

國立政治大學國際傳播英語碩士學位學程
International Master's Program in
International Communication Studies
College of Communication
National Chengchi University

碩士論文
Master's Thesis

男同志肌肉狂熱現象初探
Does Size of Muscles Matter?:
Gym Culture, Body Image, and the Gay Identity in
Taipei

Student: Chung-lun Wang 王崇倫

Advisor: Professor Hong-chi Shiau 蕭宏祺教授

中華民國 101 年 12 月
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Acknowledgement

It is finally my turn to write my own acknowledgement. I spend almost five years to get master's degree due to my heavy workload at work, and I once thought that I couldn't finish this thesis because I did not know if I had sufficient capability or, simply speaking, perseverance. But this final version of my thesis proves everything.

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Lucy and Lily are two real great friends of mine no matter good times or bad times in my life. You are the best gifts from God in my entire life. It's really my luck to have you by my side, even though we are worlds apart now. But you know, some day we will definitely eat, chat and laugh together no matter where we will be!!!! I love you. Teamo. Ich liebe dich. 我愛妳們!

The most important person in my life so far is definitely my boyfriend, Hsiang. Thank you for making my life complement. All these years, you have accompanied me through different difficulties and challenges. I do not know how to express more how much I love you. I cannot be myself without your support. It is you that encourage me to go this far. I want you to be with me every day until we are both aged. And at that time, how blessed we can still have each other! I love you and

thanks for your full support for me for 7 years.

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Your Lenny

Dec. 23th, 2012



Abstract

Earlier academic efforts on gay men's body image were by and large made in a western context. Given that, this study is set out to address the academic gap by answering two questions: why bodybuilding has become a prevailing trend for gay men in Taiwan, and what is the relationship between bodybuilding and the nascent gay identity. With the phenomenology approach in mind, this study employed ethnographic methods to retrieve three gay men's life stories. The results indicate that gay men often started bodybuilding project after their life crises, and being muscular does instantly enhance positive images and self-confidence among the informants. However, the outcome of bodybuilding is mixed in the long run. Another important finding suggests that the demand for bodybuilding is accelerated by the new social media venues ranging from gay parties or other social occasions, to the prevalence of geosocial networking applications on smart phones, and to social networking sites like Facebook. As result of these new venues, this paper examines the new body type labels in the Taiwanese gay scene, indicating that bears and wolves with muscles are seen as more desirable than others in the Taiwanese gay community.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1 ~ 9
Chapter 2: Literature Review	
2.1 Pierre Bourdieu – Theory of Practice	10 ~ 14
2.2 Gym Culture	15 ~ 19
2.3 Reflexive Embodiment	20 ~ 22
2.4 Minority Stress	23 ~ 25
Chapter 3: Research Design and Method	
3.1 Research Structure	26 ~ 27
3.2 Rationale	27 ~ 29
3.3 Research Design and Informants	30 ~ 32
3.4 Research Method	32 ~ 33
Chapter 4: Results And Discussion	
4.1 Life Stories	31 ~ 44
4.2 Discussion	
4.2.1 Workout is a lifestyle	45 ~ 46
4.2.2 Traditional Media Use	47 ~ 48
4.2.3 Muscles As Capital in New Media Use	49 ~ 51
4.2.4 Self-esteem restoration and gay identity improving	52 ~ 54
4.2.5 Gay labels in Taiwan	55 ~ 61
Chapter 5: Reflection, Conclusion and Suggestion	
5.1 Reflection	62 ~ 63
5.2 Conclusion	63 ~ 65
5.3 Suggestion	65 ~ 66
Appendix: Gay labels and scenes of gyms	67 ~ 72
References	73 ~ 76

Chapter 1

Introduction

Every time I join school reunions, I feel that I am so proud to be gay because those of my straight and classmates who had gorgeous look once become so withered and corpulent. Straight men do not care about their appearance and figure as gay men do. Most of the gay men go to gym after they finish a long-day work, while straight men either work overtime in the office or rush home to spend time with their family and end up watching TV all night long. Or when people walk in the East district in Taipei, they tend to see many muscular gay guys walking around. I start to think about why gay men concern muscles more than their straight counterparts do, which nurtures the present research.

As an open gay, I am curious about why most of the gay men around me are so fanatic about being muscular, including me. Decades ago, once people around me were aware of my gay identity, it was generally followed by the typical question, “Why don’t I look sissy or effeminate like all the TV portrayals?” People still ask me questions now when they realize my sexual identity; however, they begin with the question, “Why gay men look so strong?” Indeed, straight people associate working out with gay male. I can’t tell exactly when this phenomenon started and why this stereotypically feminine image of gay group has changed. Not only have general public’s views towards gay men changed, but gay people’s aesthetic value has altered dramatically too. Just as I mentioned above, most, if not all, of the gay men inundate the gym after a long-day work, trying to curve their body physique into another Statue of David. Testosterone and strong male hormone fill the weight training area. Each gay man turns their “gaydar” on with eyes passing through the premise and lingering on others’ muscular body in contempt of other heterosexual members’ existence. You can feel the gym has turned into an erotic space for gay men at that very moment.

After those flirting and suggestive language is done secretly, gay men will resume their workout process.

I have been working out in gyms for almost 7 years, from California Fitness Center to World Gym as a result of the merger of this two leading fitness in Taiwan in 2010. I would not call myself as a gym freak since I only go to the gym, 2-3 times a week and less than two hours for each time. The reason why I joined the gym was thanks to my ex-boyfriend “Wesley”, who was a personal trainer in California Fitness at that time and has been working out for years. He offered me a 7-day trial membership, showing me around how to build my body parts individually and carefully. During the trial period, I saw plenty of guys working out and they appeared to have a happy social life there. When I saw their muscular physique, I felt inferior. Thus, I was enrolled as a member and took up bodybuilding lessons. I went to the gym very often and diligently at the very first two years. I even drank high protein milkshake after workout to tone up my muscle, yet it did not work for me: I remained slim although friends said I was “bulky” by their standard. This is the most popular myth for most of guys who do weight training, that is, guys who work out will never be satisfied with who they are at the present. I even have witnessed some tragedies during the past few years of workout: Guys who crave for muscular physique will try everything to get stronger; however, they get too “bulky” from time to time and, at last, their weight get out of control, becoming a calamity.

I get acquainted with some straight guys and employees of the gyms, and they tell me they have seen or heard some man-to-man intercourse taking place in the shower room, which also appears in the narration in Alvarez’s book (Alvarez, 2010). Also, every time people ask me if I am gay, a sentence will always be followed. That is, “ You attend the gym and do weight training, right? You must be gay.” I feel

curious and astounded and asked them why. They then answer, “It is because only gay men care about their appearance and body shape. This is gay aesthetics!” Such stereotype is deeply inscribed in general public’s mind, and conversation as depicted above indicates two facets. First, gay men can have the chance to have sex at the gym as a fringe benefit of workout. Second, gay men go to gym and curve their body more than straight men do. This implies that gay individuals go to the gym mostly because they want to enhance their attractiveness to other men in either a long-term relationship or single-serving one.

These findings intrigued me. I began doing some primary research on why gay men are related to bodybuilding in the past decade. Plenty of journal articles are found concerning the relationship between gay community and body dissatisfaction and eating disorder. However, nearly all of these studies are written with western points of views in English and published in major academic publications. Few are written in Chinese or with Asian points of views. Drummond did a research on Asian gay men’s body (Drummond, 2005). This paper adopts qualitative research with six Asian gay males living in Adelaide, Australia, suggesting a life historical perspective reflecting that gay participants grow up in straight-dominated cultures. He also highlights the men’s current adversity as they struggle to deal with being Asian gay men living in a white, heterosexual, Anglo-Australian surroundings. However, his paper failed to provide how Asian gay men’s thinks of Asian gay men’s body. This present research provides an alternative and rare aspect voicing from Asian countries, specified in Taiwan, and written in English as well. This research can complement the lack of diversity of research at the present regarding the connection between workout and self-acceptance of gay identity.

Also, referring to body-building, most gay men work out in World Gym, the largest chain franchise fitness center in Taiwan. Adorned with neon lights and avant-garde decoration, playing electronic music, gyms are considered as a keen battle “field” and always packed with guys who train their muscles to gear for any occasions for exhibit. Some guys purposively ignore other peers and take off their tank top to expose their perfect six packs, appreciating their nice body through the mirror. Sometimes guys with bulky muscles gather around and touch each other’s chest muscles admiringly. Some guys just absorb themselves in bodybuilding, whooshing when they lift weights without chatting with others. Eye contact always lingers in the locker room and steam room. Such and such above takes place every day in the gym I attend in Taipei. So erotic the atmosphere in the gym is that gay guys see gym going is a must and start to take up working out as “habitus”.

Gay men are exposed to muscular body images everywhere, from friends’ nude photos on Facebook, to online promotional posters for gay parties, gay magazines and gay pornography - unconsciously and spontaneously as well. Odds are slim if a gay guy tries not to see images of muscular hunks even for one day. These images impose pressures on most of the gay men; thus, they take up working out for fear that they should be eliminated and marginalized from this gay social circle. Obtaining muscles seems like a climbing trend among gay population, which takes place not merely in Taiwan but worldwide.

In the favored TV series *Sex And the City*, four girls had a wild night out in a gay bar, witnessing hundreds of gay men dancing topless.

Miranda asked, “Seriously, Why don't straight men have bodies like this?” “Because gay men have the possibility in sex at the gym. If straight men could have sex at the gym, they'd work out all the time too.” Carrie replied.

In terms of looks and body image, gay men can be a pretty tough crowd. Men

are visually programmed and attractiveness is key to a man's self-esteem and his impression on others, especially in gay culture. "Into muscular", "muscle guys preferred." Take a glimpse of gay-cruising smart phone social applications, such as Grindr, Jack'd and Scruff, and you can see criteria for searching other gay males are generally listed above. If one looks around at the gay community, almost everyone has made musculature such a focus. Alvarez (2010) suggested that almost every individual is going for that gym look, or that gym body, or trying to look muscular and attractive. A great deal of research done under a western context, muscularity has replaced effeminate image that once associated with gay men; muscular guys represent masculinity and are becoming the mainstream in gay community. Earlier research explains why gay men show greater concern about body building and have a cult of muscles as a result of three responsible factors: (1) gay magazines, (2) gay pornography, and (3) wrestling. This fetishism of big muscles can be mostly observed through printed media or gay-related magazines, such as *Attitude*, *Out* and so on. Analyzing two seasons of *Out* magazine to identify and evaluate the body image of gay men, Krishnasamy (2008) argues that being muscular is often the primary image portrayed in the *Out* magazine. Academic efforts in explaining why gay men are often considered to have the cult of muscles, gay pornography is another venue where muscular physique is inundated. Duggan and McCreary (2005) indicates that pornography exposure is positively correlated with social physique anxiety for gay men. Soulliere and Blair (2006) focus on images and commentaries of male wrestling performers' bodies, suggesting that the male body is constructed and presented in World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) television programs in its culturally ideal form, albeit somewhat "hyper-masculinized," emphasizing large size, lean muscularity, and strength as inter-connected features of the male body ideal. Existing

research argues that the muscular male body ideal, often promoted in the media, is associated with male body dissatisfaction and increasingly problematic attempts to attain unrealistic body shape by young males (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Brennan, Crath, Hart, Gadalla, & Gillis, 2011; Duggan & McCreary, 2005; Giles & Close, 2008; Yelland & Tiggemann, 2003). However, the bulk of research has been done under western context, which lacks an Asian point of view. This present research can complement this scarcity.

Indeed, this phenomenon can also be attribute to cult of masculinity, proposed by Signorile (1997). He argues that the constant pressure that men have to be men, to do virile things, and to have a hyper-masculine appearance. What our culture means by “a man” is a social construct (Kesler, 2008). Under this patriarchic society, we are taught to act like a man and grow up like a man, making every effort to eliminate effeminate parts of self; being gay is deemed as a dissident. The mainstream expectation of most gay men is to be a fashion-obsessed, make-over giving, lispy faggot (Castillo, 2009). Meyer (1995) suggests that “gay people, like members of other minority groups, are subjected to chronic stress related to this stigmatization”, and describes internalized homophobia, expectations of stigma, and prejudicial events such as violence as distal and proximal sources of stress. Internalized homophobia refers to the direction of societal negative attitudes toward the self. Meyer argues that internalized homophobia, expectations of rejection and discrimination (stigma), and actual events of discrimination and violence (prejudice) predict psychological distress in gay men (Meyer, 1995). Body dissatisfaction can also lead to psychological distress. All these factors (i.e., internalized homophobia, expected stigma for being gay, and experiences of physical attack) consist of minority stress, which may be fostered to explain why gay men concern their body physique more than heterosexual

men do.

“Honestly, and I'm embarrassed to say it, but I'm hoping it will boost my self-esteem,” Chris admits. “I don't know how to boost my self-esteem now. My feeling is, “Get a great body and people will admire you. Get a great body and everything will be okay.

This is an excerpt of interview from the book *Life Outside*¹ by Signorile in 1997.

People may form their self-esteem or self-identity through the eyes of a “generalized other”. Just like the example above, Chris goes to the gym doing body training very often, yet he still can't be satisfied with his body physique, and he anticipates boosting self-esteem through workouts. Most of friends around him build their bodies; he is expected by this “collective representation.” Thus, gay men's doing workouts can be seen as an act of “reflexive embodiment”, stating that people come to see themselves from the outside, through the eyes of others, and the schemas of collective representation that order and make meaningful the particularities of their embodiment. This reflection upon the self is rooted in social interaction (Crossley, 2001). Also, under this theoretical structure, we can infer the reason why gay men pursue muscular figure is social interaction. They see their peers acquire masculine physique, and this idea reflecting on them. The pressure to look good is even more intense in an image-driven culture where near-naked images of masculine perfection abound. Men are being objectified. From super models and muscle boys to bears, along with those in the business of beauty, gay men can feel overwhelming stress and they are afraid of not being qualified for this collective representation; therefore, they then start their workout journey.

Today, muscle culture is alive, and many gay men feel intense pressure to obtain lean, muscular builds (Geoghegan, 2004). Men, heterosexual or homosexual,

¹ Life Outside - The Signorile Report on Gay Men: Sex, Drugs, Muscles, and the Passages of Life

perceive that they need to be as muscular as possible to prove their masculinity (Signorile, 1997). However, homosexual men are more at risk of adjusting themselves to cultural ideals of body image (Krishnasamy, 2008). While some researchers insist that why gay males care body image more than heterosexual men is psychological factors (internalized homophobia, minority stress, etc.), others suggest this is attributed to social causes (reflexive embodiment, media, etc.). I am interested in both of the points of views, so I will foster both psychological and social standpoints as the theoretical basis for my research, anticipating conducting a synthesized study.

As Raymond Williams redefines what culture is in his book *Keywords*, there are three current usages: (a) a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development; (b) a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general; and (c) the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This research follows the principle (b) as Raymond proposes and targets on how gay men consider the importance of workout, how life changes before and after workout and how they reflect bodybuilding on their gay identity. This phenomenon presents a part of the gay culture, and it is related to “gay aesthetic”. This subculture in gay community has become mainstream and prevalent; it now even starts to influence other gay men and dominate gay-related media, especially in magazines (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Duggan & McCreary, 2005).

I will first start this research with literature review on Bourdieu’s theory of practice to explain why gay men attend specific gyms and the meanings of workout for gay men. This research adopts the concept of Bourdieu’s “habitus”, “accumulation of capital” and “field” to explain issues brought out above. Reflexive embodiment and minority stress model is the second theoretical background that will be used to explain research results. Second, I will move to methodology section, where I will expound on what

rationale and why I adopt such for this research. It is followed by research design, in which I will explain how I am going to conduct this present research.



Chapter 2

Literature Review

Since this research discusses gym going, the relationship between muscle building and gay identity, Bourdieu's theory of practice is reviewed first. Theory of practice includes concepts of field, capital and habitus. Gym is a field where gay men work out to build muscles in order to be popular in gay community. When gay men start workout, this will turn into their lifestyle and criteria to opt for a partner, which gradually forms their tastes. Bourdieu's theory of practice can explain this situation.

Besides, living in a patriarchal and straight-dominated society, it's difficult for gay men to meet the socially constructed norms. This research tries to explain why gay men start bodybuilding, so reflexive embodiment and minority stress can offer to figure out this gay workout phenomenon.

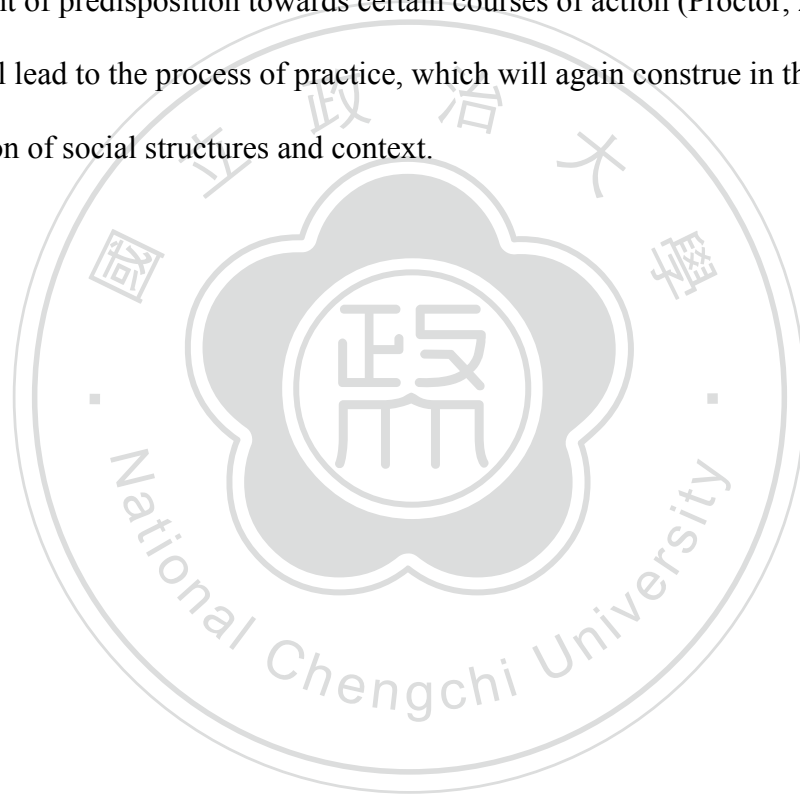
This literature review comprises four sections: Bourdieu's theory of practice, gym culture, reflexive embodiment and minority stress.

2.1 Pierre Bourdieu – Theory of Practice

Pierre Bourdieu was a distinguished French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher, whose prime contribution to sociology is an elaboration of the concept of capital in sociological contexts. At the nucleus of Bourdieu's sociological work is the theory of practice that emphasizes the importance of the body and practices within the social world.

In Bourdieu's theory of practice, the world's structural constraints form "permanent dispositions". These are schemes of perception and thought, extremely general in their application, such as those which divide up the world in accordance with the oppositions between the male and the female, east and west, future and past, top and bottom, right and left, etc., and also, at a deeper level, if the form of bodily

postures and stances, ways of standing, sitting, looking, speaking, or walking (Bourdieu, 1977). By living in a society structured by such constraints, and organized by the successful practices of others, one develops predispositions to act in certain ways. Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism (Bourdieu, 1992). According to Bourdieu, a habitus is then formed on the basis of the objective conditions individuals are exposed to which result in the embodiment of predisposition towards certain courses of action (Proctor, 2008). The habitus will lead to the process of practice, which will again construe in the reproduction of social structures and context.



2.1.1 Habitus

Habitus is the set of socially learned dispositions, skills and ways of acting that are often taken for granted, and which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. Perhaps in more basic terms, the habitus could be understood as a structure of the mind characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and taste (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu introduces the idea of “habitus” to describe how tastes shape the relation between the body and its symbolic and material contexts, explaining that habitus is the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations [which] produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus (Bourdieu, 1973, 1977, 1992; Park, 2011). Habitus embodies the lived conditions within which social practices, hierarchies, and forms of identification are made manifest through the choices of individuals, but where those choices already are predisposed by an existing social position (Sender, 2001).

2.1.2 Capital

Bourdieu (1986, 1989) studies several fundamental categories of capital and the ways in which they can be exchanged and transformed into one another, including: cultural capital (arising from prestigious cultural goods produced and positions within cultural institutions such as universities), social capital (arising from networks of social relationships and influence), and economic capital (ownership of money, stocks, etc.).

A. Culture capital

Culture capital can exist in three forms:

1. In the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and

body;

2. In the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, etc.;
3. In the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.

B. Social capital

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.

C. Economic capital

Economic capital is command over economic resources (cash, assets). The different types of capital can be derived from economic capital, but only at the cost of a more or less great effort of transformation, which is needed to produce the type of power effective in the field in question.

D. Symbolic capital

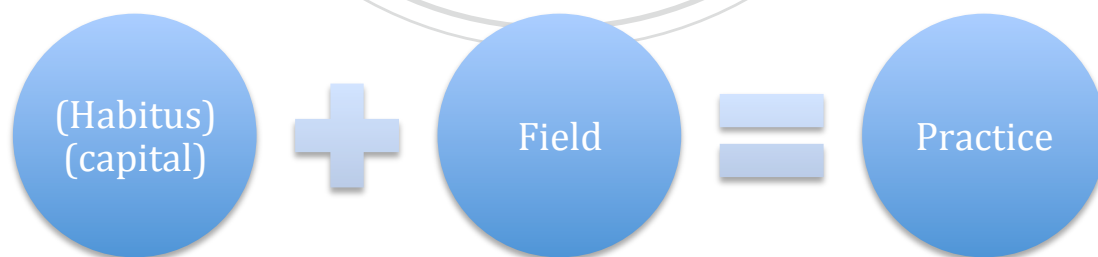
Symbolic capital can be referred to as the resources available to an individual on the basis of honor, prestige or recognition, and serves as value that one holds within a culture.

2.1.3 Field

Bourdieu (1973, 1992) defines the concept of field as a set of power relations between agents or institutions in the struggle for specific forms of domination and monopoly of an efficient type of capital (Gutiérrez, 1997). This space is characterized by relations of alliance among its members, who are on a quest to obtain the most benefit and impose as legitimate which defines them as a group; and by confrontation of groups and individuals in the search to improve their positions or exclude groups. The position depends on the type, volume and legitimacy of the capital and the habitus that the subjects have acquired over the course of their lives, and how these vary over time. Hence, field, capital and habitus are concepts that are connected as shown in figure 2.1.

Fields consist of producers, consumers, distributors of goods and legitimating and regulatory bodies, whose characteristics, rules and conformation vary according to their history and relation to the field of power (Dromundo, 2007).

Figure 2.1 Pierre Bourdieu's formula of practice



2.2 Gym Culture

Gym functions as a place for all individuals to do bodybuilding. Every individual who acquires membership is admitted to the premise, homosexual, heterosexual, men or women. Duncan (2007) suggests that gay culture and gay male communities place emphasis on physical appearance and body shape. Thus, people start to associate gym and bodybuilding with gay individuals, and this phenomenon is attributed to gay gym culture.

The onset of male body aesthetics can be found in ancient Greece, where homosexuality was a part of gay gym culture then as it is today. In terms of ideal body physique, it was characterized by well-defined muscles that are developed without being overly bulky, symmetry in the upper and lower body, and an absence of body fat, as can be seen from sculptures or paintings. Gay gym culture is a contemporary phenomenon with ancient and homosexual roots. Homosexuality has not just influenced gym culture- it is heavily responsible for its creation.

Friends or boyfriends meet after work and work out together, and others can count on running into their friends here. For many, the gym is only part of their social life, but for others it is their only interaction with the gay social world. Testosterone is in the air, and so is sex.

As depicted by Alvarez (2010), gym offers as a social venue and provides plenty of functions. In urban gay America, the gym is now an extension of gay social (and sometimes professional, recreational, and political) life. It has become the nucleus of gay life.

I had no idea gay men could look like that; when I was younger the only way for men to be gay was to be sissies. - Cecil Franco (pseudonym, a seventy-nine-year-old man, interviewed by Erick Alvarez)

I thought having a muscular body and being masculine is just a part of being gay. – Brendan Eaton (pseudonym, a gay twenty-year-old college student, interviewed by Erick Alvarez)

From these two amusing comparison, we can see the discrepancy about gay image among different generations. Before gay liberation, gay men who were masculine concealed their homosexuality. However, many of the early pioneers of gay liberation contested the “sissy” stereotype: gay men were now just like other men and were present in every position and career track. The movement accepted femininity and reclaimed masculinity; also, the spread of AIDS helped this “gay muscle revolution” set a standpoint. Doctors suggested those gay AIDS patients do workouts and exercise, which resulted in their bulky physique. This became the new model for gay community. Effeminate, frail, and weak images were replaced with muscular and rugged appearance. Gay individuals flocked to gyms for bodybuilding. Thus, in the 1970s the gay gyms started becoming social center for gay men; meanwhile, they also started influencing gay culture and literally transforming the image of gay men, both physical and cultural. The influx of gay group changed the atmosphere of gym industry.

For many straight men, the gym is only a place to work out, a tool they use, and it is completely separated from their social lives. Nevertheless, for gay men, gyms are an extension of gay social life. The gym has become a meeting place for gay men; friends visit while working out, and gay couples will often meet each other at the gym after work or go to the gym together. The gym also provides the opportunity to meet potential partners, either a long-term relationship or a temporary and romantic encounter.

Testosterone makes gyms filled with erotic atmosphere. Masculinity is now displayed and perceived as an invitation for sex (Alvarez, 2010). When eyes meet, a sudden sparkler may arise. The possibility of meeting partners is sometimes what draws some gay men to the gym – a long-term or single-serving relationship. Locker

room sex is often seen in the gym. A sexual encounter is facilitated in the locker room for two simple reasons: the involved parties are naked, and men get sexually stimulated quite easily. Alvarez (2010) suggests that 41 percent of total survey respondents admitted having engaged in any type of sexual activity while in the locker room of any gym. Such sexual encounter can be aroused by strong male hormone and testosterone in some erotic spaces like gyms.

In all, gay individuals care about their body physique more than straight men. After gay liberation, muscularity and masculinity have become prevalent in gay community. Gay men dare to display their results of ascetic bodybuilding and enjoy being watched. Gyms then become a new gathering premise for gay men. They feel secure work out there, meet friends there, and even start their gay social life there. Gym provides a venue and gay men utilize gyms to establish a “gay gym culture”, which bestows gyms a different meaning and commence a so-called “gay aesthetics”.

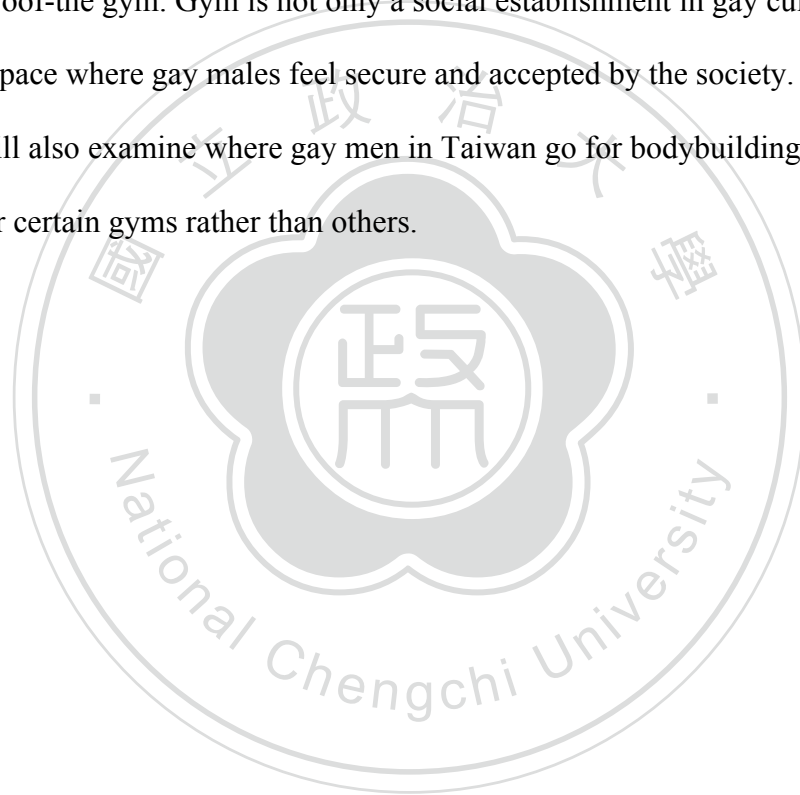
Gym culture is significant to gay men in Taiwan. Gay men in Taiwan are oppressed and at times discriminated. They dared not to expose themselves in public; rather, they tended to maintain their social life or meet their partners in dark, private spaces. Therefore, that is the reason why New Park was prevalent in gay community. Zheng-zhe Lai (Lai, 1998) indicates that there are 13 types of spaces that are considered as publicly social places for gathering in gay community: parks, public toilets, gay bars, porn movie theaters, gay saunas, some specific beaches, gay associations, some specific hot-spring hotels, some specific gyms, some specific cafes, some specific restaurants, some specific bookstores and pubs holding gay night events, most of which offers opportunities for gay men to display their body. Gay men’s need to watch other gay men’s body can be satisfied through these channels, openly. In the 90s or even in the early millennium, while the society seemed improving in every

aspect, gay community still survived with huge stigma and discrimination. In 1998, a squad of policemen broke into a noted gymnasium, "AG club", well known among international and local gay men, in Taipei downtown, Taiwan. Two men were found caressing each other in a small compartment, and were arrested by the police. The charge was obscenity in public, although in that small compartment everything was so private, without disturbing anyone else. The policemen asked the 2 arrested men to show how gay sex was performed, to show how they have sex as they did it 5 minutes before, and the police wanted to photograph gay sex in action. The police also arrested a bodybuilding trainer at the club, and both he and the gym's owner were later charged with providing customers with equipment (rooms and condoms) for the alleged obscene acts. The Taipei district court found two gay men not guilty on charges of indecency in 2000, calling it a case of justice delayed. This raid on a fitness center allegedly fronting as a gay brothel and the subsequent arrest of three men has highlighted the divisions between gay rights activists and police; also, it showed how gay men were still discriminated in the late 90s.

Nevertheless, gym has changed this oppressive phenomenon during the past decade. The first franchise gym, California Fitness Center, was launched in Taipei in 1995. California struck up a brand new era for fitness industry. The following year, Gold gym set up a branch in Taipei, heating up the gym industry. Such gyms provide exercising machines and aerobics classes, with chic interior design. Also, with the uprising sense of being more muscular, gay men start to "occupy" gyms for social occasions. Deprived of public spaces, gay men found an alternative place where they can live like heterosexual individuals. Thus, gay men's life circles stepped out of shadow and walked into a more bright and public sphere. Sexual flings among gay community spread in gyms and gay men long for other men's body (Qiu, 2001). In

the speech given at the Gay Pride in Taipei in 2011, Zheng-zhe Lai said that gay men can express the genuine self in gyms with teasing and gay terms in contempt of other heterosexual members, which has never been seen in other premises (Lai, 2011).

Alvarez (2010) concluded in his book that across socioeconomic levels, cultural, ethnic and racial lines, and age differences, gay men seem to have one thing in common: their attraction for muscle boys. This affinity for a well-muscled body is the one constant, which in turn, brings men of all ages, races, colors, and body shapes under one roof-the gym. Gym is not only a social establishment in gay culture today but also a space where gay males feel secure and accepted by the society. This research will also examine where gay men in Taiwan go for bodybuilding and why they opt for certain gyms rather than others.



2.3 Reflexive Embodiment

Crossley (2001) argues in his book *The Social Body: Habit, identity and desire* that we are never in complete possession of ourselves. Our perceptible being is captured in schemas of collective representation. From the moment of birth, and even before, our anatomical state and embodied visibility are made to signify social meanings and we, accordingly, are positioned in social place. (p. 141)

Drawing on Romanyshyn's theory of "mirroring", which states that we use the mirror to style the self we want to be; to create the image which will make others see us as we want to be seen, Mead argued that human capacity for choice and tendency towards reflection is acquired through experience in the form of habit. We have reflective and reflexive habits. The structure of the social world is incorporated within habitus. Mead exemplified his theory with games and the meanings of playing during one's childhood. Habit is the process through which one comes to view themselves through the eyes of a "generalized other" and forms the basis of self-identity (Duncan, 2007). In this way, we see ourselves from outside like a "looking glass", through the eyes of others, and the schemas of collective representation that order and make meaningful the particularities of our embodiment (Crossley, 2001; Duncan, 2007, 2010).

Crossley (2001) synthesizes previous research, suggesting that reflexivity and reflection are themselves rooted in habit. He views reflection and reflexivity as achievements of a process tending from the individual or particular, towards the universal and social. We acquire the habit of self-objectification and reflection by way of our involvement in the social world. Sociological objectification extends that form of self-objectification, which gives us a sense of me, the objectification rooted in our incorporation of the role of the other, further extending the possibility of self-

knowledge and mastery attainable by that route. To be reflective or reflexive is to transcend one's own particularity and we do this by assuming the role of others, particular, and generalized others, the process of which can be approached through an openness to otherness, and, thereby, further transcendence of particularity. Since we reflect others point of views on ourselves, and one's body is one's 'point of view', we may act upon ourselves so as to change ourselves. He suggested that our self understanding is shaped by these (collective) representations and the way in which they classify and differentiate us, and even our bodies are shaped by these collective representations (Crossley, 2001).

According to Crossley, we get to form self-identity and self-knowledge through collective representations and social interactions and all these acquisitions are rooted in repetitive habits. We can finally embody our own self-identity and change ourselves to become the one a generalized other sees us, including shaping our views towards our own body physiques. Being muscular is a collective representation of gay males. Gym provides a venue where gay men can interact with each other. Under this social interaction and collective representation, gay males begin to reflect this muscular image on them. They draw upon cultural narratives concerning homosexuality, masculinity, pride, social status and the male body physique, and they act on their embodied selves in highly dissatisfying attempts to achieve or resist the dominant body ideal (Duncan, 2007).

Duncan (2007, 2010) adopts Crossley's "reflexive embodiment" as theoretical foundation in his research. In 2007, he interviewed with four gay men to demonstrate how each negotiates an athletic, muscular body ideal with reference to understandings of masculinity, pride, and gay sexuality. Duncan (2010) further fosters reflexive embodiment to analyze gay men's embodiment practices in relation to discourses and

norms in “gay subculture”. The findings suggest that muscular body generates both social status and self-esteem, and spread out notions of everyday masculinity that imply rationality and control to resist gendered assumptions about gay men’s body image relationships.



2.4 Minority Stress

Minority stress is first theorized by Meyer in 1995, in which Meyer describes it as psychosocial stress derived from minority status (Meyer, 1995). There are two hypotheses associated with Minority Stress Theory; one is Social Selection Hypothesis, and the other is Social Causation Hypothesis. Social Selection Hypothesis holds that there is something inherent to being in a minority group (e.g., genetics) that makes individuals susceptible to health problems. However, it is clear that genetic and dispositional factors do not fully explain the health disparities observed in minority groups. Social Causation Hypothesis suggests that minority group members face difficult social situations that lead to poor health (Dohrenwend, 1966). Minority Stress Theory extends the social causation hypothesis, which suggests that such difficult social experiences explain health differences between minority and majority individuals. According to Social Stress Theory, social situations do not lead directly to health for minority individuals, but that difficult social situations cause stress for minority individuals, which accrues over time, resulting in long-term health deficits (Meyer, 2003). Meyer also indicates that minority stress describes chronically high levels of stress faced by members of stigmatized minority groups. It may be caused by several factors, including poor social support and low socioeconomic status, but the most well understood causes of minority stress are interpersonal prejudice and discrimination. When the individual is a minority person in a stigmatizing and discriminating society, the conflict between him or her and the dominant culture can be onerous (Meyer, 1995). Thus, the concept is based on the premise that gay people, like members of other minority groups, are subjected to chronic stress related to their stigmatization. Such stress will, therefore, lead to adverse health outcomes.

Minority stress distinguishes between distal and proximal processes. Distal stress processes are external to the minority individual, including experiences with rejection, prejudice and discrimination. Proximal stress processes are internal, which are presumed to occur following exposure to distal stressors; they include concealment of one's minority identity, vigilance and anxiety about prejudice, and negative feelings about one's own minority group. Together, both stressors accumulate over time, leading to chronically high extents of stress that give rise to poor health.

Proximal stressors are internal processes, examples of which include fear of rejection, rumination on previous experiences with prejudice, and distaste for one's own minority group following a prejudice event (Meyer, 2003, 2007). An expanding body of research points out that exposure to distal stressors leads to proximal stressors in LGB populations. For example, LGB youth and adults who have experienced prejudice about their sexual orientation sometimes choose to conceal their sexual identity from others (Hamer, 2003; James M, 1996; McKee, 2000). Concealing such personal information result in significant psychological distress, including intrusive thoughts about the secret, shame and guilt, anxiety and isolation from other members of the minority group (Cole, 2006; Oswald, 2007; Pachankis, 2007).

In addition to anxiety of others' awareness of their sexual identity, internalized homophobia is another proximal stressor prevalent among LGB individuals, which refers to the internalization of negative social views about homosexuality, leading to self-hatred and poor self-regard (Meyer, 1995, 2003; Sanchez, Westefeld, Liu, & Vilain, 2010). Internalized homophobia refers to the direction of societal negative attitudes toward the self (Meyer, 1995). Long before gay individuals begin to realize their own sexuality, they are raised and cultivated with anti-homosexual attitudes.

When they are aware that they are attracted to the same sex, they start to question their acquired heterosexuality and apply not only the label “homosexual” or “gay” but also negative attitudes to themselves. Thoits (1985) explains that “role-taking abilities enable individuals to view themselves from the imagined perspective of others”. It is unlikely that internalized homophobia completely abates even when the person accepts his or her homosexuality (Cass, 1984; Coleman, 1982; Eliason, 1996; Troiden, 1988). Professional psychologists who work with gay men have noted that traditional masculine ideals play a prominent role in the gay community whereby some endorse these traditional ideals and stigmatize effeminate behavior by other gay men, giving rise to negative feeling about being gay and high extents of body dissatisfaction. To combat those stereotypical effeminate, less masculine images, gay individuals commence to force themselves to work out in the gym, and some of them even take more drastic approach, that is to control their diets or even take steroid to curve out their muscular body physique (Boroughs & Thompson, 2002; Duggan & McCreary, 2005; Olivardia, Pope, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2004; Siconolfi, Halkitis, Allomong, & Burton, 2009).

To sum up, gay individuals as a minority group experience discrimination, perceived stigma against them, anti-homosexual attitudes, which lead to internalize homophobia. This fear of unraveling their real selves to others is deeply internalized so that internalized homophobia will linger even though they come to accept their sexual orientation. They want to defeat the discrimination-related attitudes in this heterosexual-dominated society.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Method

3.1 Research Structure

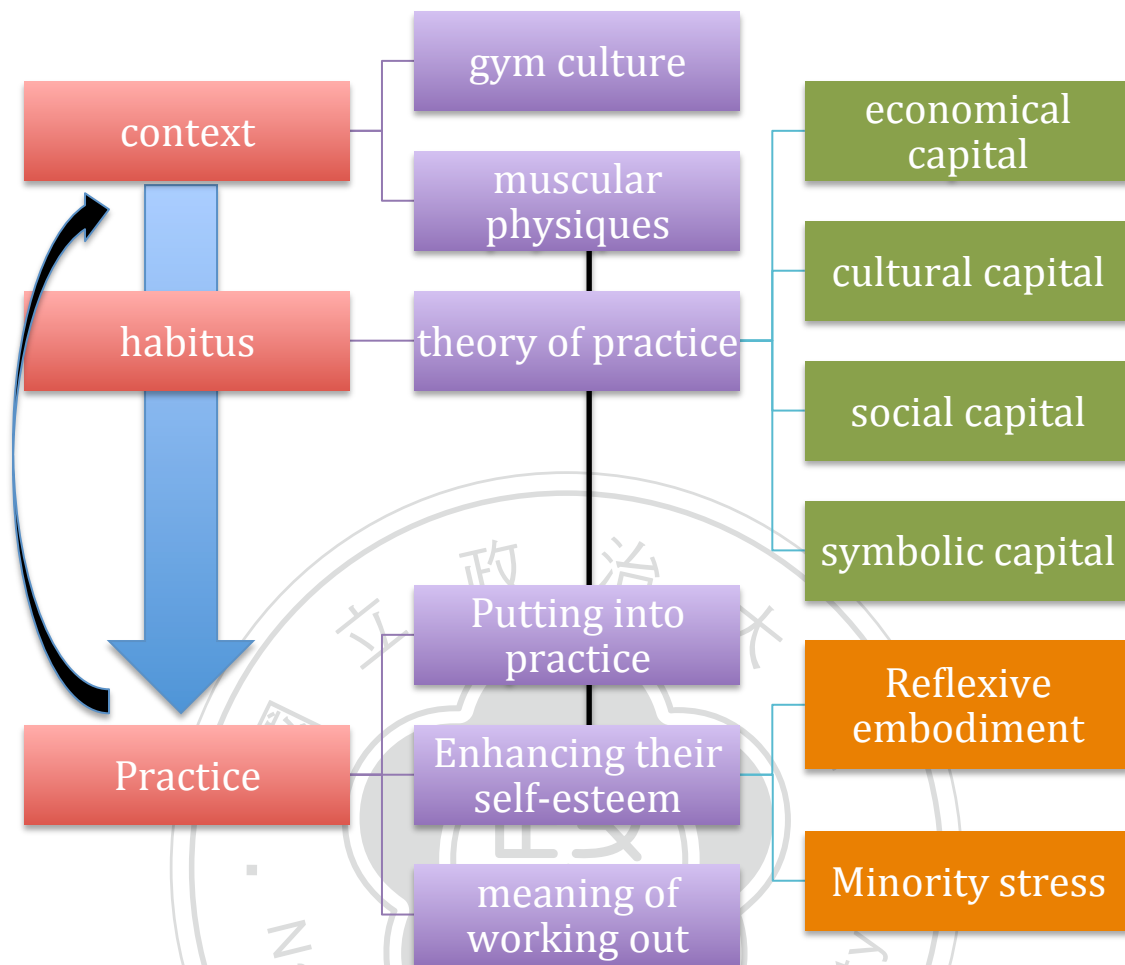
This research is evolved from context, which concerns why gay men attend specific gyms and build muscles and why general public associate bodybuilding with gay men. Through primary research, Bourdieu's concepts of "habitus" can be related to this context. Habitus here indicates a lifestyle and tastes. Once gay men cultivate this habitus, they live up to practice bodybuilding, the results of which cause enhancing their self-esteem.

Habitus is derived from the theory of practice. Gay men build muscles to gain popularity and accumulate capital. We can draw an analogy between gay community and capitalism. In capitalism, people gain respect if they acquire plentiful capital, and so do gay men. Gay men gain popularity through body capital, which can be cumulated through practice of bodybuilding in the gym.

When gay men become muscular, they gain self-confidence and their gay identity is enhanced. Reflexive embodiment explains not only why gay men want to be muscular because they want to accomplish the self in others' eyes but why general public relate bodybuilding to gay men. Minority stress can expound on gay men's motivation to take up workout since gay men grow up in a straight-dominant society. They were muscular to conceal their gay identity and fought against these patriarchal norms, and this muscular image is evolved into the mainstream aesthetic standard.

The concepts of this present research is presented as the figure 4.1 below:

Figure 3.1 Research structure



3.2 Rationale

Ethnography field research engages in a particular community's social organization and culture with an aim towards understanding their "daily lives" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Since the present research aims to discover the meaning of workout for gay men and how bodybuilding influences their self-acceptance of gay identity, reaching and comprehending muscular gay community's life pattern is indispensable. Given this, ethnography is chosen as rationale to conduct my research.

To conduct ethnography fieldwork involves two distinct activities (Emerson et al., 1995). First, the ethnographer enters into a social setting and gets acquainted with people involved in it. The ethnographer participates in the daily routines of this setting, develops ongoing relationships with the people in it, and observes what is

going on around the ethnographer. This basis approach is generally called “participant-observation”. Second, the ethnographer writes down in regular and systematic ways what is learned and observed while taking part in the daily routines of others’ life. Since I am a member in the gym with acquaintances with plenty of gay men, I actually observe and communicate with them for a long while. I have already built up communication and interaction systems with them. As a researcher and participant as well, I full understand the life pattern of gay men in the gym.

Now that this research is associated with self-acceptance of gay identity and life pattern of gay men who work out often in the gym, I will present the result with the style of life stories. Thus, I will adopt narratology method to carry out my research.

Kluckhohn outlines some of the advantages that narratology method offers, which include insights into social change and “clues to implicit themes, as documentation on roles, as demonstration of socialization and enculturation, as an entry into understanding personality, as a view of the ‘emotional structure’ of a way of life, as a means toward understanding variations within a society, and also of seeing the ‘common humanity’ among peoples” (Mandelbaum, 1973).

Costa and Matzner (2007) find that the narratives: (1) are universal and help convey some universal messages about human beings, (2) offer access to individual subjectivities and to gendered and/or sexual subjectivities in particular, (3) reveal agency and aspects of cultural controversy over norms and beliefs and how certain groups become marginalized, (4) unravel the practices of human transformation, and (5) provide a means of advocacy for and relation with other human beings. This present research deals with gay affairs, which is generally deemed as minority and marginalized community. Gay men indeed live in this same society: the one is heterosexual and patriarchal, and they often disappear from mainstream media. If do,

gay men are portrayed as a deviant group (McKee, 2000). Costa and Matzner suggest that narratology facilitates general public's understanding to minority group and help people realize life forms of other types of human beings; thus, I utilize narratology to be my rationale that leads to my research findings. I will present my research findings with life stories. Through the reminiscence from the informants, readers can comprehend the importance of bodybuilding to gay men and how the process of workout affect and/or change their life.



3.3 Research Design and Informants

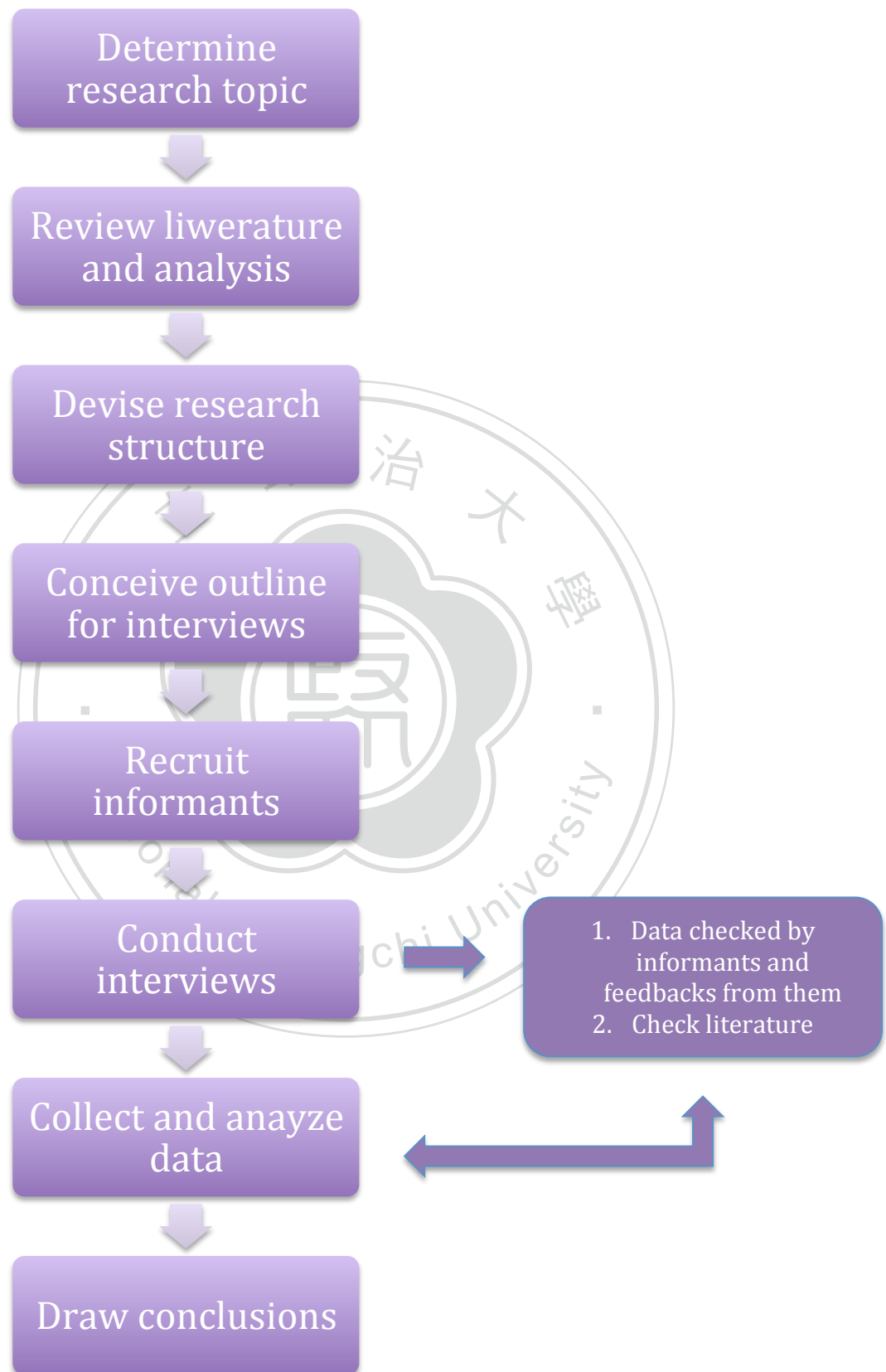


Figure 3.1 Flow chart of research design

This research is conducted through in-depth interviews. This in-depth interview includes 3 informants. All of the three informants are self-identified gay men and have regular workout routine, and they are also acquaintances of mine. I endeavor to avoid similarity in research findings, sifting three informants from different groups for fear that they should have similar thoughts on the topic or interference with each other.

Figure 3.2 Demography of informants

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Duration of Workout	Kinds of Workout	Workout Location
Oscar	25	English Teacher	5 years	Weight training, jogging	Taipei Gym
Tom	40	Sales manager	15 years	Weight training, aerobics	World Gym
Ken	29	English Teacher	5 years	Weight training, jogging	World Gym

The results of this present research follow phenomenology, which is the philosophical study of the structures of subjective experience and consciousness. Phenomenology, in Husserl's conception, is primarily concerned with the systematic reflection on and study of the structures of consciousness and the phenomena that appear in acts of consciousness. This phenomenological ontology can be clearly differentiated from the Cartesian method of analysis, which sees the world as objects, sets of objects, and objects acting and reacting upon one another. In its most basic form, phenomenology thus attempts to create conditions for the objective study of topics usually regarded as subjective: consciousness and the content of conscious experiences such as judgments, perceptions, and emotions. Although phenomenology seeks to be scientific, it does not attempt to study consciousness from the perspective

of clinical psychology or neurology. Instead, it seeks through systematic reflection to determine the essential properties and structures of experience (Husserl, 1970). This research will concentrate on informants' experiences and their life stories and practice of bodybuilding will induct the results.

As Merriam (1998) suggests that qualitative research should be highly descriptive because the research should center on process, meaning and comprehending, I will not translate all the scripts into English version for fear of lacking in authenticity. Again, the findings will be presented in life stories/ history; thus, they should be highly descriptive and comprehensive according to Merriam. Findings of this research will be presented in two parts. First comes to life stories of the three informants and then analysis from the life stories. These three informants are my friends, whom I have fair degrees of acquaintance about them. Acting as an observer and gym participant at the same time, I can obtain most, if not all, of what the informants told me, leading me to reflect upon what I have got or questioned to myself in mind for a period of time. I can have a good opportunity to contemplate on why I work out referring to the stories they kindly shared with me, which makes this research more meaningful and contributive.

3.4 Research Method

During my three-month fieldwork, I interviewed three self-identified gay Taiwanese men upon which their life narratives were analyzed. Since interviews were conducted through ethnographic method, results will be presented with three life stories utilizing first-person account. As a researcher, I am an observer and a participant as well because I also work out in the gym and I have known all the informants for a period of time, which means I can comprehend their thoughts and interpret what they really meant during interviews. These three informants are aged

between 25 and 40, giving extensive points of views of intentions why gay men in various ages train their muscles. There are similarities and also differences in their stories for why they attend gyms and the relationship between the deeds of workout and their gay identity.



Chapter 4

Results And Discussion

4.1 Life Stories

Muscle is My Strength.

Prelude

Dressed in fit-cut shirt and white shorts with mustache to present a rough look, Oscar walked towards me and greeted me vibrantly. “Hi,” the tender voice did not seem to correspond to his masculine and muscular image. He is 25 years old, finishing his master degrees at the present time. Unlike his real age, he acts like a big boy, which makes him adorable and more attractive. When he showed me his photos taken before working out, I couldn't help but cry out, “This is not possible!” By this, I mean the person in the pictures he showed me is no way the same one who was sitting in front of me. I was so astounded how much he has changed during the past decade. He was so slender and feminine in his teens, compared to how rugged and masculine image has attained now. This is where his story begins.

Reborn

Abandoned, grief-stricken and craving for a new self, I began devoting myself to this never-ending workout life.

2006, when I had a beautiful encounter with a man Peter living in Hualien, which is a milestone for my entire life. Slender and ugly was the lively depiction of myself, which is exactly different from what I look now. I was attending college in Taichung, having a chance to study in England for a month. To keep the bud of love flourishing, Skype became the fertilizer for our romance. I also bought everything he liked to prove how much I cared about him, fantasizing that we could have a great life together once I went back to Taiwan. When this long journey finished, I couldn't wait

to share every story I came across during my trip and gave him all the purchase. He turned off all of my phone calls. Thus, I took a train to the place he lived in Hualien, hanging all the things I prepared for him on the door. As I thought he would disappear from my life, he showed up with few merciless words, “You are too skinny and you are not the type I want.” Heart-broken, I blamed all on myself, being withdrawn in my own cage like a wounded lion. One day, while I was lying on my bed reminiscing of my trip to England, a thought for change occurred to me. “Most of men are strong and muscular there in England. I am so like a refugee compared with them. If I become one of them, I will astound Peter.” Whispering to myself, a commitment was made then. The ascetic process of workout was initiated.

At first I dared not attend any gyms in Taipei, for I did not possess a rippling muscles and I was afraid to be discriminated by those muscular gym-goers. I decided to buy exercise equipment home and started working out by myself. After two years of discipline, I became better-fit and more muscular than I was, which offered me enough confidence to start working out in the gym. Thus, I purchased a five-year membership in Taipei Gym in 2008, marking a new milestone in my life.

Glamorous out; Unconfident in

Before I started bodybuilding, I always wanted to draw people’s attention by dressing myself enchantingly. Middle-length hair, bunches of decorative bracelets on my both wrists, and self-fancied stylish clothes are approaches to boost up my confidence.

However, the truth was that the more glamorous the image I tried to present, the more unconfident I was of myself.

My lack of confidence could be traced back to my junior high, when I was rounded and feminine. Peers in my class started to bully me verbally by calling me “fatty” or “sissy boy”. I started to reverse this image in college by shedding my

weight first, which took me several years and still couldn't enhance my confidence. Thus, I began to wear plenty of accessories to make me stand out in the crowd. This seemed help a bit, yet I still couldn't find myself charming in this gay community; meanwhile, the man in Hualien broke my heart. A change was made, and I vowed to myself that I would impress people around me. A busy workout schedule and intake of food with high protein enabled me to build up muscles quickly and I gradually became muscular. In 2010, after two years of ascetic weight training since 2008, I finally could enjoy the harvest and benefits from my muscular figure, that is, I began to catch attention from other gay guys and get more wooers, which brought me immense confidence that I had never had before. I discarded those redundant accessories and stylish clothes; moreover, I wore only simple and casual muscle shirts and shorts, a typical gay look. Muscles are just my perfect accessories!

Reflection: Is muscle a must or a plus?

Men are visual animals. Gay men are no exception, and such phenomena could be even more intense. Although there were more wooers around me, they only focused on my body instead of my thoughts or spiritual part of me. Sadly, that is to say, the quantity increased; the quality decreased however. "Is muscle a must or a plus?" Such and such confusion emerged and occurred to me. It took me a while to figure out the meaning of muscular body image to me.

"Muscle is my weapon!"

I can take advantage of my muscles to meet more possible candidates before I bump into a relationship and make commitments, and I can get to screen out those who only have interest towards my thick chest with no intention to form a serious relationship.

Indeed, lots of gay guys who work out only seek for sex encounters, and a nice body surely can make one gain more sex appeal. To me, the reason I want to train my body not due to sex but more to making myself look better. Sometimes I feel frustrated because I've always fallen in love with those men who only yearn for ONS (one night stand) or friends with benefits and this really hurts my feelings.

Bodybuilding is a long process. I will not give up working out and searching for a real romance, however. I will always prepare myself in the best condition for the best guy to appear in my life.



Muscle is My Weapon.

Prelude

Ken always wears a white tank top with khaki shorts, which is always his favorite outfit. I have known Ken for almost 5 years. We worked for the same language center then but only for six months. Approximate a year later, I met him again in another language center we are both teaching now. I felt so surprised that how much he changed. He had his curly, middle-length hair cut and became more attractive, fit, and confident of himself. Being so curious, I asked him to be my informant, and here comes his story of transformation, which in turn makes me get to know him more.

An Australia-born Chinese

I was born in Australia. Being the youngest among my cousins, I was always repelled by them. They excluded me from their conversations, and when I did something wrong, they scolded me unanimously. I had no confidence in myself, always depreciating myself. This whole situation got exacerbated after I realized that my sexual orientation differs from theirs. I felt apprehended that I will be alienated by this society if people discover that I am gay. I talked to myself all the time that I am a black sheep in my family. The fact that I wasn't welcomed and disliked by my cousins and the anxiety to be found my sexual orientation pricked me a lot. I had no choice to dissemble my gay identity, disguising that I was straight. Having no gay friends around me, I was gradually devoured by loneliness, fear and lack of confidence until that summer vacation when I was 20, when I met my very first boyfriend while I was having summer vacation in Taiwan. He was serving in army at that time. One day, my mom discovered my gay identity through a letter he wrote me on my desk because it started with the word "my dearest husband". My mom was terrified and furious when she read the letter, which was followed by fierce

interrogations and serious revolutions. Luckily, this desperate situation only took place for a while and my family accepted the real me. I always feel blessed that I have a liberal family that supports me.

A Super Glittering Model To Be!

I started workout in 2007. At that time, I just came back to Taiwan with no gay friends around and I got nothing to do as well. I joined California Fitness Center, which was acquired by World Gym in 2010, because I heard there were lots of gay guys working out there. I attended the gym 7 days a week then, which has become my habit and interest.

A couple of months passed by, and I started to reap the harvest. Friends around me began to notice my muscles bulking up. I could even sense that my shirt became tighter. I did not need to try hard to get attention from others. More and more gay guys proactively attempted to pick me up in the gym or at parties, most of whom sought for sex or “friends with benefit”. I also made several possible dates; however, those relationships did not work in the end after getting along with each other. I came to realize that I could be popular as well. I challenged myself to participate in a model contest, and I was awarded the prize of “The Perfect Body Physique”. My confidence was accumulated as a result of my fitter body, compliments from other people as well as the whole process of this model contest. This award meant significantly to me because finally I learned to give credits to myself instead of denying every effort and accomplishment I gained.

I enjoyed the moment of people’s wowing my body whenever I took my shirts off on the dance floors or whenever they appreciated those photos on the magazines featuring me. These compliments in turn were converted into motivation for me to

work out even harder. In other words, I trained my muscles more for others than me. A thought of change evolved in my mind then.

Muscles Are Not Everything!

I've been attending gyms for almost 6 years, and now I have more confidence in myself not because of my body but of my strong self-esteem. I still join parties and take off my clothes when I feel hot on dance floors now, but I know mature thoughts are as important as muscles. I work out more as my interest and parts of my daily routines now. I still work out seven days a week, but I am working out for myself and to make myself look better.

Also, I am not like other gay guys who train bigger muscles only to entitle themselves to more possible hunky guys. When I choose my partner, I do not really judge him by his appearance or body. Instead, I emphasize more on his inner and mental parts. I have to admit that men belong to visual creatures, but if you don't have an equivalently mature brain to go with your muscles, it will then become a hunky body with empty minds.

I am fully confident in myself, both mentally and physically. I do not have to pick what to wear purposively. Only a white tank top and casual shorts can make me stylish! My muscles and confidence are just my best accessories. Workout fulfill what I am lack and I am proud of who I was born to be more. In all, muscle training makes me gain confidence and my perfect body physique leads to my taking pride in gay identity. I always think a gay man's brain is similar to a woman's. We both are eager to be beautiful but each presents in different ways. Gay has keener sense of beauty than straight guys do, for which I can say that I am so proud to be gay.

Muscle is Simply Part Of My Life.

Prelude

I met Tom in the gym when he chatted with one of our mutual friends, and the memories of that day are still inscribed and fresh in my mind that he touched my chest and told me how fit a body I have. That was the first time we met each other and I could barely forget his bluntness.

Tom is around 40 years old, mature and sophisticated. He always keeps a skinhead, mustache and beard with Abercrombie & Fitch (A&F) T-shirts and shorts, which is considered as the typical wolf-look, as labeled in the gay community. Maybe one of the most interesting facets of Tom lies in that everyone categorizes him into bear group; he sees himself as a wolf, however. “I am a WOLF, and don’t get me wrong!” he claimed with laughing out loud, which struck up this interview.

Twist of Fate

I was be introvert, unconfident of myself and even separated from gay community; nevertheless, workout changes my life. Because my body gradually got muscular, I became confident, started to open up my social life and dared to express myself. I was suddenly aware that my life changed! I, for instance, went to Funky, a well-known gay bar, in 1993. At that time, I was slender and young, so no one wanted to talk to me or even look at me at the bar. But I came to my realization that there were actually lots of gay guys who look gorgeous and even had great body shape in Taiwan. Before I went there, I had always thought only foreigners could have great figures and appealing appearance.

My whole workout process can be traced back to 1998, when I broke up with my ex-boyfriend. I having had most of free time spent with him, my life began empty without his company abruptly. I was therefore determined to change my life first to

start with my daily schedule and set up a routine to keep. Then, a lifelong workout career was initiated.

Few months later, I began to notice that more people found me more attractive since I grew fit and stronger. That was the first time I enjoyed the benefits workout brought to me and I did not know workout can enhance my sexual appeal until I met a hunky guy, who soon after became my boyfriend. He is overwhelmingly confident of his appearance and muscular physique, and he also utilizes his body to gain his popularity. We were together for almost six years, and I have to admit that I was so deeply obsessed with his body, which spurred me to train my muscles harder.

MDMA + Electronic Music + Muscles = Gay-Party Culture

Trying hard obtain muscular figure as my ex-boyfriend, I took up working out more often and ingesting high-protein, which made my muscles grow bigger and faster. I became more sociable and more confident of myself, acquainted with plentiful friends who had beautiful figures. We hanged out together almost every week and I felt belongingness and proud. I was so proud to be one member of them since we were always the limelight.

2001 was the year when electronic music dominated gay parties generally accompanied with drugs. The most popular club was called “Texound”. Under such a great mixture of MDMA and techno music, partygoers would do anything to escape from the reality and go with the lusty atmosphere and the heavy beats, which seemed like a secret ritual taking place. Pheromone surrounded the dance floor; ripping off their shirts and showing off their hard-trained muscles was a great tribute to worship the occasion. Dance floors became a runway for people like us to display our muscular bodies. I especially enjoyed the moment people around you uttering adoring sounds when you took off your shirts. We hugged bunches of topless guys a night,

lingering our fingers on hundreds of hunks with thick pectorals and prefect 6-packs. Every party night was bohemian. Parties provided a showroom to display our muscles and we could get instant feedback from other people. This mechanism was brutal but authentic, which would in turn stimulated people to train muscles even harder and more ascetically. This party culture boosted the trend of bodybuilding, cultivating the cult of muscle in the gay community. I went to gyms more often because the only way to maintain my popularity was to keep my muscles bulking up. This prevalence of gay-party culture waned down from 2004 with the shutdown of Texound, shifting to private home parties. As the demands for a venue to display muscles increased, Club Jump was launched in 2006 and several major gay parties followed then. Thus, the gym-going culture revived again, causing more gay people engaged in bodybuilding.

A Middle-aged gay workout life – Now what?

I am in my 40s and the philosophy of workout has been changed by now. I trained muscles for parties or gearing myself up for a better date to come. However, workout for me is more a habit for health than showing off or display now. I have already passed the age of having fun partying. Though I still hang out with my friends, those gatherings are more like relaxing chitchat time. I rarely go partying except for major ones now.

My workout habit is changing as well. I worked as more days a week as I could, but now due to work constraint, I only go to gyms once or twice a week. Mostly I just attend gyms to keep my shape and health.

After I took up working out, I had more confidence in myself. I do not have to worry about what I should wear since masculine muscles are just my best accessories. Also, body and appearance were my only criteria to opt for friends; however, I care more about if there is common interest and good temperament. I find only to make

friends with those decent looking guys with rippling muscles without taking their personal attributes into consideration is shallow.

I am a confident middle-aged man. I am single but content with my life at present. Working out for a better and healthier self!



4.2 Discussion

This discussion evolves from informants' talks, which develop 5 sections. All parts of the discussion are derived from details of the data, which come from their life stories and gym going experience sharing.

4.2.1 Workout is a lifestyle.

Bourdieu argues that habitus is the set of socially learned dispositions, skills and ways of acting that are often taken for granted, and which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. Sender draws on Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus" to describe how tastes shape the relationship between the body and its symbolic and material contexts. (Sender, