical platform because it was perceived to have a clear connection to the research question. With this thesis focused upon perceptions among male weight-trainers, it was hypothesised that utilising Bourdieu's concept of habitus would help explain if there was an overriding habitus among weight-trainers regarding their body image. In addition, the intention of using habitus was to see whether weight-trainers' habitus of body image had been influenced by other 'forces', such as other weight-trainers.

3.2. Field

To Bourdieu, actions are not simply the result of one's habitus (Maton, 2008). For Bourdieu, it is the physical and social spaces that one occupies which structures the habitus and, thus, gives rise to actions and practices (Maton, 2008). This leads us to the second of Bourdieu's key concepts, field.

According to Bourdieu (1998) every individual occupies a place in what he calls a field. He likens a field to a social space, or more simply a setting (Bourdieu, 1998). Within a field, Bourdieu argues that people (social agents) are subject to fields of forces and fields of struggles (Bourdieu, 1998). What he means by field of forces is that people within fields are organised internally in relation to power relations (Jenkins, 2002). More simply, what Bourdieu perhaps is arguing is that within a given field, people are subject to hierarchical positions. As Jenkins (2002) explains, individuals are 'placed' in particular positions within a given field. For Bourdieu, those who have access to resources (capital) that are at stake within the field have a dominant, leading position in that field (Bourdieu, 1977). This field of forces analogy links neatly to Bourdieu's field of struggles. With regard to the field of struggles, Bourdieu argues that fields are battlegrounds (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2007). He explains that fields are spaces of conflict and competition, where individuals "battle" for specific resources or stakes (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2007). More specifically, the "battle" among individuals within a field is for accumulating stocks of capital (Bourdieu, 1998). What Bourdieu says is that a field is a social site or arena (Giddens, 2009), which people occupy. Within fields, people are competing against one another to try to maintain or improve their position in a particular field (Thomson, 2008). One's position, status, or influence within a field is determined by one's stocks

of capital (Thompson, 2008). In every field there are forms of capital that are valued (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2007). Those who possess the valued form of capital for that field hold dominant positions. Those who do not hold the valued forms of capital are subordinated. The value of capital (resources), however, is field specific (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2007). Therefore, a form of capital may be highly prized in one field, but in another, it may not.

Without losing sight of this study's main research question, it was seen that the concept of field had the tools to provide deeper explanations in relation to weight-trainers, in particular their perceptions and health behaviours. The use field theory could highlight which 'type' of weight-trainer dominates a social field (i.e. weight-training gym). With those who dominate a social field setting the behavioural agenda, as well as shaping the values and ideologies of others (Bourdieu, 1993), this thesis can explain in detail the potential forces that act upon weight-trainers' perceptions and health behaviours. With every field subject to elements of competition and struggle, this investigation can identify what types of resources (capital) weight-trainers value. Finding out what forms of capital are valued can explain the deeper mind-sets of weight-trainers. In addition, it can explain how domineering the field (i.e. gym) is with regard to weight-trainers and their resulting perceptions and health behaviours.

3.3. Capital

Bourdieu's concept of field has highlighted the fact that individuals compete to establish their position within a social arena. He mentions that those who possess capital that is of value for a particular field are the stakeholders, the forces of influence. Position within a field is important as individuals that dominate a social field set the behaviour agenda of others (Bourdieu, 1993).

In order for individuals to align themselves with those who hold dominant positions within the field, and achieve greater status and power, they must acquire similar forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1998). With capital forming a significant bearing on one's position within a field, it is interesting to elaborate on Bourdieu's concept of capital.

The term 'capital', in its generic form, refers to any asset that can be invested with a view to accumulation and profit (Roberts, 2009, p.25). According to Bourdieu (1998), the term 'capital' in this generic form is restrictive in the sense that it cannot sufficiently explain the structures and functions of the social world. To him, the term capital had to be recognised away from solely economic theory (Bourdieu, 1998). For Bourdieu, the concept of capital had to be extended in order to study the complexities of human activity across different fields (Bourdieu, 1998). Bourdieu differentiated capital in four forms: economic, symbolic, social and cultural (Bourdieu, 1998). Economic capital refers to our resources or assets that relate to making money and purchasing material objects (Fulcher and Scott, 2007). Symbolic capital refers to anything that attracts respect, claims status or builds one's reputation (Giddens, 2009). Social capital equates to social relationships or memberships that people or groups can turn to for assistance (Roberts, 2009). And cultural capital refers to our educational knowledge and tastes (Macionis and Plummer, 2012).

To Bourdieu, we are all bearers of different kinds of capital within a given field, however, the position one occupies in the field depends on the quality of capital that is possessed (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2007). The value of capital is due to the existence of a field. The very presence of a field and the way it operates creates a belief among individuals in the legitimacy and value of the capital

which is at stake in a field (Jenkins, 2002). The value of capital is very distinct to each social field (Bourdieu, 1998). In sum, a form of capital may have high value in one field, but the same capital may not so be highly prized in another field. With forms of capital inheriting value and worth, it has been mentioned that fields are battlegrounds where people jockey for higher positions (Roberts, 2009). Forms of capital that are of value to a field can be accumulated, but this is a long process, which involves prolonged exposure to a given field and its habitus (Jenkins, 2002).

After summarising Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, it is clear that these concepts are interrelated with one another. As Maton (2008) summarises "…practice [actions] results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play [of] that social arena (field)" (p. 51). In this thesis, the use of Bourdieu's three concepts of habitus, field and capital was twofold. First, it was used to explain in greater depth the body image perceptions and health behaviours of male weight-trainers. As past work in the literature review section has shown (see Smith & Stewart, 2012), Bourdieu's concepts provide observed explanations and verifications of the data collected (McMillian & Schumacher, 2001). Second, there is a gap in the literature with regards to a theoretical underpinning behind data collect, especially a sociology one. Therefore, this study has the opportunity to fill this gap by its use of a Bourdieun analysis.

Chapter Four. Research Methods

This investigation involved a case study of a small group of male weight-trainers, and employed semi-structured interviews in order to generate the data. There are two principal aims of this chapter. The first is to provide details of the research design and method. The second is to describe and explain the research process for this investigation.

4.1. Research design

According to Gratton and Jones (2004) the research design for an investigation should be carefully considered so that it allows the researcher to systematically collect the data that is needed, at the same time as maximising the reliability and validity of the findings. Acknowledging this, the chosen research design of this thesis is a case study of male weight-trainers. A case study is viewed as a detailed, rigorous analysis of a specific case (Burns, 2000; Gratton & Jones, 2004; Bryman, 2012). More specifically, a case study is used to gain in-depth meaning and understanding of a specific instance or units (Burns, 2000). Specific instances or units may be individuals, organisations, events, programmes or communities (David and Sutton, 2011). For this thesis, the specific unit for the case study was male weight-trainers. The reason for the selection of a case study design in this study is threefold.

Firstly, Burns (2000) emphasises that the use of a case study design is to collect extensive data to gain and produce in-depth understanding of an entity being studied. A reason for conducting a case study on male weight trainers is in line with the latter. Indeed, the primary objective of this investigation is to generate deep insights in weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health

behaviours, which current literature lacks. Secondly, another rationale for employing a case study design is to shed light on the wider processes for the perceptions about body image and health behaviours among weight-trainers. As Burns (2000) states, a case study is a preferred research design for those that wish to ask ‘how’, ‘who’, ‘why’ or ‘what’ questions. For example, it is the intention of this thesis to study what body image perceptions are among weight-trainers, including why these perceptions are held, and who, if anyone, contributes to this perception. Finally, a case study approach was used so that the investigation could be located in a similar premise to that of other cases that have studied weight-trainers. Studies which are representative of other cases can provide insights which can either contest earlier generalisations, or can draw on comparisons between cases (Burns, 2000). Despite these justifications, there are few problems to the use of a case-study design for this thesis.

Researchers have commented that a problem of using a case study design is that they provide little evidence for scientific generalisations (Burns, 2000; Bell; 2010). More specifically, this reservation appears to be justified when a case study generalises findings which do not demonstrate relevance to other cases studied in a similar field (Bell, 2010). This does not mean that findings from case studies cannot automatically be generalised. Denscombe (2007) highlights that case study findings can be generalised if the case study example is similar to others of its type. Therefore, it could be suggested that this thesis can make such generalisations as there is literature that has conducted research into weight-trainers’ body image perceptions and health behaviours; for example, Smith and Stewart’s (2012) investigation. Furthermore, Smith and Stewart’s use

of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field is the chosen theoretical underpinning for this case study. Thus, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the findings obtained from this particular study could be considered by other scholars as an adequate contribution to the body of knowledge in relation to weight trainers. All told, it could be said that the case study in question will not necessarily fall into the dilemma outlined by scholars. It is worth noting that case studies, in a narrow sense, are not commonly aligned to particular research method techniques (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2010). Case studies can utilise both quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaires and interview (Bryman, 2012). For this thesis, semi-structured interviewing was the chosen methodological approach.

