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## The social construction of masculinity as it relates to sport: An investigation into the lives of elite level athletes competing in individually-oriented masculinised sports

Murray Drummond  
*Edith Cowan University*

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**This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father,  
Lorraine and John Drummond. Without their loving  
help and support it would have remained an  
unfulfilled ambition.**

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The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

**The Social Construction of Masculinity as it Relates to Sport: An  
Investigation into the Lives of Elite Level Athletes Competing in  
Individually-Oriented Masculinised Sports**

**by**

**Murray Drummond**

**B.Ed. (Victoria College, Rusden) 1988**

**M.Ed. (Deakin University, Geelong) 1993**

**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**at the**

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## Abstract

Sport has long been regarded as a masculine domain. In the past the literature has tended to focus on male athletes with respect to sensational or noteworthy performances, however little attention has been placed on the reasons why men participate in sport and the subsequent underpinning sociological implications of masculinity. This research investigated the lives of 12 elite level athletes competing in the three individually-oriented sports of triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between male identity and sport, and the process of masculinisation experienced by men throughout the lifecourse. Further, it explored the notion that sport is becoming one of the primary sites for the construction of masculinity for men in contemporary Western society.

During childhood these men quickly realised that athletic competition meant far more than merely winning or losing. Sporting success was interpreted as being accompanied by peer recognition, family attention and general acceptance by society. Future acknowledgment was therefore perceived as being contingent upon continued success. However, placing emphasis on sporting success can influence a man's development throughout the lifecourse as he undergoes changes during the transition from boyhood, through adolescence and on to adulthood.

It is with respect to such changes that some of these men experienced crises in their lives. As young male athletes, they based their self-image and masculine identity largely around success-derived appreciation from others. Therefore, when failing to live up to the expectations of these people their self-perception was affected and they were faced with problems relating to self-image, masculine identity and relationships with others, both intimate and family-oriented.

On the other hand, sport can offer its young male participants numerous pleasurable experiences and the opportunity to change various aspects of their lives. It is with respect to this element that the athletes' lives were explored to determine their motivation for participating in their particular sport and its subsequent relationship with masculinity. It was the subcultural environment of each sport which appealed to the men because it provided them with a support network and a form of safety mechanism in the event of a crisis. Therefore, feeling secure in their own subcultural environment had a positive impact on their masculine identity.

Utilising lifecourse theory within a social-psychological perspective, this research was able to identify some of the changes that emerge throughout sportsmen's lives and the role that sport plays in the social construction of masculinity for these men. By using sport to identify the problems associated with masculine identity it provides a looking glass for the problems associated with the social construction of masculinity for contemporary men in Western society.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature

Date...~~NOVEMBER~~.....1995....



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There are many people I must thank for the support and encouragement that has been offered to me in the three years I have researched and written this thesis. I must first thank the twelve men involved in this research for providing several hours of their time to allow me to interview them and write detailed accounts of certain aspects of their lives. However, there is no-one I can thank more than my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Browne. At a period when this research appeared destined never to begin, Jenny agreed to supervise the study for which I am grateful. Her guidance, motivation and penchant for thoroughness have been instilled into me forever and I look forward to carrying these qualities into my career in academia.

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## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgements	v
List of Figures	xii
 Chapter 1	
Introduction	1
Background to the Study	1
Theoretical and Philosophical Assumptions	4
Purpose of the Study	9
Research Questions	10
Significance of the Study	11
Significance of Australian Sport	13
Thesis Outline	16
 Chapter 2	
Review of Literature	18
The Changing Definition of Masculinity	19
Sport as a Masculine Domain	22
Sport, Competition and Masculinity	25
The Body and Masculinity	27

Doing versus Being	31
The Instrumental Male: The Body as a Machine	33
Hegemonic Masculinity	35
Summary: The Importance of Sport as a Masculinising Institution	36
 Chapter 3	
Theoretical Framework	39
Sociological Contexts of Masculinity	40
Gender Order Framework	44
Psychoanalytic Theory	48
Lifecourse Theory	51
Conceptual Framework	55
 Chapter 4	
Methodology	58
Design	58
Sample	61
Interviews	62
Data Collection	65
Data Analysis	66
Reliability and Validity	69
Limitations	72
Ethical Considerations	73

<b>Chapter 5</b>	
<b>The Triathletes</b>	<b>75</b>
 <b>Chapter 6</b>	
<b>The Surf Lifesavers</b>	<b>136</b>
 <b>Chapter 7</b>	
<b>The Bodybuilders</b>	<b>187</b>
 <b>Chapter 8</b>	
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>The Sports: An Overview</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>Triathlon</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>Surf Lifesaving</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Bodybuilding</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>In the Beginning</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>The Natural Triathlete</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>The Natural Surf Lifesaver</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>The Unnatural Bodybuilder</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Family Influence: A Description</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Relationships with Fathers</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Triathletes: In Search of Approval</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Surf Lifesavers: Proof of Manhood</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>Bodybuilders: Inconspicuous Fathers</b>	<b>252</b>

<b>Subcultures: Living the Life of....</b>	<b>253</b>
A Triathlete	253
A Surf Lifesaver	255
A Bodybuilder	257
<b>Commitment to Sport</b>	<b>260</b>
The Committed Triathlete	260
Surf Lifesaving: Not Just a Sport	262
Bodybuilding: A Lifetime Commitment	263
<b>Relationships: Women, Men and Mateship</b>	<b>266</b>
Men's Perceptions of Women	266
Triathletes and Women	268
Surf Lifesavers and Women	271
Bodybuilders and Women	272
Men and Mateship	274
<b>Competition and Success</b>	<b>278</b>
The Competitive Triathlete and the Importance of Success	279
Surf Lifesaving Competition and Success: More than Winning	282
Bodybuilding: Competing as a Form of Legitimising Practice	284
<b>Identity, Insecurity and Perception of Self</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>Cessation of Sport</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>Summary: A Final Analysis</b>	<b>299</b>

Chapter 9	
Conclusion	301
Research Overview	301
Recommendations for Further Research	307
Summary of Thesis	309
Appendix 1	310
References	312

List of Figures

Page

Figure 1: Variables impacting on the social construction of masculinity	57
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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

This is a study involving research on men. Specifically, it is a study of elite male athletes and their association with sport as a social institution. Sport has become a highly publicised domain as a consequence of the construction and perpetuation of masculine ideals and its subordination of women. Noteworthy is the manner in which these men use participation in sports as a means of constructing their masculine identity. This chapter discusses the relevant issues surrounding masculinity in contemporary Western society and its positional relationship with sport as a masculinising institution.

### Background to the Study

Standing at the base of the tallest building in Melbourne, about to embark upon a race which entailed running up 74 flights of stairs, not only did I question my ability but also my sanity. Along with 149 other men I had to race up the Rialto tower in a narrow stair well to determine who would be the fastest upon reaching the top. The winner would be crowned "State stair climbing champion" and receive \$1000 and an air fare to New York to compete in the World stair climbing championships. The interesting part in all of this was that the women had a separate race on the same day with the same prizes awarded to the female winner. However, despite being provided 150 slots for competitors, less than 50 women turned up to race. On the other hand, almost 100 men were turned away from their event.

I remember discussing this matter the next day with my Master of Education supervisor at the time and coming to the conclusion that it all had to do with masculine ego and men's competitiveness as opposed to women's oppressed existence and sports-oriented inferiority. Further, he suggested there was a good Ph.D topic "somewhere in there". When I subsequently began reading literature in the area of men, sports and masculinity, I soon began to realise that my original conclusions were somewhat fundamental and a little naive. An elite level triathlete at the time, I also started to question my own involvement in sport and take a cynical perspective of athletes' motives for participation.

Sport had always been an uncomplicated pleasure for me, particularly during my childhood. Outstanding in most sports attempted, I was afforded the liberty of choosing the sports I wanted to pursue through adolescence and into adulthood. My parents provided immense support throughout my sporting youth and became involved themselves in the teams with which I played, but never appeared overbearing. I was grateful to them as much as they were proud of me, but it was my father I most wanted to impress. In under age football matches he was the only person I acknowledged in the clubrooms before running out on to the ground, and his praise and critical comments were the only person's I cared for on completion of the game. At cricket matches we sat together prior to me going in to bat, and I would be back next to him on being dismissed regardless of the score made. Despite my intrinsic sporting motivation, my father was my greatest inspiration.

Cricket became my primary focus of sporting attention, but an unfortunate injury curtailed any chance of a career in that direction. As a consequence, I took up running which soon led to triathlon. Despite beginning the sport at 20 years of age, I was determined to be successful. Once again my parents were entirely supportive. However, I have never felt comfortable, nor come to terms, with giving up cricket knowing the pleasure my father gained from watching me perform well. Together we forged a strong relationship through this sport, which I initially thought might diminish on leaving. Fortunately, I was wrong

and we are now closer than ever before, but I occasionally contemplate what might have been had I continued and made it to national level. I did, however, make it to national level in triathlon which pleased both my parents, yet being such a new sport, without tradition and without many past athletes to gauge performances by, this new sport lacked the closeness and intimacy the others had provided. Thus they became mere supportive observers as a consequence of the difficulty in understanding my motives for wanting to participate in such a demanding sport. Still, they knew it was something in which I wanted to be involved and successful.

After several years of devotion to the sport I began a Master of Education degree to complement the Bachelor of Education degree attained several years earlier. Based off campus, I quickly grew to enjoy study mode once again, so much so that I soon became a full-time, on campus, student. A new association developed between myself and my parents, more so with my father because he was obviously unsure of my future and this provided positive direction. It was also at this point I began contemplating a future in academia while simultaneously decrying excessive sporting involvement, something of which I had previously been accused. However, following the discussion on men and sport with my postgraduate supervisor, I began formulating ideas, questions, and theories, albeit simplistic ones, in an effort to seek knowledge in this field of study.

My research has evolved into something that is intrinsically special and self-gratifying. On setting out to investigate the social construction of masculinity, elite level triathletes were at the forefront for analysis because of my significant involvement in the sport. Likewise, bodybuilders were singled out, not only because of their hyper masculine qualities, but as a consequence of the personal interest developed through working in the fitness industry assisting them prepare for competition. Despite not being entirely comfortable about the obsessive nature of bodybuilding it is understandable how much the sport means to these men. Therefore it was important to me to help fulfil their personal goals.

With the men of triathlon being relatively lean and the bodybuilders excessively large, I thought it would be appropriate to investigate men, also involved in an individual sport, who appeared somewhere in between the two. Thus my attention was directed towards surf lifesavers, not only because they fit the criteria, but also the friendships and sporting rivalries I have developed with them in the past. As I grew up in a beach town on the east coast of Victoria, many of my school friends were surf lifesavers. Similarly, being a triathlete, I have held countless light-hearted debates with surf lifesavers over who are the fittest athletes.

I come into this research with knowledge and experience in all three sports. However, I perceive each with a new sense of objectivity compared to my original perspective because I have never consciously contemplated the manner in which these sports affect the social construction of one's masculinity. I use my athletic background as a site of interest and a means by which to legitimately enter these domains by attaining the rapport of its elite male participants.

### Theoretical and Philosophical Assumptions

In the sporting arena, the majority of men have been perceived as traditionally demonstrating such masculine traits as the development of character, violence, aggression, and domination over subordinate groups. Included in these subordinate groups are women, homosexual men, weaker men and some ethnic groups. Contemporary Western society is characterised by competing masculinities, some hegemonic, some subordinated, for example, gay men, and some marginalised by race or class. The dominant form is hegemonic masculinity, which is defined in relation to various subordinated and marginalised masculinities, as well as in relation to femininities (Connell, 1995; Messner, 1992). It is

grounded in the notion of power struggles between men and women, known as intergender relationships and also power struggles between men, referred to as intragender relationships.

This study will investigate the social construction of masculinity within a sporting context. It will explore the impact of society on men with respect to the individual, highly masculinised sports in which they choose to participate. The research will question why men have become involved in particular types of sports and whether that sport has affected their concept of masculinity. Further, the nature of the research is designed to generate knowledge and provide a comprehensive understanding of why these sports have developed as masculine domains.

The body as a masculine preserve will be a major area of focus within the study because of the body's significant role in the social construction of masculinity. The method of inquiry includes the way in which the body is used as a site of empowerment for men as well as the way men use this empowerment to display hegemonic masculine ideals. Men's perceptions of their physique in comparison to other men, including the way their body is perceived by other men, and women, will also be investigated. The focus sports will be triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding. These sports were selected because they are widely regarded as being masculinised activities in Western society and as a consequence, men dominate these sports in terms of participation rates. The sports were also chosen because of their significant comparative differences in factors such as fitness requirements and desirable body shape and size, which allow for contrasts in the perception and construction of masculinity to be identified. Another criterion for choosing these sports was the researcher's close identification with, and personal expertise and experience in, all three sports.

In contemporary society, sport is talked about, written about, advertised, glamorised and exploited. It is the sensational, obtrusive and noteworthy events which are seized upon and highlighted. The less conspicuous outcomes of sport, such as the sociological effects

upon its participants, are not well documented. Occasionally, in sporting magazines and in the sports section of daily tabloids, athletes are interviewed and quizzed about why they became involved in their particular sport. The answers are generally short and give little insight into feelings and emotions. It is arguable that the questions directed at sportsmen are somewhat different from those posed to women athletes. Successful female athletes are commonly asked intergender related questions such as how men react towards them or how they came to rise above male oppression. On the other hand, men are asked intragender oriented questions about their transition from junior sport to senior ranks and how they coped with competing against bigger, stronger and more experienced men.

It could be contended that in Western society, a successful junior male athlete is commonly expected to continue participating in that sport into adulthood. Other than physical factors, such as injury, most perceive there are few elements that stand in the way of success. Therefore, it might be suggested that within Western cultural ideology, there is a notion based on the premise that a successful junior male athlete would not willingly drop out of a sport due to personal or emotional reasons. Thus the pressure applied to men to participate in sports is manifested at an early age. Boys who drop out of sport whilst still at school often come to terms with their decision and participate in other activities. Young men who drop out having completed their schooling can sometimes have difficulty in finding an alternative activity let alone another sport. So, what drives athletes to continue the sport they have chosen beyond school and well into adulthood? These are some of the less documented issues in the contemporary study of men, and when they have been investigated, they have not been dealt with in a convincing manner.

Historically, the literature has not explored issues of masculinity and the private lives of men in the same way that it has examined the daily lives of women and feminist issues. Despite increasing research on masculinity, there remains a gap between the amount of masculinist and feminist literature being produced. Critical and sociological literature in the

past has tended to focus on the achievements of prominent men, and men in power, rather than on their everyday activities (Brod, 1987). There was little focus on the essence of experience of being a man in power or the feelings associated with achievement. By researching this concept amongst elite level sportsmen it is contended that hegemonic masculinity and masculinity as a social construct will be demonstrated to be highly interactive with sport in Western society.

According to Messner (1992) the early men's studies literature generally ignored sport as a focus of inquiry. Sabo and Runfola (1980) were among the first researchers to produce notable work on the relationship between masculinity and sport. Messner (1992) claimed that their "groundbreaking anthology" *Jock: Sports and male identity* was an important move away from the analyses of masculinity presented by radical critics and men's liberationists. The radical critics reduced gender issues into race or class dynamics whereas the men's liberationists focussed on how the narrow definition of masculinity affected men, while "down-playing or ignoring how sport fits into the construction and legitimation of male privilege" (Messner, 1992, p.5).

Early feminist analyses of masculinity and sport were thwarted because masculinity lacked advanced theoretical conceptualisation. Development in this field of research has gradually expanded and is reflected in the growing number of men utilising feminist approaches to study issues surrounding men, sport, and masculinity (Kidd, 1987; Messner, 1987; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Not only is there more theoretical literature being produced, but there is also more research being carried out on the social construction of masculinity as it relates to sport. Connell's research (1990) on the life history of a surf lifesaving ironman as well as Klein's research (1990) into the bodybuilding subculture of southern California are two examples of contemporary research on masculinity and sport. Messner's (1992) study on the lives of 30 former athletes has led the way in masculine research in recent times. It has produced new theoretical concepts in masculinity as a social construct in relation to sport.

It is important to study masculinity in sport just as it is important to study masculinity as a concept in society, because sport, like society, is an institution wherein domination and power are both contested terrains. In many instances the underpinning theoretical concepts are transferable from one site to the other. Power is a key term in the discussion of masculine development, because it is this element that enables the notion of masculinity and the hegemonic ideal to become a dynamic process in gender inter and intrarelations. Hence the notion of bodily empowerment becomes an important component within such an investigation.

One could argue that the dimension of contemporary masculinity has reached a crisis point. Research-based literature is required for a more appropriate definition and workable form of the construct of masculinity. It is not possible to acknowledge gender role socialisation as the primary initiator of the masculine-feminine dichotomy. Sex role theory is static and does not allow for the dynamic processes to take place in the same way that gender order and hegemonic masculinist theory can provide. The advent of the feminist movement has produced significant change. Men no longer have the same oppressive influence over women, although, it is contentious that in sport, the hegemonic ideal remains strong between sexes, including hegemony concerning subordinated and marginalised masculinities. Messner (1992) claimed that in sport there still exists a gap in gender relations, more so than the gap that divides racial and class relations.

Sport must be viewed as an institution whereby power is continually challenged and domination over subordinate and marginalised groups is not only established, but also contested. Messner argued that "people have the ability to recognise injustice and to use sport as a means to resist (at least symbolically) the domination imposed upon them" (1992, p.13).



## Purpose of the Study

The study will focus on the relationship between the sociocultural construction of masculinity and three traditionally male-dominated sports. The sports under investigation are the endurance sport of triathlon, which can be regarded as a *doing* sport, and bodybuilding, which can be regarded as a *being* sport. The third sport under investigation will be that of surf lifesaving, which is perceived to be towards the centre on a continuum of masculinities, between the sports of triathlon and bodybuilding. Surf lifesaving is a respected masculinised sporting activity within Australian culture not only due to the pervading image of the "bronzed Aussie" that is bestowed upon its male participants, but also as a consequence of the *doing* and *being* components of the sport. Many of the elite level participants in the sport of surf lifesaving are envied and admired by males and females because of their desirable physique and the ability to use their body in a functional manner, a manner in which the majority of people in society cannot. At a community level all three sports offer similar opportunities for men and women to participate. However, preliminary observation suggests that they are predominantly a masculine domain. Entry into this domain can be daunting for women because of the *power* associated with male participation rates. It will be argued that intimidation, as a consequence of masculine hegemony, also prevails for men who do not display stereotypical masculine traits. Therefore, in regard to masculinities and one's perception of the masculine body image, the study will question why some men are socialised into various types of *doing* and *being* sports. It will also question why men feel the need to enter sport at all. Ultimately the study will compare and contrast these reasons to provide an insight into the way *doing* sports and *being* sports affect the social construction of masculinity and assist in the perpetuation of the hegemonic masculine ideal.

## Research Questions

The major questions directing this study ask how masculinity is socially constructed and the extent to which the body contributes to this construction. Comparing male athletes from different sports will uncover contrasting perspectives and experiences surrounding the different notions of masculinity held by men. Specifically the study will answer the following questions.

- (i) Why do men compete in sport?
- (ii) Do men achieve a heightened sense of masculinity by participating in male-oriented sports?
- (iii) How much emphasis do the athletes place upon their body image and their body appearance?
- (iv) Is masculinity perceived to be different between the groups of athletes?
- (v) What has led these groups of athletes to their particular masculinised sport?
- (vi) Have these athletes been guided to their respective sports as a consequence of masculine ideology or have their sports been a major influencing factor in the social construction of their masculinity?
- (vii) Were their initial intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for participating in these sports the same at the beginning as they are now?
- (viii) What part does competition play in the social construction of the masculine body?
- (ix) Is male hegemony a major contributing factor in men attempting to achieve a heightened sense of masculinity?
- (x) Are these men consciously aware of inter and intramasculine hegemony?

The inquiry will provide an informed analysis of the hegemonic masculine ideal and the social construction of masculinities of men involved in three traditionally masculine sports. Therefore the uniqueness of these three individual sports as sites for the social construction of masculinity will be investigated.

### Significance of the Study

This research will provide an original contribution to the investigation of masculinity and the way this concept is socially constructed within the sporting context. The notion that sport builds character was born out of organised sporting involvement among bourgeois males in the 19th century. Following the industrial revolution, with the increasing leisure time that came as a result of shorter working hours, organised sports expanded to the working classes, although it was still dominated by men. Sport has become a lucrative industry specifically targeted at the consumer oriented Western society. There has been discussion on the merits of the commercialisation of sports as well as the detrimental consequences to the individual and society. However, much of this literature has failed to recognise why sports are so appealing to men.

Men have been stereotyped into specific roles that place emphasis on physical and emotional strength, size and occupation of space, muscularity and also the ability to perform in sports. As a result, men have been encouraged to maintain a certain public form of masculinity. Many contemporary Western men do not enjoy displaying this pretentious public masculine performance simply to be accepted by society, particularly by their peers. Conversely, there are men who want Western patriarchal society to continue and perpetuate. These men feel threatened by the gathering momentum of the feminist movement. Often they will respond by producing hypermasculine behaviours such as aggression, violence,

competitiveness and increased muscularity, as well as physical and emotional oppression over feminist sympathisers (Klein, 1993b; Messner, 1992).

Sport is sometimes viewed as the last bastion of male power and privilege now that many of the traditional male social bases are being eroded as a consequence of social change primarily instigated by the feminist movement. This is perceived both on a personal/existential level for athletes and on a symbolic/ideological level for spectators and supporters (Messner, 1985a). Further, men regard the sporting domain as a stable environment in which masculinist ideals are upheld in the face of a culture perceived as becoming increasingly feminised.

The current study is important because it will investigate men in a social setting that has long been regarded as a masculine domain. Although sport plays a significant cultural role within contemporary Australian society, it is the sensational events that are highlighted, and it is mainly men who are glorified for their sporting achievements (McKay, 1991). Sport has played host to the perpetuation of masculine ideals, but has rarely been studied in depth as a site for the social construction of masculinity. Messner aptly summed up the dearth of qualitative sporting critique by claiming:

Ever since the pioneering works by Harry Edwards (1973) and others, the sociology of sport has gradually grown, but its growth has usually been limited to a positivist compilation of "facts" within the context of taken-for-granted assumptions about the role of sport in society. Voluminous quantities of data are now being produced concerning athletic performance and motivation factors, sport violence, drug use, etc., which reflect the predominant problem-management orientation of liberal sociology. Where serious theoretical work has been done on sport, it has more often than not fallen into the usual traps: an idealist notion of sport as a realm of freedom divorced from material and historical constraints; a materialist analysis which posits sport as a cultural mechanism through which the dominant class(es) control the unwitting masses. (1985a, pp.25-26)

This study will explore the meaning of what it is like to be a man living in Australia and participating in a male oriented sport. Due to the limited research investigating the

essence of experience for men in the sporting context in Western society the study will make a significant contribution to the concepts of sport and masculinity within Australia because it will investigate Australian males participating in Australian based sports.

### Significance of Australian Sport

Australians are historically renowned for their *obsession* with sport. This fixation has sometimes been referred to as a "passion" or "religion", while its male sporting heroes have been perceived as gods (Land & Butner, 1982). Accordingly Dunstan (1973) stated that "It is important to examine the reasons why this sporting obsession came about" (p.9). Further, he argued that the primary reason for Australians' sporting desire was due to the majority of the early settlers coming from Britain which, he believed, was the most sport conscious nation on earth around the turn of the nineteenth century. Therefore, sport became an expression of Australianism where organised games were thought to express social ideals that were fundamental to colonial society thereby forming "one of the characteristics of Australian life" (Land & Butner, 1982). Additionally, it was the notion that sport built character, and hence community, which became a dominant cultural ethic during this period. Land and Butner (1982, pp.48-49) claimed that the answers to account for this obsession with sport seemed to lie in Australia's cultural heritage, physical environment and the values arising from a convict and pioneering beginning. They proposed reasons for the development of Australia's sporting obsession which included:

- The first white Australians were mainly from Britain and Ireland - the home of most spectator sports.
- Australia inherited the British love for outdoor recreation.
- Australia generally has a mild climate where most sports can be played all year round.

- Endless amounts of open space existed for play areas, and grass grew all year round.
- The settlement pattern, especially in coastal Australia, with many neighbouring rural districts and towns, encouraged local competition.
- The large number of males in the population at a time when male dominance in sport was acceptable, gave sport a lop-sided boost.
- The pioneering spirit supposedly gave male Australians a unique sense of mateship, courage and manliness. In Australian literature and education, these qualities were linked with sport.
- The lack of intellectual or wider cultural heritage was offset by more physically orientated pursuits.
- The pioneering spirit and the outdoor life gave Australians an aggressive trait. Sport was seen as a means of release.
- Australia's short history and convict origins resulted in a national inferiority complex. Sport was used as a form of nationalism to show superiority to other colonial nations and especially Great Britain.

It is important to understand the underpinning "bronzed Aussie" ethos to help explain why Australians, particularly men, perceive certain outdoor pursuits as more masculine than others. Surf lifesaving, with its history based upon the voluntary patrolling of beaches, is one such sport. Pearson (1979) provided a detailed account of the manner in which surf lifesaving established itself as a legitimate form of athletic competition despite its origins in serving and protecting the welfare of the community.

The basic equipment was the reel, line and belt. Competition, to a large extent, was based on this equipment and was rooted in Royal Life Saving Society traditions. The surf boat was the first craft to be developed for surf life saving purposes. It developed parallel to reel, line and belt equipment but more slowly, so that at the time when surf boats were used by numbers of clubs, rescue and resuscitation, reel, line and belt procedures had been well established. Beach events were added to the competitive program. Initially, many of these events were to add fun and enjoyment to the surf carnival. The term "carnival" was

associated with surf life saving meetings during the first decades of this century and is still used, even though such meetings are almost exclusively concerned with competition. As they became institutionalised, they became "serious" events to competitors and were justified by the surf lifesavers in terms of instrumental criteria. (p.185)

The sport of surf lifesaving is important to Australian men because it promotes muscular, suntanned male bodies which appear to be the epitome of masculinity as they are pushed to extreme levels of physical endurance. However, it is also the origin of the sport with its community work ethic that is important to Australian men. Comradeship and mateship are regarded as being intrinsic Australian qualities and fundamental elements of the surf lifesaving movement. Consequently the sport of surf lifesaving is perceived as being a highly masculine activity due to the notion of athletic competition being borne out of men voluntarily patrolling beaches and helping save lives.

The nature of the sport of triathlon, with its open water swimming component followed by extensive cycle and run elements, has also captured the imagination of Australian men in a similar manner to surf lifesaving. Despite being a relatively new sport and one which was devised purely for the sake of testing individual endurance, it has rapidly gained popularity throughout the world, particularly in Australia. Without the same type of historical content as surf lifesaving, the mystique of triathlon has been developed through the endurance aspect of the sport, particularly with respect to events such as the Hawaii Ironman where athletes compete for many hours in oppressive heat and humidity.

Bodybuilding is a universal sport which, coinciding with the fitness industry boom, has recently risen to prominence in recent times. As interest is increasingly aroused, more men attempt the sport and try their hand at competing in championship titles, both nationally and internationally, thereby establishing bodybuilding as a formidable sport in which to be involved. Dissimilar to triathlon and surf lifesaving, because it is not aerobically based, the

number of men participating in bodybuilding in Western society is steadily increasing (Hewitt, 1995; Klein, 1993b).

Historically, Australian culture has played an important role in the development of particular sports and the manner in which they are perceived. Sports that are masculine in orientation are generally revered by society and are sought after in terms of participation by men. The reasons why they are sought after require answers. By using the sports of triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding as sites of analysis it is hoped these answers will be forthcoming.

### Thesis Outline

This chapter has provided a descriptive overview of the research undertaken including its background, purpose and significance. In the ensuing chapters a review of contemporary literature on men and masculinity, together with related topics, will be examined and discussed. The theoretical framework follows and an extensive account and analysis of the methodology utilised within the research is examined. The construction of a framework is then described using relevant sub-headings to provide justification for its utilisation. Within this research three types of methods are combined to construct the overall gender order framework because masculine research is a relatively new phenomenon and does not have one encompassing methodology or theoretical conception. Therefore, the theories underpinning this research, and discussed accordingly are gender order theory, which is based on competing masculinities, psychoanalytic theory and lifecourse theory.

The findings have been systematically segmented into three chapters under the headings of the three separate sports. The individual data from the 12 elite level athletes are located under the heading of their chosen sport. Following the sections on findings is the



discussion where the men are analysed according to the theoretical underpinnings and then compared and contrasted with respect to the sport in which they participate. Finally, based on thematic analyses, conclusions and associated recommendations are made.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Literature

Journalists and other social commentators claim that masculinity is “in crisis” and that the arrival of the “new man” is imminent (Messner, 1985a). However, there are a number of questions to accompany these assertions such as, How is masculinity in crisis? Who is this new man? and, What are the implications of a changing masculinity for men? This chapter seeks to explore contemporary literature on masculinity and discuss predominating perspectives within a range of categories. Thus it attempts to shed light on what is seemingly confusion over masculinity. Included is the changing definition of masculinity, the relationship between sport and masculinity, competition and masculinity, and the body and masculinity. Further, the concept of “doing versus being” in respect to men and sporting participation is worthy of investigation. Therefore, it stands alone as a significant component within the review of literature.

Compared with feminist literature, contemporary literature on masculinity is still relatively modest in quantity despite slow and steady gains being made in the area of masculine research. It is a matter of contention that men have been written about a lot in the past. There is no doubt that such a statement is true however, the literature being written about men now is quite different from that which society has come to expect. Issues of masculinity are now being dealt with in significant depth and breadth, whereas in the past men’s physical achievements and positive capabilities were the areas of focus, not their insecurities, weaknesses and negative qualities.

There are several broad areas in which men are now being scrutinised. No longer are only their public lives being investigated, but their private lives have become a focal point of

contemporary research and scholarship. It is not the grand, the spectacular, the noteworthy or the incredible events carried out by men that are being peered at through a "looking glass". Rather, it is the everyday events that make up a man's life that are being rigorously examined. The authorship of this literature is dominated by men, but does not exclude women scholars. This domination of male scholarship in the area of masculinity may be, in some way, a reaction to the contemporary feminist movement that has progressed significantly since its inception in the 1960s. What we are hearing now, in Western culture, is a claim by men to be perceived in a different light and to be judged on what they are, not what they do.

### The Changing Definition of Masculinity

Conceptions of masculinity vary according to the person, society or class in question. Associations of masculinity are limitless which is why attempting to define masculinity is fraught with difficulties. What is masculinity and who decides what it is?

The theoretical definition of masculinity is not a problem. However, in practice, understanding masculinity is proving to be a major dilemma for men in Western culture. What are "manlike qualities"? How should a man "act"? What does "strong and manly" mean? These are questions confronting men as they move into an era of uncertainty in the discourse relating to masculine ideologies.

Masculine ideology has traditionally enabled men to exude an air of public and private dominance over women and over other men (to be discussed in detail later in chapter 3 and in chapter 8). Both of these domains of dominance are gradually being eroded as the feminist movement increases momentum. The feminist movement has given women the confidence to speak out and state how they want to be treated by men, even in historically taboo areas

such as sex. Men are now having their private activities assessed and scrutinised by women in candid and open descriptions, particularly in women's magazines. As a consequence men are feeling the need to "measure up", as they believe their sexual performance will be judged according to other men's and women's standards. Reilly (1993) concluded, "While not denying that many men benefit from the privileges of manhood, many masculinist authors argue that men's public power is matched by private disadvantage" (p.5). Biddulph (1994, p.4) has cited three "enemies" and claims they are "the prisons from which men must escape". They are loneliness, as a consequence of men's lack of intimacy; compulsive competition, in order to prove their masculinity to others by winning; and lifelong emotional timidity, as a result of being socialised into believing notions such as "men don't cry".

Further, Biddulph argued that unlike women whose enemies are the world around them, men's enemies are generally the walls that are constructed "on the inside" (p.4). Whereas the women's movement has confronted its enemies, it is up to men to come out "from behind the walls" to change and grow.

Not only are men experiencing pressure to change work and family roles, but they are also feeling the pressure of having to change their physical appearance. Women, media, advertising and even other men are all areas of intensifying pressure. The feminist movement has been an influencing factor in the reassessment of men's physiques, because it has provided women with the confidence to publicly verbalise their perceptions of positive and negative aspects of men's bodies.

Change is a big factor in the conception of contemporary masculinity. Men, for example, have traditionally perceived their patriarchal duties as being the authoritative figurehead and financial provider for their family, whilst at the same time acting as role models for the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity in boys, particularly their own sons. Fathers often believe their duty is to demonstrate masculine-oriented traits to their sons. Such hegemonic characteristics are based around the notion of male domination over women

and over subordinate and marginalised men, that is, gay men and men who are smaller and less physically capable (Connell, 1987a).

Contemporary societal ideals concerning patriarchal duties are changing. In the past, parents' roles have been easily defined and clearly delineated, particularly with respect to raising children. A mother's task was to nurture the children during the developmental stages of childhood through to adolescence. At this point, with a major part of the care-giving duties having been fulfilled, the children were able to make informed personal decisions and begin looking after themselves. The father's role during this developmental period was primarily one of financial provider, colloquially known as "breadwinner", allowing the mother to fulfil her child-rearing function. His task was crucial because without sufficient money the mother could not adequately clothe and feed the children thereby compromising their health. A father's role was also symbolic of authoritarianism. He was the perceived leader of the family unit who commonly devised rules and implemented punishments for breaching them. As figurehead and a role model of dominance, children identified him as the protector of the family. Categorically dissimilar to their mother, he carried out few traditional nurturing duties.

Like changing societal ideals, so too is contemporary fatherhood. Increasingly, more fathers are remaining at home and taking care of the children whilst carrying out traditionally female-oriented tasks. On the other hand, many mothers are pursuing careers and providing financial support for their families. Dominant cultural, economic and social changes as well as intrinsic and extrinsic reasons may account for mother/father role reversal. Some men want to change roles to fulfil intrinsic desires while others have to change as a consequence of unemployment. There are also men who feel pressured to change roles with the advent of the strengthening feminist movement. These are important conceptual issues which must be understood in coming to terms with these changes.

The pressure to change is the most significant factor facing men concerning fatherhood and masculine role models. According to Reilly (1993) "Changing perceptions of what constitutes masculinity has always caused problems" (p.5). Gilding agreed by claiming, "It is as inevitable as history that the whole idea of what a man should be will change" (p.5).

### Sport as a Masculine Domain

Sport has long been regarded as a site for the development of masculine behaviours. In the 1960s the belief that sport built character in men was readily accepted throughout society (Messner & Sabo, 1994). Sport had become one of the most important sites of masculinising practice and socialised boys to many of the values, attitudes and skills considered so important in the adult world of men. Even before the 1960s, history provided evidence of the importance and praise, that politicians and military leaders placed upon sport, for instilling in boys and young men the courage and strength necessary to defend the nation (Messner, 1992; Sabo & Runfola, 1992; Whitson, 1990).

The underlying notion of "nationhood" is a significant element in the conceptualisation of masculinity and sport. One of the primary ideological principles underpinning "nationhood" is that of *bonding*. The term *bonding*, in this context, refers to the members of a society uniting both physically and emotionally to become allies in the attainment of a common goal. It could be argued that an even stronger sense of *bonding* was developed between men as a result of this "nationhood", because historically both sport and militarisation, within Western cultures, have been primary elements of "nationhood" as well as dominant male preserves. That is, sport is a male-dominated arena and men have defended their country in greater numbers than women, and often in more life threatening

situations. Literature has lauded and applauded this masculine domination within the sporting domain. Carroll (1986) argued that:

....women should once again be prohibited from sport: they are the true defenders of the humanist values that emanate from the household, the values of tenderness, nurture and compassion, and this most important role must not be confused by the military and political values inherent in sport. Likewise, sport should not be muzzled by humanist values: it is the living arena for the great virtue of manliness. (p.93)

However, women have as strong a sense of pride when competing in team sporting competitions and they have "forged strong bonds with one another in their own athletic quests" (Whitson, 1990, p.26). As a result of this feminine bonding, and the movement of women into sports, men have developed a form of solidarity that has further promoted masculine bonds. Messner argued that men feel intimidated by this intrusion of women into their masculine sporting domain. They sense the necessity to band together to perpetuate the notion of masculine ideology. Further, Messner argued that "The hegemonic conception of masculinity in sport also bonds men, at least symbolically, as a separate and superior group to women" (1992, p.19).

As a consequence of this deeply rooted masculine ideology, it is likely that the bonds developed through sport will be different for men than they are for women. This is particularly so where aggressive, contact team sports are concerned. These team sports are often viewed by the male participants as being analogous to war, thus maintaining the male bonding principles that underpin the notion of "nationhood". In an interview with Messner (1992) a professional athlete stated:

I'd say that most of my meaningful relationships have started through sports and have been maintained through sports. There's nothing so strong, to form that bond, as sports. Just like in war too-there are no closer friends than guys who are in the same foxhole together trying to stay alive. You know, hardship breeds friendship, breeds intense familiarity.... You have to endure something together - sweat together, bleed together, cry together. Sports provide that. (p.87)

It was this forging of friendship and closeness between men in adversity and hardship that was a common theme throughout the interviews Messner conducted with former athletes. According to Messner (1992), team mates were often referred to in a reverent manner. One of the athletes interviewed said:

The guys I played with, I had the utmost respect for. Because once you've been through training camp together, and those hard times together, you learn to know and feel things about them that no one else can ever feel if they haven't been in those situations with them. The most important persons are your teammates, and to be loved and respected by them means more than anything—more than the money aspect, if a guy would tell the truth about it. (p.87)

Not only does friendship and bonding develop between male teammates, but also with coaches, and opposing team members. However, here the bond is more often a form of respect and admiration. Messner (1992, p.102) argued that there are two distinct types of coaches. They are, the father figure who is traditionally seen as a strong, solid and secure man who acts as a model to boys and young men, teaching them skills and values necessary to become responsible and successful citizens, and the pathological types who, while working out their own insecurities, drive young athletes into destructive and self-destructive values and practices. One particular athlete emphasised the father figure ethic by stating;

There were particular coaches I didn't want to let down, [because of] the fact that they were so involved with our teams and with me as an individual. I think they cared, and the fact that they cared, just as you wouldn't want to fail your parents, you wouldn't want to fail these guys. So if they ask you to run through a brick wall, you know, I probably would have done it. (p.103)

Men can also develop close associations with opposition team members. This is sometimes described as a type of sports rivalry which manifests into a love-hate relationship. According to Messner (1992) these are "forged in battle", and "are often the closest relationships that these men ever have" (p.87).



## Sport, Competition and Masculinity

Why do men compete in sports? What qualities does competition hold that can drive certain men to compete against other men and yet can turn others away? Arguably, success based on the Lombardian ethic of winning at all costs is the primary reason. Analysis of this argument requires a definition of success, because the perception of success is different from one individual to another. For example, success is achieved through winning and defeating opponents. However, can a person be denied success if a personal goal has been fulfilled? The answer to this question is determined by the individual.

Western society places a huge amount of emphasis on the Lombardian ethic. Western sport is also guided by this dominant ideology which is structured so that success is possible for only a small percentage of competitors. Those who do not succeed are deemed failures. According to Messner (1992), failure is an inevitable component of this system. He stated:

It is tempting to view this system as a "structure of failure", because, given the dominant definition of success, the system is rigged to bring about the failure of the vast majority of the participants. (p.46)

Given the underpinning values of the system, it is possible for participants to blame themselves for their failure. This concept of failure can have negative implications upon their self-esteem. Having categorised themselves as failures there are several directions in which these participants can travel. In an attempt to improve and reach a new level of performance they can train hard and long. Alternatively, a different perspective may be adopted to justify their participation or they may drop out of that sport altogether. However, there is a chance these participants will find a more suitable sport to provide success. A non-competitive pursuit might be taken up because of its ease of justification and, therefore, intrinsic

motivational factors, rather than less controllable extrinsic reasons, are likely to be the main emphases of participation.

An important extrinsic motivating force for many athletes to participate and succeed is related to the commercialisation of sport. Athletes who are thrust into the limelight as a consequence of their sporting prowess often succumb to personal exploitation. This phenomenon has been coined by Fitzclarence (1990) as *the commodification of the body*. He argued that high profile athletes such as Canadian Olympian Ben Johnson have become a form of object which is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by many interest groups. Sport has become increasingly subject to the logic of the marketplace and the athlete's body is the primary target of that marketplace. Connell's interview (1990) with Steve, a surf lifesaving iron man, appropriately emphasised this issue. The iron man's response to the commercialisation of sport and the use of his body as a commodity was:

The thing with sponsors is that they are after an individual. The people I am sponsored with, except the beer company, it's just me. It's no one else to do with surf, or anything like that. So obviously they were after what I had done, and also my personality, my looks. (p.93)

The iron man further claimed that he had never felt that his body was being marketed because, after all, "I'm an individual" (p.93). Connell's insight to this response was incisive. He indicated that "even Steve's claim to individuality is a standard package constructed for him by his employers" (1990, p.93). This is hardly an exemplary case of individuality. Connell's interview also highlighted that this iron man competed to win for the extrinsic motivating component of money. As a primary source of income it provides him his livelihood.

Very much in the foreground is the business of winning. The classic Olympic ethic of valuing the participation rather than the victory - always contradictory in competitive sports - is ignored and with it amateurism. Steve has always seen sport as a way of earning a living. To do that he has to win, keep winning and be focussed on winning all the time. (Connell, p.92)

Competition and success in sport are highly regarded within masculine ideology, even for perceived higher status men, such as doctors, lawyers and dentists, who relinquished competitive sport in the pursuit of higher education and ultimately a lucrative career. Messner (1990) cited a number of men who chose to be interviewed in their personal offices where trophies and plaques were publicly displayed to symbolise their athletic achievements and the resultant "badge" of masculinity. This is despite claims by a majority of these men that their high school and college athletic careers meant "small potatoes" to them.

Their high school and college athletic careers may have appeared to them as small potatoes, but many successful men speak of their earlier status as athletes as having 'opened doors' for them in their present professions and in community affairs. (p.102)

Sport and competition play a major role in the operation of contemporary Western culture. Acknowledgement of their contribution towards the development of masculinity is unquestioned (Whitson, 1990). Sport, in particular, is one of the most important sites of masculinising practice within our culture. Being aware of sites of masculine production creates a more comprehensive understanding of societal interplay between intergender and intragender relations. Through heightened sociocultural awareness the forging of discerning relations is a desired outcome.

### The Body and Masculinity

The sociology and theorisation of the masculine body are important elements within the study of men. Many central concerns of men and masculinities are associated with the physical size, shape and capabilities of the body (Connell, 1983a). Therefore, it is necessary

to develop theoretical links between constructions of gender and constructions of the body and its processes (Hearn & Morgan, 1990). However, it is in the interests of gender studies to direct the study of gender and masculinities away from the ideological and the cultural and towards the bodily without falling into biological reductionism (Hearn & Morgan, 1990). Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Connell (1983a) present arguments pertaining to the body in the social construction of masculinity that are central to the notions within this current study. Merleau-Ponty claimed that the experiences of our bodies are related to our senses, how we relate to the world and to others around us. Connell suggested that to learn to be a male is to learn to project a physical presence that displays latent power. Empowerment is the key element in this line of argument. It is suggested that sport is an ideal site for the empowerment of young male bodies because it teaches them to use their bodies in ways that achieve power through combined acts of force and skill. To be masculine is to embody force and to embody competence (Connell, 1983a).

The body affects the way we perceive ourselves, others and our surroundings. It constitutes the core of our being and has the capacity to determine, or at least influence, our social relations. The body also constitutes a major site of social struggle and it is the battle for control over the body that determines the way power is structured and types of social relations are, to a large extent, constituted. Loy (1991) suggested that class, gender, age, and race are all significant in this context.

Further, Loy (1991) highlighted the extent to which the body can be perceived from a sociocultural perspective. However, he argued that other groups perceive the body in various ways. For example biomechanists, physiologists, and sport psychologists all perceive the body, and its subsequent capabilities, differently from one another. Biomechanists view the body as a system of torques and levers whereas physiologists see the body as a system of essential cellular processes. Sport psychologists, however, perceive the body as "sets of attributions and cognitions" (p.119). Coming from a sports-oriented

perspective, Loy used physical exercise, injury, pain, illegal drug abuse and homophobia as examples of the body constituting the core of sporting activity.

It is in the arena of sports that the body has come under close scrutiny in recent times. As Theberge (1991) contended, there is only a short history in the scholarly analysis of sport. Thus the conceptualisation and theorisation of the body in sport within the social sciences and humanities has not been dealt with significantly. She importantly noted that "it is ironic that in studying sport, where the body is essential to the experience, we have largely missed its meaning and importance" (p.124).

Bringing the body into focus from a sporting perspective allows theorists to conceptualise social phenomena that have been occurring, and in many instances perpetuating for many years. Turner (1984) argued that bringing the body back into social theory allows for a much more complete consideration and understanding of the social basis of patriarchy. This bodily subordination of women has been called *patriism*, a term coined by Turner to help explain the patriarchy to which women have been subjected.

Sport emphasises the creation and perpetuation of bodily patriarchy because it is a legitimate arena in which the male body can partake in masculine activities without fear of retribution. Correspondingly, the body is a primary "site of power or the locus of domination" (Theberge, 1991, p.126). Through this legitimisation of masculine sports, patriarchy is reinforced and thus perpetuated. Significantly, Connell (1987a) noted that the bodily actions performed within the domain of competitive sports have far reaching gender implications because "prowess of this kind becomes a means of judging one's masculinity" (p.85).

Connell (1983a) addressed the significance of the body in the formation of masculinity through sport by claiming:

Sport is, all considered, astonishingly important. It is the central experience of the school years for many boys and something which even the most determined

swots have to work out their attitude to. What is learned by constant informal practice, and taught by formal coaching, is for each sport a specific combination of force and skill. Force, meaning the irresistible occupation of space; skill, meaning the ability to operate on space or the objects in it. (p.33)

A critical point made by Connell in respect to these elements of force and skill is that when the two are combined, power is the ultimate product, and this is a key delineating element in the social presence of women and men. He stated that "while women conventionally have an image of attractiveness, men conventionally have a presence dependent on the promise of power they embody" (p.33).

Power and empowerment of the body constitutes a major part of the development of hegemonic masculinity (Day, 1990; Foucault, 1981; Hargreaves, 1986; McKay, 1991). Accordingly it is contended that power is exercised at varying levels.

If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because, as we are beginning to realise, it produces effects at this level of desire - and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it. (Foucault 1981, p.59)

The occupation of space to which Connell (1983a) refers is a crucial element in the development of masculinity. He believed that "to be an adult male is distinctly to occupy space, to have a physical presence in the world" (p.33). Conversely, it could be argued that to be an adult female, one must attempt to conserve space.

The notion that patriarchy prefers women take-up less space is supported by work in kinesics. Henley's (1977) study of body politics documented how in public, at home, and in the workplace men have greater personal space than women. Even women's bodily demeanour is restrained spatially: Men expand to occupy available space; women conserve space. Fat women are often resented by thin people for taking up too much space in public places. (Kissling, 1991, p.147)

To be physically large and muscularly developed commands attention from both males and females and may be a determinant in the development of bodybuilding as a masculine

domain. The intrinsic and extrinsic reasons why men feel the necessity to lift weights in order to gain size and muscular definition are quite intriguing.

Bodybuilding is some kind of logical extreme, and it is interesting that this more than the others is popularly seen as slightly ludicrous. I think it is for two reasons. Though it is flesh developed, it is flesh unused, unskilful. And it is a rather too naked revelation of the narcissism in men's preoccupation with their bodies, which contradicts other elements in the hegemonic ideal of masculinity (suppression of affect, doing rather than being). (Connell, 1983a, p.34)

### Doing versus Being

What Connell is suggesting here in respect to *doing* rather than *being* can have major implications in the perception of one's body and masculinity. Take, for example, a successful competing iron man triathlete's personal body image and perception of masculinity as opposed to that of a dedicated bodybuilder. The male triathlete is likely to gain his perception of masculinity through the success of competition and knowing that his body has competed to its fullest capacity. Despite not possessing a large body that occupies space to the same extent as that of a bodybuilder, there is contentment with regard to masculinity. Present, is an awareness that his body is capable of performing, or *doing*, physical feats of endurance that most men, including bodybuilders and women, are incapable. A body that is hard, lean, and devoid of excess fat holds the endurance capacity to swim, cycle, and run long distances for extended periods of time. Proud of his physiological health, this athlete displays accepted health-like qualities that are desired contemporary societal traits. To the iron man triathlete, masculinity is perceived as a dynamic concept whereby masculine behaviours are developed through the performance and successful completion of regarded physical activities.

A bodybuilder is different. Construction of masculinity is through the occupation of space and *being* hypermuscular, that is, the overdevelopment of a perceived masculine attribute. Together with this development is the manifestation of power which is displayed through physical prowess. Stronger and physically larger than any woman or average male, his physical presence is obtrusive. Dominance is established over anyone who is smaller and weaker and unable to match his size or strength, including peers in the weight room. Through bodybuilding this athlete has ultimately constructed a static form of masculinity. He has the *power of being*.

This *power of being* is not easily developed in bodybuilders and often comes at a price. Insecurity and powerlessness experienced by these men prior to their hypermasculine physiques is the price conferred upon them. In a discussion of a Californian bodybuilding subculture, Klein (1990) contended:

The feelings of insecurity of many bodybuilders are often masked by veneers of power. The institution of bodybuilding not only makes a fetish of the look of power but also fosters identification with reliance upon figures of power. The claim here is that the institutionalised narcissism of bodybuilding, hypermasculinity, and homophobia is in part a reaction against feelings of powerlessness. (p.241)

According to Klein (1990), it is the sense of powerlessness and the feeling of low self-worth that lead bodybuilders towards a craving for admiration. He claimed that "in bodybuilding terms, admiration is dependent on building a powerful-looking physique and finding people to acknowledge it" (p.130). However, it is contentious whether the physical power developed in bodybuilding equates to the type of kinaesthetic skill that is widely recognised as an intrinsic quality of *doing* sports. Messner (1992) highlighted this point by citing an interview with an ex-competitive runner who claimed that runners know:

what speed their body's going at, they know how they are feeling, they have some sense of how much distance is left and what they can do, and very often



will run against the clock, no matter what is going on in front of them; so they are not thrown off by people running foolishly fast or foolishly slow. (p.63)

Following an interview with a world-class, Australian surf lifesaving iron man, Connell (1990) argued that this top performer had a precise knowledge of his body and its capacities. It is this knowledge of one's body, the kinaesthetic sense and the skill level at which they perform that sets these competitive *doing* sportsmen apart from the bodybuilder. Connell stated that the iron man was quite eloquent about the particular kind of skill that was involved in top level performance in his sport, and that it was far from being pure brawn. Such a statement is striking since the suggestion of a typically masculine sport like the surf lifesaving iron man being far from "pure brawn" is a significant transformation or shift from the traditional masculine ideology and tenets of thought.

#### The Instrumental Male: The Body as a Machine

The body as a machine is an interesting concept in need of exploration in an investigation of masculinity and sport. Messner (1992) argued that it was not simply that an athlete's body became the focus of himself, but rather that the athlete was encouraged to see his body as an instrument. Perceiving one's body as an instrument or a tool is believed to have significant implications where the athlete's feelings and emotions, towards both himself and others, are concerned. Messner (1992) has called this type of athlete an "instrumental male".

An 'instrumental male' is an alienated creature: he is usually goal-oriented (in his work and personal relations), and he frequently views other people as objects to be manipulated and defeated in his quest to achieve his goals. The ultimate extension of instrumental rationality is the alienation from one's own body - the tendency to treat one's body as a tool, a machine to be utilised (and 'used up') in the pursuit of particular ends. Tender feelings (toward oneself and toward

others) come to be seen as an impediment, something that needs to be repressed or 'worked on'. Physical or emotional pain are experienced as a nuisance to be ignored or done away with (often through the use of alcohol or other drugs). A common result of this focus on the body as an instrument is violence expressed toward others, and ultimately toward oneself. (p.62)

The implications of the "instrumental male" upon physical and emotional respect for women is concerning. As a consequence of instrumental rationality among male athletes, women are commonly perceived as those "other people" who are objects to be manipulated and defeated in the quest for goal achievement. By perceiving their own bodies as "tools", alienated from emotions, some men can inhibit others who wish to be more emotionally expressive. These inhibitions stem from the overriding physical power of certain men having the capacity to intimidate the physically subordinate.

The magnificent machine of [the athlete's] physique has meaning only when subordinated to the will to win. To mentally and emotionally subordinate one's body toward the goal of winning is to make of the body a tool, separate from the mind. As we shall see, that tool is to be used against other people. (Messner, 1992, p.64)

Messner suggested that the male athlete uses his body in a manner that will enable him to compete and win against others, at the expense of others. Connell (1995) elaborated, arguing that bodily performances in sport are used to "realise and symbolise" social relations of gender which include "competition and hierarchy among men" and the "exclusion or domination of women". He concluded that "men's greater sporting prowess has become a theme of backlash against feminism. It serves as symbolic proof of men's superiority and right to rule" (p.54). However, with masculinity being dependent on bodily performances, gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be sustained such as through illness or physical injury.

## Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemony is a concept arising from Antonio Gramsci's early works in relation to the formation and destruction of social groups based on winning and holding of power. Donaldson (1994) suggested that "hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organisation of social institutions in ways that appear 'natural', 'ordinary', 'normal'" (p.645). Further, Donaldson claimed that "hegemonic masculinity" is a term that has been "invented" with its main emphasis placed on the critique of masculinity. Some fundamental tenets of masculine hegemony are heterosexuality, homophobia, and men's sexual objectification of women. However Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1987) argued that despite women providing heterosexual men with sexual validation, and men competing for this, it does not inevitably involve men being mean towards women. They suggested that some women become comfortable with the masculine hegemonic pattern in place and therefore may feel as oppressed by non-hegemonic forms of masculinity:

Essentially hegemonic masculinity in Western society is equated to male dominance and the oppression of femininities, and subordinated and marginalised masculinities. Its qualities are richly described by Donaldson (1993) when he stated that it is:

A culturally idealised form, it is both a personal and a collective project, and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal and violent. It is pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich, and socially sustained. While centrally connected with the institutions of male dominance, not all men practice it though most benefit from it. Although cross-class, it often excludes working class and black men. It is a lived experience, and an economic and cultural force, and dependent on social arrangements. It is constructed through difficult negotiation over a life-time. Fragile it may be, but it constructs the most dangerous things we live with. Resilient it incorporates its own critiques, but it is nonetheless, unravelling. (pp.645-646)

The notion of hegemonic masculinity has developed and maintained its privileged position within Western society. Sport has played a major part in the formation and perpetuation of masculine hegemonic ideology. Organised team sports in particular have often been revered as a central site for the construction of masculinity (Messner & Sabo, 1990). It has been speculated that organised sport develops a sense of male solidarity which encourages men to identify with one another thus providing a medium for the regular rehearsal of masculine identification (Whitson, 1990). The playing arena at training or in competition, the locker room, or social settings beyond the sporting context, such as bars or night clubs, are all locations in which this masculine identification and solidarity is reinforced. Boys' sport has been cited as a testing ground for uncomplicated admission into adult society. As West (1995) claimed, "Perhaps some forms of sport are the initiation into manhood" (p.9). Therefore boys who do not participate in sport will be void of a primary character building institution and may find it difficult to cope in adult life. Thus sport becomes a primary site for the production of hegemonic masculinity in childhood and a site for perpetuating hegemonic masculine ideals later in life (Messner & Sabo, 1990, 1994).

#### Summary: The Importance of Sport as a Masculinising Institution

It could be claimed that sport plays an important role in the masculinisation of every male. Boys are introduced to sport at an early age. Without prior experience, it is the initial school year that acquaints them to the realm of sports. However, even before this period boys notice sport on television and pictures in newspapers and quickly establish that the majority of people who play sport are men. Furthermore, it is generally their fathers, and other men, who take the most interest in sport whether it be watching or participating. Accordingly Messner reported that the men involved in his research "were introduced to

organised sport by older brothers and fathers and, once involved, found themselves playing within an exclusively male world" (1992, p.30). Furthermore he suggested that as a consequence of sport being an exclusive male domain the men came to equate masculinity with competition, physical strength and skills whilst believing that girls did not, or could not, participate in such activities. Thus, sport establishes, and then highlights gender differences early in a man's life. As a boy he comes to view men and women as significantly different by the segregation of sexes in sport either as a participant in school sporting activities or as a spectator of adult sports.

The body becomes an important sociological tool where masculinity and sports are concerned. Through recognition of the sex-segregated, gendered activity of organised sport men perceive their bodies differently from women's. A man's body has the capacity to confer masculinity, upon him by using it in forceful and space occupying ways and it is through sports that he can legitimately display such qualities. Rendering another man unconscious on the football field in applying a legitimate tackle is commonly seen as a signature of toughness and rugged masculinity yet, away from the playing arena it is a crime. Sport provides men with the opportunity to use their bodies as a display of masculine hierarchy. Not only is toughness a sign of masculinity but also being successful, regardless of body shape or size, is significant. Competition is important to men because it allows them to prove what their body is capable of achieving. Therefore heightened masculinity is achieved through winning and being successful.

The interrelationships that exist between masculinity and sports abound. Some men enjoy competition to demonstrate how well their body can perform, others see it as a legitimate arena in which they can prove their manhood by exhibiting strength and vigour. Whatever the reasons, men perceive sport as their territory. However, they are beginning to feel threatened and fear the intrusion of women in a similar manner to the way they intruded

the masculine domain of the workplace. Thus it is arguable to suggest that men's sport is becoming more hegemonic in terms of masculinity in a bid to ward off feminist infiltration.

## CHAPTER 3

### Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on the social construction of masculinity as it relates to men within the context of three masculinised sports. It seeks to investigate the notion of hegemonic masculinity within the process of masculinisation in order to discover the reasons why certain men feel the need to be associated with identified masculine sports. It also seeks to investigate the phenomenon of sport being a primary site of masculine construction.

It is important to recognise sport as a social institution and acknowledge the effects that it has on the social practices of men (and women) as well as the physical practices. Sport as a male preserve remains a site in which traditional masculinity is celebrated and other kinds of masculinity are disparaged and deterred (Whitson, 1990). It is an institution for the maintenance and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity.

In the process of theorising gender, the deconstruction of masculinities is an important component. The concept of masculinity needs to be perceived in terms of a number of competing masculinities rather than one encompassing concept. Dominance and subordination are associated with the notion of hegemonic masculinity within groups, over groups or over individuals.

Hegemonic masculinity is reactive to change and challenge despite being historically conditioned. Consequently, the notion of hegemonic masculinity is not restricted to a male / female relationship. The notion implies that men too, within a society that is characterised as patriarchal, may experience subordination, stigmatisation or marginalisation in relation to their perceived masculinity. The relationship between subordinate and hegemonic masculinities is a complex one, but it serves to highlight the fact that the experience of being

a man is not a uniform one and the development of masculinity is a dynamic process. The following discussion describes theoretical approaches to study and research into the social construction of masculinity

### Sociological Contexts of Masculinity

“Sex” and “gender” are two distinctly separate categories. Hall (1990) indicated that the dominant view in current theorising is to use the term “gender” as a social construct whereas “sex” is biologically defined. As Messner (1985) suggested, “biologically, it is usually quite simple to identify a ‘man’, but it is another task to define what it means to be ‘masculine’” (p.32). Advancements, initially through feminist and, more recently, masculinist research in the field of social science have produced a clearer understanding and distinction between the two. Social construction explanations of gender are commonly placed in direct opposition to biological accounts because biology is regarded as fixed and unchanging. On the other hand, the social has a number of impacting forces that render it transient and changeable because “masculine” and “feminine” social ideals vary in response to cultural arrangement and changing historical eras.

