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Welcome

The **Sport and Culture Group** (SCG) is a collaborative group of scholars based in the School of Sport and Exercise Science at Victoria University. The unifying aim of the Group is its desire to advance the critical understanding of sport through individual and collaborative research projects that explore the role of sport in local and global communities. The work of Group members is multi and cross-disciplinary, with the base disciplines being economics, history, philosophy, management and sociology. These disciplines not only drive the operation of many of the School's research projects, but also underpin areas of postgraduate supervision.

SCG hosts international conferences and local seminars, and promotes informed discussion on sport issues and policies. SCG also provides forums for commentary and debate through its ***Bulletin of Sport and Culture*** and its ***SCG Research Digest***.

The SCG Research Digest contains succinct reviews of scholarly journal articles that examine aspects of sport, leisure and recreation. The reviews address research that adds new and valuable knowledge to the field, and covers both theoretical and empirical studies. Special attention is given to: career development in sport and recreation, community sport, participation and social inclusion, football studies, global sport, nation building and the Olympic movement, identity, sexuality, and gender studies in sport and recreation, corporate sport, policy and regulation, sport and consumption, disadvantage and social justice in sport and recreation, and sustainability. Welcome to volume 1: issue 2.

Publication details

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Editor's note

Each issue of the ***SCG Research Digest*** has themed sections that focus on specific aspects of sport, leisure and recreation research. In this issue, two themes are represented, which are (1) the ethics of sport technology, and (2) Gyms as sites for 'body projects'. We welcome reader feedback, and will be delighted to receive reviews and commentaries for publication. The next issue of the ***SCG Research Digest*** is scheduled for late May 2010. The editor can be contacted at <bob.stewart@vu.edu.au>.

The ethics of sport technology

Introductory note:

This section of the DIGEST reviews a sample of commentaries contained in issue 2 of volume 36 of the *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*. This edition of the journal contains a special section of six articles on the ethics of sport and technology, plus Mike McNamee's Warren P. Fraleigh Distinguished Scholar Lecture. They contain many challenging arguments about the issue of performance enhancement (PE) in sport, and whether or not some PE technologies are less or more acceptable than others. The papers by McNamee, Miller-Brown, and Morgan are critically examined in the section that follows.

Review 1

Mike McNamee (2009) Beyond Consent? Paternalism and Paediatric Doping, *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, 36 (2) 111-126.

Mike McNamee considers the suggestion that, if the ban on performance enhancing drugs was to be removed, a position that several sports ethicists have argued in support of, what would be the response towards adolescent doping. Could an adolescent be considered competent enough to consent to the use of doping products? McNamee, as with all of his writing, presents a carefully and logically constructed argument that demonstrates a difference between (1) the ethical justification that permits adolescents to competently consent to medical pharmacologies such as the contraceptive pill, and (2) the ethical opposition to allowing adolescents to consent to doping products. McNamee investigates two aspects of the decision making process of athletes that should prevent observers from deciding that adolescent athletes are competent enough to consent to doping. The first is that elite adolescent athletes are vulnerable to the presence or potential for lucrative financial rewards that create an environment that is ripe for exploitation by significant others, a situation that would permit a soft paternalistic stance towards the adolescent athlete. The second is that the magnitude of the risks, and the difficulty in producing research findings on the risks associated with adolescent doping because of doubts about the ethicality of experimenting on populations without direct therapeutic needs and benefits, make the situation significantly more dangerous than in the contraceptive situation.

Prepared by Michael Burke

Review 2

William Miller-Brown (2009) The Case for Perfection, *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, 36 (2) 127-140.

Miller Brown has a long history of producing arguments that refute the justifications supporting the ban on performance enhancing drugs in sport. His earliest article in this particular journal appeared in 1980, and is still cited by many in this area. In the early section of this current article, he again reviews his criticisms of the many justifications used to support the ban on performance enhancing

drugs, and then concludes that the 'prohibition of performance enhancing substances... runs counter to the very spirit of sport' (p.129) as a pursuit of perfection in performance.

Having reviewed these earlier debates, Miller Brown then moves onto applying his arguments to the use of modern genetic technologies/interventions to redressing the genetic lottery that favours certain athletes in contemporary sport. He notes that the unforeseeable risks and benefits in these interventions create a contemporary conservatism or reluctance towards these interventions. Towards this reluctance, he offers the valuable 'reversal test' suggested by Bostrum and Ord: that is, we can check for 'status-quo bias' by asking those who oppose some form of enhancement if they would also oppose a reduction of capacity. If so, then opponents have revealed a bias towards the current state, a sentiment that our current state is optimal. This 'test' may be particularly useful in revealing a current state bias towards inequality in individual genetic predispositions.

Prepared by Michael Burke

Review 3

William Morgan (2009) Athletic Perfection, Performance-Enhancing Drugs and the Treatment-Enhancement Distinction, *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, 36 (2), 162-181.

It is always difficult to summarise Morgan's work because each article he writes covers so much ground with virtually no wastage of space. So, a summary of a ten page article can in fact take more than ten pages.

In another brilliant article, Morgan uses the much maligned treatment-enhancement distinction to support a historically produced and democratically accepted ideal of sport that would eliminate certain performance-enhancing drugs and strategies, and permit others. The treatment-enhancement distinction involves a response to the question; can intervention 'x' be considered to be enhancing an athlete's performance or treating a problem that interferes with an athlete's performance? Morgan's response is that there are widely shared standards of athletic achievement that will expose the distinction and, that whilst these standards are historically constructed and not essential, they remain our best mechanism for deciding between permitted and banned substances.

From this position, Morgan then proceeds to justify his controversial assertions that we should permit the use of amphetamines and steroids in the doses used today, as such doses do not produce performances that obviously exceed the current ideal of athletic achievement and are therefore treatments, but that we should ban excessive doses of these same drugs because of the obvious and excessive gains over the athletic achievement ideal which make excessive doses of these things enhancements. Equally controversially, the use of genetic manipulations would be limited by issues of fairness in approximation of the current athletic achievements (i.e. available to less genetically gifted athletes as treatments) but not available as enhancements to those that are already gifted. How that fits with the test for 'status-quo bias' in Miller-Brown's article is worth some thought.

What can be concluded from Morgan and the other articles in this issue of the *Journal of Philosophy of Sport* is the following:

- 1) Genetic engineering is going to produce another round of ethical arguments that will extend the justifications in the performance-enhancing drug debate.
- 2) Regulatory bodies like WADA and ASADA are using a host of ethical justifications for the bans on drugs and other technologies that will not stand up to logical scrutiny
- 3) The widespread opposition to performance enhancing technologies, even though it is not logically strong, remains democratically powerful.

Prepared by Michael Burke

Gyms as sites for 'body projects'

Introductory note:

This section of the DIGEST contains a sample of articles that examine the gym and fitness centre experience. Like all good social analysis, these research papers take a deep and serious look at what might seem, at first glance, to be hollow and banal leisure activities. In fact, if these studies are anything to go by, gyms are sites where a whole raft of important social interactions, practices and performances take place. They are not only places where enormous energies are expended in the name of personal development, improved fitness and better-looking-bodies, but they are also locations where the self is critically scrutinised, and identities are savagely torn apart and re-invented. It is also a world where masculinities are re-defined and femininities are re-aligned, and often in very challenging - and sometimes bizarre - ways. The gym juxtaposes authentic leisure against commoditised pleasure, and re-badges fitness programs as body-projects and gym-work. The results of these studies additionally suggest that the forces of neo-liberalism have transformed gym-experiences from a place of exuberant physicality into a space for investing in bodily capital. The review begins with a detailed analysis of a study of gym users framed by a typology that is quite unflattering to most people who use gyms and fitness centres to build better bodies.

Review 1:

Barbara Phillips (2005) Working out: Consumers and the Culture of Exercise, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 38 (3) 525-550.

In her highly illuminating research project, Barbara Phillips tackles many big questions. She asks, for example, why do people work-out in gyms? Other questions include: Is there an obsession with gym work? Is it all about building the beautiful body? Are gym participants narcissists? Is gym culture really about the consumption of fashion products...and are gyms, perhaps, sites ready-made for the consumption of drugs?

Phillips seeks to understand the American obsession with fitness and exercise as reflected in the billions of dollars spent on beauty products, health memberships, supplements, clothing, and fitness equipment. There has also been a marked increase in the number of articles relating to exercise in specialty magazines and television programs, and a widespread involvement of government exercise initiatives. In order to comprehend the phenomenal growth in the exercise and fitness industry, Phillips employs Frank's abstract and conceptual typology of 'the body use in action'. This typology, will, it is claimed, when applied to exercise behaviours and identities, (1) reveal why people exercise and (2) explain how advertising and the media lead exercisers to consume products and instil cultural meanings into these products.

Three women and three men, who, as Phillips noted, were regularly exercising graduate students, were interviewed about their exercise behaviour. The students habitually exercised in a range of sports and physical activities. Open-ended questions were used to reveal (1) why the students exercised, (2) whether they worked out alone, or with others, (3) the products they used, and (4) a number of other influences on their behaviour. The responses were then placed into one of Frank's

four quadrants, these being ways in which the individual can make use of the body when responding to social pressures.

Frank's first category is the ***disciplined body***. Disciplined bodies act through regimentation as a result of feelings of inferiority. Exercise can predictably compensate for, but never entirely satisfy, the need to remove anxiety and self-doubt. Poor self-esteem is brought about by rapid social change, war and poverty, and a sense that by turning inward, and by habitually exercising, the individual gains some semblance of control. Disciplined exercisers conduct their work without relating to others, for the body becomes disassociated in the Marxist sense. In short, it becomes alienated from itself. Bodybuilders and weightlifters thus work out in front of mirrors to transfer their pain to the mirror image, which is their dissociated body. Despite their routines, disciplined exercisers have lower self-esteem than non-exercisers, since they experience a perpetual sense of emptiness. Phillips found that all six interviewees exhibited signs of the disciplined exerciser, in that they exercised predictably, that is, they exercised at regular times and all had adopted routinised programs. They exercised to avoid feelings of "becoming old" and took a moral stance with regard to non-exercisers over whom they felt superior. Missing exercise sessions lead to feelings of guilt and disgust. Whilst they took their exercise in groups they used the presence of others to motivate them in competitive ways and preferred to remain anonymous. In other words, they did not relate in positive or supportive ways to others.

Frank's second category is the ***mirroring body*** characterized, in particular, by compensating for a sense of lack through consumption. This type of exerciser considers appearance more important than health and will therefore take risks to ensure a better body. They will continue to do exercise when ill, and will use steroids in order to improve appearance. Appearing powerful and attractive motivates the mirroring exerciser, since the body becomes a commodity and is capable of exchange for social acceptance and recognition. The consumption of goods to secure a better body is taken for granted, and the purchase of performance enhancing equipment, body-flattering clothing, and energy building supplements becomes paramount. All six participants reported that appearance was an important outcome of their exercise programs, but only two felt that consuming products was important in achieving their exercise goals.

Frank's third category is the ***dominating body***. A sense-of-lack leads this type of individual to dominate others. In post-industrial society there are few opportunities to demonstrate physical strength at work, so the dominating individual exhibits control and power through exercise. The dominating exerciser sees the world in terms of the gender hierarchy, and consequently males are seen to be biologically superior to females. All three male participants in the study reflected the gender hierarchy in sport. Two women held stereotypical views of women and men, but felt that women were more encouraging and less judging in their exercise practices. On the other hand, none of the exercisers used their workouts to intimidate or dominate others.

Frank's fourth and final category is the ***communicative body***. Communicative exercisers exist to the extent that they used working-out to understand themselves, to express themselves through their bodies, and to share enjoyment with others. Some female bodybuilders express themselves through their bodies, and so challenge the dominant hegemonic view of female attractiveness. These women can therefore be viewed as communicative exercisers. Three interview participants stated that they

preferred to exercise with others because it constituted fun. One participant, who played softball, expressed the importance of feeling part of a team.

In the final analysis, Phillips decides that all six participants could be placed into all four quadrants on the basis of the attitudes and behaviours they expressed. However she also notes that each participant was clearly strongest in one, and weakest in at least two others. As a result, their presence in the quadrants could be designated as strong, moderate or weak. For example, one-male participant was strong in the disciplined category, moderate in the mirroring category, weak in dominating category and weak in communicative category.

Phillips' use of Frank's typology has great potential as a frame for studying gym users, and the different ways they go about tackling their 'body projects'. It is equally applicable to fitness training and body-toning as it is to bodybuilding and power-lifting. It is, as we speak, being considered as a conceptual frame for a gym-work research project by members of the Sport and Culture Group.

Prepared by Brian Moroney

Review 2:

Leena St Martin and Nicola Gavey (1996) Women's Bodybuilding: Feminist Resistance and/or Felinity's Recuperation? *Body and Society*, 2 (4) 45-57.

A multitude of questions arise when women's bodybuilding is discussed. What are the consequences of bodybuilding for women? Does the woman bodybuilder risk becoming masculinized? Does she become empowered through bodybuilding? Does she challenge –and even defy - what it is to be feminine? Can she offer resistance to the male/female sex/gender system? Is there a subversive element to competitive women's bodybuilding? These are the questions that draw St Martin and Gavey to investigate women's bodybuilding in the United States. They do this by (1) reviewing videos and magazine articles, (2) interrogating interviews done by female bodybuilders with the media, and (3) dissecting the content of bodybuilding books and academic journal articles.

The recent history of women's bodybuilding – which is designated as anything after 1960 - receives the most detailed treatment. Interestingly, St Martin and Gavey contend that 1964 is a pivotal turning point in bodybuilding culture, since it heralded the opening of Gold's Gym as the Mecca for the hard-core male bodybuilder. It came to be described as "the most macho gym in the world" (47). While it built a whole superman-ideology around the mens' bodybuilding scene, its establishment was also a major factor in preventing the acceptance of women's bodybuilding, and this continued up until the late 1970s. Womens' only opportunity to compete in "body" contests had been quasi beauty pageants added as a finale to men's bodybuilding contests. But this all changed in 1980 with the establishment of the prestigious Ms. Olympia title. Parallel developments occurred in Britain where the National Amateur Bodybuilding Association renamed its Miss Bikini International contest as NABBA Ms. Universe. In 1986, the Ms Universe contest was divided into Figure and Physique categories as a direct result of the increasing muscularity of women competitors. Natural bodybuilding contests and the Ms. Fitness title were begun in the 1990s. These developments provided space for women who chose not to use performance-enhancing drugs. Tests were conducted during the events.

St Martin and Gavey go on to note the important difference between Figure and Fitness events. The distinctiveness of one over the other is discernible not so much by muscle mass but rather by the poses women strike on stage. While Figure contestants strike traditional bodybuilding poses, Fitness competitors adhere to time-honored beauty pageant poses with some aerobic movements added on.

According to St Martin and Gavey a turning point occurred in 1985 when a semi-documented film *Pumping Iron 11: The Women*, featured a Las Vegas competition and raised the question as to which of Rachel Macleish, Carla Dunlap or Bev. Francis should win. Bev Francis – who happened to be Australian - displayed a body of much greater muscle mass than the other two competitors and, in a strange twist of logic, was judged to be too “masculine”, and was therefore an inappropriate selection for any prize or trophy. This set the scene for countless controversies surrounding women’s bodybuilding and what constitutes the ideal female form. In the light of this ambiguity about female muscularity, the authors conclude that women’s bodybuilding overturns the regime of femininity through cultivated muscularity, “at the same time submitting to an almost hyper-feminine ornamentation and demeanor required for competition” (54).

St Martin and Gavey propose that reading bodies as texts allows us to interpret bodybuilding as a destabilizing social practice. This is because it disrupts the sex/gender system by presenting a highly muscularized woman, one who is indeed more muscled than the normative male. At the same time, by exposing her body in public, the female bodybuilder becomes vulnerable, for she risks censure for not possessing a natural female body. The subversive potential of women’s bodybuilding is further limited, even in non-bodybuilding settings, since they also invite hostile and derogatory comment for deliberately transgressing the normative ideal.

The other interesting point noted by St Martin and Gavey is that elite female bodybuilders – unlike their male counterparts - are often seen to compensate for their muscled bodies. In competition they will seek to take on a hyper-feminine appearance in their posing, and emphasize their make-up and hairstyling. Plastic surgery, breast augmentation, and hair bleaching represent further attempts to recuperate femininity. Surgery will be used to remove increased nasal cartilage growth, acne scarring and other unwanted side effects resulting from performance-enhancing drugs. One popular book on women’s bodybuilding suggests that the activity elevates femininity; furthermore, magazines present women bodybuilders in ways that co-opt them for the male gaze. Given these observations it seems unlikely that women’s bodybuilding has much potential as a site for female resistance.

There are, of course, many tensions embedded in the female bodybuilding discourse, and the authors refuse to adopt easy, or overly simplistic, conclusions. Put simply, there are sharp contradictions in women’s bodybuilding which defy easy analysis. What’s more, there is little research on female bodybuilders in Australia, and there is a proposal currently on-the-table for members of the Sport and Culture Group aims to rectify this situation through local research initiatives.

Review 3:

Tristan Bridges (2009) Gender Capital and Male Bodybuilders, *Body and Society*, 15 (1) 83-107.

Tristan Bridges (2009) examines the world of bodybuilding using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, and its sport-specific re-jigging it as bodily, physical, and gendered capital. Bridges did a one-year long ethnographic study in 2004-2005 of 43 American bodybuilders who had aspirations of competing in serious body building competitions. The bodybuilders were training regularly at one of four so called 'hard core' gyms, all located in two east coast cities in the USA. While they enjoyed the social setting, the whole working out regime, and the accompanying camaraderie and bravado, they were also highly committed to building the best bodies they could. However, Bridges was not so much concerned about rating their muscular development as he was to find out what drove them to build muscle, how it related their notions of masculinity, and to what extent their muscularity secured them status and social position in the bodybuilding fraternity and elsewhere.

Bridges found that all the bodybuilders believed their bodies were valuable commodities, and that their muscularity not only made them feel confident about themselves, but also awarded them the admiration of their peers. In short, they reckoned their muscular bodies built up their gender capital, which could be used to generate a benefit in the form of the esteem of others. Body symmetry, muscle definition, and size were always given the greatest weight, while strength was relegated to a secondary position. This allowed the bodybuilders to sling-off at the power lifters, who were often described as "dumb jock (s)" (101).

At the same time nearly all of the bodybuilders conceded that the status ascribed to them varied significantly from situation to situation, or, in the language of Bourdieu, from social field to social field. While, they all understood how their in-gym reputations could be enhanced by ripped quads, radically defined abs, or a massive chest measurement (90), it was also obvious that outside the gym, their appearance could be belittled, and their social position marginalised. In one case, it was noted that when exiting a cinema with another body builder, a couple of patrons laughed at the way they looked (95). This would never have occurred in the gym.

Bridges concluded that there was a clearly defined dominant, or hegemonic masculinity operating in the gym scene that he observed, which centred on 'bodily forms' (101) unblemished skin, with all extraneous hair shaved off (100), definition (99), size (99) and a sharp demarcation from the power-lifter (101). It wasn't built upon the swaggering, hairy-chested model valued by many young working class men, but contained elements of the aesthetic and the feminine. In other words, the "gender projects" of these bodybuilders had their own subtle idiosyncrasies (104), and allowed them to construct their own version of hegemonic masculinity.

Prepared by Bob Stewart

Review 4

Nick Crossley (2006) In the Gym: Motives, Meaning and Moral Careers, *Body and Society*, 12 (3) 23-50.

Nick Crossley (2006) directed his research attention to what he called “gym life” (25). He undertook lengthy ethnographic field work in the Greater Manchester area in the UK, where he aimed to seek a better understanding of the practice of gym-going. His data came from six years of participant observation and casual conversation with other gym members from 1992-2000. He had two objectives, which were to (1) understand and explore the motives for working out, and (2) reveal the meanings attached to working out (25). He incidentally examined the extent to which gym attendees were concerned with building physical capital in the way that Pierre Bourdieu addresses it.

Crossley focussed on the “body-work” of gym attendees, and was keen to provide a variety of specific commentaries on what he observed, and what the gym attendees told him (24). From his perspective there had been a lot of broad-brush speculation about the body work and body projects in gyms, but there had been little detailed analysis of what precisely went on in gyms, and what body –workers not only thought of themselves, but also of each other.

Crossley identified a number of motives, or what he called ‘steering forces for action’ (29). He distinguished between motives for starting at a gym, and motives for continuing at a gym, noting that from his casual experience over many years as a gym attendee himself, there appeared to be important differences. As far as starting at a gym was concerned, it was immediately clear to Crossley that people rarely just drifted into gym-going (30) since the costs, both in terms of time and money, could be quite significant. They therefore had quite strong reasons for doing so, which were either because they wanted to (1) enhance their physical performance, which meant preparing for the forthcoming sports season, or (2) lose weight, and as a subsidiary outcome, get fitter and tone up.

Crossley noted that in telling their join-up stories, nearly every respondent constructed a complex narrative in which not only their sense of self, but also who they wanted to be, was starkly revealed when addressing their subtle but significant ‘bodily deterioration’ (33). For Crossley, it resonated with the work done by Anthony Giddons on the interaction between self-narratives and body projects. However, their narratives were more convoluted and complex than Giddons had envisioned, since they were built on an underlying quest to “recover something they had lost’ and to return to some form of earlier glory, either as fantasy or reality. (31). Moreover, their new identity-building project was not, as Anthony Giddons had imagined, to be judged against some sort of social benchmark like a celebrity or sports star, but was rather measured against their own ‘past selves’, with this past-self being somewhat more socially attractive and commercially functional - or valuable, in fact - than their current perceived-self. In this case, interviewee narratives about identity and motives for joining the gym were regularly moving between their past self, present self, and future self. At the same time, Crossley was not able to locate any mention of physical or bodily capital amongst his interviewees, and he took this to mean that they were not all that interested in or motivated by the desire to “build up their physical capital in order to “improve their chances in a given market” (31). This was a surprising result!

The motives for continuing gym going were more routine and even banal, and in the main replicated the results from earlier studies. According to Crossley nearly every informant mentioned things like enjoyment, social interaction, escape, relaxation, and release. These things were all about pleasure and comfort. At the same time, a number of informants also mentioned the ways in which gym going enhanced their view of their physical selves. They not only gained confidence in the ability of their bodies to engage with the equipment, and the culture of the gym, but also in their capacity to manage their bodies, and develop a sense of mastery over their physical worlds. In the words of one informant, the whole gym experience made them “more confident and connected” (42).

Prepared by Bob Stewart

Review 5:

Matthew Frew and David McGillivray (2005) Health Clubs and Body Politics: Aesthetics and the Quest for Physical Capital, *Leisure Studies*, 24 (2) 161-175.

This piece of research grapples with what appears to be a broadening social paradox. While on one hand, there is a growing fascination – in western industrial nations least – with the “aesthetic of the ideal body” (161), on the other hand an obesity epidemic is spreading throughout the more affluent societies. Matthew Frew and David McGillivray were primarily interested in (1) exploring the operation of the health and fitness industry in general in these bodily-obese times, and (2) finding out what gym users wanted to achieve from their training and work-out experiences in particular.

To this end, in 2000 they undertook fieldwork across three health and fitness clubs in central Scotland, which provided a good demographic cross section of users. They were able to attract 164 informants. Interviews were conducted with the centre managers, gym instructors and gym members. Special attention was given to the types of bodies members valued, and what they were prepared to do to secure their ideal body type.

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of bodily capital was used to frame the analysis, and to better illuminate the outcomes that members were aiming for. In this context, bodily capital was posited as a personal store of value that came with securing a body that was not only attractive to the owner - that is the person in the body, so to speak – but that was also attractive to others. In other words, building a better body was like an investment, where the pay-off was not so much a higher salary, or even just a healthier body, a but rather stronger self-esteem, the respect from immediate-others, and in the longer run, the attention and friendship of additional-others. Michael Featherstone’s division of body types into the *carnavalesque* and the *idealised* was also used to assist the analysis of the results. Whereas the carnivalesque body was flat, flaccid and the manifestation of a hedonistic, erratic, and slovenly life, the idealised body, by contrast, was proportional taut and strong, and signified a concern for discipline, mastery, routine, and the aesthetic (171).

The results showed that nearly all gym members wanted to go away from their gym experience with a body that that was, in fact, firm, taut, proportional, and more attractive than when they went in. Indeed, in some cases the perceived possession of a ‘carnavalesque’ body was the driving force for attending the gym in the first place. And, without saying it directly, they all wanted to build up their bodily capital, and in doing so feel good about their bodies, and feel comfortable about showing

them off to others. Comments varied from “the body must be in proportion:’ and the “body has to fit together”, to “I want... “get rid of my pot belly”, I want to have “ a flatter stomach” and a stereotypically male statement – which was in fact made by a male – that I am...after “broad shoulders so clothes look better on me” (168). It was also interesting that the ideal body images conjured up by members were nearly always built around celebrities, with Jennifer Beals, Jennifer Lopez and Brad Pitt the most often named , with legs, thighs, butts, bums and bellies most often mentioned as points of interest (169).

At the same time, a number of instructors were frustrated with the lack of discipline of many members, and the inability of some members to engage in any sort of regular and strict training. It was if some members could not properly engage in the (idealised) body improvement game, and more often than not defaulted to their more familiar carnivalesque lifestyle. Trainers could not understand for example, why members would “after a hard session go into the chip shop across the road”, and why, having been at the gym for at least an hour, have ‘only worked out for 15 minutes” (170).

Frew and McGillivray concluded that, from their research, most gym members were not likely to achieve their aspiration for an ideal body, and that only a few would actually build any significant stock of physical capital and the distinctive status that goes with it. In the main, then, they reckoned that this current wave of gym membership is the result of just another neo-liberal mediated marketing ploy, where “celebrity bodies provide dream-world associations” and fantasy experiences to naive gym members under the fabricated assumption that they too, will secure “levels of recognition and acceptance comparable with their mythical heroes” (171). Frew and McGillivray make the very interesting final point that these body projects are taken up by members who will, for the most part, never realise their finality. This is because the very people who are most attracted to these programs will be the very people who are least able to follow them through to completion. They will be well intentioned, be clear about the body image they would like to secure, but will not be able to sustain the change in lifestyle require to make it all happen. According to Frew and McGillivray, the habits and routines of the carnivalesque ways of running their daily lives – and the excesses and pleasures that go with it - will undermine their fantastic quest for “aesthetic perfection” at every turn (172). They will be, at best, works-in-progress, and in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, continually thwarted in their quest for a better body by their own institutionalised dispositions and habitus.

Prepared by Bob Stewart