4.2. Research method technique. Semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews are based on a series of questions that focus on a particular topic (Bryman, 2012). This approach is flexible in nature and contains open-ended questions (Walliman, 2011). Although there were a number of research methods that could have been utilised to collect data for this study, the advantages of using semi-structured interviews appeared to outweigh those of other research techniques. These advantages were seen to be more appropriate in relation to the contexts of this investigation.

In the present study, given the likelihood of respondents providing varied responses about body image and health behaviour, it was foreseen that this flexibility would allow the researcher to re-direct or ask subsidiary questions. Another strength of this flexible approach is that it allows the researcher to probe. Probing is a common tool used in semi-structured interviewing which can support participants with the questions and gain further information which may

require further explanation (Bryman, 2012). Probing was an extremely valuable tool in this study. For example, many participants commented on what constituted an ideal body image. By having the ability to probe, the researcher was able encourage the interviewee to talk about why he felt the need to have an ideal body image, including how they came to their perception of the ideal body image. The use of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviewing allowed the researcher of this investigation to go beyond surface descriptions about body image perceptions and health behaviours. Open-ended questions require answers exclusively from the participant, which makes it possible for participants to say what they really feel (McNeil and Chapman, 2005). This provided the researcher with a more detailed picture of weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours.

The main purpose of this thesis was to examine, in detail and in depth, male weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours. In this regard, due to the very construction of the research question, semi-structured interviews were seen as the most suitable method for this investigation. Related to this, as Gratton and Jones (2004) have suggested, "[t]here is no one 'better' approach, rather the approach should be dictated by the research question" (p. 25). In this study dealing with the thoughts and feelings of male weight-trainers, semi-structured interviews were, therefore, considered the most suitable method to answer the research question. A further strength of the use of semi-structured interviewing is that researcher is in a good position to judge the quality of the responses (Walliman, 2011). Throughout the interview process, the researcher was able to continually assess and reflect on the responses of the interviewees. All responses from the participants were continuously

assessed in relation to the research question. If responses from interviewees did not fully answer a question or if elaboration was needed from the interviewee to increase the quality of the response, the researcher had the opportunity to address this issue. This strength of semi-structured interviewing was significantly helpful in gaining rich, in-depth data, in order to answer the thesis's primary research question.

With regard to other research techniques, such as structured and unstructured interviews, it was deemed that they were not the most suitable method for generating rich data on male weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours. Structured interviews were not considered as a data collection tool for this thesis because of the way this approach is formulated. Structured interviews are like questionnaires, whereby an interviewer reads a set of pre-designed questions and records the responses (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Interviewers using this approach have to read the same questions and in the same order that has been pre-scheduled (Bryman, 2012). Structured interviews were not considered for this investigation because they do not allow the interviewer to ask for further elaboration on responses given. With body image and health behaviours being quite complex areas, this restriction on probing for further information or clarification would have limited the depth and richness of the data, thus impairing the thesis's ability to answer the research question. From analysing the data collected from the interviews, it is evident that having the flexibility to ask further questions was significant in gaining in-depth data.

Similarly to structured interviews, unstructured interviews were not considered for this research because of its approach. In unstructured interviewing, a

researcher has a brief set of cues to cover a range of topics of interest to the researcher (Bryman, 2012). An initial question is asked, and the interviewee responds freely, with further questions developed on a on-going basis by the interviewer (Gratton & Jones, 2004). However, the primary reason why this method was not considered was because it lacked structure, in particular in the form of an interview schedule. Unstructured interviewing relies heavily on the researcher's ability to think of questions immediately after a response has been given. Thus, a vulnerability of this type of interview is that much of data collected may have lacked focus (Gratton & Jones, 2004). The lack of a specific question list may have limited the data obtained on body image perceptions and health behaviours of male weight-trainers. Therefore, the answering of the research question may have been compromised.

Acknowledging drawbacks from both structured and unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviewing was seen to be the appropriate method for the data collection on body image perceptions and health behaviours. Semi-structured interviewing provided the freedom to ask subsidiary questions and guide the interview process, which was not the case with structured interviewing. Semi-structured interviewing involves a researcher having a list of specific questions to be covered which form what Bryman (2012) calls an interview guide. Unstructured interviewing did not accommodate for this. On reflection, the interview guide was vital for the success of this thesis. This will be explored next.

4.3. The interview guide

In the present study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with male weight-trainers. One interview guide was devised (Appendix 1).

The interview guide was broken up into four sections: 1) fitness regime and goals; 2) body image; 3) body image with photographs; and 4) health behaviours. The interview guide consisted of a number of broad, open-ended questions. These questions were specifically designed this way because open-ended questions leave the answers entirely to the respondent, which enables them to say what they really feel (McNeil & Chapman, 2005). For this study, this is paramount, since to acquire the personal perceptions of body image and health behaviours among weight trainers, it must be left to the respondent to provide such answers.

The four sections of the interview guide each had specific roles. Section 1 was to act as ice-breaker. It was important for this study to break down any barriers between the interviewer and interviewee and make the interviewee feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible. The aim was to develop a rapport quickly. This is one technique which is used to achieve the objective of the overall research question (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Developing this rapport kept the discussions going, which allowed the researcher to step in with comments that would expand on the interviewee response. Section 2 was principally focused upon the body image perceptions of the weight-trainer. Here the aim was to gain specific accounts of what weight-trainers thought about his body image. The nature of Section 2's focus may have been potentially intrusive to the respondent as personal questions were being asked about their body image. However, the detailed responses given by the participants suggest that the design of the questions dealt with this issue. The questions were carefully worded to prevent an adverse impact on the participants, and were cross-checked with the investigation's supervisor. Both proved to be successful.

Section 3 stayed with the body image theme, however photographs of men with varying physiques were used (Appendix 2). The aim was gain further insights into the perceptions of body image among weight-trainers. The data collected from this section showed some overlap with Section 2; however, with the added photographs, it provided a basis for extending the body image perceptions of weight trainers. Section 4 focused upon health behaviours. The aim was to find out specific dietary and supplementary behaviours as well as interviewees' attitudes towards nutrition. In every section a range of prompt questions were designed to provide follow-up where necessary to interviewees' answers. This proved to be a valuable tool to probe for further clarification and explanation. Whenever a respondent provided an answer which linked to the thesis's overall research question, the prompt questions gave the researcher an amount of steer to gain data that would further enhance the answering of the primary research question. On a personal level, the format of the interview schedule gave the researcher a degree of confidence. The arrangement and appearance of the interview schedule allowed the researcher to make notes from respondents' answers, which could then be interpreted. Prompt questions were placed prominently on each interview guide so that the researcher could refer to them quickly in order to ask further questions promptly. This maintained the focus of the interview, but also maintained the discussion. With hindsight, the researcher should have utilised the interview prompt questions more, because at times, some sight of the research topic was lost.

4.4. Participants

The data drawn upon in the present study is based upon semi-structured interviews conducted with 11 male weight-trainers from the North-West of

England. A purposive and snowballing sampling method was utilised. Purpose sampling is a selection method which identifies certain individuals in a strategic way, so that those sampled are related to the investigation topic (Bryman, 2012). The strategy to recruit particular participants used specific inclusion criteria. However, snowball sampling proved to be a significant tool in recruiting participants. This sampling technique involved the researcher sampling initial participants relevant to the research question (i.e. referring to the investigation's selection criteria), and those sampled participants were asked to suggest further participants that they thought met the chosen criteria (Gratton & Jones, 2004). In this study, the researcher visited a local gym and made contact with weight-trainers who met the selection criteria. Here other potential participants were identified by the weight-trainers, which allowed the researcher to recruit more weight-trainers. The logic was that this method allowed the researcher an opportunity to interview other weight-trainers who met the recruitment criteria thus increase the size of the recruitment sample. On reflection, snowballing provided an invaluable strategy in the recruitment of participants.

The strategy to recruit particular participants followed specific inclusion criteria. In this study, the criteria for a weight-trainer to be a participant were the following: he must be male, aged 18 and above, weight trains a minimum of 5 times per week, completes a minimum of 10 sets, trains for a duration no shorter than 30 minutes, and has been involved in weight training for at least 1 year. It was decided to focus on males because male body image had received limited amounts of research, in contrast to women's body image, which has received extensive attention (McArdle & Hill, 2009). Interviewing participants under the age of 18 would have impaired the data collection, as Sharkey and

Gaskill (2007) state that weight training during the puberty phase (typically 10-17 years old) leads to improvements mainly in the nervous system (i.e. learning how to exert a force through weight lifting). In contrast, weight training after puberty (18 years old and above) leads to changes in muscle tissue (Sharkey & Gaskill, 2007). The objective in setting the training sessions to at least 5 a week, was to recruit weight trainers who were dedicated to weight training. In addition, it was anticipated that by setting the criteria to least 5 sessions a week these type of weight-trainers would structure their daily lives accordingly to fit in with their training. A minimum of 10 sets per workout was selected because it supports Fleck and Kraemer's (2004) recommendation for the number of sets per workout. They suggest between 10 to 40 sets is required to achieve muscle gains. With the number of sets per work out being highly variable, due to the intensity of workout and training frequency (Fleck & Kraemer, 2004), the criteria did not have an upper limit on sets performed. This was to cater for varying weight training programmes, which can be diverse as to the amount of sets performed. Thirty minutes was chosen as a minimum time for a training session because it corresponded to how long a typical strength training programme should be (see Kolt & Synder-Mackler, 2007). All told, the principal justification for these stringent criteria was to ensure the study recruited participants who had clear association with the research question, thus providing a strong basis to answer the principal research question of the thesis.

4.5. Procedure

Before the research study could commence, ethical approval was required, and subsequently approved by the Faculty of Applied Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Chester. The first phase of the research study

involved the recruitment of male weight-trainers. Local gyms were visited in the last week of May 2013, and contact was made with gym proprietors to seek permission to ask his/her members if they would be interested in taking part in the study. Gym proprietors were informed of the nature of the research project, including its aims and objectives, as well as the researcher's affiliation with a university. Approval was granted with the completion of a consent form (Appendix 3). The method of sampling involved purposive and snowballing which was outlined previously. Once the researcher had made initial contact with potential participants, a Participation Information Sheet (Appendix 4) was provided to give further details about the nature of this research and also what the participants' involvement in the research would be. Contact details (email) between the researcher and potential participants interested were exchanged and subsequent contacts were made to confirm dates and times of interview.

Interviews were conducted in June 2013 and took place in the gym where the participants trained. The location of the interviews was a primary choice of the participants. Fortunately, the gym proprietor had given permission to the researcher to use any available room to conduct the interviews. In this instance, the memberships office and a 'birthday room' provided the setting for the interviews. Both were situated in quiet locations in the gym and provided a comforting setting. All participants were asked if these rooms would suffice, and all participants agreed that they did. The motives for conducting the interviews at the gym were primarily for the convenience of the weight-trainers, but also, it was a familiar setting, therefore it was hoped that they would feel more comfortable. The location of the interview also served the interests of the researcher. With the interviews being conducted in a public space, the

researcher was able to acknowledge the University of Chester Lone Worker Policy and reduce the potential risk involved to the researcher when conducting interviews.

Prior to the interview taking place, participants filled in and signed a consent form (Appendix 5). It was reiterated to all participants' that their anonymity would be protected by the removal of any reference that revealed their identity. Participants were reminded about the nature of the study, including what particular themes would be discussed during the interview. Finally, explanations concerning the use of two dictaphones were provided to all participants. This proved to be a good strategy as some participants had some reservations about their use. To limit this concern, the dictaphones were placed out of sight of the participants. On average, interviews lasted for 23 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded. Following each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings and subjected them to data analysis.

4.6. Data Analysis

Once an interview had been completed it was transcribed verbatim and subjected to analysis. This required the researcher to analyse the data from the transcripts (words, phrases, sentences) to identify the occurrence of particular phrases, themes and enduring patterns (Bryman, 2012). Once recurring phrases had been identified, similar responses were grouped together and labelled/coded (Bryman, 2012). This made sure that segments of the text concerning recurring themes of interest, in this case, body image perceptions and health behaviours, could be identified and retrieved with ease. The coding consisted of four main stages: 1) open coding; 2) axial coding; 3) analytical coding; and 4) selective coding (Gratton & Jones, 2004). During open coding

each transcript was read carefully and all responses that related to the principle research question were identified, and initial codes were assigned. The advantage of this is that it begins to organise relevant responses under appropriate codes (Gratton & Jones, 2004). During axial coding, transcripts were reread and responses were placed into relevant categories. In this instance, responses were placed in principal categories: body image perceptions, or health behaviours. During analytical coding the researcher looked more systematically at the data in both categories. Here data from both categories was analysed to create further categories. This was to identify firm relationships between the responses. For example, during the third stage of coding, the body image perceptions principal category was split into three further groups: body image perceptions before weight-training; body image perceptions after weight-training; and principal body image perception among weight-trainers. Responses within each category were subsequently organised into smaller clusters based on relevance and relationship. During selective coding the researcher cross-checked the data from each category and selected the most relevant responses to answer the main research question of this thesis. With regard to this thesis, the coding process was found to be a valuable asset in making the large amounts of data collected from the interviews more manageable. In other words, the coding process allowed the data to be reduced, thus making it more possible to interpret and make sense of the material (Bryman, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and explained the research process for the present investigation. Furthermore, it has noted the strengths of particular approaches that have directly benefited the outcome of this study.

Chapter Five. Findings & Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings of this research. In doing so, the broader meaning of the results will be drawn in relation to Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, as well as in relation to past research. The chapter is organised into two sections. The first section will outline male weight-trainers' body image perceptions. The second section will focus upon the health behaviours among male weight-trainers, namely, dietary intake and supplement use.

5.1. Male weight-trainers' body image perceptions

5.1.1. Body image perceptions before commencing weight-training

Findings from this study reveal that male weight-trainers' body image perceptions go through considerable change. The responses from the interviews demonstrated that weight-trainers' body image perceptions prior to starting weight-training are significantly different from that after weight-training had commenced. When asked about their body image perceptions before commencing a weight-training program, it was evident that most weight-trainers viewed their body image as being slim and skinny, or overweight and fat. As a number of weight-trainers remarked:

Weight-trainer: "…I was just really thin anyway. So I thought I was [a] really skinny guy." (Weight-trainer Seven).

Weight-trainer: "Erm…I thought that I kind [of] looked a bit too thin and unhealthy…" (Weight-trainer Nine).

Weight-trainer: *"*I did feel that I looked, I wouldn't say fat, but I was chubby, and I wasn't in any cardiovascular shape whatsoever." (Weight-trainer Four)

Weight-trainer: "Erm….well I thought I was out of shape, very fat, erm…you know I was fitting into huge clothes and it didn't look nice you know. Erm…big bulging belly, almost a beer belly. You know it wasn't a nice look to have to be honest." (Weight-trainer Eleven)

These body image perceptions indicate that weight-trainers have particular reservations about the way they look, whether they are skinny or overweight. Having a body that was either skinny or overweight was regarded as being "unhealthy" or not "…a nice look to have". It can thus be suggested that this study's group of men aspire to change their physique. This is consistent with past research which suggest that in general, men desire to change their body image (Standford & McCabe, 2002; Bottamini & Ste-Marie, 2006; Tiggemann, Martins & Kirkbride, 2007; McArdle & Hill, 2009; Blashill, 2010). Although the findings from this current thesis cannot explain with conviction why men's bodies must not be skinny or overweight, past research suggests that males are under pressure from the mass media to conform to a stereotypical muscular look (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Lin, 1998; Morrison & Halton, 2009).

5.1.2. Body image perceptions after commencing weight-training

When participants were asked whether weight-training had contributed to a satisfied opinion of their body, the responses revealed a two-way divide. It was evident that weight-training had developed either positive or negative perceptions regarding body image among this study's sample. Positive

perceptions about body image included satisfaction and confidence. As some weight-trainers remarked:

Weight-trainer: "I think it's done me a world of good and it's made me feel more confident as well." (Weight-trainer Three).

Weight-trainer: "…it's contributed massively like by the way I'm satisfied about the way I look today. For example, I know it sounds a bit camp and gay and everything, but when I get out of the shower I do notice that my body is bigger, leaner, kinda fuller." (Weight-trainer Nine)

Weight-trainer: "I'd say weight training has made a massive difference to the way I feel about myself in that context. I like the fact that I get complimented, like when I go out or with my friends, or girls, that tell me I'm in really good shape. I suppose it's kind of…it gives that extra string to your bow as such, you have that kind of physique as well to go with it, it gives you that natural self-confidence from it." (Weight-trainer Ten).

To a number of weight-trainers in this study, commencing a weight-training programme has positively influenced the way they view their body. Weight-trainers felt that weight-training had given them increased self-confidence and a sense of achievement. This positive outlook of one's body image appears to be the result of weight-training. As noted earlier, before a weight-training regime had been undertaken, body image perceptions were quite negative. This notion that the weight-training gym promotes positive body image perceptions seems to be consistent with other research which found that weight-training enhanced one's perception of their body image (Probert & Leberman, 2009).

Nonetheless, in contrast to Probert and Leberman's work, this thesis found instances where weight-trainers' felt that weight-training had increased a negative perception about their body image. Weight-trainers in this study revealed that weight-training had "exacerbated" the imperfections of their physique, and had made them far more body conscious. These negative attitudes are best described below:

Weight-trainer: "I feel constantly miserable because I can't achieve what I want to achieve body wise. I just feel like I'm never getting anywhere with my body sometimes." (Weight-trainer One).

Weight-trainer: "Erm, I would have to say that it hasn't really contributed to being more satisfied as such,…I think I'm far more body conscious now then I was before I undertook weight training…[I've] noticed far many more imperfections, perceived imperfections or areas to work on. (Weight-trainer Six).

It seems that commencing a weight-training programme can affect a weight-trainer's body image perception. In this instance, some weight-trainers in this study felt continually dissatisfied about their physique and were far more mindful about their body image imperfections. There was a genuine belief that some weight-trainers would never be content with the way their body looked. This over-emphasis and preoccupation over body image has been found in earlier research (Mangweth, 2001; Goldfield, Blouin & Woodside, 2006; Probert & Leberman, 2009). Although this thesis cannot accurately suggest that weight-training gyms are the primary cause for body image perceptions, it is conceivable nonetheless to suggest that gym environments do have an influence on the construction of weight-trainers' body perceptions. Theoretically, from a Bourdieun perspective, it is hypothesised that weight-trainers' body

image perceptions are determined by whether their physique represents the dominant and valued physique of the gym that they train in. If a weight-trainer does not have a body image that matches the dominant and valued physique of the gym he trains in, his body image perception may be viewed negatively because his body does not ‘fit’ what is considered to be the valued physique.

5.1.3. Principal body image perceptions

The principal body image perception of male weight-trainers in this investigation was athleticism, leanness, and muscularity. These perceptions formed the dominant overall habitus among all weight-trainers in this study. The weight-trainers’ body image habitus in this investigation has some consistency with other research. For instance, Smith and Stewart (2012) found their sample of weight-trainers’ dominant body image habitus to be size, strength and leanness. For Smith and Stewart’s sample, leanness constituted being “cut” or “ripped”, but for this thesis, leanness meant more than that. Weight-trainers in the current study emphasised that leanness meant one’s body contained “…little body fat…”, in addition to conveying that one was physically fit and healthy. It is possible that these differing results are due to the research method employed by the two investigations. Because this thesis conducted semi-structured interviews, whereas Smith and Stewart used ethnography and content analysis, this thesis was able to ask what leanness meant to the weight-trainer, as well as probe why leanness was desired. Smith and Stewart could not achieve this deeper analysis because they were analysing internet forums in an unobtrusive manner, thus could not ask for any additional or richer explanations. In contrast to Smith and Stewart’s work, this thesis did not find evidence to suggest that size or strength were followed habituses. Instead, athleticism and muscularity

were the two other opinions held in relation to body image for this study's weight-trainers. Data from the interviews made it clear that athletic bodies implied that one was active, i.e., energetic, and strong, but also, looked like one trained with weights. Muscularity to this study's sample simply meant having well-developed muscles, i.e., each muscle is defined and clearly visible. One weight-trainer summarises what constitutes an athletic and muscular body:

Weight-trainer: '…I suppose it would be more akin to for example a sprinter, a 100m sprinter type physique. The small waist, and the big upper body, without being massive. I don't see the heavy heavy muscle as being athletic physique. Because that person is going to be slow, they're not going to be agile; they're not going to be physically fit over a long distance. They're going to tire quickly…' (Weight-trainer Ten)

This finding seems to suggest that weight-trainers have a clear, but also, a specific perception as to what an athletic and muscular body should entail. There appears to be an established belief that certain features of the body (i.e. small waist, big upper body) and a certain size of the muscles must be appropriately pursued in order to be considered athletic and muscular. If one does not follow this particular habitus, one is quickly discriminated against as illustrated by weight-trainer ten. To weight-trainers of this thesis, "heavy" and large muscles were negatively constructed as being "slow", "clumsy", and "unfit". However, in Smith and Stewart's (2012) research, muscle size was perceived considerably more positively among its sample of weight-trainers. To Smith and Stewart's participants, large muscles commanded respect, and the more muscle, the better. Evidence from this thesis demonstrates that muscle size is placed in much lower regard in comparison with previous research.

In the literature, “size” was identified as being the prioritised perception amongst weight-trainers (Mangweth et al. 2001; Smith & Stewart, 2012). However, the findings from this thesis do not support this notion. Analysis of interviews showed that leanness was the principal interest of this investigation’s group of weight-trainers. Responses to questions probing weight-training goals and desired body image changes revealed a preference for leanness:

Weight-trainer: “Erm, lean muscle gains really [and]…little fat as possible…” (Weight-trainer Five).

Weight-trainer: “…my main goal is gaining lean muscle, I tend to focus that more than anything.” (Weight-trainer Six)

Weight-trainer: “I want to get my body fat to 8%, just so I look lean, as lean as possible really.” (Weight-trainer Seven).

Data from this study does not specifically make clear why leanness was the principal habitus among this group of weight-trainers. Nonetheless, it may be the case that weight-trainers have socially constructed leanness as something of worth and of value. To weight-trainers of this particular study, leanness conformed to three aims: “fit”, “healthy”, and “muscular”. Achieving a lean body image was valued because it signified that one was physically fit, healthy, and muscular. Having a body image that met all three aims meant that weight-trainers had a better chance of being satisfied with their body image.

5.1.4. Desired body image changes

In reviewing the literature, little data was found regarding specific desired body changes in weight-trainers. This thesis found that all weight-trainers had a particular body part or parts that they wanted to change. Overall, in terms of the favoured body area to change, evidence from this thesis suggests that abdominals were the most sought after body area to change among this sample of weight-trainers. As a number of weight-trainers explained:

Weight-trainer: “Erm, at the minute I want…it’s a six-pack, and it has been for while.” (Weight-trainer Three).

Weight-trainer: “I wish I had a better core. So maybe I have that kinda more defined toned look of my stomach.” (Weight-trainer Nine).

Weight-trainer: “Physique, I’d probably say stomach area more than anything. (Weight-trainer Eleven).

In past literature, there appears to be a lack of evidence as to why weight-trainers have a desire to change their abdominals more than any other part of their physique (see Pickett, Lewis & Cash, 2005). However, data from this thesis found a consensus among weight-trainers. This consensus was that by having a flat, defined stomach made one more “aesthetically pleasing” to look at. From a Bourdieun perspective, in terms of specific muscles, abdominals to weight-trainers in this study were the most important form of capital to be held. The findings suggest that, symbolically, having flat, defined abdominals commanded respect among this set of weight-trainers. Abdominals not only made one look good, but it gave one a sense of “vanity”. Nevertheless, even though abdominals were the most desired part of the body to change, a high

majority of weight-trainers revealed they wished to change their entire physique. Responses to questions around desired body image changes reveal that a high majority of weight-trainers felt their whole body needed changing. As a number of weight-trainers remarked:

Weight-trainer: "[Laughs] Lots. Erm…I don't know. I still think that there's a bit of me that feels a bit skinny in places, but I also feel like I've got fat in some places, like I want to ideally reduce a bit of stomach and increase legs, back, shoulders and arms…" (Weight-trainer One).

Weight-trainer: "Yeah [laughs], pretty much most it." (Weight-trainer Seven).

Weight-trainer: "Yeah sure, I feel that erm, there's, that essentially everything is too skinny, erm, legs are too skinny, chest isn't big enough, my shoulders aren't broad enough, [the] lack of a sort of total six-pack…That's my perception when I look in the mirror." (Weight-trainer Six).

The results from this study support previous literature that weight-trainers have reservations about their entire physique (Mangweth et al. 2001; Hallsworth, Wade & Tiggemann, 2005; Goldfield, Blouin & Woodside, 2006). Research indicates that men who strive to attain a media or culturally driven ideal body image have done so by adopting unhealthy behaviours and strategies (Baghurst & Kissinger, 2009). Whilst data from this thesis cannot categorically state whether this group of weight-trainers suffer from muscle dysmorphia, it is possible, from the responses given, to suggest that they are fixated on the idea that their body is not muscular enough. There are potentially a number of

factors explaining how and why weight-trainers become obsessed about the way their body looks. However, theoretically, from a Bourdieun perspective, it is possible that the fields that weight-trainers engage in are a cause for this preoccupied view about their body image. The weight-training gym could be the site where weight-trainers become paranoid about their physique.

By reviewing the data, it is hypothesised that weight-trainers' body image perceptions are to a degree bound by the weight-training gym. Weight-trainers in this investigation may be fixated about their body image because their body does not embrace the principal habitus, in this case, athleticism, leanness, and muscularity. By not having a physique that embraces the principal habitus, one does not have a dominant status or position within the weight-training gym. To improve their status at the gym, weight-trainers have to accept the habitus, and accumulate forms of capital. The evidence from this thesis suggests that symbolic capital, in the form of physique, was the most valued and sort after form of capital. This hypothesis supports the work of Smith and Stewart (2012), who found that an internet forum (a field) had constructed a dominant body image habitus whereby it impacted and shaped the weight-trainers' views. It was also observed that to be part of the internet forum a weight-trainer had to embrace the habitus, attract capital and gainfully employ capital to improve his standing in the social field.

5.1.5. Desired physique

Very little was found in past literature regarding what specifically male weight-trainers' desired physique should look like. This gap in the literature was filled by this thesis examining the body image perceptions among male

weight-trainers with the use of photographs. The photographs showed of six men with varying physiques. The current study found that all participants, apart from one, wanted to change their body image. This is consistent with past research which found that weight-trainers have dissatisfaction over their body shape (Goldfield, Blouin & Woodside, 2006). However, another important finding of this thesis was that this sample of weight-trainers gave an insight into specifically what type of physique they wish to have. The most desired body image selected by the participants was photograph D. As a number of weight-trainers remarked:

Weight-trainer: "Just…I think that's a reasonable size to be. It's not too big. Obviously he's got lean definition as well so, yeah I want to have size but I want to be athletic and I think that's what that looks like. D look[s] like, he can lift weights but can also go out and run 10k as well." (Weight-trainer Four).

Weight-trainer: "Erm, lean, muscular, still looks athletic…" (Weight-trainer Five).

Weight-trainer: "Erm…if I was going to pick another photo I'd say the individual in D has erm…is a good shape…again he looks like he could have achieved that naturally, which for me is important. It's not something excessive; his muscles seem in proportion to his height. (Weight-trainer Six)

Whilst to a degree, these findings support previous literature regarding the fact that weight-trainers want to increase muscle mass and look lean (Mangweth et al. 2001; Smith & Stewart, 2012), there are, however, new perceptions that have been highlighted from this particular study. There is evidence to suggest

that weight-trainers picture of a male body as athletic, natural and in proportion. These perceptions appear not to have been previously identified. The reason why looking athletic, natural and in proportion was important to these weight-trainers is because of what these perceptions stood for. Looking ‘athletic’ meant that one was energetic, strong, but also, had cardiovascular fitness. Looking ‘natural’ meant that a physique could be achieved without taking anabolic steroids or growth hormones. This particular perception was highly valued by this set of weight-trainers. ‘In proportion’ referred to muscle size. To this study’s weight-trainers, each muscle had to match other muscle groups. The perception was that you could not have a muscled chest and slim legs. Muscles had to be” symmetrical” so that the physique did not look “strange”. Although the sample size of the interviews was small, it is possible to suggest that weight-trainers are extremely precise as to what their body image perceptions are. With past scholars not providing this amount of detail regarding weight-trainers’ body image perceptions, further work is required to support the data reported in this thesis.

Whilst this study specifically indicated what weight-trainers commonly see as the most desired physique, it found that not all weight-trainers saw photograph D as their preferred body image. In fact, two weight-trainers selected photograph B as their desired body image. To these weight-trainers, photograph B resembled their favoured physique because of the size, “striations” and definition of the muscles:

Weight-trainer: “[Photograph B is] very defined, you can see every muscle group there, all the striations. Just roundness of the shoulders, abs, quite big chest, good legs. (Weight-trainer Seven).

Weight-trainer: “Erm…I’d choose B definitely. That’s what I’d like to aspire to. You can see the size of the arms, the delts, and the chest, and how ripped he looks. The quads obviously being huge, he’s got the ‘x’ frame, the tiny waist, width of the back, legs flaring out. (Weight-trainer Eleven).

These findings are in agreement with past research which has shown that weight-trainers prioritise muscle size and leanness (Mangweth et al. 2001; Smith & Stewart, 2012). There are arguably a number of explanations as to why these particular weight-trainers favoured this body image. A possible explanation could be the social fields that these weight-trainers occupy. From a Bourdieun perspective, one such field that may have shaped this body image perception is the gym where they weight-train. It may be the case that where these particular weight-trainers train, the perception of how one’s body should look is akin to photograph B. From a Bourdieun perspective, these particular weight-trainers have accepted this body image perception in order to improve their position and status in the weight-training gym. A weight-trainer’s position at a gym is attained by the forms of capital possessed. It is possible that having a physique that represents the habitus is the primary form of capital to improve one’s status at a weight-training gym. This hypothesis seems to be consistent with other research where it has been found that weight-trainers habituses can be formed by a field due to their “paradoxical desire” to belong part of an environment (Smith & Stewart, 2012).

Although photograph B was a desired body image for two weight-trainers, this physique was considerably scrutinised by the majority of the weight-trainers in this investigation. Photographs B and F produced a substantial debate among

the sample of weight-trainers in this study. To the great majority of this study's participants, photographs B and F were seen negatively:

Weight-trainer: "Because he looks like a freak. He's way too big. It doesn't look natural at all. Neither does the other bodybuilder guy. It doesn't look natural." (Weight-trainer One).

Weight-trainer: "It's just outrageously defined, it's definitely had enhancement. I just want to look natural, not…you know not just over the top big." (Weight-trainer Three).

Weight-trainer: "Looks really artificial. I don't think you could function in any other purpose in life doing anything else being that size." (Weight-trainer Five).

Weight-trainer: "…quite dubious as to whether or not you could achieve that physique naturally without the aid of any you know testosterone booster or steroids say for example. So yeah images B and F look to me to be a little excessive." (Weight-trainer Six).

Whilst photographs B and F are lean and muscular, which are two of the dominant habituses that weight-trainers in this study appear to follow, these physiques appear to take these habituses to the extreme. To the majority of this study's sample, the level of leanness and muscularity that photographs B and F represent was seen as being freaky, ridiculous and artificial. In addition, these particular photographs rejected athleticism which for the weight-trainers in this study was a dominant habitus held. In contrast to past literature (see Mangweth et al. 2001; Smith & Stewart, 2012), this thesis has shown that there is 'specific amount' of muscle mass and leanness that weight-trainers wish to have.

Physiques that go beyond this ‘specific amount’ of muscle mass and leanness are quickly trivialised. Whilst this finding can arguably be questioned, it provides a new insight into the body image perceptions for weight-trainers.

All in all, all participants wanted to change their body image. This demonstrates that the sample in this study have clear reservations about the way they perceive their body image. The prominent type of physique that male weight-trainers wish to aspire to is one that is athletic, lean, and muscular, but also, a physique that looked healthy and natural. Anyone who does not have or aspire to have this particular body is quickly trivialized.

5.2. Male weight-trainers health behaviours

5.2.1. Dietary behaviours

The findings of this study reveal that weight-trainers’ dietary intakes are organised and structured. They are structured and organised in the sense that particular foods are carefully selected for consumption. For example, food is carefully selected to meet what may be commonly called a “healthy” or “clean” diet. As a number of weight-trainers remarked:

Weight-trainer: “Yeah I like to look at what I eat. I don’t eat fake sugars and I don’t eat too much fat. Try to eat my wholemeal carbs, erm, lean cuts of meat, vegetables, and fruit. Erm, average would be chicken breast, sweet potato and broccoli” (Weight-trainer Four).

Weight-trainer: “I eat veg, meat, fish. Things like that. Snacking on healthier things like nuts, dried fruit, stuff like that, rather than a cheat meal, like pizza.” (Weight-trainer Five).

Typically, for the weight-trainers in this study, a “healthy” or “clean” diet consisted of lean meats, complex carbohydrates, such as wholemeal rice, pasta, potatoes, and vegetables. On the whole, high fat and sugary foods were avoided. These findings is in agreement with Probert and Leberman (2009) who found that weight-trainers’ attitudes towards their diets were disciplined. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a principal reason and motivation for weight-trainers to follow a “healthy” and “clean” diet was to achieve their weight-training goals, in this case, changing and developing their physique. As research indicates, nutrition plays a vital role in three aspects of weight-training: fuelling the body for resistance training, promoting body recovery after a training session, and encouraging body adaptations such as muscle hypertrophy (Slater & Phillips, 2011). The careful selection of food was further evident in relation to protein consumption. Chicken, lamb, beef, and fish were the most common sources of protein. Most of the weight-trainers noted that their diets consisted of an array of different proteins from a diverse source of foods:

Weight-trainer: “Erm, diet wise, I just try to make sure that throughout the week I have a different an array of proteins erm, so like, today’s salmon, tomorrow might be prawns, another day it might be beef, and on another day it might be chicken…“ (Weight-trainer One).

It is somewhat surprising that past literature has not observed this trend, given that protein consumption is a staple part of weight-training (Phillips, Hartman & Wilkinson, 2005). Past methodological approaches could explain why such observations have not been made, as scholars have over relied on questionnaires. Consequently, this has provided a restricted view of the specific food consumptions of weight-trainers. Nonetheless, that weight-trainers’

consumption of protein comes from an array of different foods is perhaps unsurprising. Consuming protein from different types of foods allows the body to receive sufficient amounts of essential amino acids (Hoffman, 2007). Furthermore, research indicates that essential amino acids (proteins) are necessary for weight-trainers as they are building blocks for muscle development (Phillips, Hartman & Wilkinson, 2005).

The responses to questions about dietary behaviours revealed that this structured organisation of diets sometimes came with consequences, including feeling guilty when diet plans lapsed:

Weight-trainer: “I will always have in the back of mind that I shouldn’t do that, I should do this…like this evening I had sticky toffee pudding, although I loved it, afterwards I just kept thinking that wasn’t not good for you, that wasn’t good for you. I enjoyed it, but, it kind of gives you a kind of guilt aspect on things, whatever reason.“ (Weight-trainer Ten).

This result is consistent with those of other studies which found that weight-trainers’ have strong feelings of guilt when dietary plans are not adhered to (Mangweth et al. 2001). Furthermore, this finding supports the idea of Goldfield, Blouin, and Woodside, (2006), who observed that weight-trainers have anxieties over their food intake. Scholars have speculated that their guilty state of mind regarding what they eat is due to an over-concern with their body shape (Goldfield, Blouin, & Woodside, (2006). This finding is comparable to data collected from this thesis. Evidence from this investigation reveals that weight-trainers have regrets when eating unhealthy foods because they believe that it will affect the acquiring of their “perfect body”. Whilst weight-trainers felt remorse when healthy diets were not followed, this thesis found that time

constraints, such as food preparation, and the love of food were two common reasons for healthy diets not being followed. Further consequences of following a diet plan included relationships with friends. Weight-trainers commented that following a diet plan had affected their relationship. One particular weight-trainer commented on that his friends believed his meal regime was “too serious” and that he wasn’t as “fun” socially anymore:

Weight-trainer: “[T]hey were used to me being care free, I’ll eat whatever I want, drink whatever. No I don’t drink….I eat a lot, 7 meals per day [which] was quite a cultural shock. I won’t go out at certain times because I’ve got a meal prep, they think that’s a bit too serious, but it has to be done…They think I’m not as fun, that I’ve probably changed for the worst. But I think I changed for the better. There’s different opinions, but that’s why they think I’m a bit serious, taking it a bit too far.” (Weight-trainer Eleven).

The breakdown of friendships among this study’s weight-trainers is in accordance with earlier findings. As Probert and Leberman (2009) has pointed out, the intensity and demands of weight-training prove not only socially isolating for weight-trainers, but contribute to the breakup of relationships and friendships. Whilst it cannot be proved definitively without using an Exercise Dependence Scale, it seems that some weight-trainers in this study are isolating themselves from friends because they are committed to the weight-training regime. They appear to be dependent on the weight-train regime to such an extent that they are willing to sacrifice social relationships in order to achieve their weight-training goals. Friendships are important to weight-trainers because friendships are sources of support and boost self-esteem (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011). Nevertheless, whilst friendships may be fragile in

one area of a weight-trainer's life, friendships may be developed in another. Weight-training gyms could be potential sites for developing social relationships with other weight-trainers. From a Bourdieun perspective, friendship formation would depend on the forms of capital that a weight-trainer holds.

5.2.2. Supplementation behaviours

Supplementation was a prominent part of a weight-trainers diet. Data reveals that all weight-trainers consumed a form of supplementation to support their weight-training routines. Whilst supplement of choice among weight-trainers in this investigation was protein shakes, the array of supplements that this sample of weight-trainers consumed was extremely extensive. As several weight-trainers remarked:

Weight-trainer: ""Erm, creatine is one that I always get. Erm…I get a N02 pump thing, erm…a pre-workout drink with energy like taurine and sugar and whatever in, and post-workout I have meal replacement shake and then I'll a scoop of whey with breakfast as well." (Weight-trainer One).

Weight-trainer: "I have my either a protein shake or a meal replacement after I've trained. I take other supplements like glucosamine sulphate, cod-liver-oil tablets and multivitamins…" (Weight-trainer Five).

All in all, the reported supplementation included the use of creatine, energy drinks (i.e., high in caffeine), meal replacement shakes (tending to contain protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins and minerals), pre-workout shakes (can compromise essential and non-essential amino acids, slow release carbohydrates, caffeine, creatine and l-arginine), recovery shakes (tend to contain carbohydrates, proteins and antioxidants), fat burners, testosterone

boosters, glucosamine sulphate, cod-liver oil, and multivitamins. This array of supplementation use supports previous research (Atkinson, 2007; Smith & Stewart, 2012, Bailey, 2013). Whilst anabolic-androgenic steroids and growth hormones have been identified as other supplements that weight-trainers consume (Wiefferink, et al. 2008), this thesis did not find any evidence to support the use of these particular supplements among its set of weight-trainers. As one may expect, the primary intention of weight-trainers when consuming supplements was to support the weight-training programme. As research indicates, the use of supplements can enhance muscle recovery, muscle growth, physical performance, support weight loss, and promote bone and joint health (Talbot & Hughes, 2007). To weight-trainers in the current thesis, supplementation was not just a convenience food, it was part of the daily routine, part of the 'ritual'. The responses from weight-trainers showed a genuine belief that supplements had to be taken in order for body image goals to be realised. This notion is supported by Atkinson (2007), who found that weight-trainers' consumption of supplements was seen as a "remedy" to modify their physique.

In the literature, there is evidence that weight-trainers do not consult doctors when consuming supplements (Bailey, 2013). Instead, they rely on their own judgement as well the opinions of other weight-trainers (Bailey, 2013). The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Bailey (2013). The current investigation found evidence that weight-trainers experiment with supplement use and follow the advice of other weight-trainers.

Weight-trainer: "...taking the supplement stuff is through just trial and error." (Weight-trainer One).

Weight-trainer: “These guys have awesome physiques. They’ve achieved their physiques through the plans that they have had so it’s more of case of listening to the experts,…If you wanna have a physique like them you may as well listen to them, and implement their ideas into your regime.” (Weight-trainer Eleven).

Whilst weight-trainers will take the advice regarding supplements, weight-trainers in this study were clear that advice would only be taken on board if the person recommending them had the necessary physique. This finding is consistent with other studies which found that having the right physique represents the embodiment of knowledge (Bailey, 2013). From a Bourdieun perspective, this thesis reveals that possessing symbolic capital, in this case having a physique that related to athleticism, leanness and muscularity, equated to participants having high levels of cultural capital, i.e. knowledge regarding supplementation. This suggests that information regarding supplementation is valued, trusted and taken on board among weight-trainers if the giver of knowledge has a body image that meets the desired habitus. This finding is in agreement with Smith and Stewart (2012) which found that weight-trainers were perceived to be possessors of “superior” cultural capital in the form of diet and supplementation knowledge if their body had achieved the habitus that was upheld in the field. In this case, muscle size served as a proxy for knowledge.

Weight-trainers in this thesis mentioned few health concerns regarding their supplement use. It could be suggested that this because of their mentality. Like the results found by Atkinson (2007), this thesis argues that due to the number of supplements taken, weight-trainers’ attitude towards supplementation is that it cannot harm them, it can only help them to achieve their desired physique.

However, it must be noted that when anabolic-androgenic steroids and growth hormones were brought up in the interviews, all weight-trainers in this thesis acknowledged that this was a “bad route to go down”. The common perception was that these types of supplements were too “dangerous” and the consequences of taking them were far too risky for one’s health. This is consistent with previous literature which found that weight-trainers are aware of the health problems that are related to drugs, hence they are not consumed (Santos, Pereira da Rocha & Freire da Silva, 2011). Whilst no weight-trainers in the current study reported taking anabolic-androgenic steroids or growth hormones, scholars have noted that weight-trainers have taken these supplements to support the weight-training regime (Santos, Pereira da Rocha & Freire da Silva, 2011; Smith & Stewart, 2012). Considering this different attitude regarding drug use, it could be said that the thesis’s sample of weight-trainers value health more highly than other weight-trainers. This investigation argues that the weight-training gym is a place whereby health is valued over body image among its set of weight-trainers because this attitude forms part of the habitus that the weight-training gym upholds. This notion that a field constructs one’s attitude is evident in past research. Smith and Stewart (2012) revealed that a bodybuilding internet forum had made drug use both rational and normal. Drug use was seen this way because health did not form part of the habitus that the internet forum participants upheld. To this set of weight-trainers, achieving a body image that had size, leanness and muscularity was paramount, regardless of damage to personal health.

All in all, the food intake of this thesis’s sample of weight-trainers was structured and organised. Supplementation was extensive, with protein shakes being the

primary supplement of choice. Participants in this investigation had only minor apprehensions about the use of supplements. Only when anabolic-androgenic steroids and growth hormones were discussed did personal health anxieties come into question. Food intake and supplementation for weight-trainers in this sample was geared around their weight-training regime to achieve their “perfect body”.

Chapter Six. Conclusion

The aim of the final chapter is to return to the principal research question posed in the introduction and provide a brief summary of the results found. The last section of this chapter shall outline the contributions made by the thesis, including its limitations and future directions for research.

6.1. The body image perceptions and health behaviours of male weight-trainers

A central purpose of this thesis was to use Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital to analysis the body image perceptions and health behaviours of male weight-trainers. Using Bourdieu's three concepts has allowed this thesis to provide an in-depth analysis into male weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours. The results of this thesis show that male weight-trainers share in a three-way habitus regarding body image: athleticism, leanness, and muscularity. For most weight-trainers in this investigation this principal habitus represented the "perfect body". The findings from this study suggest that the formation of weight-trainers' habitus originates from fields that they engage in. Whilst this investigation acknowledges that many social fields are likely to have an influence on one's habitus formation, the responses from weight-trainers indicate that the weight-training gym is a significant social field where body image habituses are developed and established. This finding lends support to the work of Smith and Stewart (2012), which showed that an online internet forum provides a means of formation for the weight-trainers' habitus.

Contrary to past research, this investigation has shown that the body image perceptions of weight-trainers go through considerable change. It was found that before commencing weight-training, the majority of weight-trainers had

negative body image perceptions. This negativity is associated with a body looking either skinny or overweight. However, after weight-training had commenced, weight-trainers developed either negative or positive body image perceptions. It was revealed that weight-trainers had negative body image perceptions in the sense that weight-training had exacerbated the imperfections of their physique and had made them far more body conscious. On the other hand, weight-trainers had positive body image perceptions in the sense that weight-training had provided them with a physique which they can look upon with satisfaction. This tells us that weight-training can be viewed as either the solution for weight-trainers to develop positive body image perceptions, or the problem for weight-trainers developing negative body image perceptions.

The present study, in contrast to previous studies, found specifically what weight-trainers wanted their desired body image to be. To the majority of weight-trainers, photograph D resembled the “perfect body” which shows that this particular photograph represented the dominant habitus shared by the weight-trainers. The findings from this thesis inform us that weight-trainers are extremely specific and explicit as to what a “perfect body” should entail. It was found that weight-trainers display strong contempt for particular physiques, in this case, a physique that looks like that of a bodybuilder. Whilst the two bodybuilder photographs could be deemed lean and muscular, which are two of the dominant habituses that weight-trainers in this study appear to follow, weight-trainers view bodybuilder physiques as taking these habituses to the “extreme”. To the majority of this study’s sample, it was found that the level of leanness and muscularity that bodybuilders possess is considered “freaky”, “ridiculous” and “artificial”. This perception is in contrast to Smith and Stewart’s

(2012) study, which found that their weight-trainers placed an overwhelming importance of having a body image with large muscles.

Like Smith and Stewart (2012), this study has found that generally, symbolic capital was the most important form of capital to possess and that the accumulation of symbolic capital was supported by a weight-trainer's physique. It appears that the more a weight-trainer's body image represents the habitus, the more respected he is. Findings from this thesis indicate that weight-trainers are more likely to seek weight-training knowledge from someone who possesses an impressive physique. This suggests that by having a physique that corresponds to the fields habitus, one has high levels of cultural capital, in this case, knowledge of weight-training. Whilst this finding supports past research, the limitation of this study's finding is that the weight-training gyms that the weight-trainers used were not directly observed. Therefore, the notion that symbolic capital is the most valued form of stock to accumulate must be interpreted with caution.

Among the weight-trainers in this study, dietary behaviours appear to be structured and organised. Like Probert and Leberman (2009), the thesis found that weight-trainers' diets were disciplined in that certain foods were consumed in order to complement the weight-training regime. These particular foods that are consumed tend to be related to what is classified as either "healthy" or "clean". Typically, vegetables, lean meats and fish, and complex carbohydrates were foods that weight-trainers considered "healthy" or "clean". The diets among weight-trainers' were intended to supplement the weight-training regime. This suggests that weight-trainers have an understanding of the importance of eating the correct nutrients. As one might have expected, protein consumption

was high among weight-trainers. This is because proteins are the building block for muscle development (Phillips, Hartman & Wilkinson, 2005). The results of this thesis found that weight-trainers' protein consumption was structured and organised in the sense that an array of protein foods are eaten to ensure different sources of proteins are consumed throughout the week.

The weight-trainers' structured and organised dietary approaches appeared to encourage personal negativity. It was shown that when weight-trainers' diets were not what was deemed "healthy" or "clean", weight-trainers felt guilty. It appears that weight-trainers have remorse about eating unhealthy foods because they have heightened body image concerns. This finding supports the work of Goldfield, Blouin and Woodside (2006), who found that weight-trainers' guilty regarding what they eat is due to an apprehension about their body shape. Like Probert and Leberman (2009), the current thesis found that weight-trainers' relationships with friends broke down owing to the demands of following a specific diet plan. Whilst this finding was rare among this study's sample, it highlights the cost of following a structured and organised weight-training diet. It is perhaps important to point out that whilst weight-trainers in this study indicated that a "healthy" or "clean" diet was keenly sought, they were realistic about achieving a diet plan that met these beliefs. Time constraints, such as a career and food preparation, and the love of food were reasons for diets not being "healthy" or "clean".

Supplementation was a prominent part of a weight-trainer's diet. It was found that protein shakes were the supplement of choice among weight-trainers. The array of supplements used was extremely extensive and this finding supports past research (Atkinson, 2007; Smith & Stewart, 2012, Bailey, 2013).

As Bailey (2013) found, this widespread use of supplementation among weight-trainers was not prescribed by doctors or nutrition specialists. Instead, it appeared to be guided by one principle: trial and error. This suggests that weight-trainers have little concern for their personal health regarding supplementation use. For instance, an overconsumption of protein or creatine may cause kidney damage (Poortmans & Dellalieux, 2000; Flanagan, 2007). With supplementation use varying significantly depending on one's body size and supplementation needs (Flanagan, 2007), weight-trainers should possibly seek professional advice before taking supplements, as their health suffer. Whilst weight-trainers in this particular study appear to have few reservations regarding their health when consuming supplements, this was not this case with supplementation that involved anabolic-androgenic steroids or growth hormones. Despite strong desires to change thier body image, it appears that weight-trainers in this investigation do value their health to some degree, as anabolic-androgenic steroids or growth hormone supplements were both seen as being "dangerous" because they risked too many health consequences.

The dietary and supplementation behaviours employed by the weight-trainers appeared to be the product of the social fields that they engaged in. Whilst this study is not ignoring the significance of other fields in the development and formation of weight-trainers' dietary and supplementation behaviours, it argues that the weight-training gym plays a significant part in their construction. This study found that weight-trainers take nutritional and supplementation advice from other weight-trainers. As in other research (Smith & Stewart 2012; Bailey, 2013), this advice was only accepted if the weight-trainer giving it had ay physique that met the body habitus. From a Bourdieun perspective, this study's

data revealed that possessing symbolic capital, in this case, having a physique that related to athleticism, leanness and muscularity, equated to having high levels of cultural capital, i.e. knowledge regarding nutrition and supplementation. This suggests that information about nutrition or supplementation is valued, trusted and followed among weight-trainers if the giver of knowledge has a body image that meets the desired habitus.

6.2. Contribution to literature, limitations, and future direction.

Although the current study is based on a small sample, it contributes to the literature regarding male weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours by suggesting that the weight-training gym predisposes to these perceptions and behaviours. This hypothesis supports the work of Smith and Stewart (2012), who postulate that social fields offer a mechanism for habitus formation, which in turn leads to practices and actions. Unlike past research, a second contribution of this thesis is that a qualitative methodological approach was used, therefore rich, detailed and personal responses from weight-trainers could be collected. Finally, a further contribution that this particular study makes is that, unlike most studies, it attempts to explain weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours in a wider context by employing a sociological perspective.

Despite the contribution that the findings of this study have made to the body of literature, there are a number of limitations. The first limitation is that only a small sample of eleven weight-trainers were interviewed for this case study. Whilst eleven interviews provided adequate amounts of data to enable comparisons to be made, a larger sample size would have increased the accuracy of the results (Burns, 2000). A reason for the limited sample size was

due to the length of the research process. Recruiting of participants, organising, conducting and transcribing interviews took longer than envisaged. On reflection, the researcher should have begun this research process sooner to enable a greater sample size. However, although the sample size was small, the study's sample criteria enabled a precise representativeness of weight-trainers, which past studies have failed to provide sufficiently. The second limitation is the interviewing process. Transcribing the interviews revealed that further questions should have been asked during the interviews as some participants' responses were short. The researcher should have used the interview guide and prompt question list more to acquire longer responses, which could have provided greater clarity and understanding as regards the responses given. The final limitation is the use of photographs with varying male physiques. Whilst the photographs gave rise to deep discussion in the interviews, there were some instances where weight-trainers found it difficult to compare their body to someone else's. It would perhaps have been beneficial to compare the perceived and ideal dimensions of body image using the participants' own physiques. Indeed, a study by Urdapilleta, Aspavlo, Masse, and Docteur (2010) utilised this approach in relation to synchronised swimmers. However, within the confines of an MSc thesis, it would not have been possible to use this type of software which manipulates body image dimension. In addition, photographing participants' physiques is potentially invasive; therefore, further considerations of confidentiality would have had to be considered.

In terms of future directions, there are perhaps a number of avenues that new investigations can follow. The first is to examine, unobtrusively, the weight-training gyms that weight-trainers frequently engage in. By doing this,

researchers may be able to extend our understanding of weight-trainers' body image perceptions and health behaviours, in addition to observing Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital in action. The second is to investigate the dietary and supplementation behaviours in greater detail. A food diary may be a valuable tool in order to examine more critically how health damaging weight-trainers' health behaviours are. The researcher could use the food diary in conjunction with an interview schedule which could develop deep discussions. The final future direction of this study could be to apply more detailed sociological theory to male weight-trainers body image perceptions and health behaviours. Whilst this study has filled a small gap in that regard, further theoretical explorations into weight-trainers' perceptions and health behaviours should be conducted in new investigations.

Word count: 17,226

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Weight Trainer Interviews	**Interview No.**	**Weight Trainer No.**
Date:	**Time:**	**Venue:**

"Can you tell me what you mean by…?"

"Can you tell me more about…?"

"Can you explain…?"

"Can you give me an example of …?"

"You said_____Can you tell me why you think this?"

"You said_____Can you tell me how this came about?"

Research Question: The drive for the 'perfect body'. An analysis of the body image perceptions and health behaviours among male weight trainers.

Theme 1: Fitness regime and goals.

What motivated you to undertake a weight training programme?

Has your exercise regime always involved weight training?

“Can you tell me what you mean by…?”

“Can you tell me more about…?”

“Can you explain…?”

“Can you give me an example of …?”

“You said_____Can you tell me why you think this?”

“You said_____Can you tell me how this came about?”

When did you first begin to consider these particular methods of training and why?

Do you have any particular goals around which your weight training is oriented?

- If so, what are they and what do you do in order to reach these particular goals you set yourself?

What kind of pre-training rituals and preparations, if any, do you engage in before you commence weight training?

Do you adhere to a specific post-workout diet?

- Does this diet include supplements?

"Can you tell me what you mean by…?"

"Can you tell me more about…?"

"Can you explain…?"

"Can you give me an example of …?"

"You said_____Can you tell me why you think this?"

"You said_____Can you tell me how this came about?"

Theme 2a: Body Image.

Before you started your weight training regime, do you recall what you thought of the way you looked?

Was this as significant factor when you decided to undertake weight training?

To what degree would you say that weight training contributed to you being more satisfied with the way you look today?

Is there anything about your physique today that you wish to change?

- Why did you come to this conclusion?

"Can you tell me what you mean by…?"

"Can you tell me more about…?"

"Can you explain…?"

"an you give me an example of …?"

"You said_____Can you tell me why you think this?"

"You said_____Can you tell me how this came about?"

Theme 2b. Body Image with photographs

I am going to show you a selection of photographs. Which one do you think you most look like?

- Participant chose image no.____
  Why have you picked this photo?

  Is there a different photograph which you would prefer to look like?

- Participant chose image no.____
  What is it about this particular image that you aspire to?
  If the image is the same – ask: Does this mean you are entirely satisfied with the way you look?

"Can you tell me what you mean by…?"

"Can you tell me more about…?"

"Can you explain…?"

"Can you give me an example of …?"

"You said_____Can you tell me why you think this?"

"You said_____Can you tell me how this came about?"

Theme 3: Health behaviours.

Apart from weight-training, what other methods, if any, do you use to maintain and/or achieve your desired physique?

- Can you explain more about this?

Can you tell me why you do this?

Do you consider your particular health behaviours to have any specific psychological or physical consequences other than muscle gain?

- If yes, can you explain?

End of Interview

Interviewer signature_____

Interviewee signature_____

Appendix 2.

A

B

C

D

fs

E

F

Appendix 3.

University of Chester

Title of Project: The drive for the 'perfect body'. An analysis of the body image perceptions and health behaviours among male weight trainers.

Name of Researcher: Luke Gill

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected. ☐

3. I confirm that the researcher has permission to recruit potential participants in my gym facility. ☐

Name of Gym Proprietor	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

1 for participant; 1 for researcher

Appendix 4.

Participant information sheet

The drive for the 'perfect body'. An analysis of the body image perceptions and health behaviours among male weight trainers.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?
The purpose of this research investigation is twofold. The aim is to provide an in-depth analysis of weight trainer body image perceptions. In addition, the intention is to examine weight trainer health behaviours.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen because you are male, aged 18 years old and above, weight train using free-weights (e.g. dumbbells, barbells, kettlebells) and/or resistence machines, train a minimum of 5 times per week, perform at least 2 exercises per muscle group, complete at least 10 sets per training session, train for a duration of no shorter than 30 minutes, and have been involved in weight training for at least 1 year.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part?
If you decided to take part in the research study you shall be interviewed for approximately 25-30 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded, and shall take place at a time and place most convenient to you. Your confidentiality during the interview process shall be maintained. No reference or any identifiable information about yourself or significant other shall be made in my MSc dissertation.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
It is unlikely that there will be any specific disadvantages to you taking part in the study. However, the interview will involve asking you questions about your training methods and lifestyle behaviours and, thus, there may be some areas that are sensitive. However, you are entitled not to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
The benefits of taking part in this study are that you will be provided with the opportunity to discuss your training methods and goals, and the rationale behind them, including your pre-training preparations. By taking part you will broaden the development of current literature and add new in-depth insights into weight trainers.

What if something goes wrong?
If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact Professor Sarah Andrew, Dean of the Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester, CH1 4BJ, 01244 513055.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential so that only the researcher carrying out the research will have access to such information.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results will be written up into a dissertation for my final project of my MSc. Individuals who participate will not be identified explicitly or implicitly in any subsequent report or publication.

Who is organising the research?
The research is conducted as part of an MSc in Sociology of Sport & Exercise within the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at the University of Chester. The study is organised with supervision from the department, by Luke Gill, an MSc student.

Who may I contact for further information?
If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

Luke Gill. @chester.ac.uk.

Thank you for your interest in this research.

Appendix 5.

University of Chester

Title of Project: The drive for the 'perfect body'. An analysis of the body image perceptions and health behaviours among male weight trainers.

Name of Researcher: Luke Gill

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected. ☐

3. I confirm that the interview will be audio recorded. ☐

4. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

1 for participant; 1 for researcher