In the last 30 years social scientists have begun to investigate the manner in which gender is socially constructed. This has primarily been a result of the women’s movement and subsequent feminist research to follow. With much of the research based on an analyses of women’s position in society and their personal life experiences, studies of masculinity and men’s issues were lagging in comparison. However, the past 10 years have signified a major change in masculine research as studies and analyses of men gradually take form. This section will emphasise some of the social scientific perspectives of masculinity and highlight the manner in which these paradigms impact upon this research. However, firstly



the theoretical perspective of “sex role socialisation”, sometimes termed “sex role” theory, or “socialisation” theory will be acknowledged. Despite its diminishing approval over the past decade it was at the forefront of gender research for a number of years and helped in the development of gender theory.

Socialisation theory has been one of the most widely used social scientific perspectives on masculinity. Formulated in the 1940s and 1950s many social scientists adopted Talcott Parson’s classic account of men’s and women’s socialisation into contrasting normative sex roles - “instrumental” and “expressive”- based on the socially functional sexual division of labour within the nuclear family. Accordingly, the theory suggests that children are given different messages, from their parents and society, that cause them to act in a particular way. That is, they learn behaviours which are appropriate to their gender. For example, boys are taught to be more aggressive than girls, they are told to not cry and act like a man and instead of being given dolls, like girls are, they are given sporting equipment. By the time they reach adulthood, children will have learned a socially respectable sex role or script they can act out as adults. Sabo and Runfola (1980) argued that sport socialised boys and young men to a destructive male sex role based on “the dissemination of and reinforcement of such traditional values as male superiority, competition, work and success”. Further, they claimed that:

Through sports, boys are trained to be men, to reflect all the societal expectations and attitudes surrounding such a rigid role definition. Sports act as a mirror of the dominant culture and a link between sexist institutions. (p. xi)

Socialisation theory provides a framework within which to examine the many ways sports reflect male dominant values and socialise males to their appropriate sex roles. It also provides a means of examining the consequences of this socialisation process in relation to the manner in which men live their lives and relate to other people. Despite its positive

qualities sex role socialisation theory has a number of limitations in its approach to gender construction. According to Messner:

Taken by itself, socialisation theory tends to lead social analysis into a simplistic functionalism in which people are viewed as passive receptacles into which cultural values are instilled by essentially static institutions. This kind of analysis risks losing sight of real people's experiences, their own definitions of their motivations, as well as their ability to think critically and act and change their own lives. (1991, p.33)

Connell (1987a) has provided an extensive account of various theoretical frameworks used in gender research. It is his opinion that when taken by itself there are four basic considerations for us to abandon sex role theory as a framework for social analysis of gender. These are its voluntarism and inability to theorise power and social interest; its dependence on biological dichotomy and its consequently non-social conception of structure; its dependence on normative standard case and systematic misrepresentation of resistance; and the absence of a way of theorising the historicity of gender (pp.53-54).

However, more recently, Connell (1995) has suggested affirmatively that sex role theory places definitions of masculinity firmly in the realm of the social by emphasising expectations, stereotypes, and role models, and that it does allow for a degree of change and diversity. For example, he stated that "role theorists can acknowledge that the 'black male role may be different to the white male role'", but then goes on to say that "it is inadequate as a framework for understanding gender" (p.598).

Standing alone, socialisation theory is not an adequate theoretical framework because of its inherent limitations. The suggestions that it is logically vague and that it exaggerates the degree to which people's social behaviour is prescribed are taken into consideration (Connell, 1995). It is fundamentally static as a social theory because it does not grasp social change as history. Furthermore, not taking history into account is cause for concern.

Kimmel and Messner (1992) have recently struck upon a contemporary theoretical perspective known as “variations among men”. Based upon the notion that masculinity varies within any one society by its individuals and the various types of cultural groups that compose it, this perspective has been termed the “variations of masculinities”. It considers the presence of subcultures which are commonly regarded as the primary way in which people organise themselves and by which resources are distributed (Kimmel & Messner, 1992). It is now understood that there is more than a single form of masculinity. By claiming the presence of just one type risks emphasising one version of masculinity as normative and making all other masculinities problematic.

Masculinities in western culture are constructed differently according to class, race, ethnicity and age. They may stand alone or otherwise, interrelate and consequently modify each other. For example;

Black masculinity differs from white masculinity, yet each of them is also further modified by class and age. A 30-year-old middle class black man will have some things in common with a 30-year-old middle class white man that he might not share with a 60-year-old working class black man, although he will share with him elements of masculinity that are different from the white man of his class and age. (Kimmel & Messner, 1992, p.10)

Further, Kimmel and Messner described the resulting matrix of masculinities as “complicated and often the elements are cross-cutting, but without understanding this, we risk collapsing all masculinities into one hegemonic version” (1992, p.10). Therefore by acknowledging that there is more than one form of masculinity, it is important to utilise a theoretical model that takes such elements into consideration. Significantly, the “variations of masculinities” model can perform such a function. However, the theoretical framework based on “gender order” theorises the prevalent masculinities in an attempt to contextualise existent variations. Gender order thus provides a more comprehensive analyses of

masculinities and as a consequence will be one of three underpinning perspectives to be utilised in this research.

### Gender Order Framework

Gender is a way in which social practice is ordered.....Gender is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body. (Connell, 1995, p.71)

The framework around which this research is based is the concept of gender order (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Connell, 1987a). Due to its dynamic nature, the framework is best described as an interpretive naturalistic concept. Messner and Sabo (1990) contended that the use of the gender order is an advantageous theoretical framework with which to examine sport and the wider array of systems of domination within society. The concept of the framework is based on the notion that gender is better conceptualised as a process rather than a “thing” that people “have” (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Thus gender order is seen as a dynamic process characterised by regular change. Further, it is a pattern of power relations historically constructed between men and women, and between definitions of femininity and masculinity relations, that unfold within changing structural contexts (Connell, 1987a; Messner & Sabo, 1990).

Gender order framework is historically oriented. According to Connell (1995), historical processes supersede biological evolution as the form of change. Consequently, he argued that at any given historical moment, there are competing masculinities- some hegemonic, some marginalised, some stigmatised. This was Connell’s initial discussion on competing masculinities which has since been further refined. In his most recent work instead of three there are now four types of masculinities with the inclusion of complicity of masculinity. Furthermore they are no longer “competing”, rather, they are “relations among

masculinities". Importantly, it is claimed, these four relations are the underpinning masculinities in the Western gender order.

However, merely recognising the existence of more than one type of masculinity is only the first step. Next is to analyse the relations between them. It is contended that analyses of masculinities needs to be kept dynamic to minimise the acknowledgement of masculinities collapsing into a preset character typology. Connell (1995) proposed that:

Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable. (p.76)

Hegemonic masculinity is one of the four relational masculinities to be discussed along with subordination, complicity and marginalisation. These masculinities and their relationships with each other and society will be further elaborated.

Much has been written about hegemonic masculinity from a variety of perspectives however, in this sense hegemonic masculinity will be focussed on from a gender order perspective. The concept of hegemony is derived from class relation analysis whereby the cultural dynamic of one group assumes a dominant position in social life. Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to various subordinated and marginalised masculinities, as well as femininities (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985, 1987; Connell, 1987a, 1995; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Defined as the pattern of gender practice which underpins the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, it ensures men's dominance and subordination of women. However, it can also assume dominance over subordinated and marginalised masculinities. Further, it should be recognised that at any given time one form of masculinity is culturally advocated over others. As Connell (1995) stressed:

Hegemonic masculinity embodies a 'currently accepted' strategy. When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and

construct new hegemony....Hegemony, then, is a historically mobile relation.  
(p.76)

Hegemony does not mean total cultural dominance in which alternatives are obliterated. It means "ascendancy achieved within a balance of forces, that is, a state of play" (Connell, 1987a, p.184). Therefore other groups are subordinated rather than eliminated. Masculine hegemony is a concept based on power, yet it is not entirely due to what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are prepared to support. The notion of hegemony thus implies the necessity of considerable consent (Connell, 1987a). Masculine hegemony and male dominance may link all men together, but as a consequence of the non-hegemonic forms of masculinities, men share unequally in the offerings provided through such domination.

There are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between men within the overall framework of hegemony. Subordinated masculinity is non-hegemonic with the most prevalent relationship being between the dominant heterosexual men and subordinated homosexual men. As Connell suggested, such a relationship is much more "than a cultural stigmatisation of homosexuality or gay identity. Gay men are subordinated to straight men by an array of quite material practices" (1995, p.78). It is believed that the oppression, through subordination, of homosexuality places this form of masculinity at the lowest point on the gender hierarchy. Therefore, gayness is easily equated to femininity.

Despite being the most conspicuous, homosexuality is not the only form of subordinated masculinity. Other heterosexual men can also be banished from the domain of legitimacy. Generally attacked through verbal abuse, the words chosen are often symbolically linked with feminine qualities. Subordinated masculinity can also be temporary. These versions are often played out in the workplace where younger men, and women, are dominated by more senior men. However, attainment of experience and status

through promotion can eliminate subordination for some men, but never women. Thus, men who were once subordinated now have the capacity to legitimately subordinate others. Such a pattern of domination is perpetual and based upon ideological warfare.

The interaction of gender with other arrangements, such as class and race, constructs further relationships between masculinities. As a consequence of social dynamics, both are in a constant state of flux which is taken into consideration within gender order framework. The term "marginalisation", which refers to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups, sounds somewhat oppressive. However, it is one that is difficult to improve on because it is always relative to the authorisation of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group (Connell, 1995).

The hegemony/subordination/marginalisation triplex may establish a situation where the relation of marginalisation and authorisation exists between subordinated masculinities. Further, Connell (1995) has cited two types of relationships - hegemony, domination/subordination and complicity on the one hand, and marginalisation/authorisation on the other. It must be understood that hegemonic and marginalised masculinities involve changing structures of relationships. Contemporary frameworks, such as gender order, must take such factors into consideration and provide an account for this dynamic process.

Not all heterosexual men display obvious signs of masculine hegemony. There are some men who do not meet the normative standards of embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. However, most men reap the rewards from masculine hegemony just as all men gain from the overall subordination of women. Complicity, which recognises partial embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, is therefore an important notion in the theorisation of masculinity. Again drawing on Connell's ideology:

If a large number of men have some connection with the hegemonic project but do not embody hegemonic masculinity, we need a way of theorising their specific situation. (1995, p.79)

Complicity in this sense is perceived as men gaining the benefits provided to them as a consequence of being male, yet not displaying many of the characteristics that have placed men in such a hegemonic position. Like the sport of rugby where the forwards put their bodies on the line to further the team's cause while the backs accept the ball that has been hard fought by the men before them. They run, they try, and they receive the glory, but had it not been for the forwards the rewards are doubtful.

For the majority of men, life is a series of contestations and compromises particularly in respect to marriage, fatherhood and relationships with women. Despite the realisation of hegemony most men do not seek confrontation and are unwilling to display blatant domination and authority over women. However, there is often no need due to the underpinning statute upholding masculine hegemony.

### Psychoanalytic Theory

Sociologists agree that as a single entity sex role theory has unintentionally simplified the complexities of gender. Therefore, a new theoretical approach was required which did not regress to simplistic assumptions of biological or natural differences between men and women. As a foremost proponent of psychoanalytic theory, Nancy Chodorow (1978) identified early developmental differences between the sexes. These were based around the social structure of the family and led to categorical differences between boys and girls which persisted into adulthood. Messner (1985a) claimed that "Chodorow's (1978) *The Reproduction of Mothering* has been posited both as the remedy to the perceived shortcomings of socialisation theory and as the *missing link* in Marxist-feminist thought" (p.33).



The basic tenet of Chodorow's argument is based on the notion of males and females having different experiences of separation from, and attachment to, the mother. It is believed that males construct *positional* identities in which they fear intimacy, whereas females develop *relational* identities where separation is feared. To elaborate further, the girl who thinks she is like her mother thereby establishes an identity *in relation* to her mother. It is believed that her "relational identity" is based upon the first emotional attachment with her mother, whom is her first love, thus preparing her for motherhood. However, a boy creates his sense of identity by way of *separation* from his mother. By rejecting what is obviously female he begins to unconsciously identify with the masculine world. As a consequence, masculinity is defined as much negatively as positively, or in other words, men come to see masculinity for what it is not rather than what it is.

Psychoanalysis is based on Freud's theory of the psychic and the social. It is not the intention to delve into the intricacies of Freudian theory, only to point out the origin of psychoanalysis and its subsequent grounding. Connell (1987a) has commented extensively on this theoretical concept and also argues that it is based on the notion of an adult's personality being largely due to social pressures and principally by the way it is experienced by the young child in the family. Like Rubin (1983, p.56) who stated that "this is the beginning of ego boundaries that are fixed and firm", Connell confirmed by elaborating that, by adulthood "the formation of the super-ego as part of the person's psychic equipment is itself a social mechanism" (1987a, p.197).

Accordingly, psychoanalytic theory suggests that men display confused personalities because despite separation being important to them, so too is closeness and intimacy.

Messner stated that:

The man develops both an emotional dependency on women and a fear of intimacy and closeness with them....Thus although he may be very good at instrumental activities-working, achieving-and might even feel more emotionally "safe" in that realm, he continues to crave and need (while fearing and distancing

himself from) the relational and affective capacities of women. (1985b, pp.36-37)

Psychoanalytic theory is an important element of a social constructionist theory of gender. It suggests that men come to define their masculinity through achievement-oriented factors, rather than those based on intimate relationships. Accordingly, it adds an important dimension to account for why men came to regard sports as a unique cultural space for males in the 20th century (Messner, 1985). Psychoanalytic theorists also conceive there is an association between masculinity and the current arrangement of social institutions which is why this theoretical perspective highlights the relationship between masculinity and the institution of organised sports. However, like socialisation theory, it is not without its limitations. Personalities are not shaped, nor are gender identities constructed and internally fixed in the first three years of life. Furthermore, there is a tendency for it to be reductionist in approach by placing too much emphasis on the unconscious component of human motivation whilst at the same time implying there is no role for conscious thought. Such a notion suggests there is little that can be done to produce personal change because of its firmly fixed gender identity. This is at odds with life in "reality" because people continually change throughout the course of their lives as a consequence of conscious choices.

The study of men's lives in this research is formed around the notion that men are not totally socialised into roles (external) nor are they unconsciously fixed (internal) into a gender identity as a consequence of separation-attachment dynamics which underpin psychoanalytic theory. This is suitably summed up by Messner who stated:

In short, masculine identity is neither fully formed by the social context nor caused by some personal dynamic put into place during infancy. Instead, it comes to be in the interaction between the internal and the social. The internal gender identity of a person may set developmental "tasks", may create thresholds of anxiety and ambivalence, yet it is only through a concrete examination of people's relations with others within social institutions that we can begin to

understand both the similarities and the differences in the construction of gender identities. (1990, p.22)

### Lifecourse Theory

Connell (1990) has stated that "properly handled, the theorised life-history can be a powerful tool for the study of social structures and their dynamics as they impinge on (and are reconstituted in) personal life" (p.84). Life historical accounts map out the lives of individuals, while the life course theory is designed to analyse these accounts, noting the periodic changes that have occurred along the way. It is now well recognised that changes occur to individuals throughout their entire life, not just to adulthood. Upon reaching adult status the individual continues to undergo significant changes, because change -even crisis- for adults is regarded as normal. Levinson's concept of the Individual Life Structure (ILS) is seen as a useful point at which to begin theorising the lifecourse of male athletes, such as the men involved in this research. In clarifying the meaning of Individual Life Structure Levinson (1978, p.41) stated:

By "life structure" we mean the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time....A man's life has many components: his occupation, his love relationships, his marriage and family, his relation to himself, his use of solitude, his roles in various social contexts - all the relationships with individuals, groups and institutions that have significance for him.

The meaning of masculinity is not constant over the course of any man's life. As he grows and matures changes will occur, some consciously determined, others unconscious. The social institutions in which he will attempt to enact his definitions of masculinity are also going to change throughout his life. Thus a lifecourse approach is adopted to analyse the ways in which different issues arise within a man's life, and also the ways in which men's

lives change over time (Kimmel & Messner, 1992). The framework constructed by Levinson investigates the lifecourse of men from early childhood through to old age. It proposes that men's lives progress through a series of rather predictable developmental periods in which there are developmental tasks that must be confronted. As Messner claimed:

Each man's "lifecourse", then, involves a sort of "personal dialectic" of change: every ILS is internally "flawed", has its own contradictions and conflicts which will eventually lead to crisis and change - and eventually to the development of a new ILS which in turn will have its own internal "flaws" and contradictions. (1985, p.31)

With respect to this research, using athletes in the competitive phase of their sporting careers with most situated at the beginning of their adult phase, lifecourse theory is still appropriate to analyse the processes they have undergone up to this moment in their lives. Comparisons are easily drawn at specific points of the phases which allows common themes to be identified amongst the men.

One common theme that Levinson claimed ran through all the development stages was that of identity and men's struggle to grasp it. More particularly Levinson investigated a notion termed "individuation" which looks at the ways in which individuals locate themselves as a bounded entity in social space (Klein, 1993b). Further, individuation in men, according to Levinson, is the formulation of a clearer boundary between himself and the world. Thus he forms a stronger sense of who he is and what he wants whilst developing a more realistic, sophisticated view of the world. Accordingly, greater individuation for a man allows him to be more separate from the world as well as being more independent and self-generating. Finally, he has developed heightened confidence and understanding with an ability to establish stronger attachments in the world. It is argued that then he feels more fully a part of the world.

The theory concerning individuation runs congruently with that of psychoanalytic theory, however it is Levinson's contention that individuation must precede successful attachments and intimate relationships. His theory adds to psychoanalytic perspectives by noting the manner in which unconscious factors work in tandem with conscious motives and values in adulthood. Further, it indicates how a man's need for a separate identity gradually changes over time while he becomes more intimate and nurturant and displays signs of seeking attachment.

Life history and lifecourse analysis has long been used in anthropology but has not been so prevalent in other social sciences (Klein, 1992). There are a number of other researchers, like myself, particularly interested in the work of Messner who utilises the theoretical framework of lifecourse theory set out by Levinson. Klein (1992) recognised the importance of such a theoretical perspective and identified elements of his study on a bodybuilding subculture with aspects of Messner's research on 30 former athletes. He acknowledged:

I read Messner's work with interest, since he offers a set of conclusions based on work with athletes that I might also use in looking at the men at Olympic. Although my life history material differed in that I was dealing with men that were still in the competitive phase of their sporting careers, whereas Messner's athletes had passed through theirs, the questions surrounding an athlete's transitions into his sport could offer interesting comparisons. (p.109)

Therefore, as a framework for analysing the social construction of masculinity as it relates to three individual, masculinised sports, Levinson's lifecourse theory is valuable. However, Levinson's perspective is not entirely flawless and creates the possibility for potential problems. Associated with psychoanalytic and social-psychological theories, it is closely linked to a biological theory of development and has the makings of a biological reductionist approach. Within this theory there are age-related developmental periods in which all men are believed to pass through. There does appear to be a degree of accuracy in

this notion, although it risks plugging individual men's biographies into fixed, preset categories, thus failing to recognise variety and differences based upon historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors.

The questions underpinning lifecourse theory should ask why men change and how their lives and relationships are affected, shaped and constructed through the social, cultural and psychological contexts in which they are situated. Attaining this level of understanding will facilitate further questioning and subsequent development in the area of men's self-awareness thus improving their ability to engage in varying forms of relationships with others.

....males have a very fragile and ambivalent gender identity, which results in the development of firm psychological boundaries which make closeness and intimacy difficult. Yet males nevertheless crave unity with others and live their lives in a sort of quest for connection and intimacy. This raises fundamental questions about the role of sports in men's lives: What do sports seem to promise boys who become athletes? Does the athletic experience actually deliver what is expected, needed, craved? Specifically, does the male's experience in the sportsworld provide him with a more solid sense of self with which he can then more confidently explore closeness, intimacy, and connection with others. (Messner, 1985, p.35)

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is based on utilising various components of the three perspectives discussed above. Positive qualities that will benefit the overall analysis are contained in each, yet at the same time, there are inherent flaws and weaknesses. In light of these theoretical deficiencies the perspectives cannot be used in their entirety. In its relative infancy, research on masculinity, along with its recent offshoot, research on masculinity in sports, is confronted with discrepancies over which theory will produce the desired level of analysis.

The gender order framework adopted is based on the notion that at any given time there are competing masculinities. It is around these competing masculinities that theories have been developed to account for hegemonic, subordinated and marginalised masculinities as

well as complicity of masculinity. Psychoanalytic theory places its emphasis on unconsciously-internalised gender identity and finally, lifecourse theory based on Levinson's adult developmental theory, emphasises change and development throughout the lifecourse. The theories have been generated through knowledge acquired during the process of data analyses. Aspects of the three perspectives will provide the theoretical basis of the conceptual framework underpinning this research.

### Conceptual Framework

The social construction of hegemonic masculinity in elite male athletes is the basis of the conceptual framework for this study. It has been developed through an extensive review of relevant literature as well as knowledge gained through personal experience and observation. However, the conceptual framework will not pre-empt the discovery of new knowledge or variables that impact on the men's experiences concerning the way their masculinity is constructed.

In order to develop an understanding of the social construction of masculinity in the focus group it is necessary to examine the intrinsic and extrinsic variables likely to affect their construction of the hegemonic masculine ideal. The interplay that exists between these variables and the social construction of masculinity is what makes this process a dynamic one. They play an integral part in the athletes' development of their personal masculine perception as well as their perceptions of masculinities in other men.

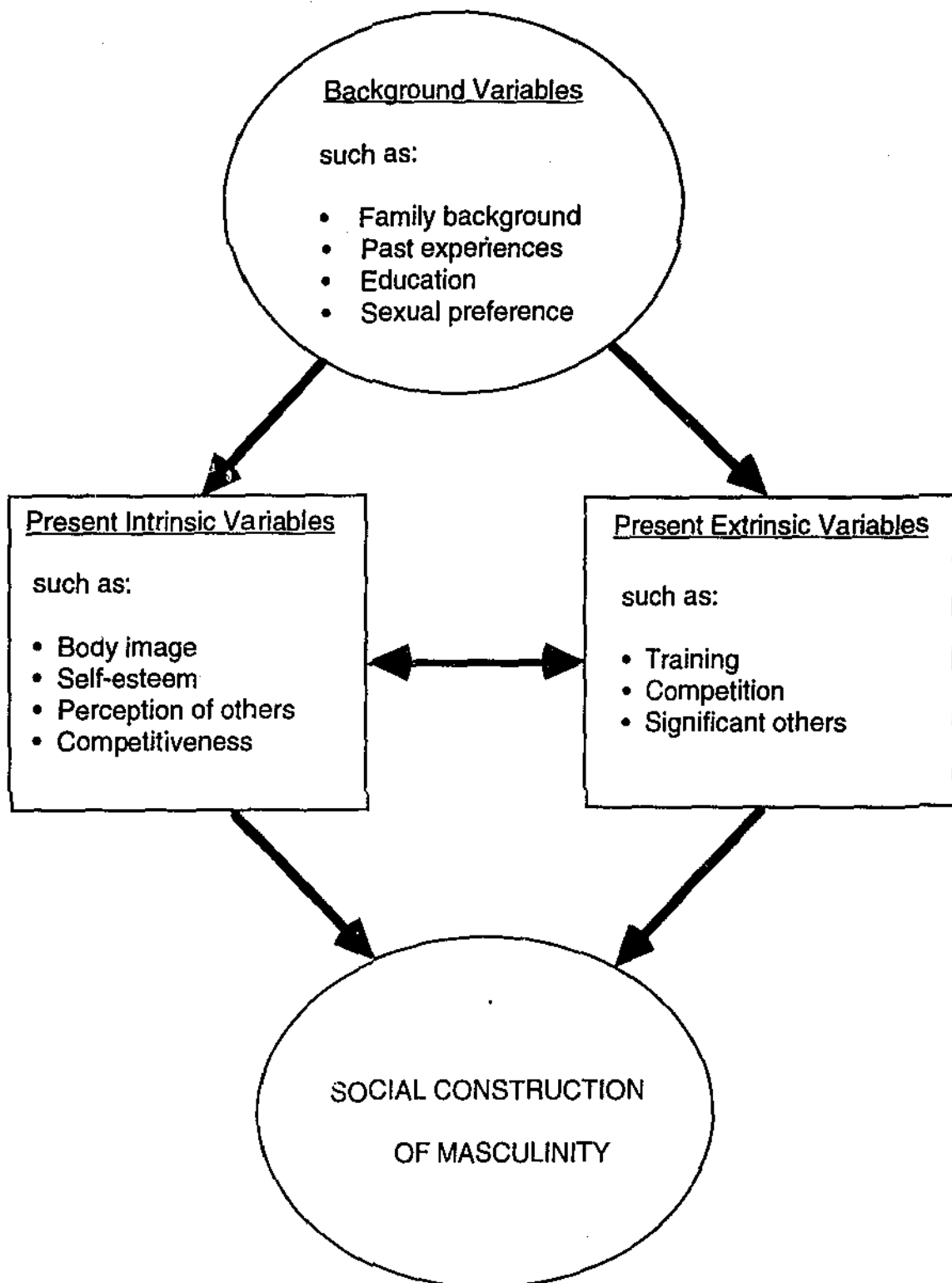
The focus of this study is the process of socialisation in the construction of masculinity. Therefore, in order to understand this process it is essential to highlight the variables that impact upon it. Variables that have impacted upon one's past, and assisted in shaping one's life such as family background, education and past experiences can have significant influence over present intrinsic and extrinsic variables. In the context of this

current study the extrinsic variables include competition and any significant others with whom the athlete may be associated. Intrinsic variables are those such as body image, self-esteem and competitiveness. The intrinsic and extrinsic variables are interrelated and highly reactive with each other thus providing evidence of the dynamic component within the social construction of masculinity.

The variables impacting upon the social construction of masculinity can have positive or negative effects on a man's masculine ideology in respect to himself and to other men. Through the socialisation process, men construct values, beliefs and meanings according to the variables that impact upon them. Within the sporting context, variables are more specific in respect to the athlete's sport and lifestyle, particularly the extrinsic variables. The dynamic component and interrelatedness between the variables will still occur in the same manner, therefore the socialisation process underpinning the construction of masculinity will be the same. Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework for the study.



**FIGURE 1 : VARIABLES IMPACTING ON THE  
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY**



## CHAPTER 4

### Methodology

This chapter will provide an outline of the design of the research and the paradigm in which it is based. It will elaborate on the sample size and structure by specifically defining the parameters around which the men were selected. Interviewing was the primary means of data collection therefore a review of this phenomenological technique will emphasise the importance of such a method, particularly when interviewing men. The procedure in which the data were collected will follow to provide an indication of the systematic process involved in this research. Finally, reliability, validity, ethical considerations and limitations will be presented in order to establish the study as a sound, well-grounded piece of research in the area of men, masculinity, and sports.

### Design

Perhaps the simplest rule for method in qualitative case work is this: Place the best brains available into the thick of what is going on. The brain work ostensibly is observational, but more basically reflective. (I would prefer to call it interpretive.) In being reflective, the researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and records - but not necessarily following the conceptualisations of theorists, actors or audiences. (Stake, 1994, p.242)

This research utilises case study design. Case studies are useful where one needs to understand some special group, particular problem, or unique situation in depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information (Patton, 1990). A case may be a person, an event, a time period, or a community and so on. In this instance the case is the uniqueness of sport

as a site for the social construction of masculinity. Within this single case study 12 male athletes (four triathletes, four surf lifesavers and four bodybuilders) provide the individual case studies that supply the raw data for cross-case pattern analysis to take place. This involves grouping together answers from participants to common questions or analysing various perspectives on central themes. Cross-case pattern analysis of the individual case studies comprise a major part of the data for the overall study.

Case studies can be made up of various layers of analysis. This study involves three layers. These include analysis at the individual level, analysis at the individual sports level (ie. triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding) and finally at the overall concept level. Case data consist of all the interview data, the retrospective accounts provided by the athletes and finally the data from field observations. Therefore all of the information that has been collected from each individual case goes to form the data for the overall case study.

The steps involved in the process of constructing a case study are to assemble the raw case data, to construct a case record, and to write a case narrative (Patton, 1990). Thematic categorisation and analysis of the data is the final component within the case study approach.

Case study design was chosen in conjunction with life history accounts primarily because of their phenomenological research underpinnings and the resultant line of inquiry. By using a guided interview technique based on phenomenology, specific issues relating to masculinities could be probed and elaborated upon in order to gather 'rich' qualitative data that assisted in describing the essence and experience of the phenomenon. Elements of life history will be present in the data through the process of phenomenological interviewing which provides data to construct a more comprehensive analysis. Stake (1994) claimed that it was not uncommon for qualitative researchers to allow the case to tell the story for them. He further suggested that despite knowing whether the story has been told in full or told appropriately, the ethos of interpretive study is based on "seeking out emic meanings by the people within the case" (pp.239-240).

Interpretivism is the paradigm in which the research design is based, and qualitative methodology is the dominant approach to data collection. A descriptive interpretive analysis of the data underpins the study as the participants' responses are described and interpreted according to sociological phenomena. Such an approach to interviewing was designed to capture the participants' experiences and descriptions through phenomenological questioning. The interpretation of data is based on a phenomenological perspective using inductive analysis.

Interpretation is crucial in understanding what has been experienced and described within phenomenology. The phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question that asks, what is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people? (Patton, 1990). It is the intention of the study to intertwine descriptions of experience and interpretations so they become as one (Patton, 1990). Interpretation is a major component of phenomenology and is essential to an understanding of experience and the experience includes interpretation. Therefore phenomenology seeks to develop a world view. There is no separate (or objective) reality for people. There is only what they know their experience is and means (Patton, 1990). Meanings and the essence of meanings are an integral part of this method of inquiry and interpretation. The phenomenon involved in the current study is the social construction of masculinities and notion of hegemonic masculinity as it relates to men in three traditionally masculine sports. An insight is gained into the way male athletes perceive their masculinity through their senses, experiences and descriptions (Husserl, 1962).

The interpretive paradigm is termed as such because it best describes what the researcher is attempting to do in the study: interpret how individuals define their social situations and the meanings they place upon their actions. Given that the phenomenology, regardless of its theoretical underpinnings, is based upon the notion of attempting to understand the social world and specifically how individuals view their situations within that

world, this paradigm is ideally suited to researching the social construction of masculinity in sports (Hall, 1990). According to the framework theories that exist within paradigmatic methodologies, interpretivism situated within a phenomenological inquiry is the most appropriate form on which to base this research.

Consequently, this study attempts to draw out the experiences of masculinities (hegemonic, subordinated, and marginalised), the body, and empowerment of the body from the male athletes and then describe and interpret them. It is envisaged that these interpretations are indicative of (the majority of) males involved in masculinised sports at a competitive level and possibly at a recreational level. Phenomenology assumes that there is an essence, or essences, to a shared experience. These essences are the core meanings within a phenomenon that are commonly experienced by different people. They can be categorised, analysed and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon. The essence of experience in this study is the essence of being a man together with the social construction of hegemonic masculinity.

## Sample

The sample comprised the following groups of athletes:

- Elite level triathletes (n=4)
- Elite level surf lifesavers (n=4)
- Elite level bodybuilders (n=4)

The study focuses upon the social construction of masculinity in men and therefore males are the primary source of data collection. Four elite level athletes each from the sports of triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding (n=12) were chosen as the participants in the study. The decision behind choosing this particular number of men was determined after

establishing a quantity that would provide adequate data and a degree of generalisability to enable cross-case analysis to occur. Thus, it is a workable unit of participants to investigate in depth whilst simultaneously providing contrasts at each particular level of analysis.

The rationale for delineating between elite level, competition level and recreation level athletes was based upon dedication and commitment to their sport. Tentative theory suggests that in choosing elite participants there is a greater possibility that their perception and construction of masculinity is more related to their sport than any other single factor (Messner, 1992). However, a competitive or recreational athlete may be successful in other areas of life, such as business, and therefore not place as much emphasis on the development of masculinity through sport.

The athletes were selected in accordance with the standard achieved in their sport, their residency within the metropolitan area of Perth, willingness to participate and their availability. The study is based on Australian and Western cultural masculine ideology and therefore the participants have all grown up in Australia and are all Australian citizens. The research was confined to participants living in the Perth area for logistic reasons. The definition of elite in the context of this study refers to having reached a standard that has culminated in competition in state or national championship level events. Since the study uses a phenomenological approach to individual case studies, a total of 12 participants should produce a rich source of data.

## Interviews

Qualitative researchers will often argue the researcher is the 'instrument'. This tenet of thought is gaining recognition in all forms of qualitative research, however it places far more emphasis on the methodological skills and competence of the researcher. The importance of

the researcher at this point cannot be overestimated. As Patton (1990) claimed "the researcher is the instrument" in qualitative inquiry and "validity in qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork" (p.14). Guba and Lincoln (1981) reiterated these claims by stating that:

....the inquirer is himself the instrument, changes resulting from fatigue, shifts in knowledge, and cooptation, as well as variations resulting from differences in training, skill, and experience among different 'instruments,' easily occur. But this loss in rigor is more than offset by the flexibility, insight, and ability to build on tacit knowledge that is the peculiar province of the human instrument. (p.113)

In-depth phenomenological interviews were the most appropriate means of data collection for this study as they could provide the richest source of data in relation to the phenomenon being researched. Therefore questions relating to beliefs, perceptions, and expectations of masculinity within the athletes' total life experiences can be explored. This technique provides flexibility and enables the interviewer to probe particular issues recognised as being crucial to the study. Therefore the depth, clarity, and 'richness' of the data will be enhanced. Another important benefit of the interview technique is that respondents can express their feelings, opinions and understandings of a phenomenon in their own terms (Patton, 1990).

The study utilised an audio-cassette recorder to tape interviews with participants. The interviews were in-depth and have taken the general interview guide approach. The guide served as a basic checklist during the interview to ensure that all relevant topics were covered. No set of standardised questions were written in advance and therefore the interviewer was required to be adept at wording and sequencing the questions appropriately to specific respondents in the context of the interview. According to Patton (1990):

An interview guide is a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview. An interview guide is prepared in order to make sure

that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same material. (p.283)

Further, Patton suggested that interview guides allow the interviewer to freely explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. As the social construction of masculinities is the subject in the current study, questions will be directed at the respondents in a manner that will best draw on their individual perspectives and experiences of masculinity. Such perspectives might include their sexual preference while typical experiences of masculinity might be their relationship with other men.

The pilot study cannot be overlooked as an important component in the development of the interview guide and the construction of the research methods and data collection procedures. During the initial stages, pilot studies were carried out to assist the manner in which the current research was to be framed. The participants were not the same as those in the major data collection, however they were drawn from the same representative groups. Each athlete involved in the pilot study underwent the same interviewing procedure as the elite athletes in this research using a guided interviewing technique. However, the guide was based on personal and philosophical assumptions, personal knowledge of the sports and knowledge acquired through literature in the area. Thus, a more refined guided interviewing strategy was adopted after analysing the data collected from the men in the pilot study and assessing the original guided approach.

The pilot study was used primarily as a means of developing appropriate interviewing skills and assessing the most accurate method of attaining rich descriptive data from the men. Analysis of the data provided an insight into which methods were most suitable to achieve such a function and the number of methods required to triangulate the data. Such triangulation was essential to provide validity and reliability to the research.



## Data Collection

Interviews were conducted at a convenient location to the athletes. Each audiotaped interview was approximately one hour in duration with shorter follow-up interviews, designed to gather any additional information required and as means of validity checks. Emanating from the pilot study was an interview guide which was devised to ensure certain issues pertaining to masculinity were discussed.(see appendix 1) However, due to the phenomenological underpinnings of the research, the questions were essentially based on the athletes' responses to previous questions. The respondents' interviews were transcribed verbatim with their permission.

In addition to this formal approach, the athletes were informally interviewed. These field interviews took place in pauses and breaks in training, in pre and post-competition discussion, as well as conversation in social settings. This form of interviewing enables the researcher to gather data that may not have been extracted from the guided interviews alone (Patton, 1990). Participant observation also took place at these settings further enhancing the depth and "richness" of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Participants were asked to record retrospective accounts of their feelings and emotions on specific issues regarding masculinities, including their perceptions about masculinities, and the masculinist reasons why they originally chose, and still continue, to participate in their particular sport. Retrospective accounts, such as these, are important because they provide the participant with additional time to contemplate their response as opposed to verbally expressing themselves with words that rapidly come to mind in an interview situation. Thus, they have the opportunity to explain themselves at length and not feel intimidated by the presence of the interviewer. On the other hand there are limitations involved with such a method of data collection. The participant has time to contrive elaborate

responses that may not reflect true feelings, and furthermore, their literary skills may not be sufficiently developed to convey messages on paper (Patton, 1990).

### Data Analysis

Upon analyses of data, similarities and differences were noted drawing on personal understanding, professional knowledge, and the literature (Strauss, 1987). Experiential data, in which analysts bring experiences and knowledge of various kinds to the research, is very important. Strauss contended that experienced researchers bring theoretical sensitivity to their research while further arguing that "equally important is the utilisation of experiential data, which consists of not only analysts' technical knowledge and experience derived from research, but also their personal experiences" (1987, p.11). Accordingly it is suggested that researchers should "mine" their experience because they have "potential gold" stored within them (Strauss, 1987).

Despite entering this current research with knowledge and experience in each of the three sports under investigation, I still displayed a degree of ignorance where similarities and differences in masculine issues were concerned. Furthermore, I was unaware of how the concepts of masculinity were going to impinge upon the elite athletes involved. Attempting to attain knowledge and seek answers surrounding the phenomenon of masculinity, I considered everything to be important regardless of my prior involvement. Thus, as Goetz and LeCompte suggested, I tried to adopt a "studied naïveté" that allowed me to "view each aspect of the phenomena as if it were new and unfamiliar and, hence, potentially significant" (1984, p.168). Further, numerous theories of masculinities were acknowledged from a variety of sources. Yet, as a consequence of the inductive style of research it was more appropriate to also select the theoretical framework using an inductive approach. Therefore,

theory emerges from the inquiry and is not given a priori (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Without a formal underpinning theory, this inductive approach is aptly suited to masculine research. Ongoing analyses of the data resulted in several methodological theories being used to provide the most accurate theoretical framework around which to construct this research.

Had it not been for an inductive approach to theorisation the research could have utilised grounded theory which can often limit the richness of the data in terms of analyses. Further, Jones claimed that "the data all too easily become structured within *a priori* definitions of the researcher in precisely the ways that data collection methodology was intended to avoid" (1985, p.58). In attempting to prove a particular theoretical conception, noteworthy data may be discarded because of their apparent inapplicability to the underpinning theory. Thus, due to it neither substantiating or disproving the theory the data is therefore seen as inappropriate and ultimately extraneous. The importance of theorising, however, should not be discouraged because, according to Goetz and LeCompte, "It is the fundamental tool of any researcher and is used to develop or confirm explanations for how and why things happen as they do" (1984, p.167).

Within this current research the men were analysed at an individual level, then at the combined level within their specific sports and finally at the overall elite athlete level as a subset of, and in contrast with, men in general. Through experiential data and knowledge attained in the field of masculine studies some of the categories were conceptualised in advance because of their importance to the overall analysis. Jones reinforced such a notion and stated:

Although I do not start with a list of categories into which the data are to be slotted, thinking about these and the broad question taken into the research represents the 'focusing' I will do before starting a detailed analysis. (1985, p.59)

Most of the data, however, were thematically categorised according to personal interpretation. This is "normal" within inductive research cited Jones, claiming that "different persons, with different perspectives and different curiosities about the area of investigation will inevitably find different categories with which to structure and make sense of the data" (1985, pp.58-59). Upon thematically categorising the data into working typologies, the main influencing themes were mapped and diagrammatically represented at each level of analysis. The intention of such a mapping procedure was designed to highlight and emphasise what is believed to be the predominating influence affecting the men's lives at each level. Likewise, causal links, relationships, and other influencing factors are easily identifiable by using directional arrows. It also helps the researcher to conceptualise the data in an alternative manner, which may have positive implications upon further thematic categorisation or the placement and relocation of particular themes within the map. Furthermore, the maps provide an easier form of identification of main themes at the individual level, through to the level of specific sports and on to the overall level of analysis.

Analysing life historical accounts is a laborious undertaking which takes considerably more time than the collection of data. Plummer provided an accurate account of the process involved.

In many ways this is the truly creative part of the work - it entails brooding and reflecting upon mounds of data for long periods of time until it 'makes sense' and 'feels right', and key ideas and themes flow from it. (1983, p.99)

Additionally he claimed there are two broad areas that must be considered within such analyses. The first is quality which is concerned with reliability, validity and representativeness. The second is moving from conceptualisation to theorisation. This is the quality component that initially establishes the research as accurate and worthwhile. Therefore the research should be flawless with the procedures well documented and providing evidence of tight methodological structure.

## Reliability and Validity

In simple terms, reliability is primarily concerned with technique and consistency and ensures the attainment of similar findings if the study was conducted by another researcher. Validity is based on making sure that the technique is studying what it is supposed to study (Plummer, 1983). Credibility rests heavily upon addressing reliability and validity within the context of research. More specifically, reliability, which refers to the extent that studies can be replicated, is dependent upon the outcome of both external and internal design problems (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Thus within this research reliability was addressed by highlighting such factors as the role of the researcher, the participants involved in the study, the site in which the data were collected, and the method of data collection and analysis. For example the researcher is the research instrument and therefore must collect the data, analyse it and report it in an unbiased manner. Reliability was enhanced by using an audio-recorder to capture the interviews verbatim and allow for accurate transcription of the respondent's dialogue.

Validity, which is related to the accuracy of the scientific findings, was accounted for by exclusively interviewing elite level athletes and providing them with transcriptions to confirm their comments. This reduced the chance of doubtful conclusions in relation to what was said and their commitment to sport. Validity was further attended to by interviewing the athletes in a setting designed to make them feel comfortable and at ease. Claims to validity with interpretive research result in confirmability according to Lincoln and Guba (1985).

An important aspect of validity and trustworthiness in interpretive research is fittingness, which is defined as the degree of congruence between the message that is sent and that which is received. Accordingly fittingness is closely linked to transferability

wherein the inquirer provides sufficient information, usually in the form of "thick description", so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment. The description must provide specific information that will assist in the overall comprehension and understanding of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility, another essential component of trustworthiness, refers to the activities within a research project that increase the likelihood that credible findings and interpretations will be produced such as triangulation.

Bearing in mind that the current research utilises triangulation of data, reliability and validity is specific to each method. Therefore research based on life historical accounts, such as this study, are often under scrutiny because of claims that they can sometimes place the reader in the eccentric world of the atypical in which a story is told but nothing else (Plummer, 1983). Accordingly, to avoid such accusations Plummer suggested that "the researcher must work out and explicitly state the life history's relationship to a wider population" (1983, p.100). He has further argued in favour of the participants being appraised on levels of representativeness and non-representativeness where at one extreme the case is meant to be representative of a known sample. However, case histories can also be a unique and necessary story that must be told in order to emphasise a specific issue.

Reliability and validity are constantly a cause for concern in life histories because;

Given that usually the virtue of life histories lies in the relatively free flowing babble of talk, to attempt standardisation of questionnaires is to invite invalidity. But without such standardisation and cross-checking, attacks become easy. (Plummer, 1983, p.101)

Thus, the "hard methodologists" perceive reliability as the primary element in providing credence to life history research when, according to Plummer, validity should be addressed first and reliability second. Thus, he emphasised that "there is no point in being

very precise about nothing" (1983, p.102). Life history is designed to attain a subjective story and hence standardising and classifying in advance will produce invalidity.

Another method of data collection is participant observation which was originally decided upon to capture the men in informal settings. The ensuing data was designed to back up interview data and assist the researcher in understanding the men's lives more completely and the world in which they live. Jorgensen emphasised, that because participant observation rarely deals with measurement, "conventional notions of reliability are not especially appropriate" (1989, p.37). Participant observation uniquely adapts its procedures to the setting in question, thus making it difficult to establish reliability through the repeated usage of the technique adopted. However, participant observation remains concerned with "dependable" and "trustworthy" findings (Jorgensen, 1989). Thus, a strong interrelationship exists between reliability and validity, where participant observation is concerned, and can be verified in a number of ways. These include multiple checking to provide further evidence, determining the extent to which the researcher entered the participants' world, describing and discussing in detail the methodology used, important concepts noted and then used and tested in everyday life and finally the possibility of an independent restudy. Further, Jorgensen pointed out that "dependable and trustworthy results are a fundamental concern, and participant observation provides a number of strategies for checking for valid and reliable findings" (1989, p.38).

The three different approaches to data collection were designed to enhance the validity and credibility of the study thereby reducing the possibility of weaknesses that may have existed with a single method. Such triangulation is intended to strengthen the design of the research thus providing rigour. It will also guard against accusations of the findings being encouraged through one single method, a single source or a single investigator's bias.

## Limitations

The limitations of this study involve the phenomenological interviewing approach. Keeping in mind the participants are all elite level athletes, competition will be a high priority. Consequently interview responses may vary markedly prior to, and following, major competition. A poor result may negatively affect self-perceptions whereas success is likely to instil enthusiasm. Furthermore, self-perceptions with respect to masculine identity may alter in the event of being unable to compete or train as a result of injury. Limitations such as these must be taken into account by the researcher, particularly when analysing the data.

A further limitation to phenomenological interviewing in interpretive studies is directed at whether appropriate questions are being levelled at the participant and whether the participant's subsequent responses produce 'rich' qualitative data. A researcher using a phenomenological approach to interviewing should use the participants' responses as a basis for the next line of questioning. Therefore the researcher must be well versed in the interviewing technique and utilise sound communication skills with the participant to enable this to occur from the outset. It is essential that a good rapport is developed between the interviewer and the participant in order to establish a comfortable, non-threatening, environment in which the participant feels at ease to discuss all aspects of life, including his most intimate details.

This research adopts a life history approach based on the phenomenological interviews with the men. Despite having the capacity to attain rich descriptive data there are limitations involved. As Messner highlighted, "the interview format utilised here offers us only a 'snapshot' of what the individual thinks and feels about his life at this point in time" (1985, p.58). He further suggested that a more accurate appraisal of change and process would be forthcoming with a longitudinal research wherein the athletes are interviewed several times over a number of years.



Ideally, the definition of an elite sportsman would be to afford the status of a full-time, financially sponsored athlete. However, in Western Australia this definition is difficult to apply for sportsmen involved in triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding. It is in the Eastern states where the majority of prestigious races are held, and financial sponsorship is lucrative for elite performers in all three sports. In comparison, financial sponsorship for such athletes in Western Australia is insubstantial and the depth of competitive talent in races generally renders wins as insignificant on a national basis. Therefore, in this study elite athletes will be classified as state or national participants with a high degree of success in their chosen sport. Despite some of the participants working part-time and not training on a full-time basis, like many of their Eastern states counterparts, it is envisaged their masculinist ideology will be similar because they are revered in the same way by their fellow athletes within the state.

### Ethical Considerations

According to Plummer's definition of informed consent, the participants knew they were "involved in a research undertaking and roughly what this research was about" (Plummer, 1983). They were informed of the importance of the study and made aware of their contribution to contemporary research on masculinity. The athletes interviewed during this study have not, and will not, be identified by name. The formal interviews were conducted in a private setting and the participants' responses will remain confidential. The interviews which were transcribed verbatim, are stored on computer software in a private and secure location. Each athlete was provided with a copy of his interview transcript which enabled the opportunity to reassess personal comments and inform the researcher of changes, amendments, or clarification of contextual meanings.

Emphasising confidentiality, data gathered will not be used for any purpose other than that outlined for the study, and feedback on findings has been provided to all participants. Data will be destroyed after five years following the completion of the study. It is the issue of confidentiality that is of significant concern in life historical and participant observation research. The participants have allowed the researcher into their world to either observe their life in a natural setting, or by disclosing information which otherwise may never have been told. Men in particular are generally uncomfortable in discussing intimate matters about themselves. Therefore researchers must assure total confidentiality and remain true to their word, particularly if it is an ongoing research project where a number of follow-up interviews or observations are required. The underpinning issues of morality must also be emphasised, because failure of the researcher to maintain confidentiality could be damaging to an individual's public and private existence.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Triathletes

This chapter provides an overview and discussion of pertinent information obtained from the four elite level triathletes involved in the research. It gives an insight into their lives so that a more comprehensive analysis and understanding of the concepts of masculinity that impact on the athletes at an individual level can be explored. The aim is to describe and draw the main ideas emerging from the interviews and observations with each of the athletes. Finally, the information from the four athletes will be drawn together and interpreted collectively.

The four triathletes come from diverse backgrounds. Their ages range from 22 through to 45 years. The men have all competed nationally or internationally and each has won a state series event at some point in his career. The three younger men have aspirations to continue to compete internationally for Australia whilst the older athlete appears content to race at state level having been a pioneer Australian competitor in the Hawaii Ironman in the 1980s.

One of the men has been married and is now divorced. Another has been married and subsequently divorced twice and is now involved in a de facto relationship. One of the athletes is currently engaged and will be married soon and the youngest athlete of the four is not currently involved in a relationship. All the men either live in or near Perth. Three are employed, two running their own businesses and one employed in private enterprise. The fourth athlete is studying full-time towards a law degree at a Western Australian university.

NAME: David

AGE: 26

SPORT: Triathlon (6 years)

SPORTING BACKGROUND: Cross country running, Australian Rules football

MARITAL STATUS: Single (Engaged)

As a world class, nationally recognised triathlete, David chooses to compete primarily on the Western Australian triathlon circuit. He occasionally ventures to the Eastern states to compete in the more lucrative races although he dislikes having to live there when involved in such series. He derives considerable pleasure from living in Western Australia because it provides him with a strong support network from his family and friends. Being a well known athlete is also a positive influence upon his self-esteem.

Born and raised on a farm in rural Western Australia, David is the youngest of three in his family. He has a sister who is married and manages a successful hotel in the south of Western Australia whilst his brother is a successful businessman in Western Australia. The three children were raised in the then traditional Australian manner whereby their father was the financial provider whilst their mother attended to the children, and home duties before re-entering the work force when it was decided the children were old enough to look after themselves.

Strong family ties exist between his parents, brother and sister and therefore to move away on a permanent basis would invoke feelings as though he were dividing the family, and he does not want that responsibility. He has a fiancée who was raised in Western Australia and she also has close links with her family. This places extra pressure on David to remain in Western Australia. Further, it is evident that David does not adjust well to change. Therefore, he finds that leaving his home state, as well as his family and the friends he has

established, is a major upheaval in his life. Changing his training location and living environment is a significant disturbance to his routinised lifestyle and training regime.

Sydney was a real horrible place to train. Well for me, because I had such a routine over here you know. I had access to pools and tracks but over there you just don't have the same accessibility or there's too many people trying to use the one venue, or whatever it may be. I couldn't relax.

David is quiet, yet exudes an air of confidence particularly in relation to triathlon. He enjoys the acclaim derived from his triathlon success, however he does not exploit this position. Physically, he is tall and lean and displays a muscularly toned body often regarded as "ripped". He has short dark hair with an opaque appearance to his skin. His slightly gaunt face sometimes emits a boyish grin which does not reflect his age. His physique is ideally suited to the sport of triathlon and he appears to be content with his body image because he understands that his body size and shape is a consequence of his sport. However, at some point in his life he would like to be physically larger.

I think I'd like to be bigger. I have a lot of trouble putting on weight and that image is probably broadcast by people constantly saying "God you're looking skinny" especially in the middle of the triathlon season when I'm really lean or whatever it may be. I suppose in some ways I do take offence and I suppose it does affect me. But people have been saying it for so long now. I mean even this winter I'm trying to put on weight. I'm trying to do a lot more weights and things like that and get stronger. Whether that's going to be a physical presence I don't know, but I do want to have a bit more of a physical presence. I mean people say I'm not, well this is probably another issue, but they say I'm not aggressive enough and things like that. I need to be a lot more aggressive with my racing. Whether that's got to do with my physical stature or not I don't know, but I certainly want to build up a bit. Whether that means looking good or not I don't know. Although I suppose if I gave up the sport I'd probably want to look a bit more muscle bound than I do now.

On occasions David does feel intimidated by his lack of physical size compared to other men such as bodybuilders by whom he is surrounded at the gymnasium where he trains. Physical presence can be a powerful sociological tool in the domination of a group or an individual over another group or individual. Therefore on certain occasions David feels

inadequate because his physical stature cannot provide the same physical presence of larger, more muscular men, particularly when he is in their own familiar environment such as a gymnasium. However, at triathlon events David never feels inadequate in respect to size and musculature. He knows that there are few individuals who can perform as well as he does. Therefore he can command respect from what his body can do and not because of the way it looks and the potential it appears to possess.

I know myself that I'm good at what I do so I don't need to look like what they look like. But I know there is something in me that says "Oh gee it would be good to be as big as that". But if I was as big as that I couldn't do what I do. I mean people say, when you're in the gym, "Oh look, you want to put a bit of beef on or something" and I just say "Well I don't need to because I'm an endurance athlete. I do sport. I don't want to be carrying around a 120kg frame like you've got".

Having a good body-image, David is not excessively worried about his physical appearance compared with other men and is similarly unperturbed by the way his physique is perceived by women. He claims he cares mainly about the way people see him as a compassionate caring person first whilst both his status as an elite athlete and his physical appearance are secondary.

I like to go out with people who know that I'm good at triathlons, but yet will talk to me as a person rather than as a good triathlete. I find that important. I don't want people to like me because I'm a good triathlete. I want people to like me because I'm David T. I don't use that as a tool to make friends, put it that way, otherwise I'd be out selling myself as a triathlete.

David takes pride in the fact that he believes he is a good communicator and has the ability to listen to others' problems. He says that he respects individuals for who they are, not what they can do.

I know that I'm healthy, reasonable looking, fit looking. I think I'm pretty intelligent and I'm a good communicator. I'm the sort of person if someone's got a problem they sort of know they can come and talk to me about it, that is, as a friend. I suppose a lot of girls I know will just come and have a chat because I

can give them good honest advice. But I can understand I suppose. Maybe sometimes I say the right things. I have a lot of good mates, a lot of good mates. But then, I have a lot of girls who are good friends. But then, a lot of those girls are friends of my mates or girlfriends or whatever. There are a few that have confided in me but I don't know whether they do that because I'm the triathlete David T., or I'm the ordinary person David T. But obviously they know they can come and talk to me. I don't confess that people should come and talk to me and I can solve their problems although I suppose I'm understanding and I listen to them. I'll talk to anyone you know, I mean even disabled people and things like that. I have a high regard for disabled people because my Mum is disabled. She's got very mild cerebral palsy. It's only very mild, I mean a normal person wouldn't even know that she had it, but I know and we know. So I respect people who are disabled and I really hate people who are in a group and make a running joke about spastics and stuff like that. It really infuriates me.

David readily cites his belief in equality for women and men, in every aspect of life. According to David, men and women should be treated as equals in marriage, in relationships and generally in life. He argued that there "should be a level playing field. There shouldn't be any domineering. There shouldn't be any dominant forces anywhere". Conversely, and at odds with this statement, David still maintains traditional sex role ideologies despite making a conscious effort to change the way he perceives a woman's role in society. He believes that he displays elements of the *sensitive new age guy* by doing the household chores such as vacuuming and cooking and hanging out the washing. These claims illuminate David's restricted perception of men's and women's roles in society. He still believes that a woman's role is to take care of the household chores, however since he is at home more than his fiancée, he feels obligated to help out.

Yeah I do that sort of thing but I think earlier on it got to the stage where Lisa would remind me that I had to do those sort of things, you know. But now I spend more time at home during the day than she would so I just go and Hoover. I do the house or I put a lump of washing on and do the washing and hang it out. I don't know whether I'm "Mr Mom" or whatever. The thing that I'm happy about is that I'll go and do it. I won't sort of question why I'm doing it. I'll just do it. Oh, I'll cook the odd meal or whatever but I don't profess to be a great cook and stuff. But she'll do most of it.

During the four year relationship with his fiancée Lisa, David has always been the most publicised of the two. Lisa had been a successful member of the women's state hockey team since she was a teenager. She then retired from the sport to successfully compete in triathlons although never reaching the heights she achieved in hockey and nowhere close to the success attained by David. Lisa has now decided to take up hockey again in the quest to attain national selection and has been provided with a Western Australia Institute of Sport scholarship. Attention is now being focussed on Lisa but David occasionally feels jealous and inadequate because he is no longer perceived as the most noteworthy partner in the relationship. Also, sport was a means by which he could display his masculinity within the relationship by providing financial assistance through sponsorship money and winning events, but now his partner is receiving accolades as well as financial assistance for her sporting prowess. Therefore part of his masculine identity within the relationship is being questioned.

My fiancée is a not a bad triathlete. She's a very good hockey player. She was in the Institute of Sport and all that sort of stuff and she had three or four years off. She's just gone back to it but she's very good and I was just thinking that if she made an Australian team and I was not doing as well as I'm doing, and she was getting all the attention, I don't know how I would deal with that. That's another thing I don't come to grips with. I've always sort of been in the limelight and Lisa's been David's fiancée rather than I'm hers sort of thing and that sort of bugs her a bit too. I mean we'll go out and people say, "Oh, g'day David how are you?" and Lisa's standing there, and they know Lisa but they'll only talk to me. If we go out and people do the opposite, that is, doing it in reverse, I don't how I would cope with it. You wonder whether you enjoy being the dominant partner, well not the dominant partner, but looked upon as better than she is and maybe you take that for granted.... She's been getting a lot of press coverage and we always sort of joke that she's getting more than me and all this sort of stuff so, in the back of your mind it sort of plays on you. But yeah, it's a real hard one.

David infers that he is not ready to be married yet and he is candidly apprehensive at the prospect of marrying Lisa. There are two major factors involved which make this task daunting for him. The first is the inherent problem he has in committing himself to important



areas of life. Consequently he does not want to be committed to a relationship that he perceives as being forever. He is devoted to his fiancée and wants to sustain their relationship for a long time but marriage means commitment which is something he has difficulty coping with. It also means changing the relationship from one that he knows and is comfortable with, to one he does not know and is yet to experience. He deliberates about what will happen to his life if this new element in their relationship causes problems and he already analyses the ramifications of divorce.

Yeah I am getting married (laughs). I've even been having second thoughts about it but I suppose it's important. Financial security and marriage. It's all part of life. In a lot of ways I feel that I'm doing it for the wrong reasons. I could be doing it for not what I really want but what other outside influences want. That is, getting married and having a family and things like that. We are sort of going through a bit of a rough trot at the moment and I'm just trying to put it all into perspective.

The second major factor contributing to David's apprehension towards marriage is the pressure that is being applied to hasten the marriage process. He has yet to positively come to terms with marrying Lisa and now he has the added pressure of parents wanting him to "do the right thing". Both David's and Lisa's parents want to see the couple married. He argues that people do not have to be married to stay together and raise a family, as long as they are happy. However, David's subsequent actions are being influenced by societal and family expectations. Again, the opinion held by David's parents concerning the way he lives his life is a conscious determinant in his decision-making. Despite living in a de facto relationship with his fiancée for the past several years, his statement that he will "do the right thing" suggests that he is not totally at ease with this living arrangement. Personally, he likes being in this domestic situation yet he knows that socially, others disapprove. Therefore in order to stem family tension and consequently assist conditional self-worth this man will be married soon.

I don't think people have to be married to have kids. I think as long as the couple are happy. I mean, I know couples who have been together for seven or eight years and haven't tied the knot and that's almost a marriage anyway. But I certainly don't have overpowering views and think, "God you've got to get married before you have kids" and things like that. But I think maybe in some respects you may have to. Probably me and my fiancée will do the right thing and get married before we have a family and things like that. I care more of what my parents think.

David originally became involved in sports because of the enjoyment derived through participation, whether it was in training or in competition. When he trains well he wants to tell people about it and his confidence is heightened. Hence he generally races well. Physiologically David enjoys the feeling of working his body hard, however, he claims that neither swimming nor cycling training compare to a good running session because of his long history of involvement in competitive running. One contemplates whether it is the physiological feeling that David attains from training and racing that makes him want to continue or whether it is the feeling of winning, of being successful, of feeling confident and of knowing that very few men can do what he does and are as successful as he is at triathlon.

I am confident, but maybe I think more of myself in a sporting light. I mean if I see a bunch of people when I'm walking around and I think "Oh well they wouldn't be real good at triathlons" and stuff. I suppose I think in that regard I'm better, but academically and things like that, I wouldn't. I suppose I might feel a bit down about that. I suppose sports play a role. You might walk into a pub and see a bunch of people walking around while you're there with your mates and sometimes you feel like saying, "Hey I'm a triathlete, I'm good at it". But you don't. I mean you don't. You just don't do that sort of thing otherwise people just think you're a total dickhead. But I mean, maybe I want more people to know about it. I don't know.

It was in 1987 that David became involved with the sport of triathlon. Prior to that he had been an excellent junior athlete at school, representing the state in cross country running on regular occasions. It was by chance that he entered his first triathlon after a doctor, who was treating his injured back, informed David about a novice triathlon and suggested that he enter it for fun. He competed in the race and won and was instantly attracted to the sport.

David did not have to experience the gradual progression of improving upon race performances from a mediocre level. He had a rare talent that enabled him to win as soon as he became involved in the sport. This made him enthusiastic very quickly, although the ramifications of being outstanding at such an early stage may have been detrimental to motivation later in his career.

Yeah, I think success may have come into it a bit early. Like when I did my first novice race I won it and I went on and won the whole series. Then the next year, even though I hadn't done Olympic distance events before, I was coming second and third and fourth and the next year I was bloody winning everything so it really came so quick. I certainly, obviously, really enjoyed it, but now it's got to the stage where it's a bit more of a grind and I'm probably not having as much success as I did in the past, although it's got to be a driving force.

It was only due to the doctor's advice that David entered his first triathlon. It was not a result of his own conscious desire. The instant success he achieved was a significant motivating factor for him to continue in triathlon rather than his intrinsic love for the sport itself. Therefore David's perception of triathlon may have been coloured by his initial, early success. It is arguable that it was the success he craved and not the sport. When asked, "Why do you do this sport?", he touched on issues including winning and achieving success to gain recognition, both of which are extrinsic reasons for competing.

I don't know, sometimes I ask myself the same question. I don't know why. It's really quite a tough question. I mean other people would just say, "Yeah I do it to win". I suppose I do it for all sorts of different reasons. It's a good lifestyle. I mean I think triathlon's more of a lifestyle than a sport sort of thing. But certainly, I think it's good to win. I suppose I might do it to have a win over here in WA, I don't know, and I don't know whether that's egotistical or whatever. It might be. Maybe that plays a bit of a part in it as well, that people still hold you in high regard just because you're doing well in your sport and things like that.

The expectations held by others to keep winning could be damaging to his emotional stability particularly as he is often driven by other people's expectations and is now beginning to feel the pressure of outside influences. Criticism does not rest easily with

David and on occasions he finds it difficult to cope. The way in which other people perceive him is important to his self-esteem and important in the way it shapes his life, both consciously and unconsciously.

I think the last couple of years, well certainly last year at the World Championships, really affected me because I raced well and earned my place in the team coming second in Japan during my qualifying race and I also won in Japan. I went to the World's and just got hypothermia. I had an absolute shocker and instantly there were things flying around Australia that I shouldn't have been put in the team. I went to Queensland and the team manager comes up to me and says, "Look David there's guys around here saying that you shouldn't have been in the team" and all this sort of stuff and that really did affect me a lot. You just think, "Maybe I'm shithouse" sort of thing. You get your knocks you know, and I suppose I need to toughen up a bit. I'm a bit weak in my head. I think I need to be a bit stronger. Although when that sort of thing has happened it can only affect you. I don't know how you can block that sort of stuff out. I've never ever been to a sports psychologist or anything like that. I mean, I've never had to seek advice on that sort of thing. But as I said, I think the last couple of years I have been racing more to other people's expectations rather than maybe even my own enjoyment.

David is quiet and reserved yet being known as a top triathlete is important to him. He does not openly thrust his greatness upon people he meets for the first time nor does he want people to gush over him because of his exceptional abilities as a triathlete. However, being recognised as a top triathlon performer, who is dedicated to his sport, is important when in the company of friends and acquaintances. He enjoys other people talking about his exceptional athletic abilities when he is the "third" person in the conversation and not directly involved in the discussion. He likes being in "earshot" of the conversation so that he can listen to the accolades being heaped upon him. This is an important positive self-esteem building mechanism for David because it reinforces his ability and status in the sport to both himself and to those involved in the conversation. Further, his perceived modest character is not compromised, and remains intact because he is not the person espousing his own greatness. Hence, that is why David surrounds himself with people who are proud of his talents and are capable of reinforcing this to others.

I like people to know but I don't like people going overboard about it. I suppose everyone must be in the same sort of boat, that they would like people to know about it. I suppose it makes you interesting to other people and they might want to talk to you about it. It's funny though, I do enjoy it but sometimes I'm embarrassed about it which is a bit odd. I mean I don't like people drumming up stuff. For example, if I'm in a group and I'm meeting people and they're going on about it saying, "Oh yeah he's great, he's represented Australia and he's done this and he's been WA champion". Sometimes I'm a bit embarrassed. I don't go on and say, "Yeah he's right I've done this". I like to go out with people who know that I'm good but will still talk to me as a person. I'm fairly confident, I'm fairly quiet, fairly reserved but I'm certainly not the centre of attention in a group. Although amongst my mates we all are, and we wind each other up.

Self-esteem is a significant factor in David's life. His self-esteem is often dependent on extrinsic factors and as a result can quickly alter the way he perceives himself. Despite his success as an elite triathlete, David is insecure. He constantly requires positive reinforcement about his talent as a triathlete, and his self-perceived "nice guy" persona. He has a desire to win triathlon competitions because he craves the recognition as an outstanding triathlete, just as he wants to be perceived as a "nice guy". So, to accommodate this desire, David attempts to associate only with those who will provide him with positive reinforcement. He will often train with men who are more accomplished than himself at just one of the disciplines in triathlon, yet he will not train with those triathletes that are a threat to his success. This would demoralise him and cause his self-esteem to plummet.

It is arguable whether David is consciously aware of the self-congratulatory environment he has produced as the coach of his training squad. The majority of the triathletes who attend his coaching sessions are either novice or age group competitors. These men and women look upon David as a mentor and father figure because of his status in the sport and the vast amount of knowledge and experience he has accumulated over the years. He has produced a training squad that resembles a subculture within the broader subculture that triathlon has established. Six days a week this training squad meets for their early morning training sessions. Every few months, David organises a weekend away

where the members train and socialise in a family-oriented environment. David and his squad members are in an environment where they each know their place and status within the group, and for David his position is located at the top, as leader. He revels in the respect and attention provided by his squad members just as they relish the interest David displays in their progress.

Although attempting several other sports in his youth, it was athletics in which David shone and as a consequence he had to forgo any aspirations of being an Australian Rules footballer, talented as he was. There still exists a passion for football but this is purely from a spectator's perspective. Recently he has had serious thoughts about giving up triathlon and involving himself in surf lifesaving. He claims that it would be a major learning process in the beginning, but this may be the outlet he needs to rekindle enthusiasm.

I really follow Australian Rules footy. I loved playing Aussie Rules and I would like to have kept playing but the problem was I was running for the state at that stage and I had to make a choice at school whether I was going to get knocked around playing footy or concentrate on athletics. It's just the decision I had to make. The other sport I'd like to get involved in is surf lifesaving sort of stuff. I'd like to dabble round with it maybe next summer because I just like the concept of the surf. I'd probably be doing a bit of the Ironman, but I'd have to become very good on the craft. I mean I'm not very good on craft so it would be a real learning curve for me. But it's just something else in there. I feel I've got to the stage where I need to have something else other than just triathlon. I'm in a bit of a sticking point at the moment and I'm sort of deciding what I'm going to do. I suppose for the last three or four years I've been competing nationally as well as a little bit of international stuff and it's really been a big grind for me. Also being a WA boy, the expectations have been really high for me to continue to compete. So at the moment I've had a five week break and I'm just sort of winding things up. I mean I'll certainly still do triathlons but I'd still like to do something else as well. I think I could actually do less training and maintain the level I'm at.

David has had a taste of what it is like to compete in a lucrative, nationally recognised, triathlon series. Whilst competing, both he and his fiancée lived in Sydney. Unfortunately they did not enjoy the change of lifestyle, which was dramatically different to the one they were accustomed to in Western Australia. They were also a little disheartened by the

organisers' claims that they would be assisted financially and that David's fiancée would be set up in a job similar to the one she was leaving behind in Perth. This did not eventuate. The series was in its inaugural year and the organisers were not professional in their approach, despite a significant amount of money being involved. These people knew how to adequately organise a race, however they did not know how to appropriately look after many of their sponsored athletes, including David and his fiancée. Consequently, David became disillusioned not only about major sponsored triathlon series, but also triathlons in general.

The first time I ever felt like I was being exploited was during the Tooheys Series. Everything we had and everything we did was Tooheys. You were just like a moving billboard really. There was Tooheys all over us. I suppose the promoters of the sport and Tooheys were very Tooheys conscious. If we were asked certain questions by the media we had to answer them in a certain way to keep Tooheys happy. Whether it's being manipulated or whether it's being made to be more professional, I don't know. I think a lot of the men felt it was intimidating having such a powerful sponsor and there was a lot of pressure if you didn't perform well. It was a bit like a travelling circus, but that's not only my opinion. That was a lot of the other athletes as well. I suppose I would like to try it again but I wouldn't move. I'd stay here. I went and lived in Sydney for seven months and I got quite a raw deal over there. They promised me and my fiancée jobs, because my fiancée came with me, but all that never eventuated. So basically I just got there and I had to sort everything out myself. It was pretty tough.

On returning to Western Australia, David found himself struggling to maintain motivation. He continued to train because there had been little direction in his life, other than triathlons, for the past five years and it was difficult to know what else to do. It was also difficult for him to give up such a significant part of his life which made him a well known and respected athlete. However, both David and his fiancée understood that decisions about his, and their, financial security for the future needed to be made. Once again David was being influenced by people who had different expectations to his original plan. He had reached the age of 25 years and, according to some, had little to show for his efforts. His parents were his biggest critics. David found difficulty in dealing with this criticism which subsequently produced a degree of stress and emotional anguish. There was a need to

satisfy his own desires, yet there was a need to satisfy the desires of those he loved, because his parents had nurtured, clothed, fed and loved him whilst providing him with the opportunity to achieve what he has thus far. Arguably it was the need to satisfy such significant others more so than satisfy himself that led to feelings of self-doubt and the need to reassess his life.

It's my parents' influence for sure. My parents have always supported me, like they always made it aware to me that I had to think about education. I had to think about my future, you know, security. That was something that has always been drummed in to me so that's probably why I've been giving only 95 percent rather than 110 percent towards my triathlon career. But yeah, they certainly still have an influence on me every time. Every couple of weeks they'll say, "What are you doing? Are you going to go back to uni? Are you going to do this or that?" They don't sort of say, "Go on, go off to Europe and give your triathlon career a bash". They want to see me happy but, my father, especially, is really concerned about me and my future. See, my brother is very successful and I'm sort of just floating along and he wants to see me do just as well.

The dilemma confronting David is a common predicament faced by many athletes. He had to decide whether he should remain in triathlons, because this is where his passion and expertise lay, or whether he should attempt to find full-time employment and earn a living. The main problem was that triathlon racing did not provide sufficient financial reward to warrant his full-time status in the sport. Similarly he realised that competing in triathlon events had a limited time span and that he must look beyond racing, to his future. Therefore the solution was to make a living out of the sport in ways other than racing which, for David, meant creating a triathlon coaching business with a view to eventually becoming an entrepreneur in the sport. His continued personal involvement in training and racing could then be justified because the credibility of his high competitive standard, with its subsequent public and media recognition, would assist in attracting athletes to his training sessions and provide invaluable advertising for the business. He claimed that:

At this point in time I want to stay successful because I'm thinking of a career in triathlon coaching and business. That's one reason, and also for myself, my



own self esteem, to be successful.... People say, "Oh look if you want to continue your coaching and attract people to your business you need to be still competing at top level" and things like that so I suppose that's another driving force why I'm competing as well. I feel as though if I'm still competing and doing well it will have a spin-off to my future career as a coach and things like that. The coaching side of it here in WA is untapped and if this sport makes the Olympics, and I'm sure it will, there's going to be a lot more money floating around for people like myself who coach and things like that. So you've got to think of that side of it and maybe I might get into a development job with the triathlon association or whatever. There might be jobs which will spring up. So I suppose I've got my finger in two pies at the moment. I'm competing but I also have an interest in coaching and things. I don't know what that will lead to. In fact I don't even know what I'll be doing in two or three years time.

In order for his business to flourish, and to receive acceptance as a legitimate coach, David realised that he would need to have formal qualifications from a recognised university, or at least be working towards attaining a relevant tertiary degree. Consequently he enrolled in a recreation degree on a part-time basis at one of Perth's leading universities and has recently attained his level one swimming and triathlon coaching certificates. He remains a firm believer in the notion of formal qualifications, however he has had to defer his course due to lack of time as a result of his expanding business. Such rapid growth was unexpected and he was not prepared for the ramifications. However, David does have a partner, also a well known Western Australian triathlete, who has assumed an equal share of the work load. They have both recently taken over one of Perth's original and premier coaching businesses from a leading triathlete who has taken up a coaching position at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. It would appear the partnership is developing into a triathlon coaching monopoly. At the time of our discussion David was on the brink of finalising the takeover and was enthusiastic about the prospect of his business expansion.

At present it's taking a lot of my time so it's a priority and we've had 100 percent growth in the last three months. There are a lot of other things in the pipeline which are going to make it bigger. I'm trying to have all the athletes at one centre, in that one centre and if that comes through it will be really successful. It also looks like I will be taking on the junior coaching role for the state schools. But really it's got to the stage where I'm thinking about buying out another guy's business south of the river. So we will have a couple of

squads running north and south. Because it's going so successfully at this stage it's very important to me. Actually, it's more important than most things. It's almost taken over my racing as well to some degree because I am putting so much more time into it.

At times David finds this rapid expansion daunting as he witnesses the changes that are taking place in many areas of his life. These changes are difficult to cope with. He is having to learn new coaching techniques and principles of business and how to motivate athletes as well as deal with major sponsors and listen to people. As a coach he must be available to his clients because this is why they pay him. His work often encroaches into his own spare time which is usually spent training or with his fiancée. Consequently he often feels moody and tense and cannot concentrate on the task at hand. He also feels guilty, even whilst training, because he believes he should be working on programs for his athletes or canvassing sponsors for his business.

At times I feel as though I am struggling to some degree. It's very hard for me to focus on my training because when I'm out training now I'm thinking a lot about my business you know, and things that I should be doing or things that I'm not doing. It even gets to the stage when I'm out on a training ride and I think I should be at home writing up programs for the athletes and things like that. So it's really taking over to some degree. I really am finding that hard at times, quite hard. The last month has been a really mentally trying period for me.... It's really hard doing tri's full time for three or four years and then you've got all these other influences on your life and you really find it hard to adjust to. The thing is I've probably taken on too much and I'm doing a lot at the moment. I'd say it's like I'm kind of short circuiting where everything is breaking down. The control box is jammed at the moment.

The business David and his partner have established is providing him with a degree of satisfaction because there is a sense of the work ethic involved in what he is doing. Yet he still struggles with the notion of not being able to consistently perform as well in races as he did several years ago. David realises that he still has the potential to be a highly ranked world class triathlete which he often finds frustrating and sometimes difficult to cope with. Despite his claims that the business is his number one priority and essential to his financial

security he still regards himself as a professional triathlete first and coach second. Similarly, if he had the chance to be a full-time triathlete once again with lucrative financial support he would gladly take it.

I want my coaching business to develop, but then there's a part of me that wants to compete. I mean I was speaking to Rod Dickson last week and he said, "Ability wise and potential, you haven't reached it yet". He still thinks I can go so much quicker if I put my time in because I'm still only fairly young. So that sort of bothers me thinking that maybe I won't reach my full potential because I'm putting a lot more time into this. So I'm at the crossroads really, that's what I feel.... I would be satisfied if I was paid by a sponsor and didn't have to work at all, that is if I was making enough money out of it I suppose. But at the moment I just can't make enough money out of just racing. So in a lot of ways I've been forced into trying to build up a business and make a cure for myself.

The word *cure* David uses here is interesting. It seems that even though it is possible to make a living out of triathlon, as some world class triathletes do, he still perceives triathlon to be a sport and not a legitimate form of work. It is arguable that his parents have had a major influence in the way he has developed this perception due to his father's firm belief in the social work ethic that suggests legitimate work is business-oriented, not professional triathlon, and that men should be the primary income earner. So despite making a living out of the sport for three years David still regards this period in his life as a non-working period and something that required a *cure*. Therefore he felt compelled to involve himself in some form of *legitimate* work, like his brother and sister, in the hope of gaining similar respect and admiration from his father.

David is confused about where his life is heading claiming that he "thinks he has taken on too much commitment, too quickly". Therefore he is struggling to cope with the workload he has placed upon himself whilst trying to maintain his status as an elite level competitor. However, these are merely claims they are not his genuine convictions. David is unsure whether he has taken on too much because he has little to compare it with in his life so far. He cannot understand why he lacks the ability to cope with the demands of business

particularly when he compares himself to other businessmen who devote their lives to their work and exist in stressful environments whilst still coping with life. David overlooks the fact that training and pushing his body to its maximum potential is extremely stressful too. Further, having to compete and live up to people's expectations is an additional draining element he must cope with as well. The self-doubt harboured by David at present is reflected by his battle to understand his personal coping inadequacies. He is not enjoying life and he feels that people around him are suffering as a consequence, particularly his fiancée.

I'm pretty unhappy at the moment. I'm just going through a rough time with Lisa at the moment. Things are going a bit "wonky". I think they will work themselves out. It's more my fault than hers. I'm just not really good to live with at the moment. But I think, I've just taken too much on and it's got to the stage now where I'll have to pull out of uni this semester because I can't manage it all. I need to get a bit more organised I suppose, but I've just got so much else going on. I just can't train at a pace I need to and run a business as well and then try and study on top of that. I just can't do it all. Just drives me crazy and then I let all these other things get on my wick and I take it out on Lisa and everybody else I suppose. Things are pretty tough you know. I'm just trying to think what I should do. I don't know what to do. It's really quite weird because I go for long rides by myself and I think "I don't want to do this" you know, and I'm saying to myself "maybe I should stop".

Wrestling with his commitment to competition, David understands that triathlon is a selfish sport and that in order to remain at an elite level he must devote quality time to his training every day as well as attaining adequate rest and sleep and adhering to an appropriate diet. A good deal of his social night life must be curbed in order to accommodate the sleep and rest so that he can be fresh not only for his training sessions but also his coaching sessions which begin in the early hours of the morning. David has gained a lot out the sport of triathlon, although he has sacrificed much as well. He summed up his current attitude when he questioned "Is it worth doing all this?"

**NAME:** Gary

**AGE:** 31

**SPORT:** Triathlon (8 years)

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Motocross, surf lifesaving

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single (Divorced)

At our first meeting at his home, Gary appeared to be quiet and reserved with strong convictions particularly in the way he wanted to live his life. He seemed tense and apprehensive in allowing a stranger into his life yet when speaking to him on the telephone several days prior to the meeting, he sounded enthusiastic about the interview and agreed to participate in the research without hesitation. As the interview progressed Gary relaxed and became more expressive with his responses and as a consequence the barrier between us gradually eroded.

Although small in stature, Gary claims to have a positive self-image. He says size does not bother him and makes no attempt to physically develop his musculature with the use of weights, maintaining the belief that we should be content with the way we are and not try to change what is not meant to be changed.

I still do weights. I suppose I do them once a week if I can because I find them quite good for avoiding injuries and things like that. But it's just a fact of life, I mean people are born the way they are. I've got quite a good friend who's huge and he only has to look at a weight and he puts on 10 kilos like someone is pumping him up with a car pump. So I mean, you are what you are and you can't do much about that so you've got to be happy with what you've got.

It is arguable that a notion such as this is designed to act as a coping mechanism to account for a small stature. It helps to reaffirm his belief in his body size and shape being acceptable because this is the way nature intended it. Hence, his positive self-image remains

intact. However, Gary has, at some stage, attempted to develop his physique with the use of weights. This is substantiated by the claim:

I did weights until the cows came home and it really didn't make much difference at all. It just made me stronger and made me develop a fairly defined sort of shape.

By claiming that it *just made me stronger*, and produced a *fairly defined* physique suggests that Gary did not set out to achieve the benefits of strength and muscle definition that weight training has to offer, but rather was seeking a larger physique because of a perceived deficiency in this area. However, the method of weight training was not producing the desired size and therefore he no longer persisted despite gaining strength and definition. Significant was Gary's appraisal of bodybuilders which may be a consequence of his undersized physique and inability to develop large muscles.

I've known people who have been bodybuilders and they've just gone right over the top. They're not happy if this arm is not twenty-three inches round and so on. They're very self-conscious of their looks and they're always trying to obtain the perfect sort of build. They're funny sort of people. They seem to participate in a sport which is to achieve their goal at any cost. I'm talking about steroids and things like that. I mean, I've met a few people who use them and they just don't seem to care what it's doing to them. They just want to have their body like in the muscle magazines and they don't care how they get there.

The noteworthy aspect of this statement is that many other sports have participants who go "right over the top" in the same manner that Gary refers to bodybuilders. The Ironman triathlon consisting of a 3.8km swim, 180km cycle, followed by a 42.2km marathon run is one such example. Just to finish this event, and receive a medallion, competitors spend many hours training each week. To most people this would appear to be obsessive behaviour, yet triathletes perceive it to be a common goal. Further, steroids are not solely symbolic of bodybuilding because many power sports can lay claim to similar

reported steroid usage. Triathletes and cyclists have been banned for their use of illegal drugs in the past. Therefore bodybuilders do not stand alone in "going over the top".

Gary comes from a relatively stable family environment, growing up in the suburbs of Perth with his mother, father, and younger brother and sister. He was always supported by his parents in the sports and leisure activities he chose to pursue. They were not the type of parents to push him into sports they thought were good for him, they simply allowed him to make the decisions and supported the choices he made. During his adolescent years Gary was heavily involved in motocross to which his parents provided him with assistance by injecting a lot of time and money towards attaining his personal goals. Eventually, as he grew older, he became less interested in competing in motocross and became more interested in the capabilities of the body as opposed to that of a machine.

I used to be involved with motocross for quite a few years when I was younger. I did no physical activity until I was about 20 and then I got involved with human type stuff, which was a bit of exercise.

At the age of 20 years Gary began exercising, something which he had not done before on a regular basis. In the beginning he did not adhere to a regimented training schedule, but simply wanted to "get out and exercise". He became involved in surf lifesaving which formalised the training far more but soon realised that his body type did not suit the sport because of its sprint-based nature. Realising the amount of exercise that he was doing, a friend, who happened to be a very good runner, invited him to compete in a triathlon. He knew that Gary's training included swimming and beach running, and of his disillusionment with surf lifesaving. At the time, Gary was also riding a bicycle as a form of transport because he had lost his driver's licence for a number of years. It seemed an obvious progression that he should compete in a triathlon. After placing very well in his first race, enjoying the sport, enjoying the company of the people involved, and enjoying the environment, he believed it was a good sport in which to become involved.

I was involved in surf lifesaving for a number of years and I wanted to just grab a sport that I got enjoyment out of and could do reasonably well at. I found surf lifesaving was more sprint-based type work and I came to the conclusion that my body type wasn't really suited to that sort of environment. A good friend of mine, who's a good runner in WA here, convinced me to try a triathlon. I had been doing a little bit of swimming through surf lifesaving and just generally beach running and I had lost my license for a number of years, so I was forced to ride a bike everywhere. So it was sort of a blended thing and the first one I entered I did reasonably well at it. I really enjoyed it and the people I met were very friendly and I thought it was a good environment to get involved with.

Exercise is an important aspect of triathlon, and Gary argues that he enjoys the exercise more than the competition itself and that training is one of the primary reasons for being involved.

I must admit I do the exercise bit not so much the competitive side. I mean I am competitive but I find I like to exercise more so than getting a specific time. I mean I'll work on times although I don't often train with a stopwatch. So I sort of exercise according to how I feel.

Despite claims that he is not involved in triathlons for the competition, Gary is a staunch competitor. He argues that competition is not the most important aspect of triathlon although without it, he is doubtful whether he would push his body as hard. Competition generally contains an element of motivation that cannot be attained in training thereby rendering training performances less impressive. Through competition Gary can also set himself achievable goals and as a consequence competition becomes a type of test to determine whether the training has been effective.

I do like the competitive aspect of triathlons, although it's not the be-all-and-end-all, but I certainly enjoy it. It is a good way to push yourself as hard as you can. I find it's something you don't really get that much of in training although I do tend to train pretty hard. The odd time there'll be a race you want to work on or a goal, because goal setting's important. I mean if you can do well in that race then it's a good feeling to actually do well at it and achieve a certain goal, there's no denying. But certainly tomorrow, if for some reason I couldn't do as much training or something happened, I certainly would still enjoy triathlons just for doing them. I know some people who have had an injury and they can't run as quick or they can't do something and they quit because they can't win or they



can't do this any more. I think it's a bit sad if you get to that stage where you can't enjoy it as well.

Gary's definition of success is one that might be expected from a recreational triathlete, not an elite level performer. Achieving attainable goals is a personal criterion for success, whilst being able to train is the most important aspect of triathlon involvement. However, when success in the form of winning occurs Gary enjoys sharing his elation with other people, particularly those who come along to events and support and encourage him. Gary's parents and family often watch major events and as a consequence he feels as though he is not only competing for himself but for them as well.

I often think winning for yourself is not always that important. Maybe sometimes winning and enjoying it with other people is what I'm trying to say. Sometimes if your parents are there and you have a good day and you see they get a lot of pleasure out of it, then I get pleasure out of it as well. It's quite good to see them get some sort of enjoyment out of it as well. To share it with other people is the thing. Someone said to me once, years ago, "There's no use being the most successful person in the world if you don't have someone to share it with". So it's a bit of a hollow victory if you're the only one holding the thing at the end of the day.

Competition and success are motivating factors to remain a part of triathlon, yet he claims that the triathlon environment and the people involved are the factors which motivate him most to continue in the sport. These elements filter through to his training because with improved communication skills he finds the training sessions are far more social in nature than they once were.

I find generally the people I meet in triathlons are very friendly. I've had only a fairly brief involvement with cycling and I've generally found that the environment of people there is not the same. I generally find that the people I've met in triathlon tend to be more friendly and I think as an overall thing you've got to not only enjoy your training but the other things that go with it. That is the social aspects as well. It's alright to just train in a certain sport but there's also the social aspect of mixing with other people. I mean, that's quite good in triathlons.

In like manner he claimed:

I find training is an individual thing because sometimes I want to go for a run so I'll go running by myself. But you know it's nice to go for a ride like with the guy I live with here. He trains as well. So you go riding and things like that. It just makes it a bit more enjoyable, you know. It makes it a bit more social.

In the past two years Gary has undergone a degree of stress in dealing with the breakdown of his marriage and subsequent divorce. He believes that several things led to the marriage breakdown. One of these factors was due to time constraints whilst the other was due to a lack of communication with his wife. In respect to time constraints both Gary and his wife, a physiotherapist, maintained hectic schedules and he accepts part of the blame because of his time consuming training.

Time was a significant issue but it wasn't the only one. Maybe in hindsight if I'd taken some time off and stuff, the problems that were there might have been able to be resolved. So in some ways I do attribute it partly to my training. You know, whatever you do, whether you're working long hours or whatever, you've got to put it into the right context sometimes.

As well as partly blaming himself for the marriage breakdown because of long training hours, he further blames his poor communicative skills during this period. He attributes the breakdown to this factor, more so than any other, and has since undertaken counselling from a psychologist on a regular basis in an attempt to improve this area of his life. He is determined not to allow a similar situation to be repeated.

I've had long sessions with a psychologist and I've learnt a lot in the sense that communication plays an important part. I think the bottom line is that you've got to be able to completely communicate with your partner in an acceptable manner. If something's bugging you then you should tell them and you can be sure that they are going to tell you. A big part of my marriage breakdown was that we had a big communication breakdown. We were doing things that we thought weren't getting up each other's nose but in the end it was driving each other nuts. It puts a big wedge in between people and eventually the wedge can't be pulled out. I believe the most important thing is to feel confident that you can both communicate with each other well so that both know what each other wants.

The counselling has affected many facets of Gary's life, far more than imagined. He believes his self-esteem has improved where communication is concerned, so much so that he has taken up a new job in a totally different occupation. Once a draftsman, sitting most of the day alone in an office, he now must deal with people on a regular basis. His job is to liaise with staff members at a computing company and teach them how to use particular software correctly. He must also be available at all times to assist should any problems or queries arise. Gary is excited about the future and relishes the idea of change. He is looking forward to travelling and meeting new people and finding out how other people live their lives and, importantly, begin to understand himself better.

I'm re-establishing lots of things and recognising that communication has been a big problem in my life over many years. I think this has probably led to a lot of the problems I've had in recent times. I've made a big effort to try and change those things and I think now it's paying dividends. I think I can communicate with people better and I feel more comfortable with people. It's a two way thing. People respond to your input and it's a sort of thing that grows and feeds on itself. I'm learning more and more about it all the time and I don't think you're ever too old to learn things. That's what I've certainly found out over the last 18 months or so.

Gary was fortunate in being able to identify his communication problem relatively early in life. By recognising this deficiency he has been able to take the necessary steps to begin to eliminate the problem. He is happy with the progress made thus far and realises that he must not be content with what he has achieved. Unfortunately, since communication does not come naturally to Gary it must be worked on continually. He likens this ongoing process to triathlon training in that it is not possible to remain at the top without a continuation of the hard work and effort that made success possible for him in the first place.

I'm confident that my communication is improving but I'm also mindful that I shouldn't just sit back and think "Oh well I've reached this point". I've got to be mindful that you've always got to be working on these things and not just sort of say "Well I got here that's fine". It's a bit like training. You know you get there

and then you've got to look for something else and just keep monitoring it all the time.

Gary is enthusiastic about his new found employment. It arrived at a time in his life when he needed positive change and positive feedback from others. This job supplies him with both because it is significantly different from the drafting work he is trained and qualified to do, whilst the people he is now surrounded by are enthusiastic and enjoy their work. They appear to be happy with his progress which provides satisfaction. The area in which there has been most improvement is his confidence in dealing with others. He feels increasingly at ease when meeting new people and is not afraid of branching away from his original close knit circle of friends.

I've got some very good feedback through the people I work with because as I say I deal with people on a rather large scale and if I was poor at communicating my job would basically be failing. I have had some very good feedback on my performance and through other people such as friends that I deal with. They have given positive feedback and the like, so I'm confident that it is improving. I think the biggest improvement is just being able to be confident to talk with more people. I must admit I tended to get into a bit of pattern where I was associating with a relatively small group of people, friends if you like, and I generally found it difficult to go outside that group and actually talk to someone I didn't know. I used to find that quite difficult, whereas now, I must admit if a total stranger approached me, or if I approached them, I could generally have a reasonable conversation and not feel anxious about dealing and talking with them.

The improvements in communication skills have not developed easily nor have they been instantaneous in the making. They have been brought about as a result of conscious decision-making together with a lot of effort. The decision to employ the use of a psychologist was a major decision. It made all of the problems Gary experienced real and, as a consequence, they could no longer be denied. Like most elite triathletes, accomplishing a difficult task in training is often inspiring. Therefore directly confronting the problem is usually the preferred method of dealing with the situation as it is in this case.

I can attribute my improvement to jumping in at the deep end of the pool, if you like (laughs). It's a bit of a description of life I suppose. I suppose the starter, of course, was my marriage breakdown and then the sessions with the psychologist and discussing my problems. Then it was really accepting the fact that a lot of the problems have been associated with communication and lack of it. Then making an active decision to improve it. It would have been very easy at the time to think "Well stuff it, the marriage is broken down and well that's broken down and I just sort of plod on from here". But you've got to think of the future a bit and think "Well hang on, there could be more in life" You've got to attack it that way and meet those challenges otherwise things will never get better.

Gary welcomes his set hours of employment. After a number of years organising his own starting and finishing time, the new job provides a form of structure in life that he has never experienced before as an adult. Surprisingly, it is also helping his triathlon training because he has a limited amount of time before and after work. Therefore he must maximise training time and perform quality work outs. A routinised schedule has helped him immensely in becoming a more committed individual. The rest received during the day is beneficial to his body's recovery and he is able to train hard as a consequence. As his work and triathlon career are perceived as two separate interests, he has little chance to become bored with one or the other. Triathlon is used as an outlet from the rigours of work and enthusiasm is generated at the prospect of upcoming training sessions at the end of the day.

I probably work longer hours but it is good in the sense that it's an office job which means that I actually get physical rest during the day. It also takes my mind off training as well so I can work, then leave work and do training. There's two distinct separate lifestyles which I think is important. So I get up at 5:30am and I get home around 7:00pm and just sort of cram the training in at both ends of the day. It sometimes makes it a bit of a long day but, oh well, you get that.

Gary's life, before his divorce, was very unstructured and he was constantly seeking the ultimate "good time". He would often get drunk on a regular basis and was well on the way to becoming an alcoholic. He knew something was wrong yet he could not rectify the problem and continued to seek further "good times" which never really eventuated. It was

fortunate that Gary was gifted with abundant talent in the sports of cycling and running because his somewhat elaborate lifestyle during this period made it difficult for him to train on a regular basis. His training was disjointed yet there was the ability to maintain good race placings by catching the race leaders in the cycle and run legs following a mediocre performance in the swim section of the race.

A few years ago, in the early days triathlons, I was trying to combine living a fairly hard life-style and training and that wasn't exactly doing me the world of good. I think now I've done a lot of things and I'm starting to realise my limits a bit, especially as I get older. I mean, I used to drink quite a bit and not sleep much and train quite hard as well as, getting a bit of drugs and bits-and-pieces, but your body just can't sustain that. Then something happened this year after being recently divorced. I realised what it was doing to me. But before that I sort of went through a bit of a lull period and, you know, getting into the alcohol a bit was a bit of a substitute or whatever and I hit a bus stop on a training ride and woke up in an ambulance. So they advised me to not mix alcohol too much with training. Maybe sometimes the school of hard knocks is the best way to go.

The lifestyle once led is a stark contrast to the one led now. He has a totally different attitude to the way he perceives his body and attends to it. Where once he didn't care what he was putting into his body, as long as it made it him feel good, he now monitors what his body requires in order to attain the maximum performance from it. Gary believes that he is not vain nor obsessed with the desire to live a healthy lifestyle, but merely "looks after his body and watches what he eats". He came to the realisation that his prior lifestyle was self-destructing and therefore something needed to change. However, in devoting himself to triathlon he is merely substituting it for the time he would spend "partying" and "living hard". Arguably, triathlon is filling a void in his life.

I suppose it does fill a void at times. When you say alcohol could be used as a crutch to prop you up, sports of an endurance nature, where they take up big chunks of your time can keep you occupied for many hours a day. I mean I have a pretty busy work schedule and I suppose I fit training in around that but the reality is I don't like sitting around and I find that it's a good way of, I shouldn't say, passing the time, but yeah, it fills a void.

Although his lifestyle is different from that of a few years ago, elements of Gary's character have remained the same. Essentially he is still a loner and one who is ascetic in some ways. He lives an abstemious life foregoing many pleasures in order to satisfy his sometimes obsessive desires. Gary understands he will never completely break free from this behaviour which underpins his character and also understands that areas of his life will be negatively affected including difficulty in sustaining relationships because of his self-contained, independent attitude. Whether he chooses to be alone is contentious because Gary's character creates a cyclical phenomenon whereby being alone is perpetuated. That is, the more independent he becomes, the less he requires companionship. Conversely, without the companionship he finds it necessary to be strong and individually-oriented, thus making the cycle complete.

Gary is liberal-minded in some respects, yet conservatively-oriented in others. He finds it difficult to provide an unbiased opinion on issues such as alcohol because he has experienced the effects caused by alcohol abuse and suffered the consequences. Therefore he can understand the desire for alcohol in society, but he cannot justify its excessive use despite having used it excessively himself many times in the past. Similarly he cannot accept the notion of cigarette smoking even though it is an individually chosen activity. Gary believes in individual decision-making which is why this notion appears out of character.

Gary's liberal mindedness continues with his attitude towards drugs in society. He argues that we should be focussing on more important issues and included in this, once again, is the excessive use of alcohol. A point of note is that Gary does not regard alcohol as a drug which might be a way of playing down his own drug problem several years ago. Also, he claims that he has seen the destruction that alcohol can produce through his involvement with a woman who was close to becoming an alcoholic. He fails to mention, in this statement, that he too has been close to alcoholism and has experienced the negative consequences of excessive alcohol.

I think drugs are probably one of the overrated things in society today considering there's other bigger problems we have in society, like alcohol. I went out with someone for quite a few years who was almost an alcoholic and I've seen more destruction with alcohol than I have with drugs. I've seen people in that environment as well and I think, unfortunately, it's a bit overrated when there are bigger problems in our society.

Consistent with his attitude towards drugs in society, Gary would be prepared to take money from a tobacco sponsor because "You can never believe what they say in terms of how the facts about advertising affect people smoking". Further, he argues that professional athletes trying to make money out of the sport would "probably think on the side of money and not the ethics" if a tobacco company offered financial sponsorship. Gary is pragmatic about the issue of sponsorship. He perceives it as a business transaction between the athlete and the business as opposed to providing each other a favour. Therefore he regards sponsorship as a form of exploitation because the athlete is selling himself and his talents whilst receiving financial reward in return. He agrees that the athlete's body then becomes a tool for commodification and is marketed accordingly to sell products and promote the business' name. Nevertheless, it is once again an individual choice to be decided by the athlete.

Sure it's marketing. I mean they're selling a product. They are using you to sell a product. So if you're running around in their shoes they're selling you to sell their product, there's no doubt about it. I mean that's the way the commercial world works. They've got something that appeals to people. The surf lifesaving ironmen are a good example, the way they sell stuff through their sponsorship. It's just a fact of life, people want to sell products and make money and if you can do it for them they'll exploit you or use you in any way to do it as long as it's fair on both parties. I'd certainly want it. I mean if I was in that position I would want to clarify the conditions first. I wouldn't say "OK that's \$40,000, I'll do whatever you like". I think you'd have to be smart and say "OK that's \$40,000" but you'd also have to be sensible and come to some sort of agreement as to what was expected of you and not just to say that you'll do anything they want because that would be a bit unreasonable.



With respect to individual gender choice Gary has little problem and displays no homophobic characteristics. On gay men Gary claimed:

I've got on alright with many gay men I've met. As long as they don't pressurise me in that particular way. I've met some guys who are just like any other guys really, just that they have different habits than you and I might have.

Further, regarding lesbians, Gary stated:

It doesn't worry me. I've known and met quite a few over the years and they seem okay. I mean, you get them in sport at different levels and come across them over the years. As I say it's no skin off my nose they do their own thing. I mean it's only a sexual thing.

Gary does not want to look too far towards the future. He envisages himself competing in triathlons for some time yet, however, his pragmatic approach to life does not permit him to commit himself too heavily. He is unsure about several areas, such as marriage, but is content to allow things to continue as they are for the moment. He does not know whether he will marry again although he claims that anything is possible, particularly if he meets a compatible woman with the same interests, goals and aspirations. He believes the institution of marriage is a commendable one and one which he supports wholeheartedly.

Marriage is one of the best institutions there is around, albeit mine failed. It's unfortunate these days that we can get out of it a bit easier than it was in my parents' days but that's a fact of life. I think it plays a pretty important part in people's lives and can give you a lot of enjoyment. So, even though mine has failed it's something that I miss. At the moment I'd probably say no to marriage again, but that's probably because I have the "once bitten, twice shy" type mentality. Although I don't know. Probably longer down the track, if you could meet the person that you think you could be comfortable with for the rest of your life I think it would be pretty good.

Once again Gary's attitude reflects his notion of the way men and women should treat each other, the roles men and women play in society and the roles they adopt in marriage. Respect should be a major element in all relationships and marriages. Just as important is

recognising and understanding that men and women should not be type cast into a particular social role merely because of their sex. He acknowledges that society has placed expectations upon men and women to carry out certain roles, however argues there is nothing stopping these roles from being changed unless they are physiological impossibilities such as child birth in men.

The cold hard facts are that men and women are always going to be different and they're different physiologically and psychologically. I don't think you can ever treat a woman as you would treat a man and vice versa. But I suppose the bottom line is that you've got to respect them. People have to respect each other really and not think "Because you're a woman I expect you to do this and because you're a man I expect you to do this". I think it's wrong that people basically role model people for what they should be. There's no reason a man can't stay at home and be a house husband while the wife works or vice versa sort of role reversal and things like that. I think people stereotype too many people into a particular fashion.

Long term goals have never been a priority until recently. He has now set himself several important goals that are achievable and will gradually work towards attaining them. His main priority is to continue improving his communication and social skills because he attributes his present happiness the changes that have taken place with respect to these two elements in his life. He sometimes notices that he regresses back to his old ways and does not like what happens to his personality in response. He understands that he will have to continue to confront this situation for a while yet and therefore must not become complacent with the progress made thus far. Gary's other goals in life are related to sport and travel. He will endeavour to take his ability in triathlon as far as possible and attempt to complete an ironman race in the near future. If he is able to combine travelling with sport and competition then another goal will be fulfilled. Travelling and meeting new people and experiencing new places is important because he is further enhancing his communicative skills and broadening his outlook on life. On the future Gary stated:

My goals for the future ? Well I suppose sport wise I'd still like to stay actively involved in triathlons cum duathlons. But sometime I'm actually hoping to go overseas, possibly next year or the year after because I've got some time off due to me from work for long service leave and I might travel around and do a bit of racing and bits and pieces. On a personal level I suppose at some stage I'd maybe like to get back into a relationship of some sort and who knows, somewhere down the track I might even contemplate marriage again (laughs), now that I've learnt all these valuable lessons. Work wise I have established myself into a fairly new career and that seems to be going well. So, in the foreseeable future I can see myself just expanding on that in the computer industry that I'm in and just you know going along from there and just seeing how it goes. That's, you know, given me renewed interest in life in general as well, so I will just probably go along those three planes, my work, my social type things and the sport aspect of it.

It is evident that Gary is looking forward to the future and is enthusiastic about the changes that have occurred, and continue to occur, in his life. He plays down his sporting achievements, but they are clearly important to him and he is thankful to excel at what he does and be regarded so highly by his peers. Triathlon provides him with direction and a sense of commitment which are two things he will hold on to for some time. Growing older does not bother Gary and whilst looking towards the future he still lives for today. Buying his new motor bike was an extravagance that many people could not understand. However, pleasure is derived from it and that is important to him. This is indicative of the way Gary now lives his life. He has established what produces his happiness and wants to maintain what he has accomplished. Individually-oriented almost to the point of self-centred, Gary is trying to attend to the things that make him happy. He knows his deficiencies and is working on them. It is a long process of redemption and it will be some time before he is totally confident he has mastered this area of his life.

**NAME:** Pat

**AGE:** 45

**SPORT:** Triathlon

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Rugby, marathon running

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single (De facto), (Divorced twice)

Pat has been involved with triathlon for around 10 years and has experienced the development of the sport in Western Australia. He is acknowledged in the triathlon community because of his talent as an ultra-distance triathlete, particularly during the late 1980s and also because of his relentless and professional administrative qualities. He established and continues to operate the first triathlon store in Western Australia. Being a well respected triathlete and businessman, Pat is likely to remain involved with triathlon.

Pat's upbringing as a child was relatively stable. He tended to be closer to his mother because of his father's reserved personality and also because he was away on business much of the time. Pat knew of the love that his father felt towards him but found it difficult to become close to him because of his father's unemotional demeanour. He sometimes felt neglected but never perceived this to be individual discrimination because his sister was brought up exactly the same way. His father was never involved with his sport and rarely displayed any enthusiasm towards it.

My father's involvement with my sport was absolutely zip as far as turning up to watch games and all that sort of business. It never really bothered me at the time but I think it did later on, when I got to the adult stage, when I thought about it. I was extremely good at rugby, in fact the only time he really showed up was when I played my first game in the first 15 at college. So I had made it but it was too late.

Although he claimed to have had a good upbringing, Pat stated that the relationship with his parents throughout his entire childhood and part of his adolescence remain a grey area to him. Nothing was exceptionally outstanding nor was there anything that was very special. He stated that his sister would back this up as well.

In my early days, when people start talking about what they remember at two, three, four and five years old, it's all very grey to me. I can't remember, even up to teenage life. It's just that, nothing was bad yet, nothing was exceptionally good so it's just a grey area, which I have spoken of to my parents in the last four or five years. We weren't a really close family. I mean we were brought up perfectly with four in the family and we were all good citizens so to speak but there was no real closeness. We all agree that it was that grey upbringing.

It was not until approximately six years ago that Pat began to develop a closer bond with his father and really understand him. Unfortunately this developmental period ended on his father's death a few years ago.

Pat was comparatively old when he began competing in triathlons and at 35 was the oldest athlete finishing consistently in the top 10 in each race in which he competed. Prior to triathlon he participated in several sports with rugby union occupying his attention throughout his adolescence and early adulthood. He maintained his fitness by running and would compete in fun runs and marathons to challenge his personal best times and ultimately gauge his progress. These races were designed to provide him with competition against his peers as well as competition against himself despite his lack of running prowess. Unlike running, Pat realised he had an immediate affinity with cycling which was a bonus at this early stage because there were few good cyclists competing in triathlon and therefore Pat had a significant advantage over much of the field. He became enthusiastic about his new found sport and began training more intensely.

Well I've always been into fitness and mind you in 1985 when I took the sport on I was 35 years old then, but I've always been into running or rugby or any sort of fitness sport. I think that the difference was the bike. I had never really ridden a bike a lot before getting into triathlons and I've got a definite talent for

it, and probably just seeing that real marked improvement on that, getting good at it, because in the early days if you were good on the bike it really helped as far as getting right up there because no one else could ride a bike. So I think that was the main reason.

In 1985, triathlon was beginning to gain popularity in the Eastern states, although it was still in its developmental stages in Western Australia. That year, Pat and a close friend, with whom he had completed several marathons, decided to compete in the inaugural Rottnest Island triathlon. They trained together leading up to the race and found that they enjoyed the aspect of cross-training which involved the combining of swimming, cycling and running. On completion of the Rottnest Island event Pat enjoyed the feeling of accomplishment which in turn provided him with a feeling of success and immense satisfaction. He has not missed the annual Rottnest Island event since its inception which is something he cherishes with pride.

In 1985 my friend and I decided that it was time to have a look at this new funny sport called triathlon, and we built up for the inaugural Rottnest event, which is a 2km swim, an 84km ride, and 20km run on Rottnest island. We both completed it and that started me on it and I was hooked from that day on.

The way in which Pat talked about the beginning of triathlon is typical of triathletes who began in this era. They use terms such as "funny", "odd", "weird", and other similar adjectives to describe the manner in which other people perceived them. This ideology still lingers in the minds of the early triathletes.

Pat played rugby throughout his school years and then as an adolescent and young adult in college. As a child he enjoyed the aspect of team involvement, however as he grew older his priorities changed together with his decision-making. He became individualistic in nature and no longer required the unity of a team to make him feel secure. During the transient years of the 1970s, Pat decided to travel with few restrictions to tie him down in one place for too long. He regards this as his "hippie period" in which he "lost the normal

social contact". Therefore he felt he was unable to fit into a team mould of any description even if he did want to play rugby again.

It was during this "hippie" period that Pat experimented with his lifestyle. He wanted to experience new elements not experienced before. He had no inclination where it would lead him because he had no preconceptions about what he would enjoy and what he would dislike. Therefore travel was a major part of this period so that he could encounter different lifestyles and cultures throughout Australia and the world. Pat experimented with drugs and alcohol during this period and believes it was a sign of the times yet he has firm views on their usage in our society today.

Well, my teenage years and early 20s I was quite a participant of the "hippie" drug syndrome then, a lot of fun. At the moment I'd say the use of marijuana is not a problem for me as long as it doesn't lead on to other types of drugs. I was quite a heavy drinker if you classify alcohol as a drug. I gave up four years ago because that drug was becoming addictive to me and I haven't had a drink since. But I think that people must really look at it. I think it's harder and harder to tell young people not to partake in it because the peer pressure is so great and the discipline that was around when I was around is not here any more as far as schools and so on are concerned. It's very hard for young people now. As for smoking I absolutely hate it. In fact in a restaurant situation or public place I would leave the area if I was sitting in it.

The sport of triathlon has had a settling effect, as prior to his involvement he had little direction in life. After leaving home as a teenager to travel, Pat has married twice, been involved in several long term de facto relationships, lived in numerous locations in Australia and been involved in various occupations, including the Australian Army Defence Force. Triathlons established a sense of commitment and dedication in terms of training which in turn has flowed on to the business.

Pat was quick to recognise that business could be generated from triathlon. Therefore with market research and an investigation into the progress of the sport in the United States, where triathlon first began in 1978, he established a triathlon store. To date the store is flourishing and it appears will continue to do so. Not only does it cater for triathletes, but

also for athletes competing in the individual sports of swimming, cycling and running, and for the recreational market. An important aspect about the shop is its non-threatening environment and the assistance provided. This was an initial aim and still remains a priority. It is in keeping with Pat's personality and philosophy on life that people should be approachable, friendly and provide valuable advice if they have the qualifications in a specific field to do so.

Pat was fortunate to be involved in triathlon at a time when sponsorship of individual athletes at the local level was quite lucrative. In the past few years this area has tightened considerably and athletes are not being funded as liberally as they were. During the early and mid 1980s, when businesses were more financially stable, there was less concern about where the sponsorship dollars were being spent. As a businessman and an athlete Pat is in the ideal position to understand the concept of today's sponsorship and what the athlete and the sponsoring business should be aiming for. He claims that sponsors at the state and local level are seeking good communicators and not just a body to wear their clothing. One of the main criteria of his sponsored athletes is that they must be approachable and help people at all times and this typifies his character.

Pat has a strong character and personality. He is an independent person, which provides an indication why he is heavily involved in an individual sport such as triathlon, and is a leader rather than a follower, particularly at the community level. He is not easily intimidated and is prepared to remain true to his convictions. It is for this reason that other people enjoy being in his presence for he provides an air of quiet confidence which often has an affect on people around him. Some might regard his confidence as arrogance, yet because he is approachable and willing to assist at all times, this arrogance is acceptable.

The veneer of confidence that is displayed is not always a true indication of the way he is feeling. He is often intimidated by wealthier men and sometimes feels inferior to these men because of their material possessions, including money and expensive luxury cars and



houses. Pat is constantly surrounded by upper middle class men through his business dealings as well as through his sport. Triathlon is renowned for its middle and upper-class competitor base where it is common to find doctors, lawyers, accountants and other such professional people competing for age group prizes. Despite often defeating these men in his age group, the desire to acquire the same material status, as well as similar material possessions, remains strong in Pat.

I sometimes feel a little inferior to other people which I don't feel good about. There's no reason why I should because I'm on equal terms. Sometimes when I have that feeling I'm consciously thinking "Why am I having these feelings? It's bullshit and there's no reason for it". But I think that's a common thing that's been put into you right from your early days. You know, I've been in job situations where I've had to converse with labourers, doctors, right across the spectrum so there's no reason why I should feel inferior to anybody in any sense at all. I think it's the material side of things sometimes. Yeah, but I guess I get caught up in the material side of things. I seem to think that money is the power. But when I sit back and analyse it, it's probably not.

Pat adequately deals with this materialistic based inferiority by not dwelling for too long on the possessions of others. He understands and accepts the situation regarding his financial standing because he has made the choice to devote his life to the elements that make him happy. He thoroughly values the life he has led and appreciates being involved with triathlon. Still, Pat has reached a point in his life where reflection is frequent and he often ponders what might have been had he pursued a business career at an earlier stage in his life instead of attempting to juggle business and sport. The time, energy and money that he has injected into his triathlon career may have been easily spent working towards financial reward, however the pleasure received from the sport outweighs any remuneration.

In the last 18 months I've reached a crisis point a few times where I still want to do triathlons. I get right into it to a level where I get very fit and then suddenly I fall into hole and don't want to do it any more. Then I feel that it's part of my business and that's the only reason I'm really sticking it out. Sometimes I feel like I'm sick of it, sick of the whole thing, but then I stand back and look at it and think, well it's a pretty good lifestyle and it has set me up very comfortably. It's a delightful way to make a living because I just talk all day about something

that I enjoy. I just look at the positives of it and I can't imagine what else I would do.

Pat is fiercely competitive by nature, but openly admits that he has lost some of his edge over the past few years. He now tries to improve on his personal times because his competition is developing at a more rapid pace than his own level of improvement. Pat still enjoys competing although he admits that it is increasingly difficult to get back into competition shape after a significant lay-off at the end of each season. He is not as motivated as he once was to continue training immediately following the season's end. Now he tends to take several months off intense training and merely goes out for occasional jogs or leisurely cycles when he feels like it, just to keep in shape. Pat may look towards focussing his energy into the administrative side of the sport, as he did once before, now that triathlon is becoming a high profile sport. He will remain in the sport in some capacity even if he is not competing. This indicates Pat's affinity with triathlon despite his statements of frustration and threats to quit his involvement.

Another important factor in Pat's life is the company and companionship of women. Pat needs women to provide him with a sense of masculine identity. He does not "hang out with the boys" socially and so his masculinity is not reinforced through his mateship with other men. Therefore being involved with a woman in a contemporary style relationship, as de facto is perceived, establishes and emphasises his masculine self-worth not only to others but also to himself. Prior to his current de facto arrangement Pat has been involved in a number of significant relationships two of which have led to marriage and ultimately divorce, whilst several other affairs have consisted of living with one another and then amiable separation. Pat claims that he is still friends with his ex-partners because the break-ups have been due primarily to one factor with which he had no hesitation in confronting these women at the beginning of the relationship. Pat does not want to father children.

Never. I've never wanted children, and this is a very heavy discussion that I always have with my partners and it's normally resulted in the demise of the partnership. The relationship I'm in now is almost at the stage of going one way or the other because of my not wanting to have children, especially now because the lady is in her late 30's, she's reaching that natural stage of "We are here to procreate, what are we going to do about it?" But I've never, in my entire life had any leaning towards children, having my own children. I've questioned it, questioned myself on it. I've had endless discussions with my mother on it because it's certainly affected a lot of people in my life along the way.

Pat's decision not to have children is indicative of his non-conformist approach to life. Yet it might also reflect the disquiet he has endured all his life arising from his father's lack of interest in his personal development. Pat may not feel equipped to take on the role of fatherhood because he did not have a favourable role model to emulate although he believes at some point he may regret not having been a father. When he looks back on his life though, he realises that he would not have been able to experience what he has, had he been a father.

I mean if I look back and if I really did want children I would have liked to have had them when I was younger. But on the other hand the life that I have led since I was 17 since I was out of school, I mean, I wouldn't change that. I've worked and lived everywhere and lived life right to the fullest. I wouldn't have been able to do that with children. Now further down the track when I get to 70, 75, or 80, I'm not going to have the children and the grandchildren to tell these stories to or whatever, so that may be a problem for me then.

Having been involved in two divorces, Pat doubts the usefulness of marriage. It seems unlikely that he will ever marry again because of the scepticism he feels towards it. These two major occurrences have impacted on many areas of his life other than just his concept of marriage. At times he has doubted whether he is doing the right thing by inciting the break-up of the relationship because of his stance of not wanting children. However, he is a man who adheres to his convictions. He believes that in being honest to his partner at the beginning of the relationship warrants him being honest to himself in what he wants from

life. Pat also claims there is now far less stigma involved with de facto relationships which should make it easier for couples not to marry for the sake of wanting to be together.

Well, with my background I'm pretty cynical about marriage I guess. I can't see any need for it in our society as it is now. I mean I'm in a marital status now really, I mean we own a house together and it's all there. But if there's not a family involved, or even if there's a family involved, it's not a big deal to come across a single parent who has never been married, there's no social stigma against it.

Pat proclaims he is a firm believer in gender equity. He attempts to acknowledge the differences that exist between men and women as well as minority and stigmatised groups. Even though he is an advocate for women's equality he states that he is "not a feminist". Further, his view of the feminist movement is somewhat tainted by the influence of the society in which he lives. He perceives this group to be a radical, highly vocal group of women capable of doing anything to further the cause of women's right to equality.

I've met various types of feminists, the hairy armpitted, hairy legged type which I don't like much at all mainly because they seem to have a huge chip on their shoulders. But most of my ex-partners, I suppose I could call feminists in terms of not being the traditional female, "I'll follow you around and clean up after you" type. They've often had definite view points on the rights of females and so on.

Regarding feminine qualities, Pat has a traditional view of what he thinks a woman should be. Like most men he thinks of femininity in terms of a woman's appearance. He agrees that his perception of femininity is "more stereotyped", than it would be for masculinity, because femininity is a woman who is "delicate but athletic". He sees the term delicate implying a petite, diminutive stature combined with a subservient nature, one that is not dominant and overpowering. Size is often equated with power, therefore by viewing a traditionally feminine woman as delicate Pat is defining both his and men's power over women.

Pat maintains that he embodies elements of the *sensitive new age guy* (SNAG) because he is prepared to take his partner's emotions and feelings into consideration. He believes the new men's movement is a positive development because "it makes it easier for men to display a sensitive image". In the past, he contends, men would have been highly ridiculed for such traditionally-perceived, feminine actions. His understanding of the *sensitive new age guy*, and the qualities he should exhibit, are both superficial and misrepresented. Like many men he regards revealing emotions, caring for women and taking part in traditional feminised activities as the cornerstone of the contemporary men's movement, whereas in reality its purpose is to promote a much broader, far more encompassing sense of masculinity.

Well it makes life a lot easier because you don't have to worry as much. I mean, this has only started to happen in the last half a decade and prior to that if you had any sense of feminine you tried to protect them, but because now it's out in the open it's a lot easier to talk about it. Gayness or homosexuality or whatever can be discussed quite openly without any arguments at all as a result of it. And it's like when I went to see this movie last night, which I went on my own. It was a French film and it was beautiful, romantic, delightful, and for me to have done that five years ago I would have been scoffed at by females or males just for going on my own to something like that. No it's good, I like it, I like it very much.

Pat is in favour of promoting the involvement of women in triathlon. As an administrator he would like to see the growth of triathlon in all facets of the sport, including increased numbers of women. He argues a similar line to many other male triathletes that the depth of prize money allocated to women should be proportional to the number that enter the event. Therefore at present he believes money should only be paid down to fourth place.

The issue of prize money is a very debatable one. Certainly the first three or four, but it's all relative too. If you've got a race field of 300 competitors and 50 of those are women then I really can't see why 250 odd males are going to have to support the five top females and they may not be coming in the top 50 overall. So perhaps the first one or two but certainly not 1 to 10 should get prize money.

Pat believes he has a good self-image. He is content with his physique claiming that he is both fit and young looking for his age. Despite some insecurities, relating to material items, he is also content with his life and achievements in terms of sport and business. Pat is a seeker of knowledge in the quest to improve himself to become a better person. He is involved with Toastmasters to improve his public speaking ability and regularly uses self-development tapes and books to assist in promoting a positive self-image.

I have a good self-image but I use a lot of self-development tapes, books and things to keep me going. The tapes are made up of all sorts of things on how to deal with other people. How to constantly keep your self-image so that you're on the same level as everyone. Yoga is in the pipeline but I do a lot of toastmasters (public speaking) organisation things which really take me out of the comfort zone and vastly improve the abilities I have. If I feel like I'm getting out of shape I'll certainly do something about it but my lifestyle doesn't lend my getting out of shape much anyway.

He tries to work both his body and his mind so that neither is over-used nor neglected.

I'd like to think of my mind and body as one. I think I probably spend a bit more time on my body than I do on my mind, which I think should probably be more the other way around or at least to equal terms. But because I don't have too many distractions as in children and I'm mature enough to be looking at these things I can spend a lot of time working on my body and working on spiritual and mental potential.

Pat believes he has developed an "overall package" and that through a lot of hard work and effort he has developed his mind and body to achieve many personal goals. He believes that completing the Hawaii Ironman was the pinnacle of his sporting achievements whilst developing his mind and being able to speak publicly about his sport is something he is proud to discuss. As Pat claimed, "I probably have more information in my field than many other people". When asked to briefly describe Pat stated:

Well I'm a fit, active, intellectually investigative sort of person, not entirely happy with myself but we are all continually looking for whatever is at the other end. I definitely go through the old mid life crisis bit, three times a week thinking whether you've done enough in your life and what else is there to do

and all that sort of stuff. So on a scale of 1 to 10 I would be seven as far as contentment is concerned. I will attempt to improve as far as I can and I'll keep looking for whatever the other three are.

The veneer of masculinity Pat displays is largely based on his status within the sport of triathlon. This is further enhanced when famous sporting identities meet him for the first time and turn the conversation away from themselves to begin questioning Pat.

A lot of them have this interest in triathlons and it gets down to them asking me questions. There still seems to be a lot of mystique around triathlons for many people and they still seem to think it's that ultimate fitness activity. I feel great when they ask me about Hawaii and so on. I mean, it's great for the self-esteem and the ego I guess. And a lot of these people are top level in what they're doing.... I see myself as equal to these athletes, not so much in performance wise now but in knowledge of my sport down to training technique and fitness.

Being recognised as a leader in the field of triathlon and having attained much experience and knowledge, Pat enjoys being the focal point to which triathletes direct their attention. His business places him in the ideal situation to foster this attention because of the increasing number of triathletes visiting his store each day either to buy goods, attain advice or use as a meeting place to commence training. Each Saturday, Pat leads a group of triathletes out on an early morning training ride which he has done for many years. He is seen as mentor to the younger triathletes while seasoned competitors hold him in high esteem thus elevating his reputation as a triathlete and further strengthening feelings of his own conditional self-worth. Additionally, novice triathletes strive to be recognised and acknowledged by him, thereby providing positive social reinforcement for both Pat and those seeking approval. Pat lives a life structured around self-gratification through others' acclaim.

**NAME:** Wayne

**AGE:** 22

**SPORT:** Triathlon

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Athletics (track), swimming, surf lifesaving

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single

Wayne is committed to the pleasurable things in life, and especially those that will benefit his future. The future plays a significant role in his decision-making. He has decided upon his chosen career and is subsequently taking steps towards achieving this goal by attending university and attaining the necessary qualifications. Wayne aspires to be a lawyer, although the degree is a combined course majoring in commerce and law, which he believes is the best combination of courses to attain a position in a law firm. He also aspires to achieving greater heights as an elite level triathlete. Consequently, Wayne is dedicated to his training regime, adhering to it rigidly, so as to achieve the balance of study and sport and ultimately fulfil his immediate and long term goals.

At 22, Wayne has been competing in triathlon for five years. He has a mature attitude to life despite living at home with his parents and having to rely on their financial support. His mature demeanour is reflected by a serious, yet easy going personality. It is also reflected by the way in which he methodically and purposefully approaches tasks to achieve his goals. Wayne admits to approaching a difficult period in his life, as soon he will have finished his university degree and no longer be financially supported by his parents. Therefore the decision to pursue a triathlon career further or begin a career in law rests heavily upon him. He understands the ramifications of the decision and therefore it will not be made in haste. In either case, Wayne will remain involved in triathlon even if it means placing further down in races than he is currently experiencing. Involvement as an



administrator within the sport of triathlon will continue because this is an integral part of his life.

Wayne had a stable upbringing as a child and continues to have a good relationship with his parents. His father is an engineer and his mother essentially looks after the home, although she now teaches swimming at an intellectually handicapped school as well. Wayne has lived the majority of his life in Western Australia, briefly living in Darwin until the time of Cyclone Tracy. He began swimming and athletics in primary school in the rural beach town of Mandurah approximately 80 kilometres from Perth and when the family moved to Perth he continued on with his sports at high school. Wayne has always lived at home and has no intentions of leaving before he graduates. He has few complaints about living with his parents and younger brother because they all have a good family relationship.

Living at home is fine. I couldn't cope doing triathlons and studying and also having to work to support renting somewhere I suppose. I don't feel any pressure to leave because I guess being part of university life nearly everybody is still living at home and I'm a year behind at university because I deferred, so everyone's a year younger. There's no pressure from that side and there's no pressure from my parents either. They've sort of accepted that it's pretty hard to survive when you're studying with no income. I mean, I've got no desire to move out of home.

Furthermore, Wayne is committed to a life of socially-respected moral standards as a result of his family upbringing. He believes strongly in helping others if his talents or skills are of use. For example, there was no hesitation in agreeing to be involved in this research, and he is known for the coaching assistance and valuable time spent on administrative aspects of triathlon. He has helped organise and marshal events despite having to forego racing himself. On one occasion at a sprint triathlon event, I set up my bicycle and race gear next to Wayne's. He was regarded as the favourite for the race but as I exited the bike compound to begin the cycle leg of the course following the completion of the swim, I noticed him directing athletes out onto the road. The race was organised and staged by his

triathlon club and extra marshals were required to halt traffic to assist the safety of the athletes. Wayne did not compete because he felt obliged to help out. Such occurrences are rare in triathlon.

Wayne's initial entry into the sport of triathlon came towards the end of high school. His primary reasons for involvement included his thoughts that he would be good at triathlon, as well as the inspiration provided by another triathlete who had attended the same school several years earlier. The triathlete, who is also involved in this research provided the inspiration and motivation for Wayne to participate in triathlons and ultimately succeed. His high school athletics' coach was also involved and this further enhanced his desire to succeed in the sport of triathlon. Fortunately, Wayne had a good grounding in two of the sports that constitute triathlon, those being swimming and athletics, and although never outstanding in them, when combined with cycling, he was exceptional.

I got into triathlon because I thought I'd be good at it. I had a background in running and swimming through high school and primary school and I'd gone through high school a few years behind David T., so I knew that he'd gone into the sport. It was probably the combination of knowing David and also my athletics' coach from school who was also involved in coaching David. It was an emerging sport and had just sort of started to get somewhat of a profile. I also wanted to learn how to ride a bike.

From the beginning of his triathlon career Wayne has been intrinsically motivated to train and compete at an intense level. After a recent state series event he admitted that his aim was to beat every male in the race because he already knew that he had the ability to defeat every female. This was not the case in the beginning, when his initial goal was to beat every woman in the event. He was concerned that women were defeating him in some races and made a concerted effort to rectify this problem. He claims that this was merely an exercise in goal setting and goal attainment because he knew that he would not beat all the men. That would occur later in his career.

That was probably my initial goal in triathlons, to beat all the women. That was the first thing that made me say, "I've got to do a little bit more training because I'm not going to get beaten by all the women". Perhaps it was to do with goals. I mean people set goals to beat people who are near them and I didn't really know a great number of people. I had a guy training with us who I was quite even with, so my goal was to beat him. In the State series races the women were also quite close to me and I guess it was a goal to beat them. They were something that I could aim at. I wasn't going to aim at all the men. I guess it was probably something to do with that power thing I had over women as well.

Wayne unfortunately inherited the part albino trait and as a consequence has impaired vision. This has not hampered him, although he sometimes finds it difficult to see the swim buoys during an event and is therefore forced to follow other competitors. His eye sight will continue to deteriorate, yet he does not seem too perturbed about this and has come to terms with the situation of ailing vision.

I like team sports but the problem is that most of them involve hand-eye coordination which is something I don't have because of my sight. I'm part albino and as part of that my sight is affected. I have about 30 to 35% sight. So I'm not too good at team sports but I do enjoy them. I quite enjoy playing things at a social level. It affects me in the swimming because sometimes it's pretty hard to see the buoy, especially if they're not using big ones or if it's really rough conditions or if you're having to look into the sun. So sometimes I have to resort to swimming behind people when I wouldn't necessarily if I had the option.

Wayne is friendly and easy going with many friends and admirers within the sport of triathlon. It provides his social base and so he is loath to give it up quickly. The friends at university are more like acquaintances and he does not regard these as close as the ones involved in triathlon. He enjoys the company of triathletes because he generally finds them to be an enthusiastic group of people with similar goals and sharing something in common.

I probably find the athletes I mix with are more an entertaining group than the non-athletes but that may be just because of the group of non-athletes that I mix with. Law students are notorious for their wild "out there" image, particularly the ones that I mix with. All through school I was sort of more with the "square" image. I don't know why it is, but I just sort of end up in that group of people when I'm in sort of an academic area. Whereas I guess in sport I get to mix with the people who don't fit that mould and I find that enjoyable. It's a

striking contrast. I mean a lot of the people who I have as friends from the sport are not necessarily good academically while some of the students have got exams in a week and a half and I'm probably going to get half a dozen "supps" and none of my friends will probably get lower than a credit.

The image of being a triathlete is important to Wayne. Having been regarded as a "square" most of his school life, he is finding that his personal image, according to others, is changing. He enjoys being perceived as different for competing in a sport that is regarded as gruelling and torturous and likes being associated with the sun, beach, and outdoor environment which are socially accepted as being a part of contemporary Australian culture. He is happiest living the life of a triathlete.

I find it's a very enjoyable sport and it's an enjoyable lifestyle. It's an image lifestyle. You're sort of out in the sun and you're out in the water and there's all the fluoro gear and things like that. But I think I just like living it. Just being a triathlete is probably the best thing. Even if I was injured and I could never compete at top level I think I would still do triathlons.

Wayne regards both training and racing as a site for socialising and developing lasting friendships with other athletes and enjoys the fact that he is a triathlete and that people know him as such. He understands the benefit of a good education and is proud of his academic achievements thus far, however at this point in his life he is more concerned with the way he is perceived as a triathlete. Wayne realises that his time at the top as an elite level triathlete is limited whereas he has the rest of his life to indulge in a career as a lawyer. He is therefore taking the opportunity to revel in his triathlon glory while it lasts. He enjoys being a part of the triathlon subculture and being one of the individuals that others aspire to be but does not flaunt his ability.

I guess lots of people will come up and say congratulations and so on but I don't like to be overly "out there" about winning. I'm probably reasonably modest as far as discussing with people how well I've done. I'll relate the discussion back to what was the race like for them. "How did you go?" and so on. I think I've always been essentially modest. I'm not out there to be like, "I'm a demi-God and you can all" you know, rah rah rah.

Importantly though, Wayne enjoys being involved in a sport that he is good at because "it's a lot more enjoyable to be doing well at a sport than to be doing badly at a sport". He thrives on the competition that the sport produces because he is able to put his body "on the line" and do the best he can. He is continually setting goals for himself in order to challenge his ability as a triathlete. Success as a consequence of intense competition is an additional bonus for Wayne. He argues that he would compete regardless of placings although "the additional perks and things are great as well". One of the main factors involved with success for Wayne is recognition. Typecast as a "square" at school, the recognition he receives through his triathlon success has had a positive impact upon his self-esteem.

Success is great. It's really enjoyable. You get the sense that everyone's looking at you and everyone is pleased that someone has won, and it's better that this someone who's won is you, rather than anyone else. Then you talk to people afterwards and everyone's really happy that you've won and people come up to you and talk and they'll ask you things and it's really good. I mean, I'm not sure that it's an additional level on top of placing very well although placing well sometimes has its benefits too. But winning is better.

One of the "perks" that comes along as a result of winning and being a success in triathlon is sponsorship and Wayne has several product sponsors who provide their product and clothing as opposed to financial sponsors who provide money. Financial sponsors are difficult to obtain in Western Australia. Wayne is a very obtrusive athlete as the tall frame combined with the albino traits of white hair and pale skin make him easily identifiable. People therefore notice the clothing he wears and the equipment he uses which is precisely what a product sponsor is seeking. Similarly his personable approach and educated speech make him a viable commodity for potential sponsors. Wayne believes that sponsors want someone who is likeable and personable and not someone who is just winning. Obviously if the athlete has both qualities then it's a bonus but a good image is far more important to Wayne.

I think they want your body because it is your body that gets you around the course and that's what people see. Therefore you're capable of promoting them. But it's no good having someone that's out there winning everything who is an absolutely appalling person that doesn't talk to anybody and is rude and obnoxious and cheats and so on. I think to that extent they sort of look for people that they think are going to have a good self-image and a good image to other people. So I think to that extent I am sponsored for who I am.

Wayne is excited to see how far he can push his body, whether it's riding downhill at 85 kilometres an hour in the wet, "hanging on for dear life", or the simple aspect of being able to go as fast as possible in a race, be that either four hours in duration or over half an hour. He says, "It's just seeing how fast your body can go and how much pain it can put itself through". According to Wayne, it is arguable that everyone enjoys the pain involved with triathlon up to certain point. He also claims that there are different types of pain ranging from the long, dull ache involved in a half Ironman race lasting four hours, to the sharp intense pain of a super sprint race lasting 45 minutes.

I think everyone probably enjoys pain up to a certain point. You can enjoy the pain probably during the swim and perhaps during the bike leg but by the time you get to half way through the run you're really starting to question why the heck you're out there and that probably carries on until the finish of the race. But I think after you've finished and you are feeling marginally better, you could probably look back on it as not being as bad as it was. It hurt a little bit but you know you got through it and there's another one coming up.

Wayne has had few lasting relationships with women and he lacks confidence in this area of his life. Although he often has women near by and talking to him at the end of events and at medal presentations, these women are usually in an official capacity or friends he has known for some time through the triathlon association. His personality appears to alter with the different facets of his life. He exudes confidence, almost to the point of arrogance where triathlon is concerned and is obviously comfortable in this environment, but is less confident with his law studies although he claims that he will successfully complete his degree with a credit rating average. In respect to women and relationships, Wayne is inhibited and has few

social skills. Consequently he lacks self-esteem and finds it difficult to attract women. He appears to have resigned himself to being single for some time to come.

I feel essentially content with myself but as a man I wish I could, well I would like to do a better job of attracting women. It would probably be good to have a girlfriend. Essentially, I'm not very good at it. I don't know. I'd quite enjoy having a girlfriend but I'm not sure if it's my lack of masculinity or some other social skill that I've not picked up along the way but I'm just not very good at it. I can talk to women fine as long as I'm not remotely interested in them.

Wayne has trouble dealing with the concepts of masculinity and femininity and deliberated for a long time in trying to find a suitable comment when asked about this issue. His struggle to come to terms with the issue is reflected in his challenge to understand his own masculinity. When asked what masculinity meant to him Wayne stated that "as an instant reaction I would probably say guys with big muscles" and his "instant reaction" to femininity was "someone who is stunningly good looking and it doesn't go a hell of a lot deeper than that". Wayne has a traditional stereotypical viewpoint of gender. As he claimed "I can picture it but I can't explain it". His perception of masculinity and femininity is based on visual images which is a common standpoint in Western culture. His notions have been established by the appearance-oriented society in which we live. Further evidence of visual imagery is his analysis of surf lifesavers. Wayne suggested that:

I think they've probably got a fairly similar image to triathletes. They have probably got a slightly more masculine image than triathletes because they've got the big upper body. You see them run and most triathletes just say, "You're shocking" because they've got these skinny little weeny legs attached to this body and I think a lot of people view them above triathletes in that regard. They've got biceps and pecs etcetera. But I think they're probably a pretty similar group to triathletes.

In terms of his own masculinity, Wayne does not maintain a positive self-image. He believes that "on a scale of least to most I think I probably sit below average". He is not happy with his physical appearance particularly his facial features claiming that he is "not so

flushed" with his face. As a result he partly blames this for his lack of female relationships because in his view, appearance counts towards one's masculinity. When asked to describe his ideal man and the qualities that he would possess, Wayne thought he should be "good looking, a sort of muscly guy as well as suave and sophisticated". Such a statement typifies Wayne's perception of masculinity and highlights the deficiencies he perceives with his own. Wayne argues that it is confusing for men to know how to treat women in contemporary culture and claims that some women want to be treated as equal yet others "want doors opened for them and dinner paid for". He appears upset that he has been brought up to be polite and courteous yet his actions are deemed inappropriate by some women. However he regards these behaviours as acts of courtesy and not inequality. Wayne is a firm believer in equality for men and women in society as well as in relationships. He has a traditionalist viewpoint that roles, within a male/female domestic relationship, need to be established in the household such as who will do the housework and who will earn the money. Similarly he believes that one parent should stay at home to attend to the children. The decision as to which parent that will be should be based on factors such as income, job security, job satisfaction, and personal desire. Wayne looks forward to the time when he is married because he has a very positive outlook on marriage. This is due to his parents successful relationship and the warmth and caring he has experienced growing up in a nurturing environment.

I look forward to the point in time when I get married. I guess my views on marriage are pretty positive. My parents have the occasional fight but that's pretty rare. No-one that I really know has got divorced or has had marriage problems so I guess I've got a pretty positive outlook on it. In a relationship I think men and women should treat each other as equal. They should be there to help each other out in whatever circumstances that are arising at the time. I think the only differences should be that I guess they'd have to relate to each other as to who is probably doing the housework and who is who is earning the income. I don't have any preconceived ideas as to who that should be in the marriage. The person who probably enjoys their job the most and perhaps earns the most money is probably the person who is most suitable to be out in the work force. When they've got kids I think one of them should be at home. They should both



treat each other equally and with respect. I don't think a little bit of healthy competition between the sexes is at all disadvantageous but it shouldn't go any further than that. I don't think there should be brutalisation of women or things like that. That shouldn't go on.

Relationships often break down as a result of a lack of communication or a failure to acknowledge each other's interests. Wayne is adamant that any potential partner will have to be involved in sport, or at least tolerant claiming that:

I think it would be an advantage, speaking from the relationships that I've seen with friends. People who are at least involved in sport, even if it's only at a social level, have a bit more understanding or tolerance to people who are sometimes viewed as obsessive in their training habits, even though they're spending 15-20 hours a week training and coming 100th in their competitions. I think to that extent it can be an advantage, but apart from that I'd like to think that they were into the fitness sort of element and provided they could tolerate and enjoy watching sport then that's alright.

Wayne likes people taking an interest in his sport and being watched. Part of the reason for wanting to win and be successful is to be the centre of attention at the end of the race. He thrives on that relatively short period of time between the end of the race and the completion of the awards presentation. This is his time in the spotlight when others want to be near him and be a part of his success. Still relatively young, and having worked his way to the top in triathlon, Wayne appreciates the accolades bestowed upon him.

It's really enjoyable. It's really great. There are so many people who are looking at you and they come up to you and say "Good on you" and "Well done" and that sort of thing. When you talk to people about the race afterwards, everyone seems happy that you've done well. People want to come up to you and talk to you and ask you questions and things like that. It's really good. As I said before, placing high up sometimes has its benefits, but winning is the ultimate.

The foreseeable problem that Wayne may have to confront is not winning. If he happens to injure himself or loses form or comes up against more talented opposition, winning might not occur as frequently. Unlike team sports, such as football where players

can live off their past accomplishments for years, triathletes must keep proving themselves every few weeks otherwise their ability is questioned. Triathlon, as a sport, is in its infancy and there are few "legends" that can be cited and used as bench marks. Therefore budding triathletes often feel as though they have to make their mark in the sport to be recognised. The pressure to perform well on a consistent basis is strong particularly for a man like Wayne who needs the support of the *crowd* to help him establish a positive self-image and ultimately a positive self-esteem.

At present Wayne's sporting endeavours are assisting his feelings of self-worth. He feels positive about his sporting prowess, even though he is not positive about his appearance. Claiming that triathlon is the only part of his life in which he feels superior to most individuals, Wayne displays confidence where triathlon is concerned because he knows that he is an accomplished athlete. The unfortunate dilemma confronting Wayne is that he generally acquires this confidence in the presence of other triathletes such as in training, at races and at social functions, although at the latter his self-assurance is compromised because he is forced to act differently to the way he does when training and competing. Lacking social skills, particularly when the conversation is not centred on triathlon, Wayne occasionally feels uneasy at these gatherings. It is still a friendly environment but it is not one in which his physical talents are promoted. Therefore the environment does not reinforce positive elements of his masculinity, rather it is likely to reinforce negative ones.

Wayne does feel inferior to other triathletes when asked whether he has competed in the Hawaii Ironman triathlon. Regarded as the most gruelling of races, it is perceived as the ultimate test of endurance and triathletes completing the race in under 10 hours generally receive high praise and recognition. Jokingly, he suggests that he will not do an ironman "until he is old and stupid" but this is an attempt to highlight the difficulty of the race and play down his desire to compete in such an event. Wayne longs to compete in Hawaii to attain the prestige that is associated with the event. Unfortunately he must compete in

another ironman length event, in the same year, to qualify for one of the limited places available. Having to qualify in an ironman event does not enthuse Wayne, but finishing the Hawaii Ironman and accepting the resultant glory does.

I've always said that I'm not doing an ironman until I get old and stupid. Why? I don't know. I guess that's probably part of the triathlon culture. Everyone wants to do Hawaii and I guess that involves you having to do an ironman. I'm sure if there was a race that had the prestige of Hawaii without it being an ironman then everyone would probably be much happier. I want to do Hawaii but it would be much better if you could qualify without having to do an ironman and just go over to Hawaii and race. I guess it's sort of like the "holy grail" of triathlons. You talk to people who are not triathletes and you say you're a triathlete and the one thing they instantly associate with triathlons is "Have you done Hawaii?" And you say "No" and they sort of look upon you as perhaps not really being a triathlete because you haven't done Hawaii.

Feelings of inferiority will be harboured by Wayne if he does not compete in, and finish, the Hawaii Ironman. Already he is trying to justify his reasons for not having completed it yet, even at his comparatively young age for an ultra-distance triathlete. In spite of these justifications, Wayne desires to be regarded as an Hawaii Ironman finisher to further qualify his status as a triathlete and assist in the construction of his masculine self-image.

I guess it doesn't really bother me. You just accept the fact that they don't really know a great deal about the sport and the fact that there are so few people who have really done Hawaii. In WA there are probably only a couple of dozen people out of nearly a thousand triathletes who have competed in Hawaii so there are not many.

Despite his claims for equality and statements that he would like to see more women involved in triathlon, Wayne argues that women should not receive the same amount of prize money as men in terms of depth of payment. He suggests that the top five men and five women should receive the same amount, but since significantly more men enter these events, payment should continue for the first ten men. One might argue it is a pragmatic approach to equality, although at a glance, such a statement displays inequities.

As far as first placed women and first placed men are concerned I think they should receive the same. There's no-one to say that the top women aren't completely as talented as the top men. I think the way that triathlon allocates their prize money is fair. I don't think that they deserve the depth of prize money, but that's purely on the basis that there aren't as many competitors. If there were as many women competing then I think they deserve the same depth of prize money. In triathlon we give the top ten men prize money and the top five women but first to fifth is the same, that is the fifth guy wins the same amount as the fifth girl.

Wayne has a good relationship with most other triathletes, as well as athletes from other sports. There tends to be a certain bond between elite level athletes which is even more prominent with sports of a similar nature such as surf lifesaving, endurance running, swimming, cycling and other multi-sport endurance events. Wayne holds a high opinion of triathletes in general and claims that they are "not a shy group by any means". He enjoys the company of triathletes because they are a friendly group and they are "out there". Similarly, he holds surf lifesavers in high esteem and argues that they have a similar persona to triathletes. Interestingly he believes that surf lifesavers appear to have a slightly more masculine image than triathletes because of their larger upper body. Despite bodybuilders having huge upper bodies, Wayne believes that they have a poor image, and one they may not deserve. However, he argues that bodybuilding cannot legitimately be called a sport, claiming that "It is more to do with body improvement than sport. In fact I would call it more a competition than perhaps a sport".

At this point in Wayne's triathlon career he cannot envisage himself competing in another sport. He enjoys everything related with triathlon and is a staunch supporter of the Western Australian Triathlon Association being involved with triathlon at the administrative level. It almost appears he is indebted to the sport for making him a popular, well known individual. Triathlon has enabled Wayne to break away from the "square" image that was once bestowed upon him, to become the "cool" guy known as "Wazza". In the future should Wayne decide to concentrate on his career as a lawyer he claims that he will still train and

compete. Basically it will be a scaled down version of what he is doing at present and he may just concentrate on the sprint races as these require less training to perform.

At this stage I believe I will compete in this sport indefinitely. I can't see that there's anything else I would prefer to do and while I've still got time to train and compete at it then, I would say, forever. If I ran out of time, then I would probably have to scale it down to sort of social competitions and short races because they don't require so much time. But as a competitive sport, there's nothing else I would rather do.

Wayne has a positive opinion of himself as an individual and athlete, although he lacks self-esteem in terms of his perceived masculinity and his physical appearance. He questions his masculinity, on occasions, where women are concerned. However, his individualistic attitude and nonconformist approach to life display characteristics that people would describe as masculine qualities. He is content with his life and looks forward to the future. The triathlon subculture is important to him, vital to feelings associated with his self-worth and he intends remaining within it for as long as possible.

## Summary

The four elite level triathletes are all highly competitive men, agreeing that competition is the essence of triathlon. However, training provides the basis upon which their competitive outcome is determined. Therefore, training is perceived to be an essential element of triathlon for these men if they want to be successful at their sport. They each claim to enjoy training for reasons other than developing physiological gains, which include social aspects, feelings of self-worth and the construction of positive self-concept. The lives of these men revolve around triathlon and the people within the triathlon subculture. Therefore the convenience of socialising with other triathletes is understandable considering

the long hours spent training together which, in turn, effectively reduces the time available to socialise elsewhere. Holding common interests is also a major consideration in terms of socialising which often results in triathletes keeping to themselves because "outsiders", not involved in the subculture, can find difficulty in understanding the lifestyles of triathletes.

Noteworthy was each man having attempted a number of sports before settling on triathlon as "their" sport to pursue. The ones they previously excelled in contained running or swimming or a combination of both. However, the men all decided to relinquish their high status in these sports to begin another that was still in its formative stages compared to athletics, swimming and surf lifesaving, in which they had been involved. Triathlon appeared to offer a new challenge whilst providing air of mystique due to its uniqueness and unknown qualities. With it came the social perception of being the ultimate gruelling sport as well as being extremely masculine in orientation. It appears these men feel the need to prove their masculinity by involving themselves in such a sport. However, it is contentious as to whom it is they are attempting to prove it - themselves, fathers, partners.

Fathers are important to these men and proving one's masculinity to them is paramount. Recognition for masculine acts, such as achievements through masculinised sports, is highly sought after because the athletes originally believed this to be the most appropriate way of receiving masculine approval. In most cases they did not, and therefore had to make the decision to stay involved in triathlon without the total support of their father. They could only hope that making an individual decision to commit themselves to a sport would be perceived by their fathers as a masculine act.

The men are all individually-oriented which is consistent with the nature of triathlon. They do care about others' perceptions but not so much as to abstain from the sport. They do not have the most positive of body images yet they are more concerned with competing and being successful rather than "looking good" and pandering to societal ideals of appropriate body images. Further evidence of individuality is evidenced by their

relationships with women. Two of the men are divorced, another is about to be married and has grave reservations, whilst another is rarely involved with women or relationships of any sort. The men enjoy their privacy and independence which seem to be stifled within relationships. The men are competitive, strong willed and determined to fulfil their goals. However, they must first clearly establish these goals in their minds which, it appears, they have yet to do.

A factor that was common amongst each of the triathletes was their conflict with time commitments. They each struggle to come to terms with their lack of available time that is divided between an intrinsic desire to train and the necessity of having to work, construct a business or attend university. The time conflict ultimately produces a form of frustration wherein these men constantly face the unenviable task of having to juggle the hours according to what they want to do with what they know they have to do to exist as a functioning member of Western society.

## CHAPTER 6

### The Surf Lifesavers

The four surf lifesavers involved in this research are elite level sportsmen as well as community-based beach patrol volunteers. Such is the sport of surf lifesaving, steeped in history and tradition, that its elite competitors must volunteer their services, like other club members, to patrol the beaches for a designated number of hours each summer. This chapter explores the masculine issues surrounding the lives of these four men in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding as to why they are so heavily involved in surf lifesaving both as a competitive sport and a community activity. The objective is to describe their lives in some detail in an attempt to bring forth the main concepts of masculinity arising from the interviews and observations which should provide insight to account for their surf lifesaving involvement. Analyses will occur at the individual level and interpreted collectively as a group.

The oldest surf lifesaver is 34, the youngest is 19 whilst the other two men are aged in their early 20s. Three of the men have competed nationally and the other has competed at state level. All have won state titles in various surf lifesaving disciplines. The youngest man is currently involved in the primary televised national surf lifesaving series and has strong aspirations to make the sport a career. One of the other younger men is in the process of moving to the Sunshine Coast in Queensland to seek more suitable training conditions and a higher standard of competition to assist him in reaching his full sporting potential. He will give himself a year to decide whether the move north has been beneficial and will remain there if marked improvement is noticed. Conversely, minimal progress will warrant a return to Perth.



None of the men are married nor is any involved in de facto relationships. Two have steady girlfriends while the other two are involved in "part-time" relationships. Only the oldest man of the group has contemplated marriage, being engaged and then separating a month before the due wedding date. Surf lifesaving is all important to these men and consequently they have lived close to the coast most of their lives. Two of the athletes are attempting to pursue the sport professionally at the moment while studying part-time. Another is a full-time student and the oldest, who has been a professional surf lifesaver, is now witnessing his building business thrive while still having the capacity to train every day for the sport that is a part of his life.

**NAME:** Mike

**AGE:** 34

**SPORT:** Surf lifesaving

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Swimming, surfing, triathlon, kayaking

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single

Claims that Mike "grew into the sport of surf lifesaving from an early age" are consistent with the life he has led thus far and the one in which he leads now. Surf lifesaving has recently taken a less significant role as he has established a solid foundation on which to develop a building business. However, involvement in the sport, the club scene and the entire surf lifesaving subculture have become ingrained, such that these domains represent important elements of his being. First becoming a member of a surf lifesaving club at the age of nine, and now 34, he has seen 25 years of training, competition, beach patrol and club activities. There are no regrets and he looks forward to future involvement both as an elite competitor and as a coach to emerging juniors. Mike's parents were heavily involved in surf lifesaving and therefore it seemed a "natural" sport with which to become associated.

I didn't really choose it. It was just there and I grew into surf lifesaving, but I stayed involved because it's such a great outdoor sport. It's very good for you, your family's involved and it keeps you fit in the sun. It's great.

It is this holistic, family-oriented appeal of surf lifesaving that attracts many of the participants and most certainly the long time devotees such as Mike. Having parents who were encouraging, yet not overpowering, was the essence to his surf lifesaving involvement claims Mike. His father, who is held in high esteem, is described as follows:

He never pushed. It was never like the alarm went off in the morning and he would drag you out of bed. The alarm would go off and if I'm not up he would

just check on me and say "You're not going swimming?" And I'd say "No I'm just bugged" or something which, you know, didn't happen too many times, but he would never drag me out and he would never push me or anything, you know. It was all done by myself, and he was there just to help and he never overdid it in the sports' situation. When I got home it wasn't always sport talk either, it was other stuff too.

Mike has immense respect for his father because of the way he and his two brothers and sister were raised. They grew up in a lower middle class environment as a consequence of his parents' employment status. With his father a butcher and mother taking care of the home and looking after the children, income was not high, yet the children were rarely deprived. Their basic upbringing, combined with having essential requirements met, resulted in contentment. However, despite uncertainty surrounding professional sports, it was Mike's father who encouraged him to pursue sport as a career. He was grateful for this complete support and further patriarchal respect was established as a consequence. It was surf board riding that Mike's father was more inclined to guide him towards rather than surf lifesaving because more money was involved in board riding at that stage and this could create a more lucrative career. Despite having the talent to make a career out of surfboard riding Mike felt less passion towards the sport compared to surf lifesaving even though they are perceived as being closely associated because of the mutual environment. There are however, many differences between the two sports which are both obvious and subtle, but for Mike, surfboard riding was a form of relaxation not a potential career.

He wasn't keen but he said "It's an option you should look at", because he could see the potential in board riding and he could see potential in me. I think he knew I was going hard at it in surf lifesaving and doing a lot of training, whereas surfboard riding was more relaxing and he thought it might have been better for me in the long run instead of all the gruelling miles and being out there on your own and stuff. And you know, my parents had moved down south and just living down there appealed to him and he thought it would appeal to me too. So it was more like, you know, surf hard for a year and see if you can get yourself into a good situation with board riding. He just sort of threw me the option more than anything. Dad did a lot of sports as well and in his day there was no money in sports. He could foresee that at my early age there would be money in sport and that, where money might be an issue, he may have thought

that I could have pursued board riding and got to a higher level than I could in surf lifesaving. He was probably correct, but I wasn't quite in it for the money.

Mike has been in the "building game" throughout the duration of his adult sporting career, although unlike earlier years there is now a substantial time commitment to establish a business. Previously, building was a method of making "good money" without a firm work commitment. "It allowed me to get in and out of work whenever I wanted throughout my sporting days". Mike has reached a point in his life where it is necessary to establish himself financially in a career other than surf lifesaving. Sport was not providing enough money to justify the time involvement nor was it providing financial security for the future. The decision to reduce sporting involvement was not made in haste and as a consequence a plan of action was established.

Okay, the decision was made when I personally believed I was content and happy with my sporting career. It's not that I didn't need to achieve any more, but I had my run and, at the time of my life, I thought it was time for me to start thinking about my career before I fell behind the eight ball. I mean, we live in a working society. So, I was sport orientated when I was learning the building game, but after my education, I still pursued a few sporting achievements and then I wrapped it up. I haven't fallen away from sport but I've wrapped it up on a national level and it's time for my work to become more of a dominant factor. "Why?" Because, you know, it's your future. At the age of 60 it's not going to be a "breadwinner" unless you're a mega-star. But again, I wasn't in the sport for money. I just feel it was that time of my life where I had to start going in the other direction. If I was making \$100,000 a year or if I was making a substantial wage out of it and I could see a career after sport as in flowing into media as a sports personality, sure. That would be the ultimate style of life. I'd quite possibly enjoy it more than building.

With more lucrative financial remuneration Mike is likely to have made surf lifesaving a career choice. His endearing love for the sport and dedication to training would have made this an easy option had the rewards been more substantial. Desire to train is common amongst athletes striving to attain elite status. Rarely experiencing a lack of training motivation as a result of intense intrinsic competitive drive, Mike describes the exhilaration experienced following a heavy training session.

I always remember after having a really big hit out. I think it's one of the greatest feelings. When you're super-fit and you go hard at it and you've had a big hit out. One of the greatest feelings is just collapsing and feeling your body rest. All the little things just activating in your body in a recovery mode, you can actually feel them go through the body and it's just one of the best feelings. If you're just lying there for half an hour drinking a glass of water on your bed and just letting that happen, I think that's one of the greatest feelings.

At 34 and still single Mike has been too preoccupied with sport, and now his business, to contemplate marriage. There is an underpinning notion of selfishness in his attitude towards relationships despite "always having a girlfriend" and being involved in "long term relationships". Mike was engaged to be married for a year and a half however, as a consequence of his surf lifesaving involvement, which included training and club activities, his fiancée was not prepared to be the second most important aspect of his life. He claimed:

I told her all along that there was going to be some involvement and I thought she could swallow that. A month before the wedding she decided she wanted out and we called it quits. I don't believe it was a sacrifice, I think it just wasn't there you know. If you have got to sacrifice things like that then the relationship's not there.

The word "marriage" immediately conjures thoughts of children for Mike. Further, the thought of children is instantly equated with responsibility and a reduction of available free time. At this point in life Mike is not enthused about the prospect of children mainly because of the desire to securely establish his business before embarking upon fatherhood. Also, the urge for sporting success has yet to entirely diminish which is evidenced by his outstanding win in the state's premier white water competition last year. He stunned many spectators by winning this event but did not surprise himself knowing his own tenacity and competitive will. Such a momentous victory is difficult to let go knowing there is still the capacity to win major events at the age of 34. Physiologically he is aware that his body is only capable of producing such physical feats for several more years. Therefore the hardship in having to

relinquish being the best in exchange for marriage and raising a family is a perplexing decision but one that must be faced in the near future.

I've always held off on marriage due to the fact that I wasn't having kids. I knew I wasn't having kids until a little bit later. I believe, I guess in the back of my mind I don't sort of want them. I've always had a girlfriend but I haven't had a lot of girlfriends. I don't you know, go out chasing one night stands or whatever, but I've always had a girlfriend. A girlfriend for nine years and then another one for a year and now one for two years, and you know, the odd one between that. And marriage has always been a big decision to me and I've never leapt into it. I've never lived with a woman. I think that can be left until marriage. And I think marriage is when you really want to settle down and create a family more than anything, not just marrying a woman. If you just want to live with a woman then move in together and live with a woman. But if you want to create a family then, with your woman, you move in together and get married.

The selfish attitude of Mike is maintained beyond surf lifesaving and sporting involvement. Even within relationships he suggests that people should sort out their own problems and not rely on partners to assist. His concept of a relationship does not appear to be based on unity, rather it seems analogous to a business partnership considering the detached emotional involvement.

If my girlfriend's got some problems I generally like to get her to sort them out herself rather than cry on my shoulder and try to get me to assist. She's still a human just as much as I am and I tend to sort all my problems out myself. I don't like bringing other people into my problems so I generally try to get my girlfriend to do the same thing. So when something happens and it looks like she needs some sympathy I think twice about jumping straight in there unless it's getting to a stage where, okay, she may need a little bit of sympathy. But I'm not the first guy to jump in and for her sympathy. I think at times she's not so much disappointed, she's probably angry at me more than anything for not assisting her, but I know it's doing her more good you know. She's growing up and getting the experience of handling things herself you know. I'm not always going to be there and there might be a day when I'm down the road or at the pub or something, or out training and something happens. She's better off learning how to handle it herself.

Attitudes displaying such emotional inattention have typified Australian masculinity and despite greater awareness and the subtle changes taking place masculine identity in

Australia remains devoid of emotional consideration. Similarly masculine attitudes towards women in sport have become more positive, yet there is still an underpinning notion of male dominance which is immediately threatened when women defeat men in male-oriented sports. Mike emphasises this notion perfectly.

I don't think there was any given day when I was at my optimum that a woman's beaten me, so when they have beaten me it's been when I'm not 100 percent. So, I've always said "Well that's fair enough" and I've always given credit to them you know. It's always a big thing for a woman to beat a man but there were days when Jenny D. "knocked" me off in some swimming races and I think it just gets you back into training a bit harder, but at the time I may not have wanted to train hard. I mean, my mates would always have a "dig" at me and I remember a triathlon down in Esperance somewhere and Sue C. actually stayed with me the whole swim leg. I mean, I wasn't in good shape but all the way back home they're giving me a hard time. But I played along with it and it was fine. I mean, that's credit to Sue for being right up there. But in the back of my mind I knew on any given day I could take her on if I wanted to you know. I can beat her. But I don't believe I'm beaten when I'm not 100 percent.

Furthermore, in relation to women, a point of conjecture Mike is adamant about is the issue dealing with equal prize money. He is firm in his convictions that women should receive the same amount of money but only "when the standard is the same as men, there are the same number of competitors as in the men's race and the media exposure is the same". The comments are blatantly discriminatory but he is unwavering and appears proud of his resolutions. The suggestion that women should receive equal prize money for sporting performances not matching the level of achievement attained by men is perceived as discrimination towards men. When performances by men are faster, longer and higher compared to women's results then Mike believes men should be rewarded more financially in terms of both prize money and sponsorship.

I think they should get equal prize money to the equal amount of mileage they put in to the event. I mean, I believe women's libbers really mucked up. I think male and female women's libbers have really torn things apart. I mean, women aren't equal to men. It's as simple as that. But if they are putting the same amount of mileage into something as a man with the same amount of media, same amount of competitors sure, give them the same prize money. If

somebody wants to sponsor them the same amount, if someone wanted to sponsor them more, sure. But if you've got 20 women in a race and there's 150 men and the main media is on the men's race running over the line I mean, women have just got to take that little back step. I mean, surely they've got to appreciate that the public are there to watch Trevor Hendy run over the line at the Coolangatta Gold not Carla Gilbert do the same thing and come across the line four hours later you know. So, I think it's got to be weighed up to a certain degree and I think there's too much women's lib organisations running around trying to make equal status. I know that's a personal point of view but it's just mucking things up.

Not surprising is Mike's negative opinion of feminists who are perceived as women who do not conform to the traditional Western sex role stereotype he has been socialised to expect. Coming from a family where the father was the "breadwinner" and mother was the "home maker" it is his view that a woman's role is to look after the man, the children and the house. Feminists are a threat to this structure and thus produce a destabilising effect upon traditional masculine and feminine roles.

Well I think if they want to get down there and start chopping some wood and changing the oil in the car and doing stuff like that then they can sort it out with the person they're with. But from an overall perspective there are still women out there who like to do the household duties, like being in the kitchen, like to make the bed, and like to live in that style like my mum's style, and it works so efficiently. You'll see a lot more marriages working better that way. But if there's a lady out there that wants to change the oil instead of doing the dishes she should sort it out with her partner not preach it against the rest of the world.

A typical masculine stance is taken by Mike towards lesbians and gays in first distancing himself completely from lesbians stating "each and everyone to themselves". Gays however, evoked a more hostile response.

As long as they're not trying to do a line on me they can have it. As long as they're not performing in the streets and jumping up and down in these gay Mardi Gras they can just keep it to themselves that's fine. I don't have to go having sex on the streets with my girlfriend so they don't go having sex on the streets with their boyfriends, that's fine.



The homophobic response is again regarded as a defence mechanism in proving Mike's own masculinity while promoting his heterosexuality. Not only are gay men a threat to individual masculinity but they are also a threat to the stability of established traditional Western masculinised ideals. The more that gay men are accepted as a legitimate form of masculine identity, the more doubt will be cast over one's gender preference. That is, it is difficult to know whether a man is gay or not simply by "looking at him" which prompts heterosexual men to prove their masculine identity. The most efficient way of doing so is by eliminating the option of being gay. Therefore it is believed the denigration of gay men serves to emphasise their masculinity.

"Looking" masculine is important to men because it helps in providing proof of their masculinity to others. Although maintaining a positive self-image, Mike is not overly enthusiastic about the way his body appears because of his short legs and stature. He claims to have "learned to accustom" himself to the negative aspects of his physical limitations but realises there are advantages as well. For example, as a consequence of having short legs he claims "I couldn't quite get the stride long enough to go well in the surf" whereas in triathlons "I have actually outrun people". Although critical of his physique, Mike is happy with the manner in which his body performs, particularly with his physical structure not being ideally suited to the sport of surf lifesaving. He best describes this attitude by stating that "I've done well with what I've got and what I've got I've always used".

Unknowingly Mike takes care of his body despite believing otherwise. Being raised in a family that concerned themselves with good nutrition and hygiene he has carried on these practices with little conscious attention. Body care is perceived more in terms of expensive creams and lotions, which he never uses, and is regarded as a feminine pastime. Consequently a feeling of masculine pride is established through minimal attention to bodily needs. It seems there is an inverse relationship whereby less attention paid to the body equates to a more masculine perception. He suggests that "on the outside from a painting

point of view it doesn't really worry me". Conversely, it is argued "I will always keep fit because I like to feel good on the inside". The basic approach taken to looking after his body does not emphasise a desire to use illegal performance-enhancing drugs. He is damning in his appraisal of drug users, particularly bodybuilders where drug use is reported to be rife.

You know, you'll read a lot about steroids and stuff and you'll see these guys are a huge size and I think it's quite incredible how they get so big, and I'm sure they're lifting some heavy weights. But if they're taking substances to get to that stage, just to get big and strong and show off their muscles, I mean, it's a sport of its own. If they were doing it naturally, I think it's great. It's a fine sport because it's healthy and it's active. But if they're using substances, and it sounds like they are, then it's probably common knowledge that they're using steroids to win titles and so forth. Then I don't think it's a sport. If I know there's a bodybuilder that's using steroids and he's just getting bigger and bigger, I don't think I'd have much time for him. I don't know if I'd lose respect because that's a pretty hard word, but I don't think I'd have much time for him. I'd just go "Okay, just go in your little corner and pump your iron, chew on your tablets and kill yourself". I'd say "Just go do it". They're not affecting me and I'm not affecting them you know. If it was a guy who was just pumping iron and not taking anything and was getting bigger and bigger and he likes the look of himself, well that's for him and he can keep doing that. I mean, I would have more respect for him than someone chewing tablets.

His opinion of other drug use in society is direct arguing simply that "if it's illegal then they shouldn't be using it". Cigarettes are also frowned upon because of their potential lethal hazards, yet alcohol is accepted. Such is the subculture of surf lifesaving that alcohol is involved in almost all social functions. As a result of its family orientation, young children in surf clubs witness parents and adults consuming alcohol in close proximity and it is therefore perceived as a normal function of adult society.

Alcohol in moderation is good and if you want to hit hard on it, as long as you're not affecting the society, sure. I think it needs to be controlled and I think that alcohol is being controlled to a certain degree with light beers and so forth. I mean everyone likes a beer.

Competition is the essence of surf lifesaving as a sport for Mike. Accordingly competition is seen as "a test to gauge yourself on" as well as "something to train towards".

But more than that, competition "is all to do with getting out there and pitting your body against others". This man thrives on matching himself against others. Personal best times are important yet it is the tactics involved in racing that appeals. Consequently, relinquishing the possibility of attaining a personal best time in order to win a race and gaining the satisfaction of defeating others is his primary goal. Although being an elite performer and understanding the nature of surf lifesaving there are going to be days when winning is impossible. There is always the possibility of craft damage or luck with wave selection but as long as he prepared properly and raced as hard as possible then there is little that could have changed the course of events.

I love competing. I love being man on man in a situation where it comes right down to the line, where it's virtually mind games. I think that's where the majority of races are won in the end. It's not by the guy with the biggest legs or the strongest body, it's the guy that's toughed it out the longest in the mind. So the biggest thing I like getting out of a race is knowing that I've pushed myself to what I know I can do and achieve. And at the end of the day whether I come first, second or third, if I know I've prepared myself and I'm at that 100 percent fitness level and everything's gone quite well through the race I'm happy. If I have some battles with people and they may have broken me, or not broken me, but they may have run away from me or swam away from me, I know mentally I've just pushed myself through those barriers that are required. I mean, at the end of the day I'm going to sit down after that race and feel good. It's a good feeling.

Motivation to succeed is primarily intrinsic for Mike. The account described is not only a personal recollection of the meaning of competition but it also helps define his meaning of success. Financial rewards have never been important motivators nor have they determined his level of success. Poignantly Mike states "My success has never been gauged on the money I've earned out of sport or my income from sport". Further he claims that:

I've earned a lot of money out of sport but I've never relied on that. I've always had work and I knew that the rest of my life wouldn't depend on my sporting money. So success to me was nothing financial. It was just more personal satisfaction and what I've achieved.

Mike is philosophical about winning and success. He talks more in terms of sacrifices, and physical and mental preparation than the extrinsic rewards often associated with them. However there are claims "You can bath in some glory when you pass the post first because not everybody will be able to do that". Additionally he states that "only five percent of the population of the world" have achieved such sporting heights "so it's a great feeling and it's hard to explain". Although claiming not to seek extrinsic rewards Mike is similar to most athletes in wanting to be recognised for outstanding sporting achievements. Masculine self-image is positively reinforced when people unexpectedly approach as a result of his sporting ability. He exclaims "I love people to know me. I mean, I love being known".

Mike believes he is not the type of person to exploit recognition received through sporting success. Rather, being recognised has made him work harder in attempting to promote surf lifesaving. Being known as a top competitor with many admirers, and having access to regular media coverage allows him to reach new audiences to espouse the benefits of surf lifesaving. Therefore Mike often spends time with juniors as a coach and mentor, together with other development programs to assist the functioning of the Western Australian surf lifesaving association. He also maintains that having an outgoing, friendly personality commands attention and encourages people to want to listen. It is not surprising that these qualities have been noticed by sponsors which is why financial assistance has been offered, and accepted, on numerous occasions. In terms of physical attractiveness he claims "I'm not a tall, exceptionally good looking person. I'm not a Guy Leech but I've got an outgoing personality and I'm good with a lot of people". Therefore sponsorship, he contends, is based on factors other than appearance, to which he is an example.

Despite being short, and not "exceptionally good looking", Mike still has a positive self-image. So strong is this perception that he regards himself as the *ideal* man. He explains:

Well, you could basically put down your ideal man as probably your idol really. When you look at it I mean, there's always someone there you'd like to be and I guess if you had a second chance in the world you'd ask if you could have those longer legs and bigger chest or stronger arms. But that dream is always there. I like to think I make good with what I've got and the ideal man is myself. I mean, I'm happy with what I've done, so for me to explain the ideal man I think it's something that you've created for yourself.

Discourse surrounding Mike's *ideal* man is visually-oriented and focuses on possession of physical aspects of the body. In like manner, discussion relating to his perception of the *ideal* woman is underpinned by possession of physical components. However, it is not entirely visually defined because there is an inference to the importance of personality. It is significant to note the possessive undertones when describing such a woman. This suggests the *ideal* woman is perceived as the one most suited to *his* needs.

Well, I mean, I've always liked to have a girlfriend that is active and outgoing and I think the personality of a woman is probably the most critical thing for me. A woman that has got personality where she can meet and be introduced to people and get along very well and be a likeable person amongst all your friends. Certainly, having a girl with a nice tidy figure and everything is always something you'd like but doesn't often happen. It's very hard to get the two together, personality and looks, but I'm sure eventually you end up with a woman that's somewhere around that.

Mike has a confused view of masculinity and finds difficulty in expressing its meaning, although it is clear appearance counts for much of the perception often referring to size of muscles and men making their bodies larger for public display.

All through my childhood days I was a little bit shy of my masculinity. I always remember being a little bit conscious of myself being a swimmer at Tuat Hill where I was always in good shape and quite strong and so forth. But I never flaunted it like a lot of people do these days. I always had a jumper on or at least a T-shirt. I never wore a tank top when I was a kid and I still don't do it really. I don't think it's necessary to flaunt your body. I'm not there for that. I'm there for more of the personal reasons. I'm you know, achieving things. Masculinity to me is flaunting your body and I've never been into that. I mean, even when I'm down at the surf club and I'm doing weights and you know, they've got mirrors up there, I feel bad about looking in the mirror while I'm doing weights. Whereas most people are quite happy to look at themselves lift weights and that.

And that's to them I mean, I don't feel bad against them or anything it's just that's the way I like to do it. They're there to make their bodies bigger when really I've never wanted to make my body bigger. I just want to make it faster and stronger, within itself. Masculinity is size of the body and so forth and it's never been an issue with me.

Mike immediately displays homophobic reactions towards the term femininity by stating "It means gay to me I guess (laughs)". Further it is argued he has "never had to deal with it". Femininity in relation to women is a difficult concept to grasp and is consequently discussed in terms of what *is not* feminine rather than define what feminine *is*. Accordingly a woman that is "butch" or "wears footy boots and starts playing footy in the local footy side" is not feminine. Difficulties arise when femininity needs to be described due to the lack of understanding.

Socialising is a major element within the surf lifesaving subculture. Using the club rooms as a base, social gatherings take place most weeknights after training and on weekends following events. They usually take the form of "having a social drink" although occasionally they are specific organised events. Mike enjoys this aspect of the subculture but it is not his sole socialising location. He states that "I socialise with everyone. I probably socialise more with athletes but being in the building business there's a lot of non-athletes and I socialise with them as well, like having a beer after work".

A good deal of Mike's life revolves around surf lifesaving and its subculture therefore it is not surprising that his current girlfriend is involved in surf lifesaving while it is believed his future wife must also be at least tolerant and supportive of his surf lifesaving involvement.

She'd have to support. If I was to take on a big race I'd like to see the support from her, and that support doesn't have to be like picking up my bag or something. Just knowing that I'm doing it and that there will be times when I'm tired and I don't want to go out. She's got to be able to say "Okay if you're tired and you've got a big training session the next day, that's no problem". She's got to be able to give that sort of support.

Similarly, Mike believes there must be mutual respect in a relationship and as such support must be provided for his partner's interests as well. His attitude has been based on years of watching the relationship between his parents and although he talks in terms of respect, much of his parents' relationship is structured around patriarchal values. In keeping with this traditional perception Mike believes a man has a role to play in society as an actor would in a theatre production.

My father always used to say "You know, you can always tell me anything, or call me anything but don't you ever treat your mother with no respect". My mum and dad, you could always see, had the same amount of respect for each other, and I think that's just got to be maintained. I'm a person where I think a man should have a certain amount of gentleman characteristics about him, like I'll open a door for a lady. I'll assist any lady and if I see her struggling with the shopping or something, I'm always the first person to assist. I think that's part of the man act, or men act in society. I think as long as the female has got the respect for that, that's like the way I'd like to see it and that's the way I sort of play with it. Well not play with it, the way I go about it.

Mike is happy with his life thus far. The sporting achievements and building business have given him cause for pleasure and having attained degrees of success in both Mike argues that he feels no different to other men. He claims:

I always maintain myself on an equal basis. I don't think I'm ever any better but I believe I may have achieved more things than other people. And that's my own personal achievement. I don't think I'm any better, greater or smaller. I know in my own mind I have achieved a lot of things and quite possibly that would be more than the average person.

Mike has created a positive situation for himself. As his sporting career starts to gradually diminish his business career is beginning to flourish. There has been a transference of interests and maintenance of masculine self-worth. Therefore his masculine identity remains intact throughout the process of sporting retirement, which can often be a traumatic experience for a number of athletes at the end of their careers.

**NAME:** Craig

**AGE:** 23

**SPORT:** Surf lifesaving

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Swimming, Australian Rules football

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single

A swimmer from the age of six, Craig has been involved in surf lifesaving for 13 years. He claims to be "an all-round sportsman" because as a child he was good at almost every sport attempted and "didn't excel at any". Being a state finalist swimmer from the beginning, attention was directed towards surf lifesaving because it "encourages good swimmers to come down to the clubs to compete for them". As a consequence of his all-round ability Craig quickly became interested in ironman events because "ironman racing was good for an all-round type person like myself".

He played a number of sports in his youth, however the majority of time was taken up playing football and swimming training. It was possible for Craig to combine the two throughout childhood and adolescence, but as both sports gradually required more time being devoted to them, a choice had to be made. His account sheds light on the decision to give up football and concentrate on surf lifesaving.

I played football for our local club. I played for them when I was eight to 17 and I used to play for my school too. So in my late teens, I was playing two games of football every weekend and doing my swimming training as well. Then when I got to the age of 17, I was runner-up state Under 18 ironman champion. Then I got a letter asking me down to play football for East Fremantle so, you know. I was lucky enough to make the choice and at the time, I thought I was a better ironman than I was a footballer, you know. I went for the love of the sport. I liked ironman racing better than football, you know. It's probably not the best financial decision, but I've got there eventually. I won the state ironman title in '93. So I've got there, you know. I'm happy with what I've achieved so far.



Craig has lived in Perth all his life. At the time of our meeting he was preparing himself to move up to the Sunshine Coast in Queensland in order to give himself the opportunity to fulfil a dream and be one of the best ironman competitors in the country. This location offers optimal training conditions for surf lifesaving and, with most of the country's best surf lifesavers living there, the opportunity to compete against the best occurs far more regularly. His parents, with whom he has always had a good relationship, are supportive of the move just as they have been supportive towards most of his other surf lifesaving ambitions. With both parents having professional occupations their aspirations for Craig's education and employment future are high. He claims they are not overly enthused with the way he lives his life at the moment, yet understand this is something he must do when young. Still, it appears time is running out for Craig and he is beginning to feel the pressure applied by his parents' comments and innuendos about looking towards the future. Therefore he has created a time frame to adhere to and has come to realise that surf lifesaving may have to be relegated to second priority behind full-time employment.

Yeah well, I think they've supported me a lot, but I think they're starting to think you know. They're worried about my future. They want me to get a job and buy a house and get a wife and that sort of thing but, you know. They're starting to realise this is just something that I want and, you know, unless I try I will never know. And that's the main thing. That's one of the things that really keeps me going, you know. I'm here now, I can have a shot at it or I can go and get a job or don't take the sport seriously and then I will be one of those guys that sits around forever going "Gee, you know, when I was young, I wish I knew whether I could have done it". This way I will find out for sure one way or the other.

The pressure being applied by his parents as well as societal expectations of what a man his age should be focussing on are beginning to affect Craig. He says from a competitive viewpoint "I've probably got one or two years that I will compete full-time and then I will have to get a job and start thinking about the future". That is why he is making a final attempt to achieve a long time ambition "to just basically see how far I can get". Craig

is proud to admit that at 23 he has already won the state ironman title. He is also relieved in a sense because it is unlikely he will ever be in a situation to win a state title again. In several years he may "just be one of the field" although as a result of experience he "might be able to pull off a win here and there". If he does not qualify for the major national surf lifesaving series that guarantees sponsorship Craig claims he will remain in surf lifesaving but concentrate on one component rather than ironman which requires immense time commitment.

Well the thing about surf lifesaving is that it's so great. I think I'll bail out of ironman racing and concentrate a bit more on ski paddling, which is going from four disciplines to just one, and with a job I'd be able to concentrate on that a lot more. And I've even thought about getting into a boat and having a row later on into my late 20s and 30s where, you know, that's more of a strength sport, and you're sort of maxing out at 28 on strength. So, I've thought about that. Oh, I'll always be in surf lifesaving, even when I'm too old to do that, I'll be coaching and just going down there for a swim every Sunday. I'll always be there.

Craig's commitment to the sport is unquestionable. He enjoys training and doesn't mind having to go to bed early in order to rise at 5 am. for swimming sessions. His days are full and he fits in two and sometimes three training sessions each day.

I usually do 12 or 13 sessions a week which is between three and four hours a day. I swim every morning for an hour and a half to two hours max. So there's two hours there, and then I'll do a lunch time session and it will probably be a running session or something like that, so it will probably only be half an hour and then I'd do another hour and a half to two in the afternoon, and then I'd do weights on top of that.

Training with other men provides Craig with enjoyment through mateship and camaraderie. This is part of the sport that would be missed if he had to give it up entirely, because not only does it provide him with the opportunity to acquire fitness and be successful, but it also provides an arena in which socialisation can take place. He trains with a number of specialised training squads and cares little about his status within these groups

because iron men have to be accomplished in four disciplines as opposed to these athletes' one.

Yeah I love training. The worst thing at the moment is just getting up in the dark and the cold mornings to go swimming. But, once I've arrived there it's okay and, you know, there's lots of people there and, I do have a good time with the people I train with. And at night it's even better. I train with so many different groups of people because I swim with Sally Johnson and Cathy Johnson who's you know, in the Commonwealth games team and went to the Olympics. I train with a swimming squad that are all pretty elite swimmers so there's that group of people. And none of those group train with me down at Oceanic. Then on Tuesday and Thursdays I'll have my board squad which is mostly the young guys and the girls. And then on the other nights I'll train with the ski paddlers so there another group of guys as well. And then I'll do weights with some of the boaties and run with them so I train with about three or four different groups of people. I'm seeing a lot of people all the time. All the guys I train with, I'm good mates with. Like there's a few of the top ironmen that I train with, and we get along really well.

Unlike his training mates most of Craig's competitors are perceived as "enemy". Regarded as a fierce competitor, he is disliked by most other top ironman competitors not involved with his surf lifesaving club.

Most of the fellow competitors I get along with except for the top few ironman guys. I'm a pretty hard sort of person to race and, you know, I won't give anybody an inch. So, if someone swims over the top of me, you know, I won't think twice about giving them one and they know that. They're wary of me and they know I won't, you know, take any messing around. So, I'd say I'm not really that good friends with the guys because I don't train with them. I just turn up and I race against them. I'm not there to be their mate, I'm there to beat them and I don't really want to be their friend. It's easier if I'm not.

Competition is an integral part of Craig's surf lifesaving involvement, but he does not compete "for the money" so "it must be for the love of it". Competition is also a guide to determine how well training has been progressing and provides an assessment of the particular skills that need to be addressed. There are claims he will "think about races more" than most other competitors and use every race as a foundation upon which to physically and mentally prepare for the next competition.

Well, competition is when you turn up and see how well your training's going. Okay, if you turn up there and you get flogged, well then you've got to go back to the drawing board and work out why that happened. I think that I'm pretty analytical in the way that I race. I try and think as much as I can and use my brain and I will always remember what happened in a race. Whereas, I say to a lot of the young kids that I coach, I say, "What happened?" and they say, "I can't even remember the race", you know. They'll get to the end of the race and they can't even remember what happened. Whereas, I'll always know if I made a mistake and where it was. And if I didn't win a race, I could always see why I didn't, so I'd concentrate on those factors more.

Ultimately, competition means winning and achieving success for Craig. This attitude is summed up in stating:

Well, I think that's what you're there for, you know. If you're not succeeding and you're getting beaten every time then I don't think I would be in the sport. I wouldn't be devoting my life to it. I'd just be, you know, turning up to have a good time. So, I go there to win, and I go there for the success of winning. I've never been in a race this year to come second, you know. I'm there to win.

According to such a statement it is difficult to imagine Craig wanting to be in the sport as a mere participant hoping to occasionally win races, as he has already claimed. Yet, citing the most important aspect of the sport, he refers to mateship and common unity amongst male club members. However, it is questionable whether such enjoyment from being associated with other men would be the same if he was not an elite level performer. The ease at which friendships are struck and then maintained are sometimes due to others' desire to be associated with a successful performer. Without success, other men might not want to know Craig.

I really enjoy Oceanic Surf Club and just the camaraderie we've got down there. We've got a great bunch of guys and, you know, we can go out and get a wave when there's one on and have a bit of fun. And we have a lot of fun while we're training and that's the main thing.

As a professional surf lifesaver success can mean sponsorship and money, depending on factors such as the level of success and the commercial viability of the athlete. Craig

realises that sponsorship is "hard to come by" in surf lifesaving therefore "you've got to do the right thing by sponsors and give them a bit of value for money". Despite a negative tone towards sponsors using his body as a commodity to sell their products, Craig is quite happy to promote sponsors' merchandise because "they're pretty good to me" he claims. On the other hand it is argued that the surf lifesaving association tried to exploit him after winning the state ironman title in 1993.

Ironman is "The" word. If it was called something else, over here we wouldn't really have a profile. But to be the state ironman champion, everyone knows the ironman from TV so, to be the champion of that in Western Australia is sort of a marketable title and that's what they played on mainly. I do think some people took advantage of the fact that I was the reigning champion. The association tried to get me to do a lot of things for them, but, you know, there was no sort of monetary reward for me out of it. Like, I went up to Broome and did a coaching clinic up there and went and spoke at all the schools and you know. I'll do a few coaching things around Perth for them but after a while you get a bit sick of it. Trying to coach the Oceanic guys, and I was Vice Captain of the Oceanic club this year so, I had to sit on the committee and try and fit in my own training and try and earn a bit of money as well. So, I was fairly busy. I think my training suffered a bit this year. That's one of the reasons that I'm looking forward to going away. I won't know anyone over there. I won't have to worry about anything except myself and I can focus a bit more.

Craig talks in a patronising tone when discussing the issue of women involved in surf lifesaving. He says that "there's a sport that can cater for them in surf lifesaving". The manner in which it is stated suggests the sport can satisfy women's whimsical sporting desires yet, for a man, there is a need to be competitive in the sport of surf lifesaving particularly ironman events. Further, for women, he goes on to claim:

There are all the theory type things as well, where you do resuscitation with R and R, and it's just a good healthy lifestyle. It's nice and sunny down the beach and it's just a good environment.

In respect to competition, Craig claims to have never been defeated by a woman, except when he was a junior and that was by older, bigger girls. Even now, attempts are made to justify the defeat by pointing out that he was "a pretty small kid and a pretty late

developer" and that has not occurred "since I was about 13 or 14". At the thought of being defeated by a woman now he declares, "I wouldn't be happy about it but I'd just keep it to myself and use it for a bit of motivation". A stigma is attached to being beaten by a woman, even in training, and it appears Craig's masculine identity would suffer as a consequence if this was to occur. He doesn't mind being beaten by other male athletes, which occurs regularly whilst training in the presence of specialised single sport athletes such as swimmers and kayak paddlers. Being defeated by female single sport specialists is still perceived as demeaning because of the inferior regard for women athletes.

As a consequence of this inferior viewpoint towards women's sport, Craig is of the opinion they should not receive equal prize money to men. He expresses his stance by insisting:

No, I don't think women should get equal prize money. The women probably think they should, but in our sport the standard of men is just so much higher than the women. I believe, to be one of the top ironmen in WA now, it's got to the stage where you have to train full-time. You have to put in your four hours a day. Whereas the women are still at the stage where they're all full-time workers and they just do their, you know, hour and a half before work in the pool and then say, an hour at the beach at night. That would be enough to keep you at the top if you're a woman but with the guys it's just not at that stage in WA any more. It hasn't been at that stage Australia-wide for a long time. Since I just started training full-time, along with a few of the other guys, it's like, you know, "they're not gonna be able to beat me", so I'm doing twice as much work as them.

Just as discriminating is Craig's consideration of feminists, lesbians and gay men. His opinions are stereotypically masculine in orientation and are ill-informed with respect to factual content. It is evident that much of what is postulated is either hearsay or misinterpreted rhetoric. On feminists he asserts:

I think it's gone a bit over the top. Like, all these women are whingeing about women's rights whereas they should just take the time to sit back and have a look around. There's no men that are whingeing about men's rights. Like, at our gym for example, there was just a recent court case where somebody was fined in the workplace because there was pictures of topless girls at the

workplace, whereas there's that billboard of Guy Leech in the nude doing his running start and no-one even says "What about men, this guy's being taken advantage of". It's just totally unfair you know.

A typical homophobic response resulted from the line of questioning relating to lesbians and gay men. In both cases Craig made it known that "as long as they keep it in the closet I don't really care". Further on gay men he aggressively articulated that "as long as they don't try and crack on to me or anything, they'll be alright (laughs)".

Craig's perception of gay men is far from the image of his ideal man. Gay men are perceived as being small and diminutive whereas his ideal man is "six foot two, very well toned. Not a big animal but just got a bit of muscle on him". He has established a representative image of a heterosexual male and one with which he is comfortable. Moreover, it is an image that he would like to be able to portray although, being "about five foot ten" the dream may only be partially fulfilled. The image created typifies masculine visual perception and suggests that a man must look masculine in order to be a heterosexual male.

Quite happy with his physique and with the way his body performs, Craig has a positive self-image. With a medium build that is "just a bit thicker than most", he "feels pretty highly" of himself. Attempts are made to take care of his body but living a hectic life, and sharing a house with other young men who care little about what they eat, Craig often succumbs to "a bit of junk". He understands the principles of good nutrition and makes concerted efforts to adhere to these guidelines where possible. Using the analogy of the body as a machine, he disputes his body being "a robot" although "you definitely use your mind to push your body and unless you put the right petrol in the tank you won't be going anywhere".

Maintaining a positive self-image, Craig has developed a strong masculine identity. He has used "respect" as a term to describe what masculinity means to him and this includes the manner in which he wants to be treated.

I don't know about the word masculinity, but for myself I just like to be respected, just for who I am. No one ever pushes me around or anything like that, you know. I don't care how big someone is. If they want to have a go at me I'll have a go. I just like to be respected and I'll stand up for myself no matter what. No matter how big or small they are.

Femininity, on the other hand, is perceived as a weak and undesirable quality afforded to those less fortunate. Craig hazards a guess that femininity "usually means petite and weak and sort of dependent on men" while perceiving any characteristics less than masculine as a move towards femininity. Displaying emotions is one such characteristic that is not easily dealt with.

If a bloke wants to be sensitive and play to a woman's needs that's his choice. I do have feelings just like anybody else, and I'm not afraid to show them to a woman if she's genuine. But I don't go out of my way to make people think that I'm a nice sensitive, nice bloke. Once they get to know me they'll know that I've got feelings.

Compared to other men Craig does not profess to be more or less masculine, although he does consider himself to be "a fairly tough person, a bit tougher than the average man". He upholds a masculine facade characterised by this tough personality both in sport and every day life. Regarding sport he speculates that:

I don't think you can succeed in any sport, especially something like triathlon or ironman or something like that, where it's just such a mentally tough game. If you're a weak person you won't last five minutes. You have to be tough, you know.

Describing himself as a man in general he declares:



I'm a pretty tough, determined sort of person who likes to achieve his goals personally.

A personal goal for Craig, in the future, is marriage. Raised by parents "who are strong minded about marriage" he was brought up to "respect and believe in the institution of marriage". Further, it is revealed "if I feel strongly enough about a girl I'll marry her". However, a time frame is placed on when he would like to be married suggesting "before I was 30 you know, in my late 20s". Ideally, getting married earlier seems more appealing although highly unlikely as a result of being a professional athlete.

Everything sort of gets put back when you're a professional sportsperson because you can finish your career at the age of 26 and have no money and no job and in some people's cases, no education. Then you've got to try and get some money together. I won't get married unless I'm financially stable enough to cope with it.

Craig has based the concept of marriage around economics. Discourse on the topic revolves around money, making financial decisions and working to earn a living. It is claimed that marriage "is just a partnership" and that "if you are both serious enough then you should have one bank account, make the decisions together and spend the money together". With his father being the sole financial provider for his family, Craig is comfortable with the notion of the father as the "bread winner" and mother looking after the home and children. However, this is not a financially viable alternative in today's economic climate because "if you want to pay off a house nowadays, unless you are a very professional person, you just can't do it on one salary".

Equality, albeit financial equality, is the key to Craig's ideology of marriage. The notion of equality is also perceived to be the ideal manner in which men and women should treat each other regardless of being married or not. However, his argument quickly transforms into a hostile attack against women who attempt to uphold their right to equality.

Thus, Craig's true sexist perception is emphasised at the expense of his equal rights interpretation.

With all this equal rights thing, I treat women the way they deserve to be treated. If they're a big mouth then, you know, they ask for trouble and that, they'll get no respect from me. If they're nice and they're genuine and they're people that I want to know, well I'll give them all the respect they deserve as a person, not as a woman or a male. But this whole thing that if you get these women that are big mouths and they hide behind the fact that they are a woman, you can't touch them. That makes me a bit angry sometimes, especially being a high profile sportsman you're always gonna get criticism from somebody, you know. It's just that I do get criticism a little bit, every now and then (laughs).

Opinionated when it comes to other athletes, Craig has negative perceptions of bodybuilders because of their inability to use the muscles acquired through weight training, whereas his muscles are functional and not cosmetic.

Bodybuilders. I think they're all for show. It comes back to the whole steroid thing you know. I think that bodybuilders are just a bunch of steroid munchers and their muscles are just for show. I'm not big guy. I'm a fairly skinny sort of bloke and, you know, my muscles are there to work. They've got a job to do. They're not there for show. It's not a fitness sport. It's just a pure strength, well it's not even a strength sport. Weight lifting's a strength sport. Bodybuilding's more of a show. It's like those aerobics competitions. They're just a dance show. They're not an aerobics workout.

A degree of friendly rivalry exists between surf lifesavers and triathletes which is appropriately demonstrated by Craig, stating that:

Triathletes are pretty skinny blokes. Good runners, very good runners. They don't swim too well (laughs). Triathletes are a breed of their own. Most of them are professional type people. There all dentists and doctors and stuff like that, well they are over in WA. But I think triathlon is a great sport.

Maintaining a more positively biased view towards surf lifesavers he indicates:

The public perception is that they are all big and have got tans and stuff like that. Most surf lifesavers are pretty fit people. They're terrific sports people. I think they're underestimated of how good they actually are. Like, if you said, "I'm the single ski champion of WA", people would go, "What's that?", you know.

Whereas these guys, you know, they're just animals. The ski champion is the state kayak champion and he's basically the best paddler in the state and he's in the top 10 in Australia. He'd do four hour's training and he'd work very hard for where he's at. The public doesn't have a perception of surf lifesavers, and I think the competitors are very much underrated. Like, I would doubt that any of the Eagles or any of the footballers would train anywhere near as hard as what the triathletes, the ironman guys and all the other surf lifesavers would, you know. I think we'd give them a hiding as far as fitness and that would go.

Craig enjoys being a part of the surf lifesaving "scene". It is a subculture in which he has grown and developed since childhood. The likelihood of him being involved in the future is high with suggestions of coaching and administration as possibilities. It would be difficult to distance himself from such a subculture because it is firmly ingrained within both personality and lifestyle elements. Future levels of involvement will be determined by the success and satisfaction received through competitive aspects of the sport. Without further accomplishment, participation as a full-time, professional surf lifesaver may be nearing an end.

**NAME:** Jason

**AGE:** 23

**SPORT:** Surf lifesaving

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Hockey, swimming

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single

A procrastinator, Jason is in his fifth year of a three year biological science degree at university and it is certain another year will be added to the five thus far. At 23, Jason has lost direction in his life and is at odds as to where his sporting endeavours will lead. Having a sound family life there is a firm support structure in place if needed and this provides reassurance. However, an indifferent relationship with his parents exists and despite not having a close relationship with his younger brother and sister a bond is maintained. There is obvious love and respect for his mother for the work she performs as a nurse and the manner in which she cared for the children when growing up. On the other hand, respect derived through fear is the most appropriate way to describe the association Jason has with his father. Often intimidated by his father, Jason feels inhibited on occasions for fear of reprisals.

Having been involved in surf lifesaving for nine years Jason finds it difficult to imagine the beach not being an integral part of his life. Initially, it was the beach that made the sport so appealing for Jason as well as having friends involved. However, probably the foremost influencing element was having a father who, in his youth, was also heavily involved in surf lifesaving. Consequently appealing masculine images of the surf lifesaving "scene" would be created by recounting, often exaggerated, stories of personal triumphs and mateship through competition and social events.

I liked water sports so, they were a sort of a factor. It was a weekend activity, and a couple of friends were in it. Oh, my old man had been in it for eons so he was probably a factor. He got me involved to start with. And, I just generally like the idea of competing at the beach because the beach is outdoors. It's a good environment to muck around and I just like the water. Water-based activities are good. I had a couple of friends in it, but they were male. I didn't really know any females. I developed a lot of friends through it and a lot of them are female, but most of them are males.

As a child, Jason was talented in numerous sports and was given an ultimatum by his parents to concentrate on one or two sports. They knew that it was impossible for him to sustain the degree of involvement then being experienced in five or six sports. Finally the choice was narrowed to two sports.

Well, when I was young yeah, every sport I've played has always been at a significant level. Tennis, basketball, golf, kids little athletics. Then, as I got older and studies became more important, mum and dad sort of said "alright, get it together. Get rid of such and such a sport", and it sort of boiled down to golf and hockey, and then hockey was sort of the prevalent sport there, and that took over. So, I was playing hockey a lot, and then that was a winter sport. Then summer sports, basically surf lifesaving came into it. So I was left with two. Hockey and surf lifesaving.

Being an extremely talented hockey player often produces a degree of emotional turmoil for Jason as he battles to decide which sport should be devoted the most time. It is understood that in order to develop and sustain elite status in either of the sports requires total commitment, such is the nature of contemporary professional sport. Therefore Jason is at a point in life where his sporting career, both in terms of surf lifesaving and hockey, has reached a plateau and total dedication to one is required to produce the next level of improvement. It is in surf lifesaving that Jason would like to enjoy this next elevation by revealing "I wouldn't mind being really successful at surf lifesaving" and then qualifies this statement by adding:

I dunno. I'd say surf lifesaving at the moment. It's probably the more "in" sport at the moment. I haven't played hockey at a real high level for a couple of

years now. So, I'd say probably surf lifesaving because that's the more sort of up to date sport that I'm involved in.

Further, Jason demonstrates significant interest in full-time, professional involvement in surf lifesaving. A previous state beach sprint title holder, his ability is unquestioned which leads him to ponder over what it would be like to become more committed and make a career out of the sport he loves. Referring to leading Australian ironmen as a benchmark for success he states:

I suppose I like the image of being successful, you know. It would be good to make a career out of something like that. It's an environment that I absolutely love, and I just like being involved, living on the beach, training in the beach, and making a living out of it. I reckon the guys like Hendy and Leech, who are making a living out of it, are lucky. Lucky to be in what they like to do, that they're good enough to be able to make a living out of it, and, you know, they seem to enjoy it. I reckon, they're very lucky individuals, and it would be great to be able to do that sort of thing. I sort of envy them in a way but, then, I dunno, I don't.

Immensely talented as a surf lifesaver, it is significant that Jason regards the leading ironmen as "lucky". Elite status in their sport of surf lifesaving has not been attained through luck particularly when they have had to train hard to enhance their genetic potential like many elite athletes. One speculates the heights that could be achieved by Jason if dedication and commitment are given priority.

Notions of equity do not underpin Jason's positive attitude towards women competing in surf lifesaving. Assumptions are more inclined towards masculine motivation for defeating women or rather, not to be beaten by women.

I reckon it's good. I have no problem with women competing in sport. In fact if a woman is better than you, you can sometimes strive to sort of out-do her, to sort of be better. I dunno, I suppose you just get this feeling that being beaten by a woman is not a great thing.

Confused about his reasons for the inclusion of women in surf lifesaving, Jason's argument is reduced to cliches and phrases on competitiveness and human nature. Both provide inconclusive evidence to qualify his original contention.

Age old competitiveness I suppose. I dunno. I suppose it's human nature isn't it? I don't like being beaten by anyone whether it be a man or woman. But, I suppose if a woman beat me it would be worse. No, I wouldn't say it's worse because, I have been involved with women who are better at certain sports. I suppose it's like that same old, age old thing where women can do just as good at things as men can. So, you know, I'd say - I just lost track of the question. How do I feel about them, beating me, competing? I like it that they compete because it adds a bit of variety to the sport and they generally compete against us but generally if you're racing against a woman a lot, you try and beat her. But, I don't feel that bad if I do get beaten by them because obviously they're better than me and it just gives me something to strive for, which would be the same if a male beat me as well.

Again, with respect to the distribution of prize money for men and women, Jason's initial comments do not provide a true indication of his feelings. There are claims that "it should be the same and I don't see why it shouldn't be the same". However, there are also claims that, "men's sport" is more commercialised and people want to watch it more". This leads Jason to reveal "Okay, if there were two things on TV, one with women doing it and one with guys doing it, I'd watch the guys' sport". His response is confirmed by stating:

Men's sport is a lot more competitive, and it's usually harder and faster. Basically the skill level seems to be a little bit higher in men's sport. Women don't seem to have the same sort of strength that men have. I can understand why they are not making as much money because people would rather watch men's sports than women's. So, it enables you to go watch sports. It's a business sense.

At 23 years of age, Jason is not married and is not currently involved in a relationship, but claims to have a firm perception of "the way I like my women". Accordingly:

I like my women to be involved in sport. I like athletic women. It's nice to sort of go out for a run or something with a woman or just as another activity, because I'm a sort of bloke who likes to spend time with my woman, when I

have one. So, I mean, if you've got a woman that's happy in sport then she obviously cares about herself, and I like that. It's a challenge.

When asked about his ideal woman Jason continued with comments referring to athleticism in women because of the close association with "taking care of their body". Thus, his perception of the ideal woman is based largely on visual elements imagining her to be "blonde haired, fairly tall, attractive and have a good figure". Noticeably though was the reference to independence.

I want someone with a mind, who can think for themselves. Someone who's slightly independent. No, really independent. Someone who can do their own thing. You don't want someone who is dependent on you all the time. Intelligence is a big thing because you gotta be able to talk to her. Someone who can take a joke and sort of, someone who's gonna be an equal. Someone who's competitive and someone who's gonna be an equal, who I can treat as an equal. A low maintenance woman, a woman that doesn't need me but wishes to be with me. I could handle a woman relying on me but, I wouldn't like it that much. No, I don't like that. I've sort of had that. I've been in situations where that's happened before and I don't like it. You feel a bit like everything depends on you. It's nice to sort of have someone else that can think of things and do things and organise things occasionally. We're talking about a wife sort of thing aren't we? Yeah I don't like people that can't fend for themselves. I like to be able to sort of say, you know, "What do you want to do?" I like the woman to sort of take charge every once in a while.

Negative attitudes are held by Jason towards feminists as they are seen as radical extremists attempting to change the status quo in favour of women when it is believed the situation is "in hand and should be left alone". Accordingly they are "good for a laugh" while further establishing that:

My definition of a feminist is a woman that sort of sits there and fights strongly for her rights as a woman, to be equal with men. So, because I treat women as an equal anyway, I sort of laugh at them. But then, I can understand why they are around because they do get a rough deal in some areas. So yeah, I think they're a bit of a joke sometimes but I can understand what they're trying to achieve. Your hard core feminists make me laugh because they get all hoity-toity. But, I mean, equality for women is a good thing. I just think some of them go a little bit overboard. I can understand why they do go overboard. I mean you're always gonna have your extremists in anything.



There exists a stark contrast between the way Jason perceives lesbians as opposed to gay men. Lesbians "don't really worry me in the slightest because they don't really affect me". Conversely, gay men have the potential to affect him which ultimately clouds his perception.

I dislike gay men immensely. I don't like them at all. I don't have time for them. No, I don't have a lot of time for them really. I mean, if I'm introduced to someone, and I've been told beforehand that they're gay, then I'm pretty cold towards them. Or, if they've done something to sort of upset me then I will hold something against them. If I have known someone for a while and then someone tells me they're gay then I look at them differently. But, as long as they haven't done anything to sort of upset my view of them then I don't mind them. You know, I get along with them, sort of, alright. Probably avoid them a little bit more than I normally would.

When asked to justify his harsh homophobic response, Jason was reluctant at first to disclose his feelings, however after a short period of silence a situation was revealed involving himself and a young gay man at a university hall of residence.

Well, I never really had a problem with them a lot, and then there was an incident a few years ago where one of them, I dunno if he tried to hit on me or not. We were just horsing around after coming home from the pub one night. We were just playing around with these women, sort of biting each others' necks or something. So he decided he'd have a go at me. That was a bit of a spin out. It wasn't the expected sort of thing. And when I asked him why he did it, he said it was a bit of a joke. But, I didn't see the funny side of it, and I got quite irate, and I was real dark. Real dark. Other than that I always just joked about them. Never really liked them but.

This incident threatens Jason's male identity, casting self-doubt over the view of his own masculinity thus instilling the belief that others too will perceive him as less masculine. The construction of masculinity Jason has mindfully conceived is not defined in terms of what masculinity is, but rather, what masculinity is not.

Well masculinity is just, yeah, a non-effeminate man. I don't like blokes that run around and have this "airy fairy" thing about them, and they sort of talk and have the mannerisms of a woman. That puts me off big time. A woman's a woman. A bloke can't have anything to do with, or any attributes similar to, that

of a woman. So, a man's a man. Anything male's masculine. I mean, I have a lot of trouble trying to picture effeminate men being masculine.

The powerful views of masculinity articulated in contrast to those of weak femininity are a consequence of the de-masculinising effect arising from the halls of residence incident. Designed to enhance his own masculinity, Jason is attempting to provide proof to others that his understanding of masculinity and femininity are clearly defined. His stereotyped view of femininity is regarded as:

The opposite thing, woman. It's a woman. Femininity is someone that's feminine. A woman that doesn't go around and belch and fart, you know, that sort of thing. A woman who's, well, a woman who's not butch. Someone who doesn't try to be a man. Someone who's happy to be a woman, and to be treated like a woman. Shaves their legs and, you know, shaves under their arms and stuff like that. Yeah, that's my idea of femininity.

Jason's approach to life is non-committal which is evidenced by his single status and few long term relationships with women, and also the failure to reach full athletic potential. Further proof of his lack of commitment is the attitude towards politics and the passing of responsibility onto others. Attempting to hide his political ignorance, Jason states "Well, I'm not a communist and I'm not a fascist" but then concedes, "I suppose I'm just like an everyday Joe". His argument is reduced to stereotypical ideology in blaming politicians inconsistencies for the problems of contemporary society.

I don't really like politics. I think politicians are dicks. No, I really don't have a lot of time for politics. I vote because I have to vote. I don't think you're ever gonna find a politician that really stands up and does what he says he's gonna do. I mean they're just as bad as one another. I guess I'd be like the average individual.

Training is an area where Jason periodically lacks enthusiasm and says that "Sometimes I just can't be bothered". However, a strong competitive desire, which is claimed to be an inherent behavioural characteristic, assists in overcoming any shortfalls that

inadequate training may produce. It is also alleged that "to be competitive is the way I've been brought up". Elaborating, he adds:

Ever since I've been young, I've always wanted to be the best. If I don't achieve to my fullest potential, I suppose that's where competition comes up. My parents have always wanted us to achieve our fullest potential and I've found that I'm usually not too bad at doing things. Things come pretty natural. If I don't achieve, if I somehow stuff up, I sort of feel a bit, I suppose, unhappy about it. I like to sort of be the best, try and be the best or at least to the best of my ability, and that's in anything. Yeah I'm very competitive.

Continuing with this line of contention, competitiveness is seen as the most important aspect of surf lifesaving in order to reach the top, more so than training, genetic potential or ability.

Competitiveness is the most important thing in surf lifesaving if you want to be the best at it. You've gotta be competitive for sure. The most important thing, because in order to achieve you've gotta be competitive. You can't sort of go into it with half sort of hearted attitude and say "Well, you know I'm just gonna do this". To make the top level, you've really gotta be 100 percent to want to do it.

Success and winning are important to Jason but he claims they do not have the same meaning. Success is "achieving what I set out to do, at anything. Setting out to achieve it or doing better". Winning, on the other hand, is "coming first". These claims are not consistent with the statement surrounding competition because according to his contention Jason views competition as a means of winning which in turn equates with success.

I don't like losing and I don't like coming second because it means you're not quite good enough to come first, and I like to be first. Yeah, I like to win. It's a feeling I enjoy. Especially if it's something that you've been trying to achieve for a while and it's always just out there beyond your grasp and it finally happens it's good. I sort of become very boisterous, very loud and I'll let people know that I've won. Yeah, basically that's it. It's just this huge feeling. You feel superior for about a millisecond. You just feel superior. You can't ever beat it.

Feeling superior is an insightful comment that requires further elaboration, particularly the notion of feeling superior to men or women. Jason asserts that "At that moment in time, like, beach sprint is my thing, if I win, I don't care if it's male or female. I've won". Furthermore, winning creates the opportunity to be acknowledged and is regarded as an additional positive consequence. Similar to superiority, discrimination between men and women who provide acknowledgement is not important because:

I like to be acknowledged by anyone. It doesn't have to be a man. Acknowledgement, any acknowledgement, is a good thing. It's a nice thing. From men, I dunno. No, acknowledgement by anyone, whether it be male or female, it doesn't really matter. It's just nice to be acknowledged.

Jason alleges to have a positive self-image, however in referring to the perception of his "ideal" man there are some obvious contradictions. It is revealed that:

I like myself. I like me, but I wouldn't mind being bigger. A bit bigger in size. Bigger in size, bit bigger in size. A bit heavier and a bit bigger in size. You know, blonde hair, blue eyes, tan. You know, your bronzed Aussie. That's a good look. I like that. I wouldn't mind being bigger. So, you know, I'm happy with myself but, if I could just be a bit bigger, I'd probably be a bit happier.

Being tall, and very thin all his life, the thought of being physically larger is appealing to Jason. Extremely defined in terms of musculature, others still regard him as "skinny" when clothed. This is something which affects Jason's masculine ego despite knowing himself that his body is toned and well structured. There are occasions when appearing large would appease the spasmodic bouts of emotional turmoil endured as a consequence of his "skinny" body.

It is difficult to foresee the direction in which Jason's life will ultimately travel. Despite having immense surf lifesaving ability it is difficult to determine whether it will be utilised to its fullest competitive extent. Priorities are changing for Jason on nearing his mid

20s as he begins thinking about the future in respect to marriage and family. The perception of a family is rather conservative and stereotypical of men his age. He believes that:

As long as you're successful and able to support your family later in life. As long as my family doesn't want for anything, I'll be happy. I mean, if my wife has to go out to work, fine. I have no problems with that. But, I just want my family to be content and happy, to live comfortably and maybe have a little bit more. So, I want to be a bloke that can sort of look after my family and be a success in anything that I do.

NAME: Nathan

AGE: 19

SPORT: Surf lifesaving

SPORTING BACKGROUND: Swimming

MARITAL STATUS: Single

Nathan was born into a surf lifesaving subculture. Both parents, as well as his two older brothers and younger sister have all been involved in surf lifesaving to some degree. Such is the involvement of these family members that the eldest of the two brothers is employed by the Western Australian Surf Lifesaving Association in an administrative capacity while Nathan is intent on being one of the best ironmen in Australia. His father is the main influencing factor on their interest and participation in the surf lifesaving movement. As a child, competitive swimming was Nathan's primary organised sporting involvement. Originally aspiring to be an elite swimmer, the sport demands hours of specific pool training leaving little time for other activities. It was "my father who got me into surf lifesaving just in case I got sick of swimming" he claims. At the age of 14, growing tired of competitive swimming, Nathan "gave that the flick and made the transition to surf lifesaving".

Nathan's father is an integral part of the way in which the family members have structured their lives. An accountant with a major oil company, his father has uprooted the family on numerous occasions seeking promotion both within Australia and overseas.

Raised everywhere. I was born in Brisbane, lived there for only six months. I've lived in Perth for four years, New Guinea for three, Sydney for five and back to Perth for another five.

It is noticeable the influence his father had over the family as the children were growing up. Being the sole financial provider, Nathan's father was recognised as crucial to the existence of the family while his mother cared for the children and attended to home duties. With the boys now adults and his sister completing Year 12, little has changed. His father is still the focal point around which the family revolves and to whom it is accountable. One of Nathan's brothers' has left home although, like the other brother of 24 years, he has no intention of leaving.

Well my brother's 24. He's still at home. So I'd say as long as I'm not bumming and bludging off them, I'd say till I'm 26 or 28. Shouldn't be a problem.

Nathan's family is a model representation of masculine dominance whereby the women pander to the needs of the men, and treat them with utmost respect. It is little wonder Nathan is reluctant to leave home when his masculinity is unquestioned and works in such a manner that produces positive consequences.

While I'm training and trying to compete full-on, I'll live at home because living by yourself you've gotta cook and clean and everything else. Having mum around is a big help. So I will stay at home as long as I can.

It is revealed that Nathan regards his mother differently to his father. "She's cool, but I don't look up to her in the same way as my dad". Further, he knows of the unqualified support provided by his father, as well as his belief in a young man's need to pursue sport explaining, "Dad's always supporting me because he came from a running, boxing, semi surf lifesaving background. He used to swim, used to dive, a bit of everything". The admiration for his father is obvious unlike his mother who is perceived as being sports ignorant alleging "mum has virtually no sporting background. She's pretty naive. She doesn't choose to be but she doesn't know much about sport". He considers her support to be divided because "she sometimes wishes I studied a bit harder. But she backs me".

Nathan's life revolves around surf lifesaving. Everything else is secondary as he attempts to make a career out of the emerging, lucrative national series televised throughout Australia. Currently studying commerce part-time at university, his grades are poor due to the amount of time dedicated to full-time training. Not only does the training take up vast amounts of time but the lethargy following training sessions makes it difficult to study and concentrate in lectures.

I struggle as a part-time student. I hate reading. Hate it. So, I always struggle with that aspect of the course and you go to morning swimming training, or your afternoon session, or your day time session, and you get to uni and you're sitting in a lecture and you fall to sleep.

Women's surf lifesaving events are not looked upon highly by Nathan mainly because they do not have the tradition of men's events. After all, "the women's events have only been there for 10 years, some only three or four". He adds that "some women get caught up in it a bit believing that the female side of it is as competitive and as traditional as the man's side". As a result of this perceived lack of tradition it is argued that women should not receive the same prize money as men "because there's not the depth, there's not the tradition and they just haven't been going as long". Admittedly he does imply a degree of equality by suggesting that "in the future there's no reason why not, but not at this stage".

Despite arguing against equal prize money because of women's limited depth of talent, Nathan has been defeated by women in the past. He is quick to exonerate himself by declaring:

Well, this happened last year in a surf league, and the guys used to do the ironman and then get straight out and do the surf swimming race. And, the girls hadn't done the ironman and they'd, you know, jump into the surf race because it was a mixed surf race. So, you were there and you'd just done a 10 minute ironman race, straight over "boom", onto the starting line. The swim was 400 metres. Yeah, straight after a 10 minute ironman race. Yeah, it was a bit embarrassing but, oh, it's alright because you know, some of my mates got beaten as well. Which is fair enough.



In justifying his defeat, Nathan finds solace in not being the only man to be beaten by a woman. Furthermore, there are challenges to the event being sex-biased in favour of women claiming inadequate recovery time as a consequence of poor race scheduling. Such allegations made the blow to his masculine ego a little easier to handle. However, had he been the only male defeated, self-doubt would have been cast over his masculinity and subsequent sporting ability.

Nathan is confused over the term "feminist" and immediately equates it with being "lesbian". Openly it is expressed as "I don't like them", while professing "At uni there are heaps of dykes". When asked to elaborate on his opinion of lesbians he responded with a narrow perception.

They're pretty seedy actually. Some of the ones at uni. Oh, they're the only ones I've seen. I don't know any personally, so I can't really say. I just think that they get a bit carried away with some of the issues.

The perception of gay men is much more scathing in its verbal attack admitting that "I hate them basically". In relation to surf lifesaving Nathan is protective of his masculine domain by disputing any suggestion that gays might be involved in surf lifesaving. Specifically, in terms of numbers, "there aren't many because they just don't fit in. They wouldn't last. I mean, I don't really know any". Further questioning along similar lines produced responses that revealed deep seated fears towards gay men.

The gay Mardis Gras in Sydney yeah, that's a bit of a social, I dunno. Actually, we had a pub crawl this year after the Nationals. We went into a couple of gay pubs as a joke. It's a worry (laughs). We were dressed up as workers you know, like off "The Village People". Yeah, all the hard hats and that, and we had to turn our shirts inside out. "Jacko" was on it, he'll tell you about it. We just went in there and hassled a few out. Unbelievable. Most of them knew we were ribbing them so they stayed away. Oh, I'm homophobic. Big time (laughs).

A good deal of satisfaction is attained through having "a night out with the boys". The "boys" referred to are generally those from his surf club or other fellow surf lifesavers from other clubs competing together at state title events in the "Nationals". These nights are normally predetermined well in advance and foster camaraderie between men not often developed with women present. As Nathan indicates:

There is nothing like having a good night out with the boys. But, I go out with my girlfriend. She doesn't like me drinking heaps so, if she's not there, I'll have a few. If she is, I won't.

Socialising is a major element within the surf lifesaving subculture. Regardless of sex, socialising often revolves around alcohol which is sometimes difficult for outsiders, not involved in the surf lifesaving "scene", to understand. Being an elite athlete, Nathan must limit "big" social nights. Although, being around alcohol so frequently, it is hard to abstain for long periods of time. He speculates that:

Theoretically it's only a couple of times a year but really it's probably once or twice a month. I only get really spastic a handful of times a year. Oh, three or four.

Marriage is not a consideration for Nathan in the immediate foreseeable future, despite having a steady girlfriend in his life. Grateful that she is a swimmer herself, and understanding of his training demands, they are able to see each other regularly after training and at the surf club because she is also a surf lifesaver. However, he does indicate that "sometimes it gets a bit much for her". Having been together for two years, a definitive outcome for their future together still cannot be predicted. Nathan has structured his future around specific time frames, and marriage is tentatively scheduled. He supposes that:

If you meet the right girl it's fair enough but, you've gotta be careful about doing it at a young age. Probably 35 is too late and 25 is a bit early, so somewhere in there.

Around this time frame is the personal ultimatum that has been set in relation to full-time surf lifesaving participation. Accordingly he has cognitively mapped out what is believed to be the ideal future whilst making sure that realistic and achievable goals have been established.

If I don't get the results I want in the next year or two then that'll be it. But, if I reach my goals, then I'll try and compete at a top level until I'm 32, 34. It's like at the moment, I'm making some sacrifices and I can't really afford to make them and live in dream world until I'm 30. I won't have any money, I won't have a house you know, they're important to me, to have those things. I'm not really studying. I'm not studying properly. I don't go out as much as I could for someone my age. Yeah, they're the big ones I guess. Don't have a job, I don't have a lot of money, don't own my own car. Five years from now, you know, a lot of guys at 25 own their own houses, so it's important. It's got nothing to do with other people. It's just something myself, you know, that I feel I should have these things at a certain age.

The next two years will determine whether retirement for Nathan will be sooner rather than later. To be retired from competing in world class events at the age of 21 would be a cruel blow for a young man with exceptional surf lifesaving talent and a strong desire to compete and win. He insists that "winning is the most important thing by far" and defines success in similar terms. Striving to win is an inherent characteristic of Nathan's persona. A card game analogy is used to emphasise this urge for competition.

I like to win because it feels good, yeah. Because, I'm competitive by nature. Even playing my sister in a game of cards. It's the same thing. I just want to beat her, you know, just whip her. Just yeah, I've got a really competitive nature.

Competitive spirit is an intrinsic motivating factor. Nathan requires little else to drive his will to win. When money became involved on graduating from junior to senior ranks, focus upon original goals were almost lost.

A couple of years ago, I thought yeah. When I got a contract with a major cereal company, I thought yeah, this is my big chance to make money. But, I find if I start thinking like that then I get side-tracked and really, the main reason you're

there is to win, or to beat yourself or your own personal goals. That's sort of winning, whether it's first or coming 10th and doing your best time whatever, yeah.

Unlike competition where the most important element was winning, Nathan claims that the most significant aspect of the sport for him is the lifestyle. For many, the surf lifesaving subculture, and its resultant lifestyle, is appealing "because you are able to train and compete in the surf". It is additionally attractive to some men because:

You don't have to be the best guy there to win. You can have better knowledge, better skills you know, a bit of luck, whatever, and you can win. That's it. It's not straight out, you against the clock or you against so and so. It's you against nature.

Still, Nathan enjoys the feeling of defeating other men in races and receiving the accolades from other people pronouncing that "it makes you feel good". Even better is the feeling of satisfaction attained from proving people's perceptions wrong.

You feel like you've done something for yourself. That's it, yeah. Like a big one for me is like, if people have said things to me in the past like, "You're never going to make it", or "You'll never be any good". Like, just to have the satisfaction of knowing, you know, "sucked in, I did it".

For a young man of 19, and having been participating in senior events for only a short time, Nathan is extremely confident about his prospects and is enthused about competing against surf lifesaving icons. Revealing respect for these men, he insists they do not intimidate him. Men such as these have more experience which is why, at his early age, important elements must be learned from competing against them.

I respect them a lot. Well, this year I started next to Trevor Hendy a couple of times. I was in the same race as him, and it's really just learning. It's good to be in the same race just to see what those guys do, just to try and beat them and learn from them. It's possible to beat these guys in the next couple of years.

Last year's effort in gaining a place in the National series was disappointing. It is assumed intimidation was the main cause of his woes suggesting that, "I let it get to me". This year however, will be distinctly different because of the experience acquired and a year of specific preparation behind him. He insists that "properly prepared, I know I'm good enough to get in, and I'm feeling good".

Jokingly, Nathan alleges to have "a short stumpy" physique. Although, when required to elaborate, the impression given is one of having a positive self-image. Being involved in a "predominantly upper body sport", he is quick to mention the disproportionately larger chest compared to his smaller legs, indicating that "it's all upper body and virtually nothing from the waist down, or the legs". Upper body development is regarded as a highly masculinised trait in Western society whereas little attention is paid to legs, regardless of size. It is the upper body which is visually prominent and since occupying space is a masculinised ideal, the larger the upper body the more masculine the man appears. Further, a body that displays wide shoulders, tapering at the waist provides an impression of being muscular and athletic which is an additional Western masculinised conception. Hence, surf lifesavers are perceived as masculine athletes.

Years of training has helped structure Nathan's body into its current shape. There are no conscious attempts to restructure it with weight training because he declares that "I don't really care as long as I'm fit. As long as I don't look like fat slob walking down the street, then I'm easy". Such a statement can be made in relative confidence because the heavy training carried out is likely to negate the onset of obesity.

Rarely is there a time when Nathan does not want to complete a designated training session. Having "pretty good self discipline", he "pushes himself to go". Training with others makes the session worthwhile particularly when team atmosphere is constructed.

The team thing yeah. We're a ski team and it's a ski squad. The same with swimming, and there's more girls there than guys in the swimming squad. But there's good camaraderie, a good team feeling.

Having a good rapport with other surf lifesavers creates a sociable atmosphere, but Nathan says "You can't be friends with everyone". He is able to "get along well with most people" which is why they talk to him "quite a bit". Surf lifesavers are Nathan's primary social contact while athletes in general are the only people with whom he likes to associate. Struggling to find any acquaintance not involved in sport he admits "Oh, I'm just trying to think of one", then eventually coming up with "Oh, with my parents I guess". Nathan's social circle is limited, providing an indication of a subcultural existence. Despite being happy in it, negative long term consequences may eventuate as a consequence of the restricted social contact.

The ideal man and woman Nathan has created in his mind are both visual in nature with his views being stereotypical of Western masculine ideals. Physical appearance is the foremost important criteria with other male characteristics being related to sporting involvement. There is no reference to personality or character. The ideal man is seen as "tall, not real tall. About six two. Solid, modest and a good competitor". It is further established that this man does not have to be involved in surf lifesaving but he would "probably" have to be involved in sport. In like manner, the ideal woman perceived by Nathan is "good looking, good body, small hips, small bum, big bust (laughs). That's about it". Although, it is specified she must be "a nice person" and, whilst she doesn't have to be a surf lifesaver, he would "prefer to meet someone who was sporting than someone just at a pub who doesn't do anything. Someone who does something".

Nathan is confused over the terms, "masculinity" and "femininity". Initially there is difficulty in putting these terms into words although after considerable deliberation they are most easily defined, once again, by referring to visual elements of male and female physical

characteristics. On masculinity it is claimed "Oh, I'd say if I see guys who are really skinny or whatever then, you know, I don't really associate that with masculinity". However, Nathan was in a quandary to explain the concept of masculinity when extremely thin marathon runners, such as Rob De Castella and Steve Moneghetti, were cited. Having earlier regarded endurance athletes as masculine, expressing "respect" for them and looking up to "guys like that", he exclaimed "Yeah, they are skinny, yeah. But they're talented as well". Then, treating the interview as if it was a test he considered the response more closely and admitted "Oh, I stuffed up I guess, didn't I?".

Femininity, presumes Nathan, is a woman who is "classy, well dressed and well presented. Petite sort of thing, yeah, that's feminine". However, he is confused between the meaning of "femininity" and "feminists" and speculates that "I sort of tie femininity in with feminists. Like females fighting for their rights or whatever. Pushing for things". Further he adds "a woman weight lifter or woman rower, who are big and bulky, will step on feminists".

Despite socialising almost entirely with athletes, Nathan has divided opinions in respect to different sports and carefully chooses the athletes with whom he associates. Upheld is the notion that "some sports I really look up to and others I don't really admire at all". Specifically he cites these sports.

Cricket, football, basketball's okay. Swimming, rowing yeah, those kind of sports. I really admire the people who do them. Yeah, oh running, triathletes you know. Guy's like Mark Allen, I really respect guys like that. Kayakers, Clint Robinson, guys like him. Sports I don't really admire are gymnastics. I despise it actually. I just think they get too much money from the government for their results compared to the swimmers. Like, I'm from a swimming background so, I'm a bit biased but, if you compare the amount of medals that each sport wins at the Olympics, then really, swimmers, cyclists and track and field and then canoeing you know, should get most of the money. You look at the breakdown and gymnastics gets by far the most. Really, we're substandard on a world scale.

Similarly, bodybuilders come under attack suggesting they are no longer involved in a sport because of its widespread steroid abuse. Triathletes on the other hand, specifically "the top guys", are perceived as "very special athletes". The "average" triathlete is not so respected.

Some triathletes you see with all the fancy gear are just, you know, they're nobodies. They've got fluoro bathers on and \$10,000 bikes and \$500 running shoes and you just look at them and go, you know, "What! Are you kidding yourself, aren't you?" My mate knows Spot Anderson well and he said, that you know, there are a few good triathletes around but a lot of them aren't really very naturally talented compared to the ironmen, like because he does both sports. He said that he really respects the ironmen as a group a lot more than the triathletes. There's a lot of triathletes who are just showmen or show-ponies, whatever you want to call it. In it for the image. But, I respect a guy like Mark Allen, who's a great endurance athlete, as much as I would Guy Leech.

Surf lifesaving is held in high esteem by Nathan. He cannot find fault in something which is deeply ingrained in his life. It is not only viewed as a sport but also as the ideal approach to life.

It makes up a fair deal of my life. I get on well with, you know, most people. I like the sort of people that are in the sport, that are attracted to it. Oh, it's not just a sport is it? It's a community service as well. And, mainly the people who we get down at the clubs are pretty good. I've got a lot of good friends. They'll be friends for life.

Nathan frequently uses the terms "forever", and "for life", because this is how his involvement in surf lifesaving is perceived. It is declared "I want to stay in the club, the movement, long term". The surf lifesaving subculture is the only environment that truly feels comfortable, therefore it seems natural to stay involved in the lifestyle to which he is accustomed.

Despite claims of believing in equality for women, Nathan provides little evidence to substantiate such notions. Having been raised in a patriarchal family, it is probable that



Nathan does not fully understand the meaning of the term "equality" regarding men and women, and with respect to relationships.

Yeah, I always look after my girlfriend regardless of who she is. I'll always be there for her. But, I'm never gonna clean a toilet. I'm never gonna iron a shirt for as long as I live (laughs).

When asked what would happen without his mother or girlfriend around to iron his clothes he replies "the same as what happened to this one. I won't iron it. I'll just wear it" (laughs).

Nathan maintains stereotypical Western male perceptions. As a consequence of its masculinised environment the surf lifesaving subculture creates and perpetuates many of these ideals. He enjoys this domain because it is one in which he feels confident, and dominant over others. Unlikely to ever remove himself from such a setting, having established a position of superiority, he is likely to try and reap the rewards of this position for as long as possible.

## Summary

The surf lifesaving men exist in an environment where their lives revolve around the surf lifesaving subculture in which they have grown up. Their fathers were all surf lifesavers in their youth, impacting strongly upon the four men to involve themselves in the sport and its subsequent lifestyle. Further, the fathers influenced their families to take an interest in the surf lifesaving "scene" thereby creating an intense surf lifesaving environment at home. Thus the men were immersed in this subculture from an early age.

Not surprisingly, these athletes did not attempt many other sports in their youth because much of their time was devoted to swimming training and surf lifesaving. Any other

sports undertaken were generally thwarted due to the effort required in training for surf lifesaving. It was difficult for these men to think about abandoning their sport for another because of the family links and the social attachments they had constructed. Their lives revolve around the surf lifesaving "scene" whereby their male "mates" are "clubbies", whilst their girlfriends are generally involved in the club scene as well. One of the men relinquished marriage because his fiancée was not involved in the "scene" and could not understand the loyalty and devotion he harboured towards surf lifesaving.

Existing in the sheltered subculture of surf lifesaving, the perpetuation of dominant ideologies are commonplace because opinions and viewpoints are rarely challenged. In this instance, the subculture is dominated by a patriarchal ideology where men perceive themselves as controlling power. Hence, these men maintain sexist views despite equality being acknowledged. However it is seldom acted out. Each athlete found difficulty in explaining the meaning of equality because it is not an issue they have to confront frequently. The athletes also displayed an inherent and irrational fear of homosexuals, particularly with gay men. Their homophobia is a consequence of their upbringing and lifestyle within the environment they live.

Competitiveness is a common element amongst the four men, and so too is the attitude that there will always be another race. It seems these men are determined to compete to their maximum ability, however, such is the nature of surf lifesaving that unexpected determinants can occur like, freak waves, or craft damage. Therefore, they are not overly perturbed about being beaten by another athlete unless, of course, it is a woman. It is evident these men do not like the idea of being defeated by a woman. It is something they have all had to contend with throughout their careers as surf lifesavers and they each deal with it similarly by justifying their defeat in claiming an "off" day. The surf lifesaving subculture, being such a masculine-oriented domain, makes it difficult for its male inhabitants to accept anything less than the masculine standards that have long been established.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Bodybuilders

The following discussion relating to the four elite level bodybuilders provides a descriptive analysis of their lives in an attempt to understand reasons for their involvement in the sport of bodybuilding. An investigation of masculine issues will assist in establishing the role of bodybuilding in the lives of these men. The data will then be analysed and interpreted collectively to shed light on emergent themes arising from individual interviews and observations.

The socio-economic backgrounds of the four bodybuilders are similar, all having been raised in working class families. The ages of the men vary from 24 to 37 years. They have all competed in bodybuilding and powerlifting contests at state level with one attaining a world title at a recent World Championship competition. Three of the men aspire to be Mr. Olympia whilst the fourth is now intent on concentrating on powerlifting.

None of the men is married at present although they were all living with a female partner at the time of the first interview. By the time the second interview had taken place the self-perceived secure relationship of one of the men had broken down. Only one of the bodybuilders has been married but received notification of being officially divorced on the day of our second meeting.

Three of the men are employed, two being personal weight training instructors, and the other working at the docks in Fremantle. The fourth bodybuilder has returned to study and having completed a three year, full-time, business degree at Curtin University, is now studying for a postgraduate diploma in business law. They have all been employed as nightclub "bouncers" at some point in their lives after taking up bodybuilding.

**NAME:** John.

**AGE:** 37

**SPORT:** Bodybuilding

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Australian Rules football, cricket

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single

Bodybuilding has been an integral part of John's life for 19 years and it is difficult to foresee him not being involved in some capacity. Indebted to the sport for transforming a "weakling" of 42 kilograms into a "mass of muscle" weighing 80 kilograms, John still has plans of competing until the age of 60 and claims that "By the time I'm 60 I will be holding my own with the guys that are 60". The "guys" referred to are the ex Mr. Olympia and world champions who are now competing on the masters bodybuilding circuit.

John grew up in a nurturing environment within an extended nuclear family. It was an extremely supportive environment whereby every family member played a part in his development. The working class background provided a strong emphasis upon family unity in order to "get by" and as a consequence the closeness forged through love and support still exists. Sport played a significant role in the unification of the family because it enabled regular family gatherings each weekend. Sport also has the capacity to neutralise class distinctions therefore, in theory, everyone was equal out on the sporting field in respect to class. John is thankful for the support provided as a child and has positive recollections.

I still have a great relationship with my parents. Whatever I do my parents are 100 percent behind me. When I played cricket dad was the square leg umpire. When I played footy he was the boundary umpire or goal umpire or coach or whatever it would be. And when I went to play any of my sports, not only would my mother and father be there, but my brother, my sister, my aunties, my uncles, my grandmother, my grandfather-the whole family were there behind me

100 percent. So I guess I always had an unfair advantage over other people. I didn't have the genetic sort of ability for a lot of things, but I had the support system there. It sort of helped and motivated me.

One of the main reasons for beginning weight lifting was to assist John in his football endeavours. Initially the goal was merely "to put on a bit of muscle", however the muscular gains that were made in the off-season would be lost during the football season due to the lack of available time that could be spent in the gym. Therefore, increasingly more time was consumed in the weight room at the expense of football training and this consequently reduced fitness and affected ball skills. He argues it was a natural progression to continue with bodybuilding due to the extra time that was being applied to weight lifting and the debilitating injuries being sustained through football. Weight training had an immediate impact on John's life both physically and in respect to self-esteem. Developing a muscular physique changed the way other people perceived him which ultimately heightened personal confidence and self-image.

Before I started weight lifting I was really, really shy. I hardly went out. I was embarrassed easily. People talked to me and I'd answer them with a "Yes" or a "No". Or if I was at someone's house I wouldn't take a drink, I wouldn't go to the toilet, I wouldn't do anything. I was just a really shy person. Girls would frighten the shit out of me. But that certainly changed because weight lifting took me from shy to having confidence in myself I guess. And then people tended to look up to me and started admiring me and say nice things rather than pick on me and push me around like they did at school. People started complimenting me and saying how good I looked, and then girls started looking at me differently and things like that. So I believe it made a better person. Much more confident, positive sort of person.

A personal trainer for a number of years, John is satisfied being a part of the bodybuilding and fitness "scene" particularly when assisting people who resembled himself as a youth and young adult with low self-esteem. Although never fat, he extends compassion towards others who do not fit the ideal body image as depicted by society. Further, despite having never been formally educated beyond Year 11 and with no training in

psychology, John feels qualified to try and change people's lives through motivational techniques learned through experience. He claims:

I train people to do what I did. I believe that's good because I take other people with problems, either really fat or really skinny who have low self-esteem, and after they spend time with me we turn it around and change their personality to make them happier in themselves.

Immense pleasure is gained through assisting people to develop a positive self-image and ultimately self-esteem, yet for John it is also a business and therefore it must be conducted in such a manner. At 37, he has little to show financially and he is beginning to worry about the future. At the time of our first meeting there was strong aspirations of a business partnership with his girlfriend of two years. At 20, she is studying marketing and accounting which John believes to be ideal for their partnership considering he has expertise in the fitness industry and little knowledge of financial matters with respect to business.

This is what I'm going to do for the rest of my life, in the fitness industry. I want to set up my own gym and do this and that. My girlfriend and I plan to get married when she finishes university and we're both going to work together. When she leaves we're going to do some advertising and marketing so we get some clients for her. Then we'll get some backers and set up our own place and with what she's done at university, she's going to work behind the scenes, do the PR and stuff like that.

By the time our second meeting eventuated the relationship between John and his girlfriend had broken down. Consequently many of his long term plans are being restructured, although he still has a strong desire to own a gymnasium claiming that "my personal dream is to build my own gym". In attempting to save enough money to begin this "dream" with his girlfriend, as well as financially assist her through university, long hours were spent working to acquire the finances. Ironically, the lack of quality time spent together was the major cause of the separation.

We've had some major hiccups the girlfriend and I. We don't get to train together any more. The hours are sort of different. Because I'm only home for like an hour at night time and then we go to bed. I'm up an hour in the morning and then I have to go to work. But she has a lot more free time on her hands. That has been a problem. We have actually separated at the moment causing dramas. I think she was getting bored and feeling a bit neglected and looking somewhere else for love and care which is a bit of a problem because I'm trying to do the right thing for us and for the future and stuff like that. I haven't got the quality time to put into the relationship so it's a bit hard but I'm trying to juggle that one around. That's why I'm waiting for her to finish uni so she can come on board with me and then possibly we can spend more time together and sort of help each other out.

Like many relationship break-ups, one partner is left feeling more pain. John is bitter towards his girlfriend for leaving, yet he is old enough to understand and justify her reasons for wanting to separate. However, he has difficulty coming to terms with her reneging on the pact they had established prior to his increased workload, after initially agreeing that times would be hard.

We talked about this and that's what she wants as well. So I thought I'd put all my energies into getting money for the deposit for the house. She doesn't work so I had to support her every way, pay for rent and food and clothe her and everything like that. So at the end of the day I might make 900 bucks or 1200 bucks a week, but by the time you pay your tax and pay for the rent and food and clothing and give her spending money and myself, there's not a lot of money left over to do the saving part. But she's only young and she wants everything. But we can't, we've got to make sacrifices and we've got to do this and do that. It's not like it is in books and fairy tales. I mean you have to make compromises and you have to work together. And if you really love each other, well, you make the compromises gladly and get back on track down the road.

Despite the bitterness, John wants to eventually reunite, being convinced they complement each other.

I hope we get back together because I think that we work together as a team. She's very different to me but a lot of people don't understand that. Her strong points are my weak points and vice versa. So as a couple we were quite complete. She's only young at the moment. She's missing out on the attention and she wants to have a bit of fun and she's got a couple of girlfriends that like to go out and do this and do that and I'm not able to go out and things like that you know. Being young she wants to go out and have a bit of fun as well because she feels like she's missing out.

It was not the first occasion that John's commitment to other factors caused the demise of a relationship. Until now there has been little remorse with such separations because the associations were never regarded as serious in terms of marriage. Still, the break-ups were often due to excessive amounts of time spent training or the preoccupation with bodybuilding and having to eat and sleep at specified intervals.

The girl I had before this one, we went out for eight years off and on and it was real volatile. She was the nicest girl I've ever met in my life and everything was great physically. Loving and caring and couldn't do enough for you, but she thought she was in second place to people which is probably true. But she wouldn't come to the gym with me. She didn't like training. She drank, smoked and would go out dancing and stuff like that. But she didn't fit in with the gym scene, didn't want to fit in with the gym scene. She wanted me to give up the gym and didn't want me to train people which is what I've done all my life, deal with people who get fat and out of shape. She loved me for me. She didn't care if I was 20 kilos fatter, but I'll never be like that because that's just the way I am. But she used to take great offence from my training and would think of it worse than another woman because she couldn't compete against it and that was our problem all the time. Around competition time she'd feel left out if I was getting respect and attention from other people. The only attention she wanted me to have was from her.

Now with the added time constraint of working long hours and having to train "to stay in competition shape to keep an up-front profile so that you're known and recognised", means there is minimal leisure time. John finds his situation problematic because the sport that was once recreational has now become his business and no longer holds the same values. He must maintain a visually impacting physique to appeal to, and draw in, prospective clients. In this manner the body is a commodity whereby it is used as a form of advertising. Bodybuilders are aware that it is their bodies people want to see and are generally happy to "sell" it to advertising agencies. Proud of his body and the training that produced it, John claims:

We put so much time and effort into it. I mean I don't mind walking around with no clothes on and things like that because I've got nothing to hide. I mean



I've trained so hard, I'm quite proud of my body and I like to show it off. I'm not the sort of person to train hard and then walk around wrapped up from head to toe and not let anyone see it. I don't know if that's egotistical. I think it's just being proud of what you have.

Financial sponsorship is difficult for bodybuilders because their sport is not associated with state government funding agencies and in some cases bodybuilding is not regarded as a sport. In terms of his own business John realises that he must display his body enough to entice new clients but he must not over-expose himself. On the other hand, there are no qualms about selling his body for commercial advertisements if it means financial remuneration. Discourse surrounding advertising often draws comparisons between male bodybuilders with female models. Further, examination of the body as a site for commodification and exploitation is frequently undertaken.

I think "being exploited" is a term that's used too often. I think people want to be exploited. I mean I'd love someone to exploit me and say "Look okay, we don't care about your brain, there's a body, we want it, we want to put it on posters, we want to put all round the bloody world and give you lots of dollars". They talk about these models being exploited and things like that I mean, shit these girls make millions of dollars and they've got nothing but their bodies. Well they might be smart, but it's their body that makes them a living. So if someone wants to exploit me for my body, give them my best.

Bodybuilding is strongly perceived as a masculine domain. Women entering the foray of bodybuilding are rarely taken seriously by male "lifters" arguing that "muscles are a male characteristic" and "they would be better advised to compete in figure fitness contests". John admires and appreciates the time and effort women bodybuilders put into their sport, but has a problem in dealing with muscular women.

I believe everyone should be able to do whatever they like. I mean I admire the women because I know how hard it is to do what they do but at the same time I don't find it very attractive. I don't look at a lady bodybuilder that's as big as me, or bigger, and find her sexually attractive. I can admire and appreciate the hard work that she's done but I believe a man's a man and a woman's a woman. I think some women are trying to be too masculine and become a man, or as close to a man as they can be. I don't like that. It doesn't do anything for me.

But I can appreciate them as a person and still like them. I like women to look like dancers. I like women with toned bodies, gymnasts and ballerinas and dancers and things like that. But I don't like them overly built with big muscles. I think it's a male characteristic.

Women bodybuilders should receive equal prize money according to John. In spite of having a negative view towards their involvement "everything should be fair and there should be no discrimination of any kind". Continuing with this anti-discriminatory approach he also addresses male inequities by citing evidence:

They don't have Miss Universe beauty contests for men, and there's lots of prize money. The Penthouse girls and Playboy girls get to win pet of the year and win cars and all this money, but nothing for men.

However, sex-role stereotyping ultimately negates his attempts at gender equity with claims that "I still believe you should have beauty contests for women and bodybuilding for men, and that the women should have the beauty contests as the male equivalent to bodybuilding". Traditionally, Western society has regarded beauty contests as a woman's domain whilst bodybuilding was for men. Some men feel cheated that women are able to cohabit their "world", such as in bodybuilding, while they have difficulty entering women's territory. Fear of being regarded as less than masculine or even feminine direct men away from these traditionally female-oriented activities.

Feeling threatened by having one's space invaded is common to men with the advent of the feminist movement. John does not have a favourable opinion of feminists arguing that "they are vocal and radical and very angry about males in general". Further it is believed they are "extremists who you couldn't please unless you wiped out the entire male race. They are going over the top and just trying to push the point too far". Unknowingly John is likely to have regularly associated with feminists throughout his life yet he claims to have met "only a few and they were actually like lesbians". In providing an analysis of lesbians he contradicts original perceptions that suggested they were angry women to now alleging he is

"not bothered by them". There are however, references to sexual fantasies as well as confessions of homophobia.

Lesbians, yeah doesn't worry me. I always try to bring a few home for my girlfriend (laughs) but she won't be in it. No it's just one of those things. Men in general don't mind seeing women together. It's a real turn on, but the thought of two blokes together sort of turns your stomach. I guess it's a double standard when you think about it. I mean occasionally I've gone to night clubs and there's floor shows with gay guys up there kissing each other and stuff like that. It makes me feel sick. But I've known gay men because a lot of them are in the gym situation and they are really nice people and don't bother me, but when you talk to them to see what they do and stuff like that, it's a bit hard to take. But, at the same time the thoughts of women hugging and kissing each other would excite me, would be great. Maybe it's only a problem I have. Maybe I can't handle it.

John has not led a sheltered life. Many years as a night club "bouncer" enabled him to witness shocking scenes concerning drugs. Consequently there exists a strong hatred towards illicit drugs because of their addictive qualities and ability to ruin people's lives. Conversely steroids, growth hormones and other such anabolic substances are gladly accepted without hesitation and with little regard for their negative side effects. A big supporter of steroid use, John is adamant that it must be controlled and that any steroid program should be administered under a medical doctor's supervision. Asked whether he had ever taken illegal performance enhancing drugs the reply was poignant stating that "I haven't taken them illegally because I've always had doctors that look after me". Once again he has seen the terrible results when bodybuilders abuse steroids or take dosage into their own hands. Often a bodybuilder is unaware of the steroids original source because of its illegal importation and selling on the "black market".

Once again it's like other drugs, like heroin and cocaine. I mean, someone takes some heroin and some donkey's cut it and mixed it with some other stuff and they take a shot of this and it's alright and next week they take the same amount and they drop dead because they've OD'd. Where the problem is once again is that it all comes on the black market. People go home and get a bottle of bloody something and fill it full of olive oil. It's unclean and someone buys it and shoots himself with it and gets bloody septicaemia, or blood poisoning, or

abscesses, or gets all sorts of things. The only real problem in bodybuilding though is there's never been really any deaths that I can see directly related. Somebody might have died with cancer, or somebody might have died with a brain tumour, and they blame it on steroids. But people die from cancer and brain tumours every day, even if they haven't seen a steroid or don't know what a steroid is. I think, from what I can see, it definitely has a place in everyday life because after a certain age your body stops producing as much testosterone and everything and then we start to get atrophy and muscle wastage, and then your body fat level goes up. It's the "growing old gracefully" syndrome which is a crock of shit. Because if you take stuff like this and are able to take a youthful outlook of all these things and improve your growth hormone and your testosterone and things like that, you won't get muscle atrophy, you won't get the bone decay and when you're 60 years of age you're still gonna have the body of a 20 year old, with sensible exercise as well. So I think down the road people will realise that is the way to go and it will be like women when they have hormone replacement for menopause and things like this. It will follow suit for males as well.

As an advocate for steroid use, John looks forward to the future. He claims that "we have a natural shut-off point where we drop dead at 180 years of age and there is no reason we can't get close to that age with the use of steroids". Personally he believes that his physique will continue to improve through to 60 years with the assistance of steroids and growth hormones.

By the time I'm 60 I'll be holding my own with the other guys that are 60. And I guarantee the fact that I will be taking steroids. I'm still trying to work out how to get hold of some cheap growth hormones as well, and get them on script from the doctor. They're too expensive, \$300 a bottle, and you need three bottles a week. So eventually they're going to come down. But down the road I want to start using growth hormones as well, and that will slow down the ageing process. I guarantee you, by the time I'm 60 years of age I will have a much better and bigger body than I have now. Guarantee it.

Notwithstanding the anabolic substances entering his body, John pays much attention to bodily requirements. Unlike many bodybuilders who gain excess fat in the off-season, a strict diet is maintained all year. Having chronic asthma as a child meant eliminating certain foods from the diet, including fatty fast foods, which resulted in "not being addicted to chocolate and junk food". He thinks of himself in terms of a car whereby "the brain is the

motor that drives the body to perform". However, it is essential for the body to have "good fuel in order to run smoothly" which is accommodated by maintaining a healthy diet.

Bodybuilding has helped John create a positive self-image. He argues that his body "looks good", but suggests that others may not find it so appealing.

I believe it looks good. Some people might think it looks repulsive because I've got too many muscles. As far as a bodybuilder goes, there are some guys I believe who look too big as well. They look a bit Neanderthal looking and overdone. I think I have a happy, good balance with my physique. It's pleasing, and most women, even if they're not into bodybuilding, find it nice and not overdone. It looks good on stage and competitive. It's a practical sort of body. I feel healthy, I feel good, I feel strong, I feel positive. All those things.

It is arguable that John is less confident about his physique than claims suggest. Restructuring his body from a small frame to a large frame, the possibility of regressing constantly looms. Having experienced this once before, precautions are being taken not to allow it happen again. Years of working in night clubs inhaling cigarette smoke has affected his lungs and also contributed to contracting Legionnaires' disease which in turn led to pneumonia. A subsequent massive drop in weight, and muscle bulk resulted, leaving him to ponder the future. Bodybuilding and the gym "scene" are his life and therefore involvement would not cease if he were injured or unable to train but it would change significantly to the current involvement.

I've had bad illnesses in the past where I couldn't train for 12 months and had Legionnaires' disease and I went down to about 40 kilos from 81 kilos. At first I was worried about muscle loss but then the survival thing kicked in and I started to worry about my existence. That's when I started re-evaluating my life and realised that bodybuilding wasn't that important. I needed other things as well, like a house, a family, and kids to carry on the name. I think I could cope with it because I could still have an involvement in the sport. I mean if I had an accident or I was crippled or something like that I could still go down to the gym. I could still coach or help people. I could still be a part of the competitions and stuff like that, so I don't think I'd sit home and cry and feel sorry for myself. I'd get off my arse because there's always someone a lot worse off.

The original intention of building a muscular physique to assist football, became an ambition to develop the best physique John could possibly achieve. Competition was therefore a "natural progression because you start off doing something that you know you are good at, but then you want to improve even more". A "normal human trait" is his way of describing competition. Claiming not to be smart, lacking a university degree and "hopeless with money", sport has always been an arena for competitiveness because this is an environment where he feels most secure and most accomplished.

I was competitive when I played cricket and when I played football. I wanted to be the bloody best. I always tried to be the best I could be. I believe not so much in trying to beat the next person as trying to beat yourself and trying to improve your previous performances. Now I'm competitive in this sense.

Competition and success are closely related where John is concerned. A high sporting achiever from an early age he places realistic, achievable demands upon himself. Claims that "trying to beat yourself and improve your performances" rather than "beat the next person" are unsubstantiated because much of his self-esteem is enmeshed in being recognised as the best. The only way of achieving such status is to compete and defeat every other contestant. At a recent bodybuilding competition, where he acted as a judge, there was no recognition of being the best and in many instances there was no recognition at all by young competitors.

I found myself not being known by a lot of the young bodybuilders, but I don't want to train bodybuilders like John Q. I had bodybuilders walking up to me after the comp and saying "Oh were you competing today?" and I said "No". They don't know who I am or what I do. They haven't got a clue. Didn't know me. It was quite humbling really because I was in a situation where a lot of the people knew who I was but all these new faces, up and coming people, had no idea who I was and any of my achievements or anything like that. It made me feel a bit funny. I thought "Well you haven't heard of me". So I said "I'm John P". "John Q?" "No John P. "Oh". Because you do sport, you're into gym, I thought "Shit! I'm gonna have to start competing locally so these people can see how good I am". But see, I haven't wanted to train bodybuilders, I wanted to get away from them. But I guess that was the ego kicking in when the young bodybuilders didn't know who I was or my achievements. So I felt really sad I suppose, a bit depressed. But I think that's probably just the ego thing. When I

see the comps I want to get up there, I want to compete, I want to pose, I want to be a part of it.

Being defeated, being left behind by the younger competitors and even being "washed-up" and finished are some of the thoughts John believes are going through others' minds. His masculine identity feels threatened by not displaying his physique then comparing it to, and defeating, other men on stage. However, claims that he can still beat these men remain unheard.

The promoter said it was a really good standard, but I could have ripped my shirt off and gone on stage and won the under 70 kilos anyway. I felt like I wanted to get up on stage and do a few poses just to let everyone see that I'm not competing, but I'm still good enough to compete and I've still got potential. That was in the back of my mind.

As a current participating athlete, past achievements cannot continually re-establish one's status in sport. John argues that "you are only as good as your last competition". Therefore in order to maintain a high profile repeated top placings in competition are required. Also, the standard of bodybuilding is rapidly improving together with increased depth which ultimately requires constant, uninterrupted training in order to be a winner. To be recognised as a leader in the sport of bodybuilding, winning is an essential component, something that John is acutely aware.

Well, the guys coming up who are big like Steve M., on my best day and on his best day I'd still be able to beat him. But if I don't pull my finger out and get back in the next couple of years, if I don't get into some serious training, they will start getting in front of me. I've beaten better bodybuilders before in the Eastern states, heavy weight guys. I've beaten them all day long over East. I was better than them. But on the day of the last contest where I was a judge, if I got on stage Steve M. would have wiped the floor with me. But me, on my best day, I would still beat him, and I still have that competitiveness in me. I want to do that but I'm just taking some time off for a couple of years and not getting too far out of touch. I will take care of business and get things happening and then come back. You know, after that weekend I felt "Well shit! I'm going to have to come back in here and probably do a light weight division or something just to get my face around so the people know me". The best publicity is people talking about you and word of mouth is the best sort of advertising.

John enjoys success and he thrives on the accolades that accompany it and the subsequent recognition. When people provide congratulations after a win it is analogous to "having a birthday" he claims, because "everyone comes along and gives you presents and sings happy birthday to you and you feel really happy". The analogies continue whilst John becomes increasingly excited in recollecting past glory.

Or it's like when you go out and you see this beautiful girl and all of a sudden you think "Should I talk to her?" You get to take her home and you get to "bonk" her and on the way home you're bloody jumping out of your skin. It's just unbelievable, you can't wait to tell everyone. It's the same thing you know. It's like having your first sexual encounter, like winning a million dollars in lottery, it's like getting your first car and sort of going for a burn in it. Every time you get on stage and you win it's just something really, really special. All the hard work you've put into it you just feel great. You're king of the castle for a day.

Despite the excitement and the euphoric feeling of being a winner, John maintains a pragmatic approach to sport and its subsequent fickle nature. He best describes success as:

...great but it only lasts as long as you do it. You work all year and you get on stage and compete, and as soon as you get off that stage everyone shakes your hand and thinks you're wonderful and stuff like that, then two weeks later everyone has forgotten about you. And if you compete next time and you come fourth or fifth, no one gives you the time of day. So you're only a champion, as long as you're winning.

Training is an essential part of bodybuilders' lives. A good deal of their time is spent in the gym "working out", but it is also a place where socialisation occurs. Similarly it is an important area in which their masculinity is socially constructed by displaying masculine attributes such as strength and musculature and receiving subsequent feedback. Positive feedback is used to assist in the development of a positive self-image and the promotion of self-esteem. Therefore it is vital that bodybuilders have constant positive reinforcement which is commonly achieved through the use of a training partner. At this point in his career John needs a training partner to provide motivation because the desire of his youth is no



longer present. He claims that "when I train by myself, I don't train good. In the old days it wouldn't matter, but I've been doing it such a long time". Further, his training has become a chore.

If I could look good without training, I wouldn't train. I don't do it because I like it, because it is hard work and most days you get out of bed and it's the last thing you want to do, but you have to do it. I feel good when it's done. Normally before I start I think "Shit. I wish I didn't have to do this". I'd rather do something else like sleep in. I guess it does make you feel better. Obviously it makes your body produce endorphins and things like that so you do sort of feel high after a workout. I've been doing it for such a long time. If you'd have asked me 10 years ago how I felt, it would have been great, it would have been probably better than sex. But these days I've been doing it so long I've gone off it. It's something I do because I have to, not because I enjoy it. I'm really glad when it's finished.

Muscles are important to John because he attains "respect from people" and "people look up" to him, yet they are not the sole priority of being masculine. Although remembering what it was like as a "skinny kid", he claims that "I didn't have many friends and I felt bad about myself" which entirely changed with the onset of a muscular physique. Feelings of pride are experienced when others admire him. However, being a bodybuilder is his chosen sport and a way of life just as any other man chooses to run his life. Moreover, it is argued that size is not the most prized component of masculinity.

I haven't got an ego problem. I was down the pub the other week. There were all the bad boys, the drug leaders and all those wankers down there. Every "fuckin(g)" week they're punching some poor "prick" out just so they can be a hero. It's all this male bonding amongst each other, like "I'm a tough guy" and then they run around and talk about it for the next bloody hour. I'm not into violence, I'd rather walk away from a fight. I could punch someone's head in but what's the point? I do what I do because I choose to do it. If I walk in, and I've got muscles and you haven't got muscles, I don't think I'm better than you. I don't think I'm more masculine than you. I don't think I'm a better person than you. It's just that, that's what I chose to do and I do it well. Whatever I choose to do I'm good at, but I don't expect everyone to look like me and I don't expect everyone to want to look like me. I can understand why they wouldn't like the way I look. But I do find that people don't like my body and then say "Well I don't like the muscles but you're not a bad bloke after all".

John has a firm view of what masculinity and femininity mean to him although they are stereotypically visually-oriented. Masculinity is a "physical appearance", someone that is "manly, well built and strong looking". Femininity is "sort of opposite" that is, "cute and cuddly". He believes he is one of the *sensitive new age guys* because of the caring attitude displayed towards women, but does not take into consideration factors such as equality in terms of sex-role stereotyping. Merely treating women with care does not constitute equality nor does it emphasise the underpinning notions of the *sensitive new age guy*.

I think you should treat everyone the way you want to be treated yourself. I'm not going to come home and say "Where's my tea you bitch. I want this done now", because I wouldn't want her to say that to me. If you care about something you look after it, you take care of it. I support my women. I like to buy them nice things and take them out to dinner and do stuff for them and they do things for me. I'm really appreciative for it so they cook my dinner and stuff and might do my washing, and I'll bring them flowers, buy them chocolates and stuff. Let's go to dinner. Let's go for a holiday or buy you something. I'll give them something in return. But if my wife was working 40 hours and I was working 40 hours, well we would do the chores together. But if I'm working and she's not working and she sits at home and doesn't do anything all day and says "I'm fuckin(g) bored, I'm this, I'm that" well I'd expect her to do the washing and cooking and cleaning and all that stuff. But if she's working full-time and I'm working full-time then we share the stuff.

From the "old school" John is adamant that "marriage is forever" and that the couple should be best friends before they decide to take the relationship further. Coming from a close knit family unit with no evidence of divorce, a good model has been established for him to emulate. Looking forward to the future despite breaking-up with his girlfriend, there are hopes they will re-unite and carry out the plans made together. If this does eventuate, he is confident his bodybuilding and business careers will prosper.

**NAME:** Tim

**AGE:** 27

**SPORT:** Bodybuilding

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Australian Rules football, cricket

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single

Upholding a professional attitude towards bodybuilding, Tim plans on taking the sport as far as possible. After a successful trip overseas where he was crowned Mr. World in his height class, winning the overall Mr. World and Mr. Olympia titles are now realistic ambitions. Having been involved in bodybuilding for eight years his relaxed attitude will help prolong involvement within the sport. His training routine has varied over the years and is presently based on a weekly program of four or five two hour sessions in the weight room. After an intense workout he describes the feeling as:

Basically very tired, you just want to sleep, just totally stuffed, yeah. I don't feel like I'm on a high or anything like most people do after training. Pretty well stuffed, just want to collapse.

Initially it appears there is little intrinsic desire for Tim to be involved in bodybuilding. Such claims as "stemming from childhood I was always impressed with big muscles and muscly men" are common amongst men, yet there are proportionally few who act on developing musculature. There is often an underlying motivational reason to account for men's attempts to restructure their physique through weight training. "An athletic type physique, but nothing special" is not an exceptionally damning judgement by Tim of his own childhood physique and would not imply a poor self-image, therefore other elements of his life need to be addressed before further analysis. His business-like approach to the sport gives the impression there is a lack of enthusiasm towards bodybuilding, which is difficult to

believe considering the enormous size of the man. Many hours of dedicated resistance training would need to be carried out in order to achieve a physique of such magnitude. The low key, methodical approach could be a strategy employed to keep his motivation constant and remain focussed on long term goals.

As a child Tim played several sports, the most prominent being Australian Rules football and cricket. He did not pursue them further than school level because, despite support, there was little guidance or encouragement from his parents, whom had divorced when he was very young. Being brought up by his mother, but still remaining in contact with his father, Tim claims to have had a good relationship with both parents. He believed they were not entirely comfortable with the notion of him becoming a bodybuilder yet, as evidenced throughout childhood, they supported the newly chosen pursuit.

They supported me in my sports I played. In the early stages of bodybuilding they weren't too sure about it you know, until I started training, proving that I was serious about it and started competing. Then they sort of got behind me. I mean, my father supports me more than my mother would anyway, but mum still comes along and watches.

Bodybuilding has forged an important unity between Tim and his father unlike any sport attempted in the past. Being raised primarily by his mother, Tim did not spend a lot of time developing a close relationship with his father despite him making attempts throughout childhood and adolescence. There are several reasons to account for bodybuilding creating a new element to their relationship. Bodybuilding is a diverse sport which usually requires an active decision to become intensely involved. Participants rarely "fall" into the sport and there are commonly inherent reasons for beginning. Further, bodybuilding is a way of life and to reach an elite level one must devote his life to the sport and make numerous lifestyle changes. Respecting Tim's decision, his father is proud that he has remained loyal to his convictions and is acting on the decisions made. This is often perceived as an element of strength in men.

Also, bodybuilding is the act of hyperdeveloping muscles, which are highly regarded masculine characteristics. Therefore in doing so, Tim is becoming more muscular in an attempt to prove his masculinity to his father. As a son, Tim sometimes feels inferior to his father and continually needs to prove his masculine worth. Ultimately rewarded by attention and support these elements are used as motivating forces to perform even better and make his father proud. Tim's assessment of the situation is more fundamental claiming that "I mean it's just that dads always take an interest in their sons sport I guess, more so than their mothers do. That's probably the only reason I guess". Tim could remain in bodybuilding for some time as a result of the closeness forged with his father through the sport. When confidence in the relationship has reached an equilibrium and the bond between them is complete, only then might he think about retiring, although this is dependent on him feeling close to becoming as masculine as his father. Only when Tim acquires the approval of his father will he feel he has achieved such status.

Team sports never really inspired Tim. Football and cricket were enjoyable yet he "didn't like having to put in the hard work" for the sake of the team. He says "I do like watching team sports but myself personally, I prefer individual sport because it is you and no-one else type thing. It's what you put into it, you get out of it". The choice of individual sports is wide and varied but there was something about the individual element of bodybuilding that appealed. Enjoyment is attained through watching improvement in body size and shape, which is easily detectable through measurement and visible comparison. According to Tim, it is the improvement and the striving to improve that provides the motivation to continue with bodybuilding.

I'm motivated to improve on myself each time I compete. Just basically my own rewards really because financially there are no rewards in bodybuilding at my level. To get to a level to earn money it's very hard anyway. It means moving to the US and stuff like that. But yeah, self-satisfaction basically.

Living in America to satisfy his bodybuilding desires is not a real alternative because Tim is afraid of losing the close relationship established with his father. Accordingly it would take "a pretty good offer" to persuade a change of mind. Also being "born and bred in WA" and having an established "live in" girlfriend, he is settled and content.

Tim's girlfriend is supportive of his sport and, similar to his success, is one of the top women "fitness physique" competitors in Western Australia having been invited to the last world titles. However, Tim is not over enthusiastic about women becoming involved in bodybuilding and would rather see their involvement cease at fitness physique.

I think that it's great for them to tone up, to tone their bodies and what not. Competing, yes to a point where drugs get involved. I mean a male hormone in a female body is disastrous really when you think about it. But competing in bodybuilding, for me personally, doesn't do much for me, but it's up to the individual I guess. Fitness physique is a lot more acceptable. The public accepts it better and it's a lot more pleasing to the eye that's for sure and the women are a lot more feminine.

Considering his negative assessment of women's involvement in bodybuilding, it is not surprising that Tim is adamant women bodybuilders should receive less prize money than men. Claims that women are not as good and have less public appeal than men are the primary reasons used to justify the comment. He argues:

Being the chauvinist I am, no women should not get the same prize money as men. Mainly, because I mean, even in all sports I don't think women should get the same prize money, because I mean, the top female tennis player wouldn't be as good as the twentieth ranked best male tennis player. No I don't think they should get the same prize money. In bodybuilding, no again I don't think so, because I don't think they're more of a crowd puller than males are I mean, how can I say it? You get more crowds going to a male bodybuilding contest than female bodybuilding because it is a lot more acceptable, but no I don't think they should get the same prize money.

Tim is not well informed on feminist issues. He doesn't concern himself with the politics of women's rights or matters of equal opportunity and states that "I couldn't really comment on it". Similarly on the subject of homosexuality his reactions imply homophobic

tendencies particularly towards gay men, whilst a stereotypical attitude is held towards lesbians. On lesbians he states:

Well most of them are feminists. So there you go. (laughs)

On gay men:

I mean as long as they know where they stand with me and I stand with them it's fine.

On gay men in bodybuilding:

I mean I haven't really seen it in bodybuilding here at a professional level. I couldn't really comment. But probably in the US. They say it's pretty horrific.

Tim displays a lack of concern for societal problems. It appears as if the problem does not directly affect him there is little cause to worry. Therefore politics is virtually disregarded stating that "I watch current affair programs and what not but no, I'm not really into politics. I'm more a Labor man than a Liberal man, I guess that's about it". Correspondingly, non-intrusive views are held about drugs in society because they are not a part of his life. "I never touch them." He suggests they will never be eradicated arguing that "recreational drugs are always going to be there because when there's a demand there's always a supply". However, a much firmer view is held towards alcohol and tobacco because of their far reaching and easy accessibility.

Well alcohol is probably the biggest downfall in society these days especially with families and what not. Cigarettes, they're probably just as bad in some ways except they probably just affect the individual more than other people with passive smoking of course. I mean because they're accepted, because they're such a dangerous drug both of them but they're accepted it's alright. But other drugs that are illegal aren't accepted so you know, they're twice as bad.

Despite being a drug that has the capacity to produce devastating side effects as well as being illegal in sports, Tim has an opinion about steroids that is similar to many other bodybuilders. He believes that:

If they could eliminate everyone from taking them it would be great, you know. Get rid of steroids. But if there's always going to be one or two that take it and have the edge then everyone should be able to, that's my opinion of it. I mean, I don't agree with them, but if someone else is taking them we should be allowed to compete at their level.

Steroid use is widespread at all levels of bodybuilding according to Tim, including amateur and professional, as well as recreational bodybuilders who merely want to "look good". It is noticeable that Tim is concerned about steroid use because it is a part of his subculture that does directly affect him. Knowing the documented side effects, he must make the decision to either take steroids in an attempt to remain competitive or else abstain and relinquish the opportunity to maintain the same muscular development as those who are taking them.

Steroids at an amateur level are very prolific. I mean, just living in Perth itself, I know what goes on throughout the gyms. I know what people do and it's quite alarming really, when you think about what people do. I mean, I know people who don't even compete, it's just the vanity reason, it's just to look good. I know people who take it to just feel good about themselves you know, make them aggressive, maybe doormen, maybe boxers and stuff. They do it to increase their aggression. At an amateur level it's just unbelievable what goes on. Not just bodybuilders alone take it. I mean, from every sport. Cyclists, you know just everyone, any sport that involves strength they're around. At a professional level well it's because their sport is their career. I mean, they sort of have to take it I guess.

The reality of steroids and performance-enhancing drugs according to Tim is "they're always going to get them through the black market or whatever". Therefore it would be far more advantageous to legalise their use and have a doctor prescribe them and monitor the athlete on a regular basis. This means that:



People will be able to monitor their health better, whereas if they get it through the black market they don't even know if they're getting the right stuff. They could be getting counterfeit stuff.

It may be contradictory that Tim has a relatively good self-image yet is never happy with his physique. He realises his large body with hyperdeveloped musculature sets him apart from most men in society, creating feelings of positive self-worth as a consequence. Yet, having chosen to devote his life to bodybuilding in an attempt to make it a career, the quest for perfection produces constant bouts of unhappiness and disillusionment.

I mean because I do bodybuilding and weight training I don't walk around as if I own the gym. But yeah, my self-image is alright. Although as long as I'm a bodybuilder I'll never be happy with the way I look I guess. I don't know. That's just me. Always looking on improving. I guess my body is at a competitive level, it's probably, it's symmetrical in the sense that I don't have many bad body parts. Nothing. Then again I don't have any outstanding parts that sort of overtake everything. I guess my symmetry is very good.

His body is where the future lies, therefore it must be looked after and cared for. Tim argues "as far as eating right and getting the required sleep I look after it more than well enough". Further, it is believed "the body is a machine" however, "it is the mind that drives it". Consequently the mind and body are perceived as dichotomous which is said to become increasingly evident nearing competition.

I mean, especially in the contest phase of competing when I'm dieting and stuff like that, it really becomes a mind game the final two weeks of competing. Mainly because your body is physically drained, but the mind sort of takes over at that point. That's what drives you on. It just keeps you going.

Success is important to Tim because in professional sport it means money. He defines success in terms of "definitely winning. I mean, the ultimate is to make money out of your own sport". The money can come from various sources including prize money and also from sponsorship endorsements. It is understood that potential sponsors are not after his "mind" but instead, he claims "I guess they're just after the body really". Because it's a

business, there is little chance of feeling exploited "as long as they give me something in return, that's all that matters".

Competition is regarded as distinctly different from success. Asked what the most important part of the sport was for him, Tim quickly replied with "competition because just being on stage is great. Just to travel with your sport is great, just to go overseas, just to compete". He says that being on stage is "a bit of a high once you get over the nervousness". He then argues that improvement is the primary element to competition. "It's like a runner trying to improve on his PB (personal best) times. It's to improve every time." Competition is also seen as a test "where all your hard work throughout the year can be displayed on the day. Of course it's to beat myself obviously but it's also to beat other people on stage". Beating other people on stage has not been a real problem since entering contests because Tim is always well prepared reflecting a professional, business-like approach.

To win is the ultimate feeling I guess. I've only ever lost and come second once. Even the day that happened was my first world championship and that was, in a way, still good. It wasn't such a downer. But to win at the worlds, the world championships, it was great. Yeah, a great feeling.

Bodybuilders do not often venture out of the security of their subculture, even when given the opportunity to fantasise. Tim was no exception when asked to describe the qualities possessed by an "ideal" man.

Ideal man. (Pause) I guess a great idol of mine would have to be Arnold Schwarzenegger because of his success in bodybuilding obviously and his success in business now. Yeah he's a great role model, someone you always look up to that's for sure.

Not having a female idol, Tim's description of the ideal woman is more stereotyped according to societal expectations as well as visual in orientation. She should have "an average build, nice shape, not muscular, not over muscular anyhow. Just a great figure and

a mind to go with it". It appears the mind is secondary to the figure. Furthermore, femininity is explained in just as simple terms stating that it's "just a woman that's all woman". Masculinity, however, is slightly more defined but still confused.

Masculinity. Well it's definitely not going down the pub with your mates and having a few beers. I don't know. I guess it's someone, a male who can express his feelings, show affection. I guess that's a sign of masculinity.

Despite earlier claims of chauvinism Tim does not believe he is a chauvinist because of his support towards equal rights. However, he comprehends little of the notions underpinning the equal rights campaign. Damning towards the *sensitive new age guy* movement and doubting these men's "consistency", he claims "you can go overboard" with equality.

Tim's relationship with his girlfriend is a priority in life. It is important to have a partner that is supportive towards his interest and fortunately she is involved in the "gym scene" as well. "Coming from two broken marriages on both sides of the family" he takes a cynical view of marriage but does not dismiss it totally, saying "I can't say all marriages are going to fail. It's definitely up to the two who actually get married". Respect is the major component in a relationship according to Tim and it should be the basis of marriage because "you just don't take your partner for granted".

Training takes up a large part of Tim's life. Each session lasts for two hours although when not training he is eating, sleeping or resting in preparation for the next session. Training is regarded as the "behind the scenes work" further establishing the sport of bodybuilding as a form of entertainment with the bodybuilders as the cast acting out their roles. He always trains with a partner and uses him not only for physical assistance in the weight room but also as a confidante and motivator during stressful periods.

I train with just the one guy. He knows how I train, what I do. You rely on a training partner in a lot of ways I guess. When you're dieting, they're good to

have just to pick you up when you're feeling down type thing. And when you're training in the off-season with heavy weights, you always need someone there in case something goes wrong. Just all round support I guess, and you do likewise, give the same back.

Many bodybuilders perceive Tim as an aggressive man with a "bad attitude" yet he believes his relationship with "fellow lifters" is amicable. It is claimed that "we don't all mix with each other but we don't ignore each other either. We're a close knit bunch and there's rivalry between us, but we all get on pretty well". He is condemning of the bodybuilders who are not at the elite level and do not take the sport as seriously as he believes is warranted. Such people irritate him because it reflects a bad image on those bodybuilders who take the sport seriously.

Most of them are "fuckin(g)" losers really (laughs), to tell you the truth. I mean, most of them are doormen, just total meat heads you could say. I mean, I know a few that are okay and you can't really generalise. Yeah most of them are alright but you know there are a lot of idiots in the sport as I guess there are in a lot of other sports, but it seems more prominent with bodybuilding unfortunately. But it gets a bit annoying when people take those small few and sort of regard the rest of us as the same

Due to his elite status and knowing the amount of effort needed to reach the top in sport Tim is appreciative of other elite sportsmen who partake in events that require elements of skill, fitness and endurance. His opinion of triathletes and surf lifesavers in particular, is high.

Great, I reckon they're great. I mean, I've never been an aerobic type athlete ever, even when I was at school. I was only ever good at short distance events and running and what not. I've never been a long distance athlete anyway so I sort of stuck to an area that best suited my body. But yeah I reckon it's great. I love watching it.

Tim rarely feels intimidated by other men. He knows that he is a world champion bodybuilder and is "better than anyone else at bodybuilding in a competitive sense", but he

doesn't regard himself as a better person as a consequence. In respect to masculine identity and the formation of self-esteem:

It all depends on how the other person comes across. Body language is a big thing. I mean, you could say that if a small guy comes in the gym, he's in my domain. Whereas, if I'm doing something he's good at, I'd probably feel intimidated.

Looking forward to the future Tim has visions of remaining involved in bodybuilding for some time despite experiencing injuries over the past 12 months. He partly blames this on age and length of involvement in the sport but mainly it is a result of lifting more weight in the quest for more muscle.

My poundages have gone through the roof in the last couple of years, so I've got to expect that. So it's just a matter of training smart and listening to your body really.

"Training smart" is the essence of longevity in the sport of bodybuilding and it is possible to be competitive well into middle age. Tim is not sure when retirement from competition will come about, because he is still enjoying himself and has not fulfilled all his bodybuilding desires. It is arguable whether he will ever give up bodybuilding, because fulfilling the desire of "achieving the perfect physique" will never eventuate according to the personal criteria set.

**NAME:** Steve

**AGE:** 24

**SPORT:** Bodybuilding

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Judo, rowing, rugby league

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single (engaged)

Bodybuilding is arguably the most important part of Steve's life. Despite weight training since 18 years of age as a complement to judo and rowing, he has only been seriously involved in bodybuilding for three years. At the age of 10 Steve's father died forcing responsibilities on him beyond his years. Steve matured quickly and, although having a close relationship with his mother, was ready to leave home at 17. After travelling a lot both overseas and interstate and living in numerous locations throughout Australia, he is now ready to settle in Western Australia with his recently engaged fiancée, with whom he is looking forward to married life.

Marriage is important to Steve because it "holds a lot of good things that I've been brought up to respect". It means a lifetime commitment and therefore, "you've got to know it's right the first time". A loner most of his life, he is happy to begin sharing his life with a woman. Having lost his father at an early age and not experiencing a family unit since 10, he is excited at the prospect of beginning a family of his own.

At present Steve is employed as a doorman at a night club to supplement the income from his personal training business. The business is gradually developing with increasing numbers of clients paying for personal training. He understands that being known and recognised as a top bodybuilder is the best form of advertising for such a business to prosper and so must win to ensure success and identification. Currently competing as an amateur, there are strong aspirations to soon turn professional because this is where the money and

recognition lies. Being a professional and having his body marketed and sold is important to Steve because in order to make a substantial income from the sport using the body as a commodity is the most lucrative approach. There is not enough money in winning one or two contests a year to sustain a living and therefore endorsements and sponsorships are primary means of support. He claims that "at a professional level all you are is a tool if you want to make money".

Quick to realise that his destiny lies in the size, shape and commercial appeal of his body Steve is methodical in his bodily maintenance. Diet, sleep and training are all strictly controlled although he argues they are carried out in such a manner that they are natural and not too stressful.

I'm very full-on with my diet, my sleeping, my eating, my training, but at the same time I try to get them in such a manner that I can do them while I'm relaxed. I try to get into a pattern where I eat, sleep, train and I do everything without having to think about it, so it becomes less stress to me and I can concentrate on other things like relaxing and enjoying myself, you know.

Living such a focussed life devoted to achieving the "ultimate physique", it is unlikely Steve will ever be happy with his body. Continually analysing and assessing body parts he is his worst critic because "there is always room for improvement". He claims that at such a high level of bodybuilding, thinking that his body is "far from perfection" sounds strange to people. Stranger, and also disturbing, is the belief he will never find perfection. Yet there are claims that he still has a good self-image and is happy being a bodybuilder.

I'm very picky on my own physique, so I'm happy with the progress I've made while I'm doing it, but at the same time, my self-image is good. But I always want to be better. So yeah, my self-image is good. I'm happy with the way I look now and I'm happy with what do. I like bodybuilding. It's something that I can work towards to perfect my physique and it's something that I enjoy doing. There's just so much in it, you sleep it, you've got to get the right amount of sleep, you've gotta eat at the right times, so really it's with you all the time. You can't be out with a meal.

Being a bodybuilder and living the life of a bodybuilder are essential elements of Steve's existence. His life revolves around the gym, where he trains and conducts personal training consulting. Otherwise he is a doorman, where the criteria for employment is to have a large physique, a consequence of being a bodybuilder. Further, his fiancée is heavily involved in weight training and is planning on competing in a fitness figure competition in the near future. Being heavily immersed in the bodybuilding subculture and weight training scene herself, Steve's fiancée is claimed to be totally supportive of his bodybuilding lifestyle. He states that "she loves my body and supports me 100 percent". Hence it is difficult to distance himself from the bodybuilding subculture because it is the core of his being.

The most important thing for me is the lifestyle. Living the life of a bodybuilder. It's hard to say that it's living a healthy life because I know that bodybuilders are definitely far from what most people call healthy. It's an extreme sport. Most people look at me and go "Ooh" but it's just what I've chosen to do and I'm happy with that. I'm very comfortable with what I'm doing. So yeah, it's the lifestyle, it's achieving and getting better and being positive and happy with the gains that I am making, that's what I find most.

Noteworthy is the comment that "bodybuilders are far from healthy", yet their obsessive behaviours are seen as a necessary, if not masculine, part of the sport. Having to take elements of their sport to extreme levels provides proof of dedication and commitment. Strict diet, regimented training schedules, the use of steroids and abstaining from certain pleasures leading up to competition are methods of displaying such proof. Women bodybuilders are also regarded as being involved in an "unhealthy" sport, however the perception of "unhealthiness" differs from men. That is, for men it is the act of becoming lean, of taking steroids and of training excessively that is regarded as not healthy. The end result that displays a muscly, vascular man with extremely low body fat levels is perceived as a picture of health. Whereas with women it is the end product of these activities that is critically analysed. For example, it is acceptable for women to diet but not to lose too much



body fat. Losing too much body fat is often equated with anorexia nervosa which is accompanied by a negative social reaction.

I don't mind the female physiques that do bodybuilding. At some stage it's not really healthy for a female to get such a low body fat, definitely for a female to get that low a body fat on stage. And maybe it's not that feminine either. In the off-season they look great. But on-season I don't really know. Sure they put a lot of work into it but it doesn't really do anything for me. I don't think it's really feminine. Fitness physique is definitely more feminine. I don't mind the more muscle, but not the leanness that they go to. The size is not too bad as long as they keep their symmetry and their female lines. I mean not the size like Bev Francis' size. I like a feminine type of size.

Accordingly, Steve claims to not have a problem with allowing women to compete in bodybuilding, although, as his criterion stipulates, they must look different to men and still retain visual feminine qualities. Even as a younger competitor and having only been involved in the sport for three years he feels ill-at-ease in allowing women to try and emulate men in a sport that is masculine in orientation. There are further claims that women's bodybuilding has a long way to go before it reaches the standard that men have set and as a consequence the prize money for women should not be as high.

The main reason being that men have to put in a lot more effort. Women's bodybuilding is not at the standard of men's bodybuilding. It takes a lot more years for us to get to the top as a male bodybuilder, a lot more hurdles, a lot more blood sweat and tears than it takes a female. So that's why I think the prize money should be more for a male. In fact the prize money's not that great even for the males for the work you have to do to get to the top.

Steve is non-committal in the appraisal of feminists and lesbians, whom he sees as two separate groups. If they don't directly affect his life then there is little to worry about. Statements such as "it never really enters my mind" and "everyone to their own" are commonplace because after all "they are women and they don't really affect me". Interesting though is the point made concerning gay men because other men do have the capacity to affect his life. He states that "they can be as gay as they want as long as they don't approach

me or make sexual innuendos towards me". Pretending homosexuality doesn't exist is his way of dealing with his own homophobia. He is obviously uncomfortable discussing issues relating to gay men in particular and argues that "gay men would not go for bodybuilder types that are my size anyway".

Far more at ease when it comes to discussing drugs in society, Steve has first hand knowledge of the situation being a nightclub doorman. The amount of young people taking drugs worries him and he believes it's frightening. Similarly, he is against the excessive use of alcohol due to the aggression that often eventuates. Admittedly, he claims:

I have a few drinks myself. I don't mind a few drinks, but I know the way alcohol affects me. I enjoy it when I have a few beers, have a laugh with my mates or whoever I'm with and I feel quite good, but sometimes there have been occasions when I would get paralytic and that's fun too (laughs). But, I don't like the people who drink and can't handle the drink, and there's a lot of them. So, basically it's a drug. At least other things make people peaceful. Alcohol brings out more aggression I've seen than anything.

Steve is prepared to talk about steroid use amongst bodybuilders albeit in a guarded manner. His opinions appear subdued and he is more inclined to condemn the legislation which prevents the legalisation of drugs in sport, ultimately directing people towards the "black market".

Steroids in sport. Well I think that's another unfortunate thing where it's got to the level that it's at. You are never going to get rid of it now but like anything, steroids are only a small part of the enhancing drugs you can get on the market these days. I don't disagree with it at a certain level under supervision. Definitely, that's the way it should be. It should be legalised, I personally think, so that the people can have it under supervision and be monitored and have these things checked. When it's illegal, they're going to do it anyway and that's where the problem starts for me, that is where you get the problems when people don't know what they're taking for a start. It could be "black market" stuff, it could be anything. They don't know how to take it, they don't know what amounts to take, they don't know what combinations work. At least if they went to a doctor, if it was legalised, at least they would be put on proper courses and have their symptoms monitored.

Young bodybuilders look up to Steve and constantly inquire about steroid use. This produces a difficult situation because he does not want to impart his convictions on enthusiastic young bodybuilders who may take such views out of context. By stating their value and the importance of a doctor to administer the drugs, the young men may begin steroid use immediately. Otherwise devaluing their significance may only make them more defiant to obtain drugs from any source, including "black market" racketeers.

I get a lot of questions all the time about steroids by young guys. It's really hard for me because I'm in a "catch twenty-two" situation. I want to say something to them, but what can you say to them, how can you help them? Because number one it's illegal. You find it hard to say something to them because you're going to get in the "poo", even for probably saying something. You can't say "Come and sit down with me, if you're going to take something. Take this and this is what to do". It's unfortunate that. So I just tell them to go and see a doctor to be honest, first of all, no matter what they are taking. Whether they are getting it black market or not. Go to a doctor and ask him to prescribe it. But I say "Look if you're going to take it, go to a doctor anyway. Tell him that you're going to take it. Tell him what you're taking and get things monitored anyway". You can't stop them. If they're going to do it, they're going to do it. I tell them to see a doctor and that is the best way. That's all you can do from my point of view. It would be good to have a doctor that knew what he was doing, they could go and see him.

Many questions are directed towards Steve other than those relating to steroids. The most common pertain to training methods and diet. Steve has a different approach to training than most other bodybuilders. He only spends 45 minutes to an hour, five days a week training with weights, however the training sessions are intense. He best describes his method stating that:

I prefer to call it quality training not quantity training. Some people try to add sets, reps and what not to push the muscle further. I prefer to just lift a lot more intensely over a short period of time which forces the muscle to grow. And as a consequence I find I get stronger all the time whereas other people who volume train I don't think get any stronger. It works good for me anyway.

Strength is an obvious desirable outcome of weight training although it still remains secondary to muscularity. The underlying notion of acquiring strength is its proportionality

to gaining muscle size. That is, the stronger the muscle, the larger it will be, which is diverse to the way bodybuilders trained several decades ago using lighter weights and higher repetitions. Thus strength was not a major consideration during this period.

The way I look at weight training is, it doesn't matter what you start out at. For example there's two blokes at 150 kilos and one might be able to lift 80 kilos and the other might be able to bench 50 kilos. But the fact of the matter is that it doesn't matter what their strength level starts out at. If their weights increase so will the amount of muscle that they've got. It's impossible to be able to gain muscle if your weights are not going up. And vice versa, if you're gaining muscle you know your weights will be going up. You can't lift more weight if you are doing an exercise in a strict motion without more muscle. It's impossible. You've only got so much muscle to lift a weight, that's my theory.

Training is never a chore for Steve stating that "it's the best part of the day". Although at 24 and having been in the sport for only three years enthusiasm is high and motivation is not a problem. Sustaining noticeable gains in size and strength, the sport's attractiveness remains untainted and continues to intensify in its appeal. Furthermore, having the ability to train comfortably alone or with a partner is an additional bonus, because should circumstances create a situation for one or the other to occur, Steve does not feel threatened by the change and thus continues to train comfortably. Training alone also provides introspection allowing attention to be directed towards specific aspects of training.

I'm training with a partner at the moment but I have trained alone. I do enjoy training alone now and again when I can do what I'm doing and get into my own focus and focus on what I'm doing.

Steve says that he is a loner and does not associate with many other bodybuilders, using reciprocity when meeting new acquaintances. That is, people he meets, whether they are bodybuilders or not, are treated with the same respect they provide him.

I don't really mix with too many people. Obviously being in the gym you come across other people. I get on good with anyone who treats me with the same respect. I give everyone the benefit of the doubt. I respect that person first. Unfortunately in the sport there are some bodybuilders who, like in any sport,

are "assholes". There's a few of them about and that's fine because they just nigger behind your back and you just let them get on with it. It's like any sport you have these people, although there seems to be quite a few in bodybuilding. (laughs) It's a terrible thing to say but from the way I see it, it's fairly true.

Despite being a bodybuilder and living the life of one, Steve does not have a high opinion of his fellow athletes in general. He is particularly severe on "lifters who try and live bodybuilding as an image" and suggests that:

They don't seem to have a balance in their life. There is one common thing between most of the people that do act like assholes, they're the ones that walk around with balloons under their arms and seem to treat it as living the image of a bodybuilder. I might be generalising but that's how I see it.

His assessment of bodybuilders does not provide a picture of athletes who are happy with themselves or intrinsically motivated to participate in their sport. Further, the analysis has been well conceived and recited in such a manner that implies having been stated numerous times before. It could be that Steve is reciting an assessment based upon himself.

Generally bodybuilders are probably people that are a little bit insecure. Bodybuilders are probably people that want an outlet in their life and want to do something for themselves, and that's it. Maybe they aren't quite happy with their physique or have female problems would probably be another one as well. I would think there are a lot of them like that. Not having problems but wanting to look better for the females.

The attitude towards fellow bodybuilders at the elite level is not so damning and in most cases it is complimentary, just as it is towards athletes such as surf lifesavers and triathletes. He appreciates the amount of training that is required to attain such a high level of fitness and respects them for what they are able to do with their bodies.

Awesome. Awesome. Very awesome athletes. I've watched what they do and it freaks me out. I have a lot of respect for them, like any other sport because, I mean, I try and run 100 metres and it nearly kills me. I mean, I've played a lot of sport when I was young and I was fit but now, obviously I am totally different, but yeah they're awesome.

When asked about triathletes he responded "Triathletes, cyclists. I definitely have a lot of respect for them too". Questioning about their smaller physique brought the response:

It's still the thing that they're doing. It's the mental image, it's the preparation, it's the determination and the skill that it takes to get there no matter what the sport is that I respect you know. It doesn't matter what the person is doing. I know at an elite level, in any sport, what it takes to get there and that's what I respect, that's what I see.

Still an amateur, Steve is looking forward to the future as a professional bodybuilder. Ultimate success in this sport is a lengthy process, but on reaching the top there is a strong likelihood that success will continue for some time. It is therefore possible to establish a career out of the sport if the athlete is good enough.

I want to become a professional and I want to win in about five years as a professional. I want to make it a career, a proper career out of it, enough to retire on, and obviously take my physique as far as I can in that time. I'm 24 now. I would say in about 10 years I will be in the sport and by that time I will be 34. I would say in two years I will be at a professional level so that gives me eight years at pro level.

Although prepared to travel overseas to events, Steve is settled in Perth for the time being. However, he understands there is far more money to be made in bodybuilding in Europe compared to Australia in terms of endorsements, seminars and exhibitions. As a money-making venture in the future, living in Europe for several years might be an option. Attaining money from the sport is a major consideration of Steve's and therefore winning the Mr. Olympia title is at the forefront of his long term plan.

That's the number one pro show. I mean that's the goal because that's the biggest magazine and he publicises them and that sort of stuff. I don't like what the IFBB (International Federation of Bodybuilding) stands for as far as Joe Weider because it's all publicity and there's probably a bit of politics at the top there, you know.

Having made money from the sport of bodybuilding Steve would like to stay involved in either an official capacity or by writing articles for bodybuilding magazines. For a lot of men disengagement from sport is a difficult process and he is already preparing himself for this period. Realistic in coming to terms with life at the top not being indefinite, he must therefore plan for all aspects of the future, not just financially but also keeping his self-image and self-esteem intact. Respect is a major element in achieving such a goal, particularly for men who have retired from sport, because they sometimes no longer feel worthy of staying involved in any capacity.

Well hopefully, if I have been at a professional level long enough, I would like to continue putting input into the sport and I would hope that I have reached a level of respect that others will listen to my opinion. I want to take up writing and I would then be interested writing articles for magazines. So somehow be in the sport at a bit more of a commercial level and sit back a bit, you know what I mean. At a more professional level.

Steve has a distorted view of his body and harbours significant insecurities as a consequence. Although having developed a massive hypermuscular body there are still underlying notions of being small compared with other men. He best describes this distortion as analogous to the way in which anorexics distort their bodily perception, yet in the opposite manner.

To be honest I don't feel I'm big until I see myself in the mirror. My mind doesn't sort of mix with my body. But my mind is like, it takes it all in as a normal person. When I'm sitting here talking like a normal person, I don't see myself. When I'm walking along and I look in the mirror I say "Jesus Christ, how big are you". I don't feel that big, I feel like I'm your size. Even now you're looking at me and I feel like I'm your size, I feel on the same level, that's just the way I feel. That's probably why I have got to get up on stage. I feel pretty insecure when I get on stage, quite often. I don't feel very big, I feel a bit skinny until I see myself in the mirror. It's a bit like anorexia you could say in a way I guess. I was talking to my girlfriend, about it the other night actually. I mean it's something to think about. When I thought about it, when I feel that way, considering the size that I am, I shouldn't really feel small when I'm on stage. I guess I have insecurities when it comes to that I guess.

Furthermore, minutes before going on stage and winning at the recent State championships, Steve admits to feeling small according to his personal criteria. Once again the battle for size, muscularity and perfection appears to be never ending.

I felt small to myself, because I know what I want to do. You know, all the way going in I said to myself, even just before the comp, I said "Yeah this is good, but I can't wait for this comp to be over so I can get better", because it's part of getting better. That's just a bench mark for the comp next year.

Consequently Steve admits to never having feelings of being more masculine than other men. Although it is arguable that his size and strength at time do make him feel more superior. As a nightclub doorman he uses these attributes to deter others who are not so big from causing fights and other such problematic situations. Therefore he knows that his physical presence is capable of intimidating smaller men without having to display what his body can do. Such a phenomenon is likely to make an individual feel more confident and self-assured. When asked to describe himself as a man he was noticeably more positive stating:

I'm a very strong person, mentally strong with my goals. Very mentally strong with my morals in respect to my family, and people around me in general. The way I see myself is a very strong moralled person basically, as a man and I have all the feelings that any person could have. So I have very masculine, manly feelings as well. That's the way I guess I see myself.



**NAME:** Rob

**AGE:** 30

**SPORT:** Bodybuilding

**SPORTING BACKGROUND:** Judo

**MARITAL STATUS:** Single (divorced)

Born and raised in Perth, growing up in a working class family, Rob was the only son of three children. The relationship with his two sisters was loving although not exceptionally close. In like manner the relationship with his father was congenial but somewhat distant in terms of emotional support. On the other hand he claimed to be close to his mother.

I had a good relationship with my parents. A close relationship with my mother and more of a different relationship with my father. I would say this is because my father doesn't involve himself in the politics of the house. Never has and never will. Basically my mother ruled the roost and took control of the house.

As a child, sporting participation was not a high priority for either Rob or his parents. Therefore feelings of necessity to pursue sporting involvement were rarely harboured. Engagement in sports was of Rob's own volition and his parents were non-committal in their regard for the choice made. Only when he became serious about the sport of bodybuilding did they display any response.

My mother thinks I'm too big. My father's in two minds. He's quick to criticise but he's quick to defend me if someone criticises me for my size. So I think he's moderately proud of me, but he'd probably prefer me to have a job than to do that. But my mother quietly smiles and says "Too big, too big". But generally they don't care.

Of significance within this statement is Rob's comment pertaining to his father's criticism and subsequent defence of him. His father cannot justify the time involvement for a narcissistic sport like bodybuilding yet paternal instincts override any criticism from others in defence of his son's judgement. Despite not approving of bodybuilding, nor understanding the motivation behind the sport, he does accept Rob's individual choice and decision to commit himself to something that is important to his life.

Rob argues that he chose to pursue bodybuilding because it provided him with added strength. However, he immediately equates strength with size claiming that "the stronger you are the bigger you will be" and argues that muscle must grow in order for it to become stronger. Strength is an important factor in his association with the sport of bodybuilding, although bodybuilding, as the name suggests, remains the major priority for him. Discontinuing his involvement in judo, due to its failure to produce hypermusculature, is evidence of this notion. Despite the enjoyment attained from judo, size is more important than any benefits the sport has to offer. He states that:

I'm afraid of losing size in the summer. I was losing quite a bit of size very quickly so I have sort of put judo on the back burner for the time being. That's where I got the idea that losing size was due to aerobic activity.

Bodybuilding is like a drug to Rob because of its addictive qualities and has been this way from the moment his body began to show signs of muscular growth through resistance training. In the beginning however, he experienced a degree of discomfort as a result of his body's low level of physical pain tolerance to the new exercise regimen, and therefore it is reasonable to suggest there was a strong desire to pursue a predetermined physique. It is also arguable there was prior knowledge regarding the addictive capacity of the sport. Participation was not inescapable nor compulsory, however creating a larger physique was seen to be a consequence of addiction and therefore appeared to be a worthwhile obsession.

It's like a drug. You will begin. You will not be very good at it. You will put it away, then you will begin it again. And finally you will start seeing results. The moment you start seeing results it becomes like a drug and you won't stop. You'll have periods when you feel you are not achieving much and then you will have great short periods. But otherwise no, you won't want to stop. You will want to do it over and over again. You will actually go to bed thinking "What am I going to do tomorrow, what exercise am I going to do?"

An individually-oriented man, Rob does not conform to all of the male societal expectations. Close female companions outnumber his male friends which is indicative of his damning philosophy towards groups of men wasting time together in public bars. Spending time with a woman at a cafe or restaurant is far more appealing than being involved with a group of men in which the establishment of male hierarchy is constant. In like manner Rob has never been involved in team sports, always opting for individual sports instead. He claims that "I like a sport that I can basically rely on myself. I can prepare myself for the sport and not have to rely on other people". It is probable that such a statement is common amongst individual athletes. As a child, Rob may not have had either the sporting ability or confidence to be a team member because being a short child with a small frame, involvement in masculinised contact sports such as Australian Rules football and rugby would have been daunting. Whilst maintaining a small physique throughout adolescence into early adulthood, there was little chance of eradicating feelings of inadequacy where contact sports were concerned. Therefore developing a body that appeared to have the potential to play these sports was an appropriate solution.

Initially for Rob, embodiment of masculinity came as a result of physical musculature rather than as a consequence of physical capabilities. However, he has reached a point in life where being large and appearing muscular no longer provide the same excitement and positive effect upon masculine self-image. Competition is now becoming an important component in the construction of his masculine identity because he wants to show what his body is capable of doing, something which has never been realised before. Therefore a

compromise between bodybuilding and powerlifting has resulted with the ultimate goal to be the strongest man in the state, but without losing muscular size, definition or symmetry. The mind-set of a bodybuilder still exists and despite claiming that as a powerlifter he needs "at least one year of competition", he is unable to let go of bodybuilding.

I have no idea when I will stop. In the past I've said I will stop as soon as I find it boring and will take up another sport, but at this moment in time I haven't had major injuries, "touch wood". Until I have major injuries I imagine I will keep doing it. It is a drug. It's an addiction. Once you start it's very difficult to stop and when you do stop, for example if you were to go on a holiday where you couldn't find anywhere to train, you become very miserable, very depressed. I would have to get over that depression.

Insecurity is one of the main driving forces behind Rob's bodybuilding involvement. Low self-esteem, poor self-image and a depleted masculine ego are all recognised major components of this insecurity. Many insecurities are established during childhood with Rob's case providing no exception. He is constantly seeking new avenues to promote his ego and self-perception and bodybuilding is assisting this promotion as it fills a void in his life. The void that Rob argues is being taken up by his fervent commitment to bodybuilding is that of confidence and poor self-image. As he claims: "Confidence will boost that. Very much so".

Masculine ego is closely associated to confidence and the terms are often interchangeable where men are concerned. Rob craves attention and being recognised for both his physical appearance and strength. Formal recognition, such as success in competitions, is not essential because of the feelings associated with the praise and admiration from those around him. He enjoys hearing the whispers and watching others stare at him which means he is being noticed. Positive ramifications upon self-image are likely to flow on as a result together with improved overall confidence.

I like to be seen because it helps me do the bench press and if they don't see me I like to hear about it. I'm quite modest. I just like to hear about it.

There are certain exercises in which Rob excels and will repeat time and again to prove his strength at the expense of belittling other men. In this manner he is reaffirming his masculine identity by continually demonstrating strength. Because strength is widely acknowledged as a masculine characteristic, feelings of superior masculinity are constantly being reinforced.

In all honesty, I'm good at one particular exercise and I don't know anyone that is any better for my size. So generally I will rely on that exercise all the time and every time I feel down I will go back to that exercise.

Constant reassurance of his muscular physique, as well as confirmation of outstanding qualities, are vital for Rob's self-esteem. So superficial is the assessment of himself, and of others, that negative criticism adversely affects his masculine self-image and he therefore does not want to experience such critical appraisal. Evidence of this is provided in his description of the "ideal" woman claiming that "I actually need someone to tell me how wonderful I am. I need someone that is quiet and tells me how bloody wonderful I am".

Women are important to Rob because they have the capacity to be companions, friends, and lovers. However, he is critical of those women who do not conform to the "ideal" image he has constructed. That is, women who are not "quiet" or deviate from the "attractive, curvy and shapely" figure he has established as feminine criteria are harshly judged. Consequently, radical feminists, prepared to voice their opinions, are not well received because of their potential to threaten masculine hegemony.

Oh, I've got no time for them at all. I heard a quote once, it said "Feminism is about women gaining control over themselves, not gaining control over men". I think that's quite appropriate. They need to gain control over themselves not of men which is what I think feminists are trying to do at the moment.

Although he discusses feminism as a global threat to men it is arguable that Rob is more concerned about feminism being a threat to his own masculinity. The women he associates with are carefully chosen to ensure essential qualities of his "ideal" woman are present. However, increasingly there are less women who conform to such a narrow perception.

His confusion towards gender and the feminist movement is obvious as he struggles to understand the two:

Again hardened lesbians, I've got no time for. Radical feminists I call them. No, time for them at all. Otherwise lesbians in general, I'm quite for it actually. I've got many friends, by the way, who are bisexual, girls that is.

Further, Rob has difficulty in accepting women into the masculinised world of bodybuilding because the image constructed through this sport is not a feminine one. He cannot understand why women would want to compete or train to the same extent as males and claims that "I have a real problem with it. I don't see the need for it. I imagine they are very uncomfortable with being women at times". Accordingly, to hyperdevelop men's muscles beyond their genetic capacity is understandable and justifiable because they are "supposed to have muscles". On the other hand, the hyperdevelopment of women's muscles is regarded as odd because "people haven't got used to seeing female bodybuilders". Rob is adamant that bodybuilding does not suit women yet his statement suggests that society only needs to "get used" to it before the sport will be accepted. His earnest refusal to accept women's involvement in bodybuilding could be representative of the intimidation felt towards losing a part of his life that is perceived as a truly masculine domain. After all he is not in the sport to impress women, rather his desire is to impress men.

I've basically convinced myself that all I'm out to impress is males anyway. There's no female that's going to be impressed. Females don't get impressed by it at all, males do. I'm certainly out to impress males and you can see that other males are impressed.

The gymnasium is a comfortable environment for Rob. Surrounded by other men in awe of his physique and physical strength, his masculine self-image is heightened far more than when in the presence of women. However, immediately on entry into the gymnasium the act begins as he plays the role of a bodybuilder. This can be unnerving.

I would say over the last two and a half years I have been very comfortable. I'd even be comfortable going to a new gym. I'd be comfortable because of looking forward to showing off the moment I got in the gym, "This is what I can do. Is there anyone here that can do it?" However, I do get very nervous when I go to a gym. I get nervous because I'm afraid I'm not going to be as successful in lifting as I was the time before, or in past training sessions. That worries me every day. Every day I step into a gym I'm nervous thinking that I won't be able to lift as much as I have been able to in past sessions.

Regarding his role as a bodybuilder:

If I'm at my biggest, I'm in two minds. I'm actually quite happy to be on show. However, I become aware of everything I do. I don't say much, but everything I do I'm aware that people are going to be watching and again I want them to comment, I want them to be positive in their criticism. However, I'm afraid that if I show off or anything I will receive negative criticism and it's quite funny, but as a bodybuilder you are ill at ease to receive negative criticism.

Rob believes that men understand the sacrifices made to achieve the size and strength of a body such as his whereas women can only imagine. The sacrifices he has made to attain immense size and strength have resulted from conscious decisions. Certain aspects of his social life had to be curbed such as late nights, alcohol and diet range. The most significant decision made was the use of steroids which in turn has uncovered elements of hypocrisy in relation to his stance on drugs.

I'm totally against drugs in society. Unfortunately I'm not against drugs in sport at all. I think everyone should be competing at an equal level, either drugs in or drugs out. And as drugs are in at the moment I feel that everyone who wants to compete successfully needs to take those certain things. Administered in a professional way, whereby the person taking the drugs has a close association with the medical practitioner, yes definitely so. I constantly take steroids, and

generally most people do. Most bodybuilders and most people who are serious about what they do will take drugs, because there is no other way. The problem with the drugs is that it definitely becomes psychologically addictive. You see what the drugs can do and you rely on them. You rely on them to a large extent and when you don't have them you see the benefits reduce, not totally, but they are somewhat reduced and that's where the psychological addiction sort of takes over.

Another hypocritical factor in relation to Rob's steroid use is the claim that he looks after his body and only takes in healthy substances. He may have convinced himself to believe steroids are healthy, or at least making his body look healthy, when in reality the artificial growth substances are detrimental to the longevity of his body.

Rob bases much of his training on constant improvement. He requires the satisfaction of gauging added muscle bulk, improved symmetry or greater strength to elevate self-esteem. Continual change, regardless of accomplishments, is the essence of his improvement.

Constant improvement. If I don't see improvement I ask myself, "What am I doing this for?" I constantly change things. I couldn't remember what I did a month ago with regard to the weights I was lifting, how often I was going to the gym. No. Everything is constantly changing. Training and changing training.

Critical of bodybuilders and contemporary masculinity Rob does not like being categorised as "typical". He wants to be distinguishable from other men and in a superior class to bodybuilders he associates with. Masculinity means "strength, control and confidence" and is therefore opposite to his perception of the "new age man". He is scathing in his assessment of the movement known as the "sensitive new age male" stating that:

It's all bull shit. Most uneducated guys like myself aren't capable of putting too much thought into most things. They would do now and again in short bursts, but over a long period of time with a range of different females they're not going to be sensitive. You will always be sensitive around one or two different females over a short period of time but not for a long period of time. To me I see them as "woosy". I don't think they're the strong, confident, quiet type that are in control. I like a man to be in control.



Coming from what he believes to be a "middle class, blue collar family" Rob's perception of himself in respect to education is not high. His claim of being uneducated cannot be justified because he has a bachelor's degree in business and is studying towards a postgraduate diploma of business law. The working class upbringing is difficult to put in the past despite entry into university and attaining a degree. University came at a mature age and has had negligible effect on re-establishing his working class frame of mind. It has also been insignificant in changing the way he feels about his masculinity.

Rob believes that he is still "growing up" and argues that "I haven't quite reached manhood yet, both physically and mentally". It is common for men to define themselves in terms of their work so being a student makes it difficult to think of himself as a man. But this is "likely to change again when full-time employment comes around". The pressure to work is significant:

I wish I didn't worry about the pressures around me in regard to work and the fact that at some stage in your life you are required to work for a period of time. If I didn't have those pressures around me, if I was capable of not listening to them, not letting them control me and having an effect on me, then I would be happy with myself. Perhaps I wouldn't need bodybuilding to such an extent.

Being the eldest peer group member at university does not make Rob feel old or mature. On the contrary, he feels young although it does occasionally produce introspection thus making him contemplate life and the future.

When you have young people around you, it's quite funny, you're in two minds. You have young people around you and you're quite happy for it but then when you have them around you constantly you think to yourself, "How do I put up with this?" But I'm generally happy that they are around me. I mean most of my friends will be between 25, 26, 27, so they are a few years younger than me. But then again I look at them and I'd say that they are probably more mature than I will ever be. But I don't think that's bad. I would like to think that at 50 I was still feeling quite young.

The relationships formed with his peers at university are friendly but not close. They are however meaningful and enduring unlike those formed with fellow bodybuilders.

"Superficial" is a term that Rob uses to describe the relationships experienced with other bodybuilders. He is cynical about most and questions their motives, as opposed to his own where intrinsic motivation is the essence.

Some bodybuilders are not there just to get big, they are there to display their power over others and are very vocal in expressing their power. Quite interestingly, there are a lot of small people that are very vocal and very aggressive in the gym and I'm not quite sure why. These small people lack muscle development and definition and are not big at all. However, they believe if they wear the clothing of the bodybuilder, if they mimic the behaviour of what they perceive to be the bodybuilder, then they are one step closer to becoming the bodybuilder.

Narcissism is unavoidable in bodybuilding. Rob believes he is not caught up in the bodybuilding "scene" like some, but it could be suggested the association is similar. Despite not wearing designer labelled bodybuilding clothing or developing an artificial suntan he still acts out the role of a bodybuilder which is easily detectable. The narcissistic tendencies which include constantly looking in the mirror, measuring body parts and assessing other bodybuilders in a homoerotic manner are evidence of significant involvement.

Most men will look at each other through the corner of their eye. A lot of them are quite blatant in looking and quite interestingly they behave like women in that they're quite critical and quite cutting regarding individual features of the body. It tends to make you laugh at times.

In this statement it is worthy noting the manner in which Rob believes he distances himself from other bodybuilders when in reality he is the same. Also of note is the sexist remark that categorises male bodybuilders as women for having narcissistic tendencies. He is harsh in his appraisal of men who display feminine qualities and acrimonious towards gay men thus emphasising his homophobia.

If they keep to themselves, they don't promote it and they don't breathe down my throat. I couldn't care. As long as they don't touch me and don't use my cups. Look, I really don't care as long as they keep to themselves. It's simple.

Regarding Rob's marriage, discussion is limited to "divorce is coming". It appears as though this is a part of his life not wanted to be remembered and it is doubtful whether another serious relationship will eventuate in the near future because of the feelings of immaturity being harboured. Until he has graduated and is once again working on a full-time basis, Rob's life is virtually "on hold". Further, it appears the concept of his own masculinity is tied up in the capacity to work. Significantly he did not begin bodybuilding until entry into university which might suggest that bodybuilding is used as a crutch upon which to "prop up" his masculine identity in the absence of employment.

### Summary

A number of similarities exist between each of the men involved in bodybuilding, particularly in respect to the reasons that underpin their involvement in the sport. Notably, it was during their childhood that these men developed a penchant for large muscular physiques as a consequence of poor body-image and low self-esteem. Compared to children of corresponding age, they were all below average in height and size which made engagement in contact sports seem daunting. Despite one of the men attempting Australian Rules football and another, rugby union, these sports were abandoned during teenage years through fear of injury. As adolescents they did not have the necessary size to be competitive with bigger boys of similar age.

Only one of the men had a father who took an interest in his childhood sporting endeavours. The other men received minimal sporting recognition from their fathers, or

parents. It was an element they were mindful of and a factor involved in the perpetuation of an already low self-esteem. It appears these men are continually searching for something they cannot have. All desiring the perfect physique, they are doomed to fail because it is unlikely there will ever be contentment with the physique constructed. Having had a low self-esteem and negative body-image all of their lives, it would be difficult to suddenly develop a positive self-image. Being accustomed to negative self-perceptions it is likely they would feel most comfortable maintaining such a manner. Consequently, the reconstruction of a new self-image will take time.

Bodybuilding consumes most of these men's lives. They can train up to two hours a day in the gymnasium, and, when they are not training, two of the men either work in the gymnasium as personal trainers or recuperate in an effort to fuel their bodies for the next training session. The other two men go about their daily tasks mindful not to over exert themselves, remembering muscles require total recovery to produce maximal growth. Such is the mindset of these bodybuilders, continually thinking about physiological requirements to induce optimal muscular development. Comparing the four men it is evident that eating patterns are almost identical. The foods eaten are similar as are the vitamins and protein powders. Only the brands vary whilst the quantities remain the same. Then there are steroids, and, as mentioned by all of the men, steroids and other illegal anabolic substances are a necessary part of elite level bodybuilding. Two of the athletes admitted to their use yet, all of the men are elite bodybuilders.

Competition was perceived to be an important part of bodybuilding but it was not the driving force behind the men's involvement. It seems competition is a form of justification for being a "bodybuilder" thus providing legitimacy for their bodybuilding involvement. Two of the men only compete once a year while another has not competed for several years. This man is still widely respected as one of the best bodybuilders in the state and regarded as a mentor by many young bodybuilders. The most important thing about the sport for these

men is size. They all want to be big and they strive to be bigger. Size is the mark of success which satisfies them as much as formal competition because every time they walk into a gymnasium they are competing against other men to determine who is the largest and therefore, who is the most masculine.

## CHAPTER 8

### Discussion

This discussion aims to compare and contrast the similarities and differences that exist between elite male athletes involved in triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding. Emphasising these elements will shed light on reasons underpinning men's participation in selected sports. It has been argued that sport is "a fundamentally sexist institution that is male-dominated and masculine-oriented" (Theberge, 1981, p. 342). It is my contention that not all sports are male-dominated and masculine-oriented, although some sports are more so than others. Triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding are examples of such sports with disproportionately high numbers of male participants compared to women. Therefore the question, "Why do men choose to participate in particular sports over others?" requires an answer. Such an inquiry will provide the foundation upon which additional questions can be addressed, particularly those in respect to masculine hegemony, masculine ideology, body image and factors affecting the social construction of masculinity as it relates to sport.

### The Sports: An Overview

#### Triathlon

The sport of triathlon is a gendered activity. The triathletes interviewed in this study are participating in a sport with separate gendered cultures. For these men triathlon is a male

dominated world. Only when asked specific questions did they acknowledge women's involvement in the sport. Consequently they found it natural to equate masculinity with triathlon, physical fitness, endurance and tolerance to pain. Triathlon competitions consist of separate races in the one event. Men and women, and now, age group competitors begin at specific time intervals with the overall finishing time adjusted accordingly. The elite level men are regarded most highly. The majority of attention is focussed on these athletes because they are frequently given the privilege of beginning the race five minutes before the women and age group competitors. Consequently they are immediately rewarded for their physical capabilities which ultimately illuminates and reinforces the differences between sexes as well as differences between groups of men. A structure of power and dominance is formed by emphasising the elite male triathletes ability over the women and the lesser talented men who must compete in the ensuing, inferior esteemed, age group race. Inter and intramasculine hegemony is thus operating to provide the dominance of one group at the expense of other groups.

### Surf Lifesaving

Society has created a healthy image of male surf lifesavers. Regarded as an archetypal man, they are perceived as strong, muscular, robust men with bronze, sun tanned bodies. It is the visually-oriented muscular appearance which captures the attention of many people and dupes them into believing all surf lifesavers are highly masculine, finely tuned athletes. This is not necessarily the case. Those within the surf lifesaving subculture realise that ironmen are the fittest surf lifesaving athletes but, this does not immediately equate to the perception of being the most masculine. The surf lifesavers interviewed regarded "the boaties" who row the surf boats, as the most masculine men in surf lifesaving because of their ruggedness

and immense size. Generally, it was agreed, "the boaties" acted like "animals" which further enhanced their masculine reputation. So, although society perceives ironmen as the epitome of masculine surf lifesaving, the ironmen, themselves, believe differently. Still, they have extremely positive opinions of themselves knowing they are the fittest surf lifesavers and being regarded by society's ideals as highly masculine individuals.

### Bodybuilding

Bodybuilding represents an extreme form of masculinity. Men involved in weight training frequently call themselves bodybuilders, however it is elite male bodybuilders who display exaggerated behaviours typical of men involved in this subculture (Klein, 1993b). Bodybuilders at all levels, will be able to identify aspects of their lives and emotions within the current text because despite the elite men being distinctive from one another, they each embody the lifestyle and subculture the sport embraces. Their association with the sport may be different, so too their reasons for participation, but their commitment cannot be questioned. Gaining size is a major component of bodybuilding which is suitably highlighted by Klein (1993b) when he stated:

Bodybuilding is a subculture of hyperbole. In its headlong rush to accrue flesh, everything about this subculture exploits grandiosity and excess. Not only are the bodies in this world large, but even descriptions of them are extravagant. The goals of competitive bodybuilders are not simply to become champions but to become Mr. Olympias and Mr. Universes. (p.3)



## In The Beginning

### The Natural Triathlete

A number of issues must be investigated before understanding how and why hegemonic masculinity is established by elite male triathletes. Of equal importance is how and why did triathlon come to play such an important and central role in the lives of the triathletes interviewed. All of the men began their triathlon careers through the recommendation of a friend or an acquaintance. On completion of their first race each man unanimously agreed to being "hooked" on triathlon. Therefore, the quest to achieve better results and develop into an elite level competitor appeared to be a logical progression for these men. Perceiving triathlon as *their* sport from the beginning, the triathletes believed they had been gifted with a "natural" talent. A sense of positive self-worth resulted from notions of "naturally" belonging to the sport, similar to finding one's niche in life. Consequently, they displayed little hesitation in devoting significant time to becoming elite level triathletes despite understanding that their involvement in triathlon was going to be an enduring one.

Clearly, being a "natural" at one particular sport is highly questionable because, as cited, only a few sports were attempted during childhood and adolescence. It could be there is another sport, yet to be tried, that might be more naturally suited to them. Consequently finding the sport that one is gifted with "natural" ability is a contentious issue. Being an outstanding swimmer, cyclist and runner does not predispose a man to a life of triathlon competition any more than it predisposes him to a life as a lawyer, an academic, or carpenter. There are many influencing factors impacting on the athletes interviewed that has led them to their current association with triathlon. Although they regard their involvement as a logical progression they all spoke of common experiences and motivations that have helped

formulate their connection. Relationships with family, with women and with other triathletes were all meaningful to each of the men. The manner in which these social experiences have affected their lives differs thus highlighting the meaning of triathlon involvement in relation to their masculine identity.

### The Natural Surf Lifesaver

A sense of naturally *belonging* to surf lifesaving pervaded these men's perceptions in respect to why they participated in the sport. Having fathers previously involved in the surf lifesaving "scene", and in some instances other family members, surf lifesaving seemed to be a "natural" part of their lives. From an early age much of these men's lives were consumed by surf lifesaving not just in terms of training and socialising, but also pertaining to family concerns. For two of the men family involvement meant constant interaction with surf lifesaving at varying levels. They would focus attention on aspects of training, competition, rival athletes and general surf lifesaving matters. Consequently the men felt little need to seriously contemplate exchanging the sport they had grown up and developed with for another, even though others were attempted. In most instances the attempts were only fleeting because their endearment towards surf lifesaving rendered their sport beyond reproach. The strong family association also made it feel natural as if it was "meant to be".

The complexities of mastering surf lifesaving's associated water craft together with the perplexing elements of nature make the concept of being a naturally gifted surf lifesaver difficult to substantiate. Long, intense training hours are required to become expert in this sport, however there are still a number of influencing factors that impact upon the athlete in determining overall success. Further, since these men have devoted themselves primarily to surf lifesaving it is impossible to establish whether or not natural talent lies in other sporting

domains dissimilar to surf lifesaving. On the other hand, the men exude a noticeable passion for the sport as well as obvious ability, regardless of its motivational or genetic origin.

### The Unnatural Bodybuilder

The elements that lead a male bodybuilder to his sport are complex and yet, simple. They are complex in terms of the underpinning psychological reasons that influence him to gravitate towards a life of bodybuilding. On the other hand, the consequence of these psychological ramifications is simple in that bodybuilding is used by these men in an attempt to heighten self-esteem whilst concealing flaws and inadequacies. Ultimately they lead a life of false ambiguity and one that is *unnatural*. Much of their lifestyle is unnatural as they attempt to hide behind the freakish looking, hypermuscular body constructed in an attempt to mask self-identity problems (Klein, 1993b).

In developing oversized physiques the men must partake in unnatural acts, both physically and chemically-oriented. Bodybuilders spend a good deal of their time training to attain size and when they are not training they are concerning themselves with sleep, recuperation, food and the intake of chemicals such as anabolic steroids and growth hormone. Their unnatural life can also be regarded as one of excess despite being confined within a limited range of lifestyle factors. Big muscles, large physiques, massive quantities of food, and long hours of sleep and recovery are testimony of bodybuilding excess. However, it is the use of physiological chemicals, already produced by the body in adequate amounts, which emphasises the lengths to which these men are prepared to go in order to satisfy their inadequate self-identity. The men understood from the beginning the obsessive lifestyle that bodybuilding demands. They were prepared for an unnatural existence and were under the impression that if they continued for long enough, bodybuilding would

become an addictive, normal, almost natural way of life for them. In some instances this addictive, routinised lifestyle was appealing by helping to provide direction and meaning to their lives.

### Family Influences: A Description

The family plays an important role in the lives of the four triathletes. The men's initial responses to questions pertaining to parental support were almost exclusively centred around their fathers. Whilst acknowledging their mothers' opinions, more concern was displayed towards their fathers' reactions with respect to their sporting involvement. Accordingly, a neutral stance was taken by the mothers, unlike the fathers who either approved and consequently provided support or else simply abstained from encouraging and recognising their sons' sporting involvement. That is, several fathers displayed no interest in their sons' sporting participation or esteemed athletic achievements. One man was bitter concerning his father's lack of sporting interest in him, so much so that on occasions throughout the interview he periodically referred to his plight as a child when discussing seemingly unrelated topics. Disheartened at the absence of interest shown by his father he has no paternal inclination. The ramifications of such a leaning are more complex than simply not having children. As a consequence the experience of fatherhood will never be afforded nor will the possibility exist of forging and sustaining relationships with children through to adulthood. The possibility of loneliness as one grows old is high in men such as this because, like this athlete, he is limited in the partners that share his same view. Two broken marriages and a third long term de facto relationship have all succumbed to the non-procreative stance taken. Therefore loneliness may be a reality in the future without a partner and no children.

Sharing success with family members is important to these men. Triathlon is an individually-oriented sport and somewhat selfish in nature particularly for those in pursuit of elite status. Long hours are spent training alone with no communication. Likewise, interaction between athletes during the course of an event is minimal. A triathlete can feel alone, even lonely, during a race despite the numerous triathletes competing and spectators watching the event. On completing the race, lasting anywhere from one hour to 10 hours, the triathlete typically seeks attention from the people closest to him. In most cases it is his family because they will be aware of the effort applied and the sacrifices made to have qualified him at such an elite level. Therefore sharing his success with those who have supported him throughout is a form of repayment by the triathlete. Ultimately his feelings of self-worth are enhanced because he is giving back something that is so important to his being to the people he loves most. Every time one of these triathletes races his reputation and ability is being questioned. He feels as though he has to prove his ability to everyone including his family because triathlon is the activity in which he is supposed to excel. Moreover, triathlon is where he constructs his own masculine self-image using success to create a positive self-esteem. Without success the triathlete believes he has nothing to share which means he is unable to repay his family and those he loves. It is analogous to the case in which men feel inadequate if they cannot provide financial security for their family. Their position as "breadwinner" is questioned together with their masculine identity because of Western society's traditional perception of men as the provider and protector of the family.

Having respect for one's parents and acknowledging their experience-laden advice is important in a man's non-physical development. However, too much acknowledgement of advice may be detrimental by eliminating essential elements of a young man's individual decision-making skills. A young man must first recognise all the alternatives available to him, then he must choose an option and finally decide how to act upon his decision. In receiving too much advice the options are reduced and the choices are limited.

Consequently, the action implemented may be appropriate for the advice provider, however may be unsuitable for the young man who needs to develop a sense of individuality but is too afraid to take responsibility and decide for himself. Only one of the triathletes interviewed has had to deal with such a predicament. He is struggling to come to terms with his intrinsic competitive triathlon desires on the one hand and parental obligation to secure steady reliable employment on the other. His strong sense of obligation and lack of experience and maturity where decision-making is concerned is creating insurmountable personal pressure because, until now, there has been little need to make life altering choices. Approaching an age where men in Western society are supposed to have certain *things* if they are to be successful in the future, namely financial security and a wife, at this point he has neither to which his parents express their concern.

The importance of the family for the four surf lifesavers cannot be emphasised too highly although one family member stands out amongst the rest. A patriarchal system operates within each family whereby their fathers are the dominant and controlling force. Only one of the men has a working mother although her financial contribution to the family, derived from employment as a casual nurse, is insignificant compared to his father's income, as the manager of a bank. The other men's mothers are "house wives" while their fathers are the sole financial providers. Established at an early age, the surf lifesaving men came to view their fathers as the most significant member of the family and someone with whom they could identify and try to emulate. Still, their mothers played an important function in the overall development of these men during childhood, adolescence and now as adults. Each man noted the stability their mother provided the family as they were growing up. Thus, in a period marked by rapid change and development this stability was the one factor that seemingly remained constant and was cherished accordingly. The men spoke of coming home after school and knowing their mother would be waiting for them, often with treats to eat. They also spoke of their mothers knowing little about sport which did not bother them

because the conversation would not have to revolve around surf lifesaving as it did most times with their fathers. With no talk of training, racing or opposing competitors the time spent with their mothers offered comparative light relief. They were able to act like normal boys in the presence of their mothers and not potential elite athletes, which was imperative during specific periods of their development.

The surf lifesaving men all talked of having forged "strong", "healthy", and "close" bonds with parents. Noticeably, minimal reference to sibling kinship was mentioned other than alluding to them being "normal" and "like most other" sibling relationships. Another feature common to each of the men is the lengthy period in which they lived at home with their parents. Such are the close knit associations between themselves and parents that moving out on their own seemed inappropriate. They were in their early 20s when three of the men decided it was time to leave, whilst the fourth man, who is still 19, is adamant upon staying until his mid to late 20s, similar to his older brother, who has remained at home. The family is an important support mechanism for these men because they know they can rely on its members to provide encouragement and motivation. Years of helping each other have provided a positive environment in which these men are afforded the privilege of feeling good about themselves regardless of competition results. Their masculine self-worth remains intact and is propped up and continually reinforced by the nurturing and supportive domain in which they live.

The families of three of the bodybuilders played a less important role in their sporting endeavours. Claims that their parents were disinterested in sports are common amongst these men. However, it is significant to note that in these three instances, their fathers were central to their claims. One of the fathers died when the athlete was a child, another divorced and was unable to see his son frequently, whilst the third father was an older man and not interested in sports. The bodybuilders' relationships with their mothers have always been congenial and pleasant, as they are now. These women were never entirely interested in

sports yet attempts were made to provide support where possible. However, support, encouragement and recognition was not what these men were seeking from their mothers. All that was required from them was love and care, just as they had always provided. It was their fathers from whom they sought these elements of approval from. With little motivation to encourage participation in sports, childhood and adolescence passed without significant sporting involvement. Consequently, bodybuilding is the first sport these men have committed themselves to on a long term basis.

The oldest bodybuilder of the group is dissimilar to the other three men in respect to family involvement. Proud to recognise his family's support, he cites this as a major factor in his bodybuilding success. Growing up in an extended nuclear family where loyalty was a priority, there has been unfailing encouragement from parents, grandparents and siblings, while further inspiration has been derived from aunties, uncles and cousins. Importantly his father's recognition has been constant and dependable, although recognition from other men within the extended family has positively impacted upon his feelings of self-worth. In his research on the lives of 30 former athletes, Messner (1993) highlighted the importance of men such as older brothers, uncles and even close male friends of the family who serve as teachers and athletic role models. Further, being successful at sports themselves additionally provides a standard of achievement against which to measure oneself. Noteworthy however, was the importance the men in Messner's study placed on the relationship between themselves and their father which was similar to the men involved in the present research.



## Relationships with Fathers

### Triathletes: In Search of Approval

Living up to the expectations of one's father was a high priority for the elite men of triathlon. From an early age they all believed that sport was a means to impress their father because "that's what fathers expected". They also believed that by fulfilling their fathers' expectations they would forge a closer bond with their father, whom they generally looked up to as a role model. As boys they were aware that sport was dominated by men and they recognised the interest and attention that men paid to particular sports. Therefore they believed that, as men, their fathers would also pay attention to them and be impressed if they participated in one of these sports. The beliefs held by these four men were thwarted as boys because none of their fathers took an overriding interest in their sporting ventures. Three of the fathers would turn up to sporting events as a course of fatherly obligation to their sons but with no real commitment or concern whilst one father took no interest in his son's sports and did not turn up to watch him perform in competition. Ultimately, behaviours such as these can have a lasting detrimental effect, not only on the boy's sporting participation but also on the boy's relationship with his father. At an early age it is difficult for the boy to understand why his father is not taking the same interest in him as other fathers do their boys, and other men do with the more masculinised activities such as the contact sports of Australian Rules football and rugby.

For these athletes, triathlon was the last sport attempted following a series of both successful and unsuccessful efforts at other sports. Each achieved success in at least one sport as a boy, however this did not provide enough motivation to warrant them continuing that sport to adulthood. Having attained little recognition for their achievements from their

fathers the boys may have been searching for a sport that would ensure their attention. Therefore their commitment to their early sports may not have been as a result of intrinsic motivation but as a result of craving attention from their fathers. The men were all adults when they involved themselves in triathlon and by this time the attention, or approval, from their fathers was not essential, although it was still important to them.

A boy often uses sport as a means of identifying with and living up to the dominance and power held by his father (Messner, 1994). This is particularly so if the father was seen as a sporting hero himself. Of significance is that none of the four triathletes' fathers were heavily involved in sport at all as children which may account for a lack of interest in their boys' sporting endeavours. Consequently, in seeking approval from their fathers, the boys sought different sports in the hope of achieving much wanted recognition. Unfortunately, having fathers with little or no interest at all in sports, the men missed the opportunity to develop a closeness with their fathers through the masculinised institution of sport.

As a man, and no longer seeking the approval of his father, the athlete may have decided to pursue triathlon as a backlash against his father's disinterest in his sport. The backlash is significant for these men because they have chosen a sport that requires major commitment. Triathlon is not a sport in which elite level athletes can "get by" on minimal amounts of training. To gain elite status the triathlete must be prepared to commit much of his life to the sport. Such a lifestyle is completely opposite to the way in which their fathers conducted their own lives and suggests that these men may have partly decided to take up triathlon to spite them. Ultimately this would prove they had reached a point in their manhood where they were capable of making important decisions without the consent of their father.

Alternatively, it is possible that the triathletes committed themselves to their sport either because of the immediate success they established, or the contemplation of what success might bring in terms of their relationship with their fathers. The desire to impress their

fathers was an important priority for these men when they were growing up and remained through to early adulthood. Only when they reached manhood did they begin to worry less about their fathers' approval and concern themselves more with their own future.

### **Surf Lifesavers: Proof of Manhood**

It is not uncommon for surf lifesavers to have siblings involved in the "club scene". Moreover, it is common to have had their fathers involved, or still involved, in surf lifesaving in some capacity. Significantly, each of the athlete's fathers had been a swimmer or surf lifesaver in his youth and was the primary instigating factor towards his son's initial involvement in the surf lifesaving "scene". It was the athletes' fathers who received the most attention throughout the interviews when discussing aspects of family life. They were proud of their fathers' sporting achievements and felt the need to emulate their athletic feats. Noteworthy is the fact their fathers never came close to elite status nor did they approach the sporting heights their sons have already attained. However, the surf lifesavers still felt the need to continually prove their ability to their fathers despite accomplishing far more than they ever had in surf lifesaving competitions.

Messner (1993, p.29) claimed that for boys "first athletic experiences teach them that successful performance in sport is a key to successful emotional attachment with their fathers". Furthermore, it is suggested that "failure to perform may destroy the tenuous bond between father and son". He emphasised the plight of a young man's ordeal by describing a relationship in which the young man "is in awe" of his father's presence and feels a "sense of inadequacy in utilising sport in an attempt to please and emulate him". The man cites a number of reasons in justifying his feelings, such as his father appeared to him as being "the most powerful person on earth", and no matter what this man did he "would never come

close to him". Messner contended that these feelings of inadequacy had a detrimental effect upon the man's self-image despite being a high school athletic champion in football and holding several weight lifting records. In his own mind, this man never achieved the stature of his father regardless of whether people recognised him as being bigger, stronger and better at sport than his father. His attitude is best summed up by the comments that he "simply couldn't conceive of it" (1993, p.29).

A sense of obligation to continually prove their ability to their fathers is a likely explanation to account for the elite surf lifesavers' actions. It was their fathers who led them to the sport of surf lifesaving thus providing them with a basis upon which they were able to build their successful status. Had it not been for their fathers' encouragement, these men may not have attempted the sport at all. A further reason might be to provide their fathers with evidence of their own masculine identity. With surf lifesaving being culturally embraced as one of the foremost masculine-oriented sporting domains, the site is ideally suited to creating masculine awareness, particularly at the individual level. Successful ironman surf lifesavers are immediately thrust into prominence and often perceived as being tougher, stronger and more highly competitive, all of which are regarded as highly masculine qualities. Therefore, the acquisition of such characteristics is sought after by the surf lifesavers providing proof of masculinity to their fathers.

### Bodybuilders: Inconspicuous Fathers

For three of the bodybuilding men their childhoods were tainted by having spent minimal time with their fathers. Through the death, divorce, or the disinterest of their father the men failed to sustain close relationships with them whilst growing up. Fortunately for one of the men an important bond has been forged between himself and his father as a

consequence of bodybuilding. Therefore it is one of the main motivating factors in continuing the sport indefinitely. As a child this man attempted several sports with little success in attracting his father's attention. Further, living away from his father, as a consequence of divorce, made gaining attention a difficult task. When bodybuilding was initiated, instant recognition was granted by way of his father's heightened interest in this seemingly new, and unusual, sporting endeavour. Furthermore, it seemed his father's approval grew in tandem with his rapidly developing physique and increased musculature. Where once only minimal support was provided to other sports, his father now is enthusiastically involved in supporting and encouraging his son's bodybuilding. Reasons for this transformation cannot be easily justified and there is difficulty in determining whether another sport, at this point in both men's lives, would have produced a similar outcome of interest. His father may have decided to make a conscious effort and begin recognising his son's sporting endeavours or, on the other hand, he may have wanted to be more muscular himself at some point in life and is living the dream through his son. According to Messner (1993), the phenomenon of fathers using their sons to live out their own athletic fantasies is common. However, unlike this instance where the father has remained distant from his son's decision, and actions in respect to bodybuilding, fathers will sometimes "push" their sons into sports regardless of the boy's desire to participate.

### Subcultures: Living the Life of...

#### A Triathlete

Regardless of their reasons for triathlon involvement, being known as a triathlete is meaningful to these men. Being regarded as different from other athletes is an attractive

quality the sport has to offer. Triathlon is surrounded by an air of mystique and often appears inaccessible to many people not associated with the sport. A definite triathlon subculture exists housing a range of triathletes from recreational through to elite level. The four triathletes have been a part of this subculture from the outset. They all want to live the life of a triathlete which is the basis of the subculture. They all agree that "triathlon is not just a sport, it's a lifestyle as well". It is contentious that such a statement is a justification for the excessive amount of time they spend in training, in attending to their diet and strictly adhering to socially regarded healthy living guidelines. People outside the triathlon subculture are likely to view such behaviour as extreme, almost to the point of obsession. Part of the attraction for men to become involved in triathlon is the feeling of security amidst the triathlon subculture. The athletes can share similar experiences without fear of being ridiculed for perceived obsessive behaviours.

Being a part of the triathlon subculture is important to these four triathletes. They enjoy being "placed on a pedestal" and regarded as the perceived leaders of the Western Australian triathlon scene. As one man succinctly claims "it's an ego thing". The men are not entirely consumed by the triathlon subculture because they all socialise with other people away from the triathlon "scene". However, it is amongst triathletes that these men feel most comfortable because of their similar lifestyles and common interests. Each of the men are in contact with other triathletes every day. Two have developed businesses around the sport whilst the other two live with fellow triathletes. One is a friend who shares a house, the other is a rapidly improving junior triathlete, and brother to the youngest of the men living with his parents. Being around triathletes so frequently creates a feeling of ease where socialising is concerned. They do not have to go out of their way or make concerted efforts to socialise because constant interaction through training and post-race functions facilitates this process. Therefore, social involvement through triathlon feels right for these men and is

emphasised by one man's comment that it feels "kind of normal, you know, like it was meant to be".

### A Surf Lifesaver

The surf lifesaving subculture is a significant factor in determining the level of involvement for male surf lifesavers. The subculture provides a family-oriented atmosphere in which these men revel. They all come from stable family backgrounds and as they moved through adolescence towards adulthood, the transition was made a little easier knowing there was the surf lifesaving "family" to help them through. The subculture, with its subsequent stable environment, provides a strong support network for those individuals who wish to utilise it. Therefore, surf lifesavers beginning the sport at an early age have few reasons to justify leaving. The four elite athletes interviewed are testimony to this statement, all joining early in life and now claiming to be involved "forever".

Being a surf lifesaver was an important factor for these men which is reinforced by the data attained by Pearson (1979) in his comparative study on surf lifesavers with surfboard riders. He concluded that for participants of surf lifesaving it was "a whole way of life" and "a central life interest". As one of his surf lifesavers suggested:

To achieve any worthwhile results from anything one has to be more than just interested in it. It is necessary to work, eat and sleep the activity to get the best results. Hence it has been aptly described as a way of life. (1979, p. 95)

Furthermore, Pearson's study goes on to highlight similar data collected in the current research by indicating much of the informal learning of surf lifesavers takes place as a consequence of the competitive sporting component rather than the community-oriented elements of beach patrol and rescue. One of the main reasons for belonging to surf

lifesaving was found to be the sense of belonging that came with comradeship and friendship. It was this social factor that created a nurturing environment whereby individuals who became involved in the surf lifesaving subculture were reluctant to leave and would therefore more than likely remain involved.

In an effort to emphasise the similarities that exist between members of the surf lifesaving subculture particular attributes and characteristics are provided which have been derived from the questionnaire data in Pearson's research (1979). The descriptions have been attained from both surf lifesavers and surfboard riders. Despite approximately 15 years difference between this data and the current research data, the comments made about surf lifesavers and the 12 elite athletes were strikingly similar.

Surf Lifesavers ("Clubbies") were seen as:

- conservative, conformist, establishment types, extroverted.
- prepared to accept discipline and formal authority.
- generally sociable and mixing in large groups.
- enjoying the comradeship and social life associated with the club as well as the facility it offers.
- having a great range of ages involved.
- having neat and tidy personal appearance with typically short hair. Fit looking as a result of training and competition.
- having a conventional attitude towards drugs; are normally beer drinkers.
- making some sacrifice of leisure for patrol and rescue work.
- interested in training and practice for competition and patrols.
- particularly interested in competitive Surf Lifesaving Association carnivals.
- wearing speedos, hats and zinc cream on beach and conventional dress away from beach.
- using a variety of equipment, much of which is kept in the local surf club house and normally used in the vicinity of the club.



- generally sticking to one beach; may travel to other beaches for competition but do not travel from beach to beach in search of waves.

(Pearson, 1979)

Living within the confines of a subculture can have positive benefits although it can also limit the perceptions of individuals by influencing them to adopt a set of ideals created by dominant forces acting within. Therefore, the subculture becomes a mini-society whereby expectations can differ from those set by society. The surf lifesaving subculture is dominated by patriarchal principles and is perceived as a truly masculine domain. The four men all exhibit male chauvinist characteristics which is an accepted ideal in this environment. Despite still living in a patriarchal society, it is arguable the feminist movement has brought about significant change where women's equality is concerned. Such is not the case in the surf lifesaving subculture where men dominate and pass on patriarchal ideals to younger club members.

### A Bodybuilder

The bodybuilding subculture is one of excess. The people involved are large while the behaviours they display are exaggerated. Everything about it seems unreal and one wonders how its members can keep living such a facade. The sport may be legitimate with its competitive elements, however being a bodybuilder involves far more than just training and competing, it means *living the life* of a bodybuilder. The body is the focal point around which these athletes' lives revolve. Unlike other sports where physical aesthetics are seldom the sole criterion of judgment, bodybuilders must pay attention to how their bodies appear as well as the manner in which it performs, because without peak functioning the athletes are unable to maximally extend their bodies in training to acquire optimal growth. The body

therefore becomes a means of obsession for the bodybuilder, even more so in elite level athletes where they are trying to make a living out of both the sport and their body.

Klein (1993b) argued that the core of the bodybuilding subculture is made of people who are entirely devoted to the cause of bodybuilding. These people will take any jobs to support their bodybuilding training, or else they will be employed within the subculture. On the other hand, those people who do bodybuilding and have steady employment in areas unrelated to gymnasiums and weight training, as well as having other interests away from the sport, are perceived as marginal to the core of bodybuilding despite frequenting the gym four or five times a week. The four elite bodybuilders are all at the core of the subculture. Two of the men have developed personal training businesses to coincide with their own training, another works as a shift worker on the docks in a job that permits rest and sleep, while the other man, who is at university, is enrolled in a post graduate diploma and is reluctant to give up his leisurely lifestyle. Noteworthy, is that at some point they have all begrudgingly worked as "door men" at night clubs for the sake of their training. Such an occupation allows them to work at night leaving their days free to train at will. However, ultimately the smoke, alcohol, and undesirable people that must be dealt with are not worth the initial perceived benefits.

Still, it seems there are a number of stages that a bodybuilder must pass through in order to be accepted as a core member of the bodybuilding subculture. As Fussell stated, it is the paying of one's "dues" that enables a bodybuilder the rite of passage into the bodybuilding fraternity. Firstly he must look like a bodybuilder, that is, he must have big arms and chest, and a thin waist to convey a proportional and symmetrical "V" shaped upper body. Bulging thighs represent a large "base of support" upon which a "massive" physique can be structured. Once he has attained "the look" he can begin to "walk" and "talk" like a bodybuilder. However, you don't "talk the talk, unless you walk the walk" claimed Fussell (1991, p. 54).

A structure of hierarchy exists within the bodybuilding subculture. Such a hierarchy is played out by its members almost entirely within the confines of the gymnasium or in situations or locations where bodybuilders congregate. Observations in these locales confirm such an assertion as the men display relationships based on hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. A typical example is identified by the manner in which more dominant men lay claim to pieces of equipment without objection from subordinates. In one training session, one of the bodybuilders, whom had recently been awarded a world title, stood behind a subordinate bodybuilder as he performed an exercise, using a barbell and safety frame, known as "the squat". Despite having only just started on this apparatus the presence and size of the elite athlete overwhelmed the smaller man so much that he felt the need to relinquish the piece of equipment in a manner which implied admitting defeat. Intimidation, albeit silent, by means of hegemonic masculinity was the basis of this encounter.

Importantly in the confrontation described above was not only the size of the elite bodybuilder but also his status within the gymnasium and bodybuilding subculture. His recent world title had elevated his status to new heights and legitimated his position within the hierarchy. Klein (1993b) contended that structural hierarchy is fairly clear within such a subculture. Thus he argued that bodybuilders are accorded status on the basis of whether or not they compete. This is further separated between competing in professional or amateur ranks, the number of titles won and the prestige attached to the title. A minor placing in Mr. Olympia will still provide higher status than a state or national title. Those with status and position are given more than deferential behaviour and they are sought out by up-and-coming bodybuilders as mentors (Klein, 1993b). Using these high status men as mentors creates positive situations for both the elite and fledgling bodybuilder. The masculine identity and self-worth of the elite bodybuilder is positively enhanced by being recognised as someone whom other people want to emulate. On the other hand the "rookie" bodybuilder is gaining exposure and subsequently enhancing his self-esteem by being in the presence of a noted

bodybuilder. It is understood that a high status bodybuilder will not simply "take on" anyone because the early qualities of an elite performer must be present. Such is the influence of a high status performer that endorsement by means of association affords the newcomer the opportunity to skip a number of hierarchy rankings and establish himself towards the top end.

### Commitment to Sport

#### The Committed Triathlete

The four elite level triathletes are all heavily committed to their sport. When they began their triathlon career each was intrinsically motivated to compete, however they now have other external factors involved in motivating their actions. What they believe to be naturally occurring motivating factors for elite level athletes are impacted upon by social forces which affect their intrinsic values. External factors such as parental and family expectations, demands applied by sponsors, as well as societal expectations of elite professional athletes can have detrimental implications for the athlete. Unaware of the impacting forces upon their motivation, the athletes' commitment to their sport is being socially constructed. Western society places a good deal of emphasis on the widely accepted, but misrepresented, "Lombardian ethic" of *winning at all costs*. Elite triathletes are not immune from this *winning at all costs* attitude. Therefore the pressure to win is significant for these athletes with societal expectations shaping their behaviour.

Having transformed their initial motivation from one of wanting to participate to now having to participate in some instances, feelings of obligation are beginning to emerge for these men. For one man, competition is enjoyable although he finds difficulty in coping with

the pressure of being expected to compete and importantly, expected to win every time he races. Winning the first race he ever entered was an exciting and unforgettable experience, however, it is likely that this race, along with his many other early successes, could have been detrimental to the longevity of his motivation for the sport. Although a state cross-country runner, he received more publicity and accolades for his initial triathlon victory than from all his running achievements. The athlete claimed that he was "hooked on triathlon from the beginning" and cited his love for the sport and its subsequent competition. These motives are questionable because he may derive more pleasure from the resultant feelings of success and recognition as opposed to harbouring an intrinsic devotion to the sport. Both success and recognition are forms of positive reinforcement as well as being powerful tools in promoting the repetition of a behaviour. Therefore the extrinsic motivator of being known and recognised as a success in sport has heightened this athlete's self-esteem and made him seek, and repeat, the *cause* of that recognition time and again.

For some men commitment to sport can become excessive and too much time can be spent trying to achieve success at the expense of compromising other elements in their life such as relationships and work. Triathlon has produced this dilemma for one of the triathletes, yet on the other hand it has also provided him with a new sense of direction. His commitment towards triathlon has changed amidst major upheavals in his life. He has a far more holistic sense of training and competing, and is able to place triathlon in perspective within his current lifestyle. Originally most of his motivation came from selfish desires such as winning for the sake of glory and money. Still maintaining the desire to win he is now driven by intrinsic motivation and competes only when he wants to. Sharing his successes with other people, including his supportive family, has strengthened his commitment to triathlon. The difference now is that he wants people in his life whereas once he would cast them away.

As a man passes through various stages in his life cycle he will take on different commitments (Levinson, 1979; Messner, 1992). In like manner sportsmen are prone to make changes in their commitment towards sport as they pass through the various stages of their careers. Some may decide to scale down their level of training and competition to concentrate on other areas of life such as family and business. Others may decide to pursue their sport further and increase the level of intensity and subsequent commitment. All the triathletes have experienced a change in commitment at some point in their triathlon careers. Significantly different are the actual changes, yet poignantly similar as to why they felt the need to change. They have all attempted full-time status in the sport and each perceived it to be a form of indulgence. Arguably they would have remained in this state had they been making enough money to justify full-time involvement. However, the masculine work ethic overpowered any dreams they were harbouring and consequently they felt the need to begin thinking about employment and their financial future. This is a common reality faced by men in particular, due to Western society's expectation to work in socially respected occupations. Therefore it is contentious that these men may have had lucrative professional triathlon careers cut short as a result of the guilt they feel derived from society's underpinning work ethic ideology.

### Surf Lifesaving: Not Just a Sport

The elite men of surf lifesaving do not perceive their involvement as merely one of sporting participation, yet their commitment cannot be denied. The surf lifesaving "scene" is a part of their lives and something with which they have grown up. Having experienced the many positive qualities that surf lifesaving has to offer, the men are not tempted to pursue another sport, or lifestyle that might jeopardise what they have created. Further, living the

life of a surf lifesaver is ideologically appealing to these men. Environmental factors such as the beach and surf are major drawcards, just as the notion of being revered by women and envied by men for their resultant masculine physiques. An air of cultural mystique surrounds these men, in particular the ironmen, as society places them upon a pedestal, classifying them as sporting icons. It is little wonder why such men would not want to leave an environment that provides constant positive masculine affirmation.

Despite being elite competitors, the four men do not receive lucrative sponsorships that "set them up" for life like several of the surf lifesaving icons in the national televised series. Thus intrinsic motivation is still the primary reason for participation and wanting to be a surf lifesaver. Training up to six hours a day can be physically, emotionally, and mentally draining on the athlete. Therefore motivation is the key to sustaining interest and being successful. Having a strong network of support is essential in times when the positive qualities of surf lifesaving do not retain their appeal. Thus, family involvement and a close knit circle of friends in the surf lifesaving "scene" can bolster a man's outlook by positively reinforcing his self-esteem and reaffirming his masculine identity. Sometimes men involved in sports can doubt their ability and question their involvement as a consequence. Surf lifesaving is structured such that these occurrences are minimal through the fostering of strength, encouragement and loyalty.

### **Bodybuilding: A Lifetime Commitment**

To an observing outsider, the excessive bodybuilding lifestyle is an obsessive compulsive phenomenon. These men sacrifice much of their life in exchange for time spent working out in the gymnasium or resting in order to fully recover for the next training session. Regardless, their lives are consumed by bodybuilding in terms of training, eating

the necessary types and quantities of food at specific time intervals and recuperating for optimal growth to take place. Then there is the time they spend thinking about, and acting out the role of, being a bodybuilder. It is in respect to diet that bodybuilders have come to see themselves as experts in the field. As Klein emphasised, "This is perhaps the area wherein bodybuilders most exert self-mastery, or rather, where they are tested" (1993b, p.152).

The four bodybuilders all talked of being "cut up" and "ripped" when they are competing on stage. They were also unanimous in their self-appraisal of being "cranky", "niggly", or "a real bastard" in the days leading up to competition. In the latter stages of competition preparation bodybuilders go through a ritual known as "cutting up" wherein aerobic activity is minimally increased and food energy is drastically reduced. The ideology behind this concept is to achieve maximum muscular striation by decreasing body fat levels, yet still maintaining significant muscle bulk. Depleting energy consumption in such a drastic manner does produce optimal fat reduction but it can involve a price. Without sufficient carbohydrates the body is unable to function in a normal capacity due to a lack of energy. Further, chemical stimuli to the brain are disrupted causing fatigue and irritability, and cardiac irregularities are not uncommon. However, these men see this pre-contest ritual as a part of the bodybuilding phenomenon and something they must accept if they are to stay involved in the sport. They perceive it as a test of masculine character and a challenge to the commitment made to accepting bodybuilding as a lifestyle and one of change.

Bodybuilding offers the promise of change to these men. Inside their bodies lies a past in which an insecure child or adolescent has existed and continually reminds the athlete of why he is involved in bodybuilding. The initial attraction to the sport is based on the notion that something positive is being achieved through participation. Bodybuilding offers a degree of control through the ritualised simplicity of developing a routine that compartmentalises the body into segments (e.g., arms, chest, back, legs). The mindlessness



of the routine offers seductive qualities via bodily change in the form of muscular development and a restructured physique. Structural redefinition is virtually guaranteed through regular commitment. Therefore the failures, insecurities and lack of success these men may have experienced in the past are unlikely to occur in bodybuilding if commitment is a priority. Some men perceive the situation as a simple equation whereby increased bodybuilding time equals greater physical metamorphosis, which ultimately produces a more positive life.

The ultimate commitment to bodybuilding is arguably based on the decision to begin steroid use. Anabolic steroids are any of a group of synthetic derivatives of testosterone, a male sex hormone, which are used to increase the synthesis of protein used for muscle growth and repair. Steroids are a major part of elite competitive bodybuilding. Their adverse side effects have been well documented in medical journals yet elite performers are still prepared to use them in the hope of attaining greater size and musculature. It is contentious whether steroid use is initiated from the desire to succeed in bodybuilding or whether it is purely a narcissistic desire that will ultimately quell feelings of inferiority and insecurity. Arguably it is the latter reason that is most prevalent, particularly since steroid use begins well before elite status is gained and often before entering the competitive ranks. Two of the elite bodybuilders are frank about their use of steroids and human growth hormone, while the other two are more guarded in their response to such lines of questioning. They are not deterred by the harmful effects that steroids can produce and, despite the vast quantity of literature espousing the dangers involved, they each advocate and justify the use of steroids. They all agree that in order to be elite bodybuilders and compete at the level they do, steroids are essential. All of the men are elite level bodybuilders.

Sam Fussell's autobiography describing his life as a bodybuilder provides a detailed account of the pleasure that bodybuilding, and its subsequent changes, can bring. Conversely, the detrimental effects upon physical, mental and emotional health through

undivided commitment are poignantly highlighted. Recounting his strict diet maintained in the week prior to his final contest sums up the "satisfaction" (commitment) / "detriment" (health) dichotomy.

I flexed in the mirror, pumped up now for the first time in days, and as my muscles inflated, I saw my diet had succeeded—at least from the neck down. I was cut, as sliced and diced, as any professional bodybuilder. But above the neck, when I managed to smile, I saw a stranger. This blonde-haired, orange-skinned face smiling back at me was unrecognisable. The diet had taken its toll. My face was drawn and haggard, my eyes the haunted sockets of a ghoul. (1991, p.232)

### Relationships: Women, Men and Mateship

#### Men's Perceptions of Women

Regardless of the sport in which they are involved, the elite athletes all espouse the notion of gender equity. However, further investigation proved that these claims are based on socially appropriate ideology, not intrinsic personal conceptions. Thus, the men consciously believe they perceive women as equals, but instead they unconsciously regard them as subordinates with whom masculine hegemony can be displayed. A prime example, that is a common theme running through the interviews of the triathletes and surf lifesavers, is the intrinsic desire to defeat every woman in both training and races. Several of the men have never experienced being beaten in a race by a woman and therefore treated this issue with contempt. On the other hand, the men who gradually moved up the ranks were initially defeated by women thereby creating a sense of humiliation for them. As a consequence their foremost, prioritised goal in the beginning was to beat every woman home. It is now several years on and women are no longer seen as a threat to their masculine identity where races are

concerned. However, even at training, some men still find difficulty in accepting defeat by a woman despite her being a specialist, single sport, athlete. It is common for elite triathletes and surf lifesavers to train in the same swimming squads as state, national and world class swimmers. Specialising in swimming, these athletes, regardless of sex, are generally more accomplished than the multi-sport athletes. They spend the equivalent amount of time training for one specific event while triathletes and surf lifesavers must compromise between a number of sports. It was interesting to note the reasons the men used to account for these training occurrences, claiming tiredness and lethargy, and not being a specialist athlete but instead having to train for numerous disciplines within their sports.

Hegemonic masculinity is a major underpinning notion within the triathletes' and surf lifesavers' sporting involvement. So much emphasis is placed on how well their body can perform that being defeated by a woman can significantly undermine their masculine and sporting achievements thus far. The elite men of bodybuilding do not have the same hegemonic masculine anguish where women and bodily performance is concerned. Comparing bodybuilders' physiques to women's is futile because, at the elite level, men are far superior in size and musculature. The majority of their physical work is carried out in preparation, prior to competition, which means these size differences are established well in advance. Despite displaying intergender, physical masculine hegemony over women, the bodybuilders are more concerned with intragender hegemonic masculine relationships. That is, they are more interested in dominance over men, as a consequence of their physical stature, because this is a primary means of establishing masculine identity.

The taken-for-granted, masculine hegemony over women is prevalent in each of the athletes regardless of their sport. Noteworthy are the intrinsic attitudes held by each man in relation to women being ideally suited as the homemaker, and men assuming the position of breadwinner. In spite of instances where an athlete may suggest otherwise, positive affirmation of traditional gender stereotypes eventually surface, unconsciously championing

hegemonic masculinity once again. Sport both generates and perpetuates these notions of male dominance at the expense of women. In a society where winning is generally afforded the privilege of perceived dominance, sport offers its male participants a number of incentives. All of these men are elite level athletes and have therefore attained a degree of success through sporting involvement. Regardless of personal definitions of success they have, as a consequence, been provided status and recognition. The manner in which this privilege is used varies from one athlete to the next, and whether they attest to it or not, women are perceived inferior particularly where sports are concerned. It is difficult for these men to demarcate these notions of inferiority to the realm of sports. Generally speaking, it is commonplace for women to be perceived as inferior by the elite athletes.

#### Triathletes and Women

Of the four triathletes interviewed two have been married and subsequently divorced, one is engaged to be married but is doubting his motives, and the fourth is seeking a relationship but has had difficulty attracting women all his life. They all claim that relationships are difficult to sustain for triathletes because of the long hours they must spend training which ultimately places additional strain on the relationship. Both of the men who have been divorced cite this as one of the contributing factors that led to their marriage breakdown. They claim that it was not the only reason but it was responsible for them "drifting apart and finding separate interests".

The term "drifting apart" is noteworthy. Men are inclined to be poor verbal communicators allowing their actions to state much of what they want to say. Unfortunately some men do not understand that others, particularly female partners, do not realise what they are trying to communicate. If this continues for a lengthy period the partners tend to understand each other less thus magnifying problems that may have otherwise been small.

Hence the term "drifting apart". Therefore if a man has a goal to be a successful endurance athlete and aims to share his success with his partner and develop a positive self-image he may have to train six hours a day to fulfil his desire. Without verbally communicating his goals clearly to his partner those six hours a day spent training may appear to be self-indulgence at the expense of the relationship or even avoidance in some cases. This was the predicament faced by one of the men whose marriage ended in divorce.

Only months before he is set to be married, one triathlete holds a number of fears for the future as his relationship, and his life as a man, moves into a new phase. He is attempting to deal with numerous changes that are occurring to his lifestyle at present, combined with the added pressure of outside influences. At this point there is doubt as to whether marriage is the right step because of the turbulent period he and his fiancée are experiencing at present. The problem may be exacerbated by his indifferent attitude to the relationship at home because even he claimed that he was "hard to live with at the moment".

Men's relationships with women, particularly wives and lovers, can often be strained as a result of displaced anger. Furthermore relationships with women are strained when the man's own identity is being questioned. This triathlete is likely to be "hard to live with at the moment" because he is finding it difficult to come to terms with his disengagement from triathlon on a full-time basis. Through his parents' insistence he now feels obliged to work and become financially secure for the future, yet in the process feels that he is losing his self-identity. Unable to train as intensively, the performance of the athlete is suffering as a consequence. He no longer feels the man he was several years ago when ranked as the best triathlete in the state and one of the most accomplished in Australia. He frankly admits that he now broods in silence at what might have been had he committed himself a little more to triathlon. Indicative of men's silence and non-communication in dealing with such a dilemma, it has created a substantial rift in the relationship.

Sport is sometimes used as a means of escape for men who are insecure about their appearance and have difficulty in forming relationships with women. This shyness is generally established during adolescence, at school, and continues through to adulthood. Being good at sport is at least one way of creating a positive self-esteem in the face of other perceived adversities. Additionally, some young men view sport as a method of outwardly promoting a positive self-image thus producing popularity and sexual attractiveness through sporting prowess. All the men were aware of the social recognition created through sporting talent and they all used it to their advantage in some capacity. One of the men hoped that being an outstanding triathlete would give him the confidence to overcome his awkwardness in communicating with women. He is able to talk with female friends but finds difficulty in approaching women that he is "remotely interested in". He hoped that the sport would do the talking for him but as yet it has failed. The athlete doubts his masculine identity. He is confused about relationships with women and unsure how they perceive him. Sport bolsters and sustains his self-image yet his inadequate social skills throw doubt over his self-esteem and ultimately his own sense of masculinity. Social skills and confidence are not always transferable from the site of one's sporting talents to every day situations. The confidence acquired through sport can assist a man's overall development although he must have a positive self-image as a man, not just a positive self-image as a sportsman.

Women are an important part of these men's lives. Knowing that they are sexually attractive to women helps establish a sense of masculine identity and reaffirms their involvement in triathlon both as a site for success recognition and as a site for socialisation. They claim to require the companionship of women to provide emotional support, stability in their lives, friendship, and a sense of being needed. Traditionally, men have been seen as the protector of women and family and therefore a sense of masculine self-worth is established when men feel wanted by women.

## Surf Lifesavers and Women

The surf lifesaving men are critical of the feminist movement and scathing in their attack upon feminists. Regarded as antagonistic women, feminists are perceived as a threat to the masculine domain men have so long inhabited. Women who merely discuss gender equity are regarded as radical feminists, just as lesbians are too. The lack of insight contained in these athletes' perceptions are partially due to the closed environment in which they exist. Although they cite respect for women as a positive quality in men, very little female respect is shown. They were all raised in families in which their mother stayed at home and cared for the children whilst attending to home duties. Consequently, the view these men have of the ideal family situation is for the man to be the financial provider and the woman to bear children and look after the home.

Women are regarded as secondary to men in virtually all aspects of life. The athletes have grave reservations about women entering surf lifesaving competitions, eventually satisfying themselves by arguing that their involvement is a means of appeasing feminist activists. Involvement of women in surf lifesaving is regarded as essential at the community level where voluntary services are carried out, but not in surf lifesaving competitions. Hence, the prize money allocated to women should be minimal according to the elite men because there are fewer competitors, the level of competition is substandard compared to men, they do not have to train as hard to achieve top 10 placings and, having only been recently included, a lack of tradition prevails. The responses are stereotypically male in orientation and are presumably created and perpetuated through their subcultural existence.

All still single, none of the four men have realistically come close to being wed. The oldest man is the only athlete to have been engaged, however the marriage was unlikely to have taken place from the outset. Enforcing an ultimatum before the wedding to relinquish

all ties with the surf lifesaving "scene", his fiancée abandoned the wedding due to the realisation this would not occur. It would mean distancing himself from the life and subculture that was so important to him.

There are several possible reasons to account for these men not wanting or feeling the need to marry. It might be assumed, that living within a close knit subcultural context, their lives at present are complete. The family environment created by surf lifesaving fulfils their current needs and therefore change is unnecessary. However, it must not be overlooked that these men are elite athletes with specifically focussed goals and aspirations. Therefore marriage is likely to be perceived as a major distraction from the original plan and could ultimately produce a detrimental effect upon the attainment of such goals. They are unanimous in agreeing that the institution of marriage is still valuable and meritocratic in contemporary Western society despite data proving divorce rates and de facto relationships are continually increasing.

### Bodybuilders and Women

Noteworthy is that none of the bodybuilders are married and have had difficulty in sustaining relationships in the past. This has not worried the men too much, but recently the oldest athlete has become reflective and wants some security and stability in his life. At 37 this man is looking towards the future both in terms of financial security as well as family. He would like to marry and have children, which is entirely different to the way he has led his life thus far where there was little concern for the future. Our first meeting presented a man who was excited about the future with his girlfriend, because in several years they were to be married and own a fitness centre together. However, our second meeting was a stark contrast, being distinctly sombre in tone and exhibiting a shattered man having broken up



with his girlfriend just days prior. As a result his dreams had been destroyed. He blamed the separation on the lack of quality time spent with his girlfriend. Consequently she sought, and found, someone who would give her the necessary attention. Ignorance and not realising the amount of time required to make relationships work is common amongst many men. It was assumed that working 75 hours a week to establish their future business was proof of devotion to her but it only served to break down their communication. Like most men with depleted verbalisation skills he thought his actions were more appropriate than using words to indicate his love.

Generally the men had a traditional view of male and female roles in society. Having all been brought up with the underpinning notion of "man as breadwinner" and "woman as homemaker", they saw their role as a man to earn more money than their potential wife or partner. Their traditional views on marriage and partnership correspond with established masculine perceptions on men's and women's physiques. They believe men and women should be poles apart in the way their bodies are structured and as such, men should be large and muscular while women should be small and petit. In keeping with these conventional, yet somewhat narrow, conceptions the men were not entirely at ease with feminists and feminist ideology. Women involved in this movement were seen to be a threat to their manhood because of the destabilising effect upon masculine ideals. Through bodybuilding they are beginning to attain a sense of what it is like to reap the rewards that a muscular body can afford. Feminist perspectives espousing equality at the expense of masculine domination is not something they want as it undermines their bodybuilding involvement. Accordingly, several men firmly believed most feminists were lesbians because of the gay rights protests often covered by television news. Such news events often falsely depict the essence of the protests and portray all lesbians as being radical pro-feminists and in a similar vein casting feminists as lesbians.

## Men and Mateship

The triathletes and bodybuilders involved in this research are individually-oriented men and do not place major emphasis upon developing close relationships with other men. Surf lifesavers, on the other hand, enjoy the mateship and camaraderie their close knit subculture provides them. Common amongst the three groups however, was the concern towards other men's opinions of themselves in terms of self-image, based on the notion of conditional self-worth (Messner, 1992). Men enjoy the praise and accolades of other men because they provide the standard of success. To be recognised by another man who is in a position of equal or higher status, particularly from the same sporting realm, is generally a mark of success.

As mentioned earlier, fathers are the primary target for boys seeking male approval and recognition. However, this does not discount the influence of other significant men within a boy's life. Older brothers, uncles, cousins, and close family friends can provide the necessary attention to the successful athlete during childhood. The attention received by the boy provides an emotionally distant form of connection whereby, according to Messner (1992, p. 49), "it is through this form of connection with others that the boy begins to construct his masculine *positional identity*". As the boy passes through developmental stages to adulthood he is likely to move through primary and secondary school, perhaps university and possibly into the arena of professional sports. The attention and adulation he receives becomes increasingly diverse and he no longer has to look solely towards his father, family and friends. Several of the triathletes and bodybuilders typify such a phenomenon wherein their childhood indicates a series of attempts and subsequent non-recognition of sports by their fathers. Therefore upon reaching an age where there was enough confidence to choose a sport that appealed to them, attention-seeking ideals were not the main source of

motivation. The men had finally come to the realisation there were other sources of recognition available. Gaining approval and attention from their fathers remained important to the athletes, although efforts to achieve such an aim were fraught with futility.

Camaraderie, or bonding, is an acknowledged component of organised team sports. As one sportsman suggested, the intimacy he experienced on a successful team is something that he has not been able to find elsewhere (Whitson, 1990). Team sport is therefore meant to offer solidarity, companionship, comradeship and intimacy. These are elements which Whitson believed are a "rare enough experience in modern life" (1990, p.25). Individual sports, on the other hand, are perceived as being more intrinsically-oriented and specific to the needs of the individual participant.

The men of surf lifesaving unanimously concur that their sport is individual in nature, yet it is also agreed that comradeship amongst club members is common. Thus, these men are afforded the privilege of pursuing a sport that will appease their intrinsic desires as well as develop bonds with other men. Being involved in a "club scene" is a primary delineating factor between surf lifesaving and the sports of triathlon and bodybuilding. Admittedly triathlon does have a large club base but it is not an essential requirement for triathletes to be registered members. Similarly, bodybuilding is generally performed in gymnasiums which are becoming increasingly akin to clubs, yet the diverse range of members with varying goals and aspirations make common bonding a difficult task. Thus bodybuilders seek out similar men with whom to associate because the likelihood of pursuing a universal goal of developing size and musculature is high. Despite surf lifesaving club members competing against one another there is a common link that unifies them. The surf lifesavers admit that it is important to be individually successful and satisfy themselves, but it is equally important to be successful for the sake of the club. Such is the comradeship of surf lifesavers that bonds forged through sporting participation are carried over into life away from the sport.

Therefore it is not uncommon to witness the same men socialising together on frequent occasions in locales unrelated to the club scene.

However, merely socialising and bonding together does not make men more compassionate or feel the need to display heightened levels of intimacy between each other. Where once male friendships were regarded as positive and "natural" they have come under scrutiny from the feminist movement and are now perceived to be shallow and superficial. They are less intimate, less close and spontaneous and they have less physical closeness than do women (Pleck, 1981). Rubin (1983) suggested that sports offer men the opportunity to be involved in an emotionally safe activity where they can enjoy the company of other men whilst, at the same time, keeping their distance and not have to become intimate in a way that might cast aspersions over their perceived heterosexual masculine identity. Further, she contended that it is necessary to distinguish between "bonding" and "intimacy" and suggested that bonding is a mere connection whereas intimacy is far more emotionally-oriented and dependent on verbalisation skills, of which men are thought to lack. Conversely, Messner(1985a) argued that male friends sometimes have a deep sense of understanding and communication in which verbal interaction is minimal. He appropriately reinforced this claim by stating:

Furthermore, who is to say what goes on in private between men? What do they talk about? Rubin is certainly not privy to this kind of information, as it is often in the very nature of male friendships that what is spoken in confidence (their dreams, their hopes, fears, relationship problems) is privileged information, not to be shared with anyone - even an extremely sensitive and understanding interviewer (p.179).

Training, particularly for the triathletes and bodybuilders, is an area in which relationships with other men are forged. Since the social structure of surf lifesaving does not exist, men are influenced to develop bonds through sporting activities as opposed to socialising after participation. Friendships founded on sporting admiration, mutual respect

and similar interests are the basis of such attachments. Some of the triathletes claim to have developed a closeness with other men simply by meeting them once a week for a two or three hour bike ride, yet rarely do they socialise with them in any other capacity. Bodybuilders also cite an alliance with the men they train with, particularly their training partners, although, like the triathletes, their affinity remains training-based. That is, the friendship typically stays within the confines of the gymnasium. This occurrence is not surprising because all of the elite men are scathing in their judgment of bodybuilders and agree that as a collective, bodybuilders openly display egotistical, narcissistic tendencies. It is their opinion that bodybuilders who take on such a persona are not positive representations of the bodybuilding ethic which espouses strength of body and mind through commitment to weightlifting. Such is the reverence held towards their sport that these men display a spiritual-like devotion in honour of its transformative qualities. Thus, men who exploit these qualities are perceived as betrayers, in breach of the bodybuilding ethic.

Social relationships with other men are important to each of the athletes involved in this research but it is the surf lifesavers who place the most emphasis upon mateship. Regarded by many as the epitome of Australian manhood, these surf lifesavers have grown accustomed to their identity within Australian culture. Likewise, the surf lifesaving subculture, or "scene" as it is known, is recognised as a masculine institution wherein little doubt is cast over the heterosexuality of its male participants. Therefore the men can freely interact with one another on a social basis without fear of homosexual accusation. Further, the men enjoy this masculine gathering because it reaffirms their hegemonic position over women and subordinate men. Mateship, primarily group-based, is fundamental to the surf lifesaving subculture and offers far more than individual friendship. The confidence and self-esteem associated with such a male gathering is based on the support structure that is provided as well as the visible recognition of belonging to a socially and culturally respected group.

Thus it provides a strong site for the construction of masculinity and reinforces hegemonic masculine ideals through the solidarity of group structure.

### Competition and Success

Competition provides athletes the opportunity to achieve sporting success and, according to Messner (1992), if this success comes early in the athlete's career the attention directed from one's peers and from "the crowd" create an addictive method of identity construction. Some men adhere to the competitive Lombardian ethic of "winning at all costs" while others are happy to achieve their own measure of success based on personal goals. The "winning is everything" ethic is generally dependent on extrinsic motivation and often brings about a sense of failure for those who perceive being "the best" as the only possibility of ensuring success and ultimate happiness. Only one person can be deemed number one at any point therefore failure is an inevitable component of sport.

When athletes lose sight of their original intrinsic goals, winning often becomes the most central point around which to attach their motivation. Some of the men involved in this research, primarily from the sports of triathlon and bodybuilding, are unconsciously in the process of such a change. Thus they can be described as being in a state of motivational flux. Business ventures associated with their respective sports play a significant role in the personal challenge to compete and win. Whereas originally their goals may have been based on intrinsic motivators, success and winning are perceived as essential for their future livelihood in respect to financial earning capacity. As one of the bodybuilders aptly points out, after a two year hiatus from competing in the sport his profile is beginning to diminish and thus the necessity to compete and win is imperative to bolster his image. Likewise, several of the triathletes require high profiles in their sport to legitimise their involvement in

triathlon-related businesses and thus create positive advertising through public awareness. The surf lifesavers, however, are a little different as a consequence of their holistic approach to involvement in sport and their resultant lifestyle. It seems these men are set up better to cope with the structure of failure that sport brings through the support network of family and friends within the subculture.

Investigating the changing competitive nature of these athletes will shed light on the meaning of competition and success at various points of their careers within the lifecycle structure. Further, it can help illuminate reasons to account for men's initial involvement in competitive sports and their subsequent continuation.

### The Competitive Triathlete and the Importance of Success

Sport is a hierarchical institution where success is determined by winning. Initially triathletes will enter their first few races with their goal being to finish. However, they quickly realise that more recognition is provided to those who place higher. Many young triathletes aspire to attain this status too soon. Triathlon is physically and emotionally demanding on the athlete and therefore dedication and determination are required to sustain a long career in the sport. Early success in sport, experienced by one of the triathletes, produces immense pressure to continually repeat high achieving performances. The expectation of others to keep winning can become a burden on the athlete and have a detrimental effect on performance. The triathlete feels as though he has to win in order to fulfil the expectations of others as opposed to wanting to win to satisfy his own competitive desires. Expected to win every race he enters on the basis of his past record, the athlete begins to doubt his own commitment to sport. He ends up feeling "burned out".

A sense of obligation to compete and win rests heavily on elite triathletes. With a comparatively short season extending approximately five months, most of the men feel a sense of urgency to compete almost every week to continually prove their ability. In not attending a particular event another triathlete, who may be a potential threat to his status, could win and cast doubt over who is more accomplished. One of the men is concerned that others may perceive him as being unsuccessful, thus affecting his self-image and his masculine identity. Comments such as "weak" and "lacking strength" have been directed at one of the triathletes by Australian officials and the media designed to make him appear less than a man. Strength of character, and being able to battle through adverse situations are common masculinised ideals held by Western society. One triathlete has been so deeply hurt by the comments that he is seriously contemplating his future in the sport. Further, he admitted that the official probably was correct in that he was "a little weak". Consequently he claimed that these comments have made him question his identity as a man by casting doubt not only over his own ability as an elite level triathlete, but also his strength of character.

For the most part, competition is a place where these men can prove their ability to themselves and to others. As one of the triathletes suggests, it is like "a test" to assess one's training methods and to show what these training methods can do. Proving oneself was a common theme noted with the triathletes. For their own specific reasons they felt a need to prove themselves, particularly to others. Competition enabled the men to develop a kind of hierarchy of masculinity with the winner being the most successful. Also competition gave the men the opportunity to display their ability to others such as family and loved ones. Remembering that men are often less capable than women of verbally communicating their feelings and emotions to the persons they love, competition is seen as a vicarious way of revealing their devotion through sport. By successfully demonstrating their talents the men felt better about their own self-image because they had proved that they could accomplish



their stated goal. Remaining true to their *word* seemed to play an important part in their masculine self-worth. Competition was crucial to this process because this is where their *word* was tested.

The final result of competition is important to the triathletes, but of similar importance is the physical competitive aspect of the race itself. Being a relatively new and exciting sport these men are able to put their "body on the line" as one man suggested. There are elements of danger which appeal to the men because they are able to demonstrate traditionally recognised masculine qualities to a captive audience and receive accolades for doing so. Added to these physical elements is the recognition received for being able to push one's body to its limit and experiencing the euphoric feeling of being successful at a socially respected, masculinised, sport. They all agree that it is only possible to push one's body so far in training, yet in competition they have the capacity to push themselves that much further. Their enjoyment of the competitive element is unanimous and they claim that racing is the essence of triathlon. Arguably, competition is where masculine identities are formed as well as masculine self-images in relation to the athlete's sport. Consequently, these men enjoy competing because they regularly achieve a degree of success thus enhancing their masculine identity and feelings of conditional self-worth (Messner, 1992).

It is interesting to note the manner in which the men's competitive desires and meaning of success change over time throughout their lifecourse and throughout their careers. Utilising Levinson's theory, it is possible to address the dynamic component of personal change throughout the lifecourse. It is believed that a man's initial challenge into the world of competitive sports is a consequence of individuation and an attempt to prove himself by successfully competing in a hierarchical world. At a point, usually nearing midlife, there is a "souring" of his "dream" regardless of whether success has resulted or not (Messner, 1985a). However, it is arguable that in the competitive arena of sports the souring of such dreams may occur sooner than midlife. This is evidenced by two of the triathletes who have

come to realise that their sport will not provide them with financial security for the future, which is important to them as men and to their existence in general. Despite achieving even more success than when they first began the sport, alternative arrangements are being made to financially establish themselves for the future whilst scaling down their competitive triathlon involvement for now. It is difficult to foresee the future in respect to these men's competitive careers due to the changing factors within their lifecourse.

Success means a number of things to these elite triathletes, yet a prevailing theme is the notion of recognition and acceptance as a consequence of success. They placed more emphasis on these elements than on extrinsic rewards, such as money, in spite of being professional athletes. One of the men simply wanted to be successful to be admired and accepted into a group. His goals have evolved over time although recognition, for his triathlon endeavours, still remains a top priority. Once again, the motives for wanting to be recognised and accepted differ with each man but in the end they are attempting to promote their masculine self-image.

### Surf Lifesaving Competition and Success: More than Winning

Competition, winning and success are closely related according to the four surf lifesavers. They are extremely important elements to these men but not always essential as a consequence of their understanding towards the nature of sport. Winning is their most sought after position in competition yet consistently placing in the top few is adequate enough to satisfy their competitive desire. Still there must be occasional wins to appease self-doubt in relation to their own ability. The surf lifesaving subculture is well set up to provide a support structure for elite athletes such as these four men. The social atmosphere, together with the nurturing, family-oriented environment, make it easy for competitors to

share the joys of success but also to be comforted in periods of despair. Further, the "always next week" attitude prevails in an environment such as this because of the fickle nature of surf lifesaving. There are many elements within a race that can go wrong for a competitor such as craft damage and the luck associated with wave selection. Therefore elite competitors regard themselves and others as being "as good as your last performance".

Unlike track running and pool swimming, where the fastest runner or swimmer on the day - barring accidents - may be predicted to win, there are no certainties in surf lifesaving and it is a common occurrence that the fastest competitor in the flat water is beaten in surf. The changeful character of the sea as an arena, where the competition takes place, adds numerous factors to the nature of the competition and consequently offers many challenges to the competitors. (Pearson, 1979, pp.129-130)

In his comparative study on the subcultures of surf board riding and surf lifesavers, Pearson (1979) suggested that surf lifesavers place great emphasis on competition and its requirements. Referring to the surf lifesaver he claimed:

Much of his behaviour is in some way geared towards performance and the achievement of competitive success. The lifesaver's orientation towards competition appears even to influence his relationship with nature; this also tends to be competitive, often with socially competitive ends in view. (p.124)

Further, Pearson argued that the majority of young, novice surf lifesavers are attracted by the competitive sport component rather than volunteer beach patrol and rescue work. It is, accordingly, "their main reason for joining" (p.129) and provides much of the informal learning within the surf lifesaving subculture. The unknown and uncontrollable elements of the surf might be one factor involved in making this sport appealing to many young men because it offers them more opportunities to be successful. This is appropriately described by Pearson stating that:

In short, surf lifesaving as a competitive sport has a greater number of factors involved in the determination of the outcome than most sports. This makes the nature of the sport more open. More competitors stand the chance of coming out

winners. The entrant does not necessarily have to be the fastest or best to win. (1979, p.130)

Specifically though, it is the ironman events which capture the attention of many young men because of their high profile, masculine-oriented nature. Furthermore, involving four disciplines, two of which utilise craft, the chances are even higher of producing an unpredictable outcome. Ironman, as a consequence of both its name and the rigorous nature of the event is a highly regarded sport particularly in Australian culture. Until recently however, before being nationally televised, ironman events were left largely to people's imagination. It is a contentious issue whether televising it has positively or negatively changed people's views or whether it has reaffirmed them. It is probable that by presenting the sport to the masses, the manner in which people perceive surf lifesaving men has grown in stature. Consequently, more men are contemplating involvement in the sport in the hope of receiving similar accolades.

Two of the surf lifesaving men are striving towards selection in the lucrative televised national surf lifesaving series. Therefore success is regarded as essential in helping them make a career out of the sport. Failure to succeed at this level will mean retirement or at least a reassessment of their goals. The likelihood of competing at state level is a viable alternative as evidenced by the older of the four athletes. Now focussing on events in Western Australia, his competitive needs are being satisfied while continuing to sustain a positive masculine identity through recognition of masculine defined sporting achievements.

### Bodybuilding: Competing as a Form of Legitimising Practice

Competition is a form of legitimising bodybuilders' involvement in the sport. The elite bodybuilders compete once every year and occasionally twice a year. One of the men who

has been in the sport for 19 years is currently taking a break from competition and does not plan on competing for at least another two or three years while his personal fitness training business is being established. He still regards himself as a professional bodybuilder as well as one of the best in the state of Western Australia and firmly believes that he could defeat anyone in Australia when adequately prepared. This man's reputation will be maintained throughout the three year lay-off from competition, however the other elite men, who do not have the same distinction, must prepare to compete more regularly to establish themselves as consistently high performers. Compared with other sports, competing once a year seems inconsequential. However, bodybuilders can easily justify their minimal competitive involvement by emphasising the difficulty in peaking twice a year with regard to an optimal looking physique. The stress a bodybuilder undergoes in the weeks leading up to the contest can be traumatic to his body and thus it is unwise to place it under such duress for more than several weeks in a year. It appears to be a sport where the competitors rarely feel totally prepared for an event. They are always looking towards competition at least one year in advance, even prior to a current event, and claim to be underprepared thus highlighting their insecurities and reinforcing their bodily dissatisfaction. On the other hand, such a mind set could be a coping mechanism to buffer any resultant failures. At least by taking this approach there is always something positive on the horizon, even if their present existence is not an entirely happy one.

Success is important to the elite bodybuilders, but it is far from being solely defined in terms of winning. Instead it is regarded as improving the size, shape and muscularity of their physiques. Therefore competition is the testing arena that determines whether improvement has been made. Success can take on different meanings for these men, particularly since it is an integral part of their professional involvement in the sport. Without success there is unlikely to be the ensuing recognition which in turn means a dearth of

sponsorship endorsements. A professional bodybuilder's financial existence is based on sponsorship, seminars, advertising and other such bodily commodifications.

Like most other bodybuilders these men hold Arnold Schwarzenegger in the highest esteem not only because of his massive, symmetrical physique but also his ability to use his body in a commercial sense and subsequently build a business "empire" around it.

Exploitation is not a term these men care to bother with. They all understand that their body is what people want to see and they cannot accuse sponsors for exploiting them if they are receiving remuneration. Amongst other things, bodybuilding is perceived as a business by these elite athletes and this further justifies their excessive involvement in the sport. Having decided to make it their profession, either now or in the future, they must apply themselves accordingly. This means that dedicated training is required to develop the best physique possible so that success is achieved and sponsors will seek them to advertise merchandise. Should they be fortunate enough to land a television or print advertisement the men believe that the time spent bodybuilding has created a bonus for them because none of the men began bodybuilding with the intention of making a living out the sport. Their initial intentions were based on promoting a positive self-image and improving their masculine identity by increasing muscular development.

Two of the men rely heavily on success to promote their personal training businesses. They argue that success is the best form of advertising because it is free and, as one suggested, people like others to know they are being trained by state, Australian or even world champion bodybuilders. No more is this evident than immediately following a successful championship competition, as both commented on the upsurge in business when they perform well. Not only does business flourish following a successful competition, but also the accolades from friends, acquaintances and fellow bodybuilders at the gymnasium abound. This is an important element in heightening self-esteem through achievement-oriented success. However, despite the congratulatory period lasting only a short while, it is

an essential element in making the athlete strive for the recurrence of such a self-gratifying occasion.

The lengths at which these men are prepared to go in order to achieve success is extraordinary. As mentioned earlier, excessive dieting and steroid abuse are just some of the self-destructive methods employed by bodybuilders in the name of achieving the desired physique. Clearly, developing a "perfect body" is the ultimate goal for these elite bodybuilders and recognised as a mark of success. The main problem with this tenet of thought is the inherent insecurities many bodybuilders harbour in relation to the self-perception of their own physiques. Remembering that most bodybuilders believe they will never achieve the perfect physique they are therefore doomed to a life of self-perceived failure and lack of success.

### Identity, Insecurity and Perception of Self

Identities of men change throughout the lifecourse. Beginning from childhood, boys often shift their source of identification from the family to peers as they approach adolescence (Messner, 1985a). It is during this period that boys crave attention from peers, and therefore in order to attain peer group status boys try to gain recognition and attention by proving themselves to be worthy of future manhood. Sports offer an ideal rite of passage into manhood, therefore boys feel the necessity to involve themselves and perform well in socially regarded masculinised sports. Since winning is given foremost recognition this, more than anything, becomes the target for which to aim. Messner concluded that as a consequence of this, most boys are never satisfied with their performance, because there can only be one winner. Therefore it "ends up stripping them of the ability to receive the one major thing that sport really does have to offer: fun" (1985a, p.78). Further, he contended

that the construction of masculine identity relates more with "doing" and with "achieving" rather than concerning itself with fun.

In establishing their masculine identity a number of the elite men involved in this research, namely triathletes and bodybuilders, moved from one sport to another during childhood and adolescence. They were in search of a sport that would help them define their self-perception and provide proof of transition towards manhood. However, by the end of adolescence they had still not established themselves in a particular sport, nor were they closer to understanding their masculine identity. Upon reaching adulthood the men settled on a sport they believed fulfilled their intrinsic desires and positively impacted on their masculine identity and self-esteem. Still, masculinity remains a problematic issue for these men, and sport their salvation. However, it is contentious whether their sporting involvement has alleviated many of the problems they originally faced in respect to masculine identity. Sport may have simply masked these points at issue causing others to arise in lieu.

One of the major concerns facing these men in terms of understanding masculine identity is the difficulty in positively defining masculinity. Men, and particularly boys, come to conceive of masculinity in terms of what it is *not* rather than what it *is*. Asked to place a definition on the term "masculinity", the men in this research referred to it as not being feminine, not being gay, and not having muscles. It was however, being big, strong, and muscular. When asked how they established such a definition most of the men attested to constructing a visual image of a "masculine" looking man. He was commonly someone they admired, as in the bodybuilders' veneration for Arnold Schwarzenegger, or he was a composite of favoured body parts from numerous men which ultimately constructed their ideal masculine man. These men ranged from sportsmen, to movie stars, and even comic book heroes. Generally their images were "larger than life" figures and somewhat unrealistic in their conception. Attaining the appearance of their ideal man may be such an unachievable goal that it could provide them with ongoing motivation. Such was the case with the men of



bodybuilding, more so than the other groups. However, it is significant the importance they all placed on being big and muscular. Noteworthy is the emphasis the men placed on visual imagery in relation to masculinity as opposed to personality traits, occupation, or even material factors such as financial status. They could easily identify with looking masculine, but it was difficult for them to think in terms of being masculine and yet not having a masculine appearance.

Most men harbour insecurities, some more so than others. However, there are men who can disguise personal fears and anxieties whilst upholding a veneer of normal existence. On the other hand there are men who act upon insecurities in quest of solutions. Success generally produces positive changes in men's lifestyles, perceptions and self-esteem. On the other hand, failure may create disillusionment as evidenced by the elite bodybuilders wherein unattainable goals that have been set ultimately result in perpetuation of low self-worth. The emphasis placed on bodily image in the quest to bolster individual self-esteem and masculine identity does little to positively influence these aspects of their lives. Thus insecurities may be masked, changed or transformed, but they are never entirely eradicated. Therefore, bodybuilding is attractive to men in need of having their self-image propped up because of its ease of accessibility and its relative "quick fix" approach to a long term problem. However, the repair work is only minor and somewhat superficial.

Despite the elite bodybuilders knowing they are significantly larger than when they initially began the sport, their original anxieties about being small have developed further. Not only do they display insecure tendencies towards inferior size but also regarding body shape, muscularity, and definition. Although it is probably true to suggest that these men have improved body-images where "normal" physiques are concerned, they are now having to compare themselves with other bodybuilders which is something they did not seriously partake in prior to their bodybuilding commitment. Thus insecurities are now based on a new set of criteria which, in many ways, may produce more intense anxieties. Much of their

self-worth and masculine identity hinges on physical size and subsequent body appearance. Hence, concern is directed at maintaining muscular gains while constantly seeking new methods to further enhance muscle growth.

Utilising both psychoanalytic theory and lifecourse analysis there are several stages of development in a man's life where insecurity requires examination. Puberty is a crucial time in a man's successful dealings with masculinity (Klein, 1993b). It is a period in which a boy enters the transitional stage of becoming a man and therefore must decide upon the attachment/separation dichotomy with his mother. Further, Connell (1987a) emphasised another problem, that of sexual dimorphism which is at its most significant point at this time. It can result in girls, around 11 to 13 years, being bigger, stronger, and often more coordinated than boys of equivalent ages. As a consequence a boy's perception of inferior physical status may lead to a separation with his mother and a stronger identification with men (Klein, 1993b). Thus bodybuilding becomes alluring to pubescent boys who want the status and recognition of a man.

Organised competitive sport is perceived as crucial by boys as a signifier of masculine identity. Western culture has historically linked masculinity with occupations of status and danger such as firemen, policemen, doctors and so on. However, as a consequence of cultural evolution these mainstays of masculinity are gradually being deconstructed and removed. Contemporary Western men are now in search of a new pillar upon which dominance, power and, ultimately, masculinity can be based. It is arguable that increasingly sport has become a primary substitute particularly as a consequence of television, where images can be portrayed instantly to millions of people. Therefore violent, aggressive, contact sports can both visually display and socially venerate idealised forms of masculinity. Thus sport is seen as a signifier of gender (Messner, 1993). It not only offers men the chance to display and prove their masculinity to other men, and women, but also provides them the opportunity of involvement in a masculine identified subculture. Such a subculture

appears attractive to young men in need of masculine identification by way of propping up their own self-image whilst associating and developing relationships with men. By associating more with men in recognised masculine domains a young man reinforces and reaffirms his personal masculine identity whilst simultaneously separating himself further from his mother. He is also unconsciously distancing himself from most feminised practices to promote masculine identification in an attempt to emphasise gender differentiation.

Chodorow (1978, p.176) explained the process by citing differences between girls and boys.

Girls' identification processes, then, are more continuously embedded in and mediated by their ongoing relationship with their mother. They develop through and stress particularistic and affective relationships to others. A boy's identification processes are not likely to be so embedded in or mediated by a real affective relation to his father. At the same time, he tends to deny identification with and relationship to his mother and rejects what he takes to be the feminine world; masculinity is defined as much negatively as positively. Masculine identification processes stress differentiation from others, the denial of affective relation, and categorical universalistic components of the male role. Feminine identification processes are relational, whereas masculine identification tend to deny relationship.

Most of the elite athletes involved in this research have undergone a similar identification process to the one described by Chodorow. The difference between them is the sport in which they chose to satisfy their separation and attachment desires. In an attempt to gain the respect of their fathers the men searched for the appropriate masculine-oriented sport that would also separate them from feminisation. Fortunately for the men of surf lifesaving their task was made easier by having the search reduced following the first attempt at their sport. Despite trying other sports throughout childhood and adolescence, these men were at least aware of the sport that would help gain the respect of their father regardless of whether they would continue to participate or not. They were also fortunate to be involved in a sport that championed traditional masculine behaviour at the expense of women and subordinate men. Thus, socialisation and mateship between males was a high priority within the realm of surf lifesaving.

The triathletes and bodybuilders were different in that they did not strike upon their sport until later in life. Taking responsibility according to personal needs on reaching adulthood, the men chose sports that satisfied their intrinsic desires as opposed to gaining their fathers' approval which they had tried to do so often in the past. The individualistic subcultures of these two sports are vastly different from the supportive, nurturing environment that surf lifesaving offers its participants. Therefore, insecurity is more prevalent as a consequence of the minimal support network and identity becomes largely concerned with the opinions and perceptions of others. Bodybuilders are guided by the perceptions of others, more so than triathletes, because their masculinity is almost exclusively determined by the size and definition of their physique. Even in competition a bodybuilder's physique is closely scrutinised and judged according to subjective guidelines. Ultimately he leaves his masculine identity in the hands of another person who has the capacity to decide one's competitive fate through personal preference. It could be contended that these men, who have been noted for their insecurity towards self-image, have purposely tried to seek out a sport that enables others to judge their masculinity for them, thus relinquishing their task of self-appraisal. As in the narcissist, they depend on others to validate their self-esteem (Lasch, 1979).

Still, bodybuilding is a seducer to many young men with the attraction grounded in the promise of change. Visible transformations of physique from an unimpressive to an heroic, imposing figure is followed closely by a transformation of psyche (Klein, 1993b).

Bodybuilding is thus seen as a legitimate and acceptable means of attempting to create change in relation to one's physical appearance and subsequent psychological perspective.

However, as Klein aptly explained, bodybuilding is sometimes not enough to eradicate the past:

All too often, however, bodybuilding and weight training still do not allow us, as individuals, the desired degree of transformation. Narcissus fell completely

in love with his reflection. The bodybuilder would like to, but can't. Inside that body is a mind that harbours a past in which there is some scrawny adolescent or stuttering child that forever says, "I knew you when...". The metamorphosis is doomed to remain incomplete. The individual gets a new body, maybe a new self-image, but one so lacking in substance that only constant reassurance from a friendly mirror can allay the fear of not having changed at all. (1993b, pp.41-42)

Body image is a strong determinant of insecurity and body identity. Narcissism, which is closely linked to all three, has loosely taken on the meaning of describing vanity and a self-centred approach. It is generally believed that high profile athletes display narcissistic tendencies, in particular athletes involved in sports where desirable physiques are constructed as a consequence of that sport. Such sports include football, swimming and surf lifesaving but none more so than bodybuilding while its participants at all levels are regarded as the most narcissistic of athletes. Their self-adulation together with incessant body analysis and intimate appraisal from fellow male bodybuilders places them as the epitome of self-love.

Surf lifesavers display a high degree of self-adoration and maintain positive self-images where their body is concerned. Despite the elite level participants regularly partaking in weight training whilst mirroring their actions in the same manner bodybuilders mirror theirs, these men are perceived as well adjusted, individualistic men. A large part of this conception by Western culture is based on the notion that training is a means to an end for these men. Unlike the bodybuilder who bases his success on not what his body can do, but rather, what his body looks like it could do, the surf lifesaver is seen as an aesthetically pleasing, well functioning, instrumental body. Thus the function and form of a surf lifesaver overrides the look of power, virility and prowess of the bodybuilder, which is more akin to the world of modelling, beauty contests or movie stars than that of sporting heroes (Klein, 1993b).

The elite triathletes within this research maintain a positive perception of self in terms of body image and masculine appearance although they all, at some point in their lives,

would like to be bigger. Despite acquiring their masculine identity, and some elements of security, through competitive accomplishments these men occasionally feel threatened whilst in the presence of men with excessively large, or well muscled physiques. Only when they are in their own triathlon environment do they feel completely comfortable with their physical stature. Still, they take solace in knowing their body can perform physical feats that the majority of men, and all women cannot.

It is the bodybuilders who are continually searching for their masculine identity. Surf lifesavers have long been content with their sporting involvement and masculine self, whilst the triathletes have taken some time to reach this point. Unlike the bodybuilders, sporting contentment, and its associated masculine identity, has eventually been met. Contentment for the bodybuilders does eventuate in sorts, that is, it arrives sporadically yet it lasts only a short while. Observing these men in training and at competitions it was noticeable that attention, even negative attention, was appreciated. On numerous occasions the elite bodybuilders were enduring an arduous training session in which they would scream and moan in anguish as they lifted the weights. The spectacle of their efforts plus their sheer size forced everyone in the gymnasium to at least take a glance, if not a long stare, at the particular bodybuilder. It was not out of admiration, but more like amazement as one would look at freaks. However, this was accepted just as openly as praise would have been. Klein emphasised this point when he claimed:

The shocked reaction of the public is almost as good as looks of admiration. That look of shock or approval ricochets between his needs for confirmation and sense of self, and others' perception. In the look of incredulity the bodybuilder sees reflected a self that resembles the look of power and which earns the acknowledgement he so badly needs; and this constitutes a dimension of narcissism that is central to bodybuilding. (1993b, p.203)

### Cessation of Sport

For some, the end of the athletic career approaches gradually, like an unwanted but not unexpected house guest. One can thus at least plan for the inevitable. For others, the athletic career ends with the shocking suddenness of a violent thunderclap that rudely awakens one from a pleasant dream. But whether it approaches gradually or emerges suddenly, the end of the playing career represents the termination of what has been central in the man's life, and the change signals a crisis in the lifecourse.....The end of the athletic career, can disrupt and drastically alter a man's relationships with the world, with people and with himself. (Messner, 1992, p.111)

None of the men in this research have entered the retirement phase of their sporting career, however it is evident that several are beginning to contemplate life after current sporting involvement. The two oldest men, one from the sport of triathlon and the other from surf lifesaving, foresee their level of participation gradually declining to the point where disengagement will involve minimal anguish in an attempt to create as little upheaval to their lives as possible. For one of the men, his triathlon store offers him ease of access to gradually step back from the competitive aspect of the sport and yet still be involved in a major capacity. Furthermore, he is contemplating re-establishing himself in the politics of triathlon to become an administrator once again, a task previously accomplished with success. The surf lifesaver, on the other hand, perceives his future as a coach and mentor to the young "nippers" within his surf club. At present he is spending a lot of time establishing a junior coaching program which will be further reinforced upon retirement. The fortunate aspect of this man's competitive involvement is in his ability to choose several specific events in which to compete each year. Thus, mental and physical preparation are monitored and controlled through training specificity which ultimately means approaching the event in a "peaked" state as opposed to entering it "burned out".

The noteworthy element of successfully competing in only a limited number of races each year is the resultant generation of heightened esteem and identification. Thus, an air of

mystique surrounds this man wherein people are in awe of him and his success. Further intensifying the fascination is his attitude of contempt that pervades a seemingly nonchalant competitive persona. However, this is his method of dealing with imminent retirement from competition, by exiting in a manner that will not undermine the reputation established through a long and illustrious career. Thus, both men are looking towards voluntary retirement in the next few years which, according to sociologists in this field, is the most desirable method of disengagement from sport (McPherson 1978; Messner, 1992).

It is generally regarded that athletes who retire voluntarily have a much easier transition than those athletes who continue to try and hold on despite diminishing levels of talent, skill and fitness. A successful sportsman is often noted for his refusal to give in, often in the face of adversity, and when this is combined with the comparatively short career for the athlete voluntary retirement is problematic (Messner, 1992). Further, at the elite level of sporting involvement men find difficulty in retiring at a young age. Unlike retiring from a job upon reaching the age of 65, retirement from sport is comparatively premature and is not as socially sanctioned. Therefore, men often continue on with their sport because they feel too young to retire when in reality their elite career may have reached an end.

The thought of retiring at a young age is a difficult element with which to contend. Once again, men from the sports of triathlon and surf lifesaving find themselves in this situation, as a consequence of self-doubt. The men are all concerned about their future and are therefore trying to determine whether it is financially rational to continue with their sport if monetary success does not eventuate soon. At present it is feasible to sustain a living with their earnings from sport and part-time occupations, however they are unable to save for the future. Sport is the foremost element in their lives at present but attaining financial security is beginning to rest heavily upon them. Therefore they can foresee a drastic reduction in training which will ultimately produce retirement from national and international events if financial rewards do not eventuate in the next few years.



Competition is important to bodybuilders but does not hold the same significance for them as the other men. Generally they will compete only once a year, although it is not the competitive results on which the major emphasis is placed upon but rather the bodybuilding lifestyle. Therefore retirement from competition means relatively little and is often masked by comments such as the athlete is taking an extended break from competition while he "puts more size on" and "bulks up" in preparation for an event in a few years time, as one of the elite men suggested. So long as competition is mentioned in order to justify their involvement in a sport rather than a narcissistic endeavour, the men can regard themselves as athletes and not freakish exhibitionists, as some might contend. The primary difference separating these men from triathletes and surf lifesavers, in relation to competition, is their conviction of being able to compete well into their 40s and 50s. One man anticipated competing at the age of 60 with a better body than he has at present. Thus, bodybuilding is perceived as a lifetime commitment of both training and competition, although some may see it as a lifetime obsession in the form of addiction.

Upon reaching retirement, the surf lifesavers are content with remaining involved in the surf lifesaving scene. They have grown up with the sport and its subculture and therefore contemplate difficulty in leaving to pursue another. Whereas the triathletes, who have tried a multitude of sports prior to their current involvement, perceive themselves attempting a new sport if the need arises. Originally attracted by success and the enjoyment acquired through affiliation with the triathlon subculture, these elements have the capacity to diminish over time. Therefore, with negligible history or tradition securing them to the sport, finding an alternative may be a viable option if it appears to offer its participants heightened pleasure.

Retirement can produce negative implications with respect to masculine identity based largely on athletic performance. Several of the elite athletes find difficulty in sustaining a positive masculine identity when they are in environments disassociated with their sport.

This provides an example of the extent to which their masculinity is dependent on constant sporting involvement and attachment to its related subculture. Retirement from elite level sports generally comes at a young age, therefore these identity problems, based on a reliance of sport, are exacerbated when cessation occurs. No longer are the accolades and praise for sporting achievements forthcoming nor is the means by which they can adequately display their masculinity in a manner they are used to. Furthermore, without the close knit membership of their sporting subculture the men are often left with a crisis of identity.

On examining the lives of the men involved in the three sports of triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding, it appears that the surf lifesavers are the most appropriately set up to deal with retirement-oriented identity crises. The subculture in which they exist has been a major part of their lives from an early age. Unlike the other two sports, their families, and in particular their fathers, are involved in the subculture to a large extent. Therefore, the subculture acts like an extension of their own nuclear family upholding similar traditional masculinised values. It provides them with a support network structured upon unity, camaraderie, mateship and, importantly, continued masculine identity. The men of surf lifesaving perceive themselves as being involved in "the scene" for life and are not overly perturbed about having to retire from elite competition. Ironman success is anticipated at state and club level events for some time and there is a strong likelihood of continued achievements on specialising in a single component of the sport such as surf-ski or board paddling. Therefore disengagement from sport is a gradual process and should not create major identity crises.

### Summary: A Final Analysis

Masculinity is a fragile construct. Too often it is depicted, and socially sanctioned, as being a tough and rugged form of ideology wherein muscles have become the dominant physical manifestation within one's visual imagery. Masculinity is perceived as being a developmental process throughout the lifecourse of men. However, it is a social construct that is highly dependent on the boy's childhood relationships with parents, family and peers, particularly with respect to his father.

Sport is viewed as a means by which boys can gain attention from others in terms of establishing and reinforcing their masculine image. As the boys grow older, establishing themselves as men, other elements enter their lives, such as work and intimate relationships which may assist in their personal construction of masculine identity. However, it is arguable that sport, in Western society, is becoming the primary site of masculine construction for men not only involved at the elite level, but also for sportsmen in general.

Prior to the industrial revolution and the resultant technological advancements working-class men were able to develop their masculine identity through physical acts of manual labour. Post-industrial revolution has brought about the declining rate of physical work through improved machinery and mechanisation which has made difficult manual tasks comparatively easy to negotiate. As a consequence, men are gradually losing a primary site of masculinisation and are being forced to look for other sites to assist in the construction of their masculine identity. Therefore sports, which place emphasis on strength, power and aggression, wherein participants are rewarded through the social acknowledgement and consent of masculinised acts, have become the logic of Western society.

On the other hand, sports such as triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding, which do not advocate these elements, have proven to be masculinising sites for its elite male

participants. Therefore, displaying idealised forms of masculine behaviour is not the only way in which sport can provide its participants with masculine identification. Intrinsic elements such as displaying hegemonic masculinity over men and women through competitive success, as in the triathletes, or having a larger physique, as in the bodybuilders, is a highly sought after component in using sport as a site for the construction of masculinity. It is important to acknowledge the inherent qualities that each sport has to offer its male participants in terms of developing masculine identity as opposed to focussing on the socially idealised masculine elements, such as violence, which are constantly reinforced and venerated on television depicting them as acts of masculinity. That is, for example, if the masculine identities of male figure skaters or golf players were analysed, it is likely they would maintain intrinsic qualities relative to their sport similar to the men involved in this research. Despite not participating in socially revered, masculinised sports does not mean they are any less of a man. On the contrary, some people would claim the opposite and argue that these men are pursuing sports they find inherently satisfying and have not succumbed to the pressure of participating in idealised masculine sports merely to prop up an insecure masculine identity.

## CHAPTER 9

### Conclusion

#### Research Overview

This chapter is designed to provide an overview of the research and emphasise the main issues of masculinity arising from the data analysis. Using evidence cited in both the findings and discussion, conclusive statements with respect to the social construction of masculinity as it relates to sport, and its relationship to men in general, will be provided. It is also important to remember the researcher's status as that of being a triathlete as well as the associations with men involved in surf lifesaving and bodybuilding in the past.

This research has investigated the role that sport plays in the social construction of masculinity for elite level sportsmen. The outcomes are transferable from the site of elite level male athletes to men in general because sport is a reflection of society wherein dominant values and power relations are upheld and continually reinforced. Highlighted by virtue of extremism, the issues that surround the social construction of masculinity are more easily discerned within individually oriented elite level sports. Furthermore, analysing the sports of triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding is designed to acquire data from contrasting sports, in terms of training and competition, but with a degree of uniformity in terms of their individual nature and masculine social orientation. Analyses of resultant data also provides differences within a subcultural context. This is significant in determining the overall social construction of masculinity for these men by emphasising the importance of subcultural identification.

A social-psychological perspective was adopted to examine the lives of athletes throughout the individual lifecourse wherein sports often act as a focal point around which

males develop. Lifecourse analysis indicates that sport is important in the development of a boy's masculine identity and self-esteem from an early age. Children's sport is problematic because on the one hand it offers a privileged few the opportunity to develop a positive sense of identity and status, while on the other hand it serves to exacerbate insecurities, poor self-images and lack of identity.

Boys enter sport for numerous reasons, several of which were emphasised by the men in this research, including status, involvement in subcultures, friendship and enjoyment. However, the most prevalent reason for the men in this research was to gain recognition and admiration from fathers and ultimately a heightened sense of masculine identity. Boys who attempt to establish masculine identity through sporting success learn that continued success is the only real way of maintaining such status. Despite believing his masculine identity is based upon a strong foundation of athletic prowess, it is in reality, unstable and highly problematic in terms of insecurities, self-esteem and relationships with others.

Understanding that "winning is everything", based on the Lombardian ethic, men soon realise that the most successful athletes are afforded the status and privilege they are seeking in order to enhance masculine identity. Achieving such success often means athletes must push their bodies to maximum physical capacity in spite of pain and injury. Adopting such an instrumental rationality and perceiving their bodies as machines is a common theme throughout the interviews with the men. Thus, food takes on the function of fuel which is measured in quantities to optimise performance and physical output of the body. However, food is sometimes not enough to produce the necessary energy requirements that will ensure success. Therefore, despite the well documented evidence regarding the negative implications of steroid use, illegal anabolic substances are frequently used in sports requiring high levels of muscle strength and power output. Ingesting these substances in the face of inherent physical dangers provides proof of the extent to which certain athletes are prepared to sacrifice their bodies for the sake of success.

The notion that "winning is everything" can have negative implications upon various aspects of the athlete's life. Being solely focussed on winning can jeopardise friendships, personal relationships and intimacy with others. Noteworthy is that none of the men in this research are currently married, while divorce and relationship breakdowns are common. Lacking communication skills, sport is often used as a mask behind which the athlete can hide and use as an extension of his self. They often appear confident with a strong sense of masculine identity and self-esteem, when in reality they may be lacking these positive qualities. Sport, therefore, has the capacity to prop up some of the most masculine characteristics in grandiose style (Klein, 1993b).

It is the surf lifesavers who appear to be the most appropriately set up to deal with personal masculine identity. The support network around which their lives revolve provides an environment wherein an intrinsically motivated masculine identity can be constructed whilst being afforded the privilege of knowing that they exist in a secure subculture in the event of requiring assistance, should the need arise. It is this security and positive support which provides the surf lifesaver the opportunity to explore numerous aspects of his life. With very little to fall back on in terms of education and employment the men have little hesitation in applying themselves totally to the sport which is testimony of the supportive environment in which they exist. As a consequence they have no trouble in dealing with failure at the elite level because they believe their future is secure regardless of their sporting achievements. The two surf lifesaving men who have decided to pursue the sport full-time are simply going to "give it a go" because in their view they have "nothing to lose".

On the other hand, triathlon and bodybuilding do not have the same structures of support within their subcultural environments. Triathletes, more so than bodybuilders, will find difficulty in retiring from competitive sport because competition is the primary site for establishment of their masculine identity. Indeed, praise and admiration is bestowed upon them away from the competitive environment, but it is success derived from competition that

places these men hierarchically above others within the context of their sport. Bodybuilders claim to be involved in a "lifetime" sport in which they adopt a "way of life". As a consequence, competition is not the main focus of attention in their lives. Living the life of a bodybuilder, being big and receiving recognition from peers seems to be more important. Competition is still necessary but only as a form of legitimising bodybuilding involvement and classifying themselves as being involved in a "sport". Noteworthy however, is the extent to which these men go in preparing for a competition. Therefore, competition is important to them because it provides a stage upon which their masculinity can be visually displayed in the hope of being judged more masculine than their competitors.

As boys, each of the men, regardless of their sport, wanted to be judged as masculine by their fathers more so than any other person. Some of the men believed that if others perceived them to be masculine, as a consequence of masculine-oriented sporting success, then so too would their fathers perceive them in the same light. The surf lifesavers, once again, are the most adequately prepared to deal with such an occurrence because of mutually respectful relationships that have been forged with their fathers. Much of their respect is based on sharing common experiences with all of the surf lifesaving fathers having been surf lifesavers themselves. Further, having fathers understand the individual needs of their sons is crucial. In most instances the father is already respected whereas the son is constantly trying to prove his masculine self-worth. In the cases of several triathletes and bodybuilders who did not gain the desired respect from their fathers throughout their sporting youth, settling on a sport which was intrinsically appealing was an important transition in their lifecourse. It proved to themselves, and their fathers, they are capable of individual decision-making skills based on intrinsic needs. Therefore, respect was attained from their fathers through the traditional masculinised notion of "standing up for one's convictions" as opposed to respect derived from sporting involvement.



The reason why men choose to participate in selected sports are varied. They are specific to the individual, but as the research has shown, they are also indicative of the sport. Upon analysis at the next level, the reasons are generally indicative of elite male athletes. Since sport illuminates, reflects and reinforces the dominant values and relations of power in society, the analyses can be used to emphasise similar practices in society. For example, that men achieve a heightened sense of masculinity by participating in male-oriented sports might suggest other similar traditional bastions of masculinity are as far from having their gender barriers eroded as they are in sport.

Bodies are important to men. The physical presence of the male body is a significant factor in determining a man's masculine identity. Bodies can be compared and contrasted to one another with respect to how they look and what they can do. How one is perceived is crucial to a man's self-perception yet the way in which his body performs is equally important to some men. It was evident throughout the research that the majority of men, regardless of their sport, wanted to be bigger at some point in their lives. This suggests that the visual imagery of masculinity is important to men more so than masculinity attained through bodily performance. Men have a need to display a physical presence. Generally, men who are larger in terms of physical size and muscular definition are perceived as being more masculine because they embody a look of potential strength and power which are traditional masculine qualities. Smaller men are perceived to be weak and lacking elements of masculinity, therefore the desire to be larger is strong in most men. However, most men do not act upon their desires. They use other elements in their lives to establish personal masculine identity. For example, the elite triathletes place important emphasis upon competitive results to construct their masculine identity. They use this method of masculine construction similarly to the way a successful businessman would use his status and financial success. That is, they utilise other elements of masculine identification instead of their

physical appearance. However, similar to the triathletes, it is likely that the desire for a more masculine appearing body, in terms of size, is high.

The physical appearance of the surf lifesavers is something to be revered particularly in Australia. Regarded as icons not only because of their physical attributes, but also the enduring physical capabilities of their bodies, these men are generally comfortable with their masculine identity. They do realise their bodies are held in awe within Australian culture as well as being regarded as the epitome of physical fitness. Combined with the "bronzed Aussie" ethos they embody everything that is masculine and are perceived by many as the archetypal male.

Still, more people within contemporary Australian society perceive strong, powerful, aggressive athletes such as Australian Rule footballers and rugby players as the archetypal male because these men display idealised forms of masculine behaviours. Thus, contemporary Australian culture bases its masculine identification largely on superficial analyses of individuals' behaviours and physical appearances. The archetypal male should not be judged according to a prescribed set of criteria. In fact, it is contentious whether he should be judged at all. It is essential to encourage men to adapt to the changing social structures and not be caught up in attempting to fit a particular masculine ideal. If, however, we are to subscribe to an archetypal male figure, maintaining qualities of adaptability are important for men so that they may be able to change in relation to the dynamic structure of their social environment. Confidence with respect to a man's masculine identity is paramount, regardless of his sporting involvement.

## Recommendations for Further Research

Messner (1985a) discussed personal and social change in relation to masculinity and later subcategorised these into adaptive and transformative change. It is with respect to this discussion I will emphasise the foreseeable changes as a consequence of studying the three groups of elite athletes.

As they age, men change and adjust to the social reality around them. Social reality is changing and so too is the meaning of masculinity within the realm of sports. However, it is difficult to establish in which direction the changes will occur. Social structure is dynamic, therefore individuals need to adapt to socially structured conditions and experience personal transformations throughout the lifecourse. Analyses of the elite athletes' lives indicate that they do adapt and transform accordingly. Adaptation refers to the individual changing to adjust to the existing social system, whereas transformation is based on individual and social changes which challenge the value system and power relations that are upheld in society and within the realm of sports (Messner, 1985). As the findings show, adaptation and transformation occurs for a number of men during childhood, through adolescence and then on towards early adulthood. For some, the process is more traumatic than others. Therefore, it is necessary to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the social changes that cause difficulty for men during these developmental periods. Some of the questions that require answers are: What might make the transition from boyhood to manhood easier? How might these men's relationships with fathers, family, friends and women be appropriately structured and better balanced? How can sport be positioned to assist in the development of individuals and not undermine personal identity?

It is important that future research focuses on the changes that are occurring within society and their relationship to contemporary masculine identity. People's personal changes

affect the structure of society just as social changes affect people's personal lives. Further, it must also increase our appreciation for the nature of change (Messner, 1985).

Understanding individuals' participation in sport is significant in the analyses of the social construction of masculinity. It is crucial that research in the future looks not only at why heterosexual men involve themselves in sports but also why homosexual men participate in sport. It cannot be taken-for-granted that all men will undergo the same process of social construction and that is why sub-groups such as gay men must also be examined. Despite touching on issues of homosexuality in this research it would be far wise for someone more qualified and someone who is immersed in the culture of homosexuality to comment on this area in a more detailed manner.

Within the context of sport it is essential that research is directed towards the intrinsic and extrinsic reasons why men choose to be involved in organised sports. Competitive sports are not something which need to be eliminated. They do, however, need to be assessed with respect to the values they uphold and the elements which are advocated and those at their expense. Sport in contemporary Western society has become a lucrative business, and despite the efforts of the feminist movement, it remains an essentially sexist institution where patriarchal values are upheld and perpetuated. Too often boys perceive sports as a means by which they can express their masculinity at the expense of women and other subordinate and marginalised men. Thus it is regarded as a legitimate arena to display one's masculinity and to many is perceived as the last bastion of masculine construction.

Sport provides its own intrinsic pleasures. It should not be used as a substitute or a means by which to fill a void in one's life, nor should it be used as a site for the construction and perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity. The transformation of sports, with respect to the social definition of masculinity, has yet to be addressed by contemporary society. The comparatively few social scientists who are investigating this concern are slowly making

progress but further research is essential to attain a concise understanding to what is a complex and problematic issue.

### Summary of Thesis

This thesis investigated the social construction of masculinity as it relates to three individually-oriented, masculinised sports. Elite level athletes from the sports of triathlon, surf lifesaving and bodybuilding have been interviewed and their responses analysed utilising inductive analysis. A case narrative has been constructed for each of the 12 athletes involved in the research thereby providing an insight into their lives and ultimately a more comprehensive understanding of the issues affecting their masculine identity.

The discussion surrounding these men was underpinned by a theoretical framework based on three different theoretical approaches. Elements of psychoanalytic theory, lifecourse theory and gender order framework are utilised to provide a structured analysis of the men's lives and the way their masculinity is, and is continuing to be, shaped as a consequence of sporting involvement and its relationship to social change. Men's role in society is changing, therefore recommendations for future research have been cited as a consequence of the need for a more comprehensive awareness of men, masculinity and gender hierarchy. This is essential for a complete understanding of inter and intragender relationships.

## Appendix 1

Using a phenomenological interviewing approach, an interview guide was the most appropriate form of schedule to ensure that specific, distinguishing aspects of masculinity were discussed by the participants. However, the questions were posed in a manner which also allowed the participant freedom to respond in a unique style thus providing an outstanding opportunity of attaining rich, thick descriptions of the men's lives.

The following is a guide to the interview schedule used to investigate the lives of the 12 elite level athletes.

### Research Interview Schedule

- General leading questions to make the participant feel comfortable and at ease.
- Family relationships
  - father
  - mother
  - siblings
- Competition
- Success
- Winning
- Body image
- Self-esteem
- Perceptions of masculinity/femininity
- Perceptions of feminists

- Perceptions of women in sport
- Perceptions of men/mates and male athletes
- Perceptions of gays and lesbians
- Future goals/ambitions
- Retirement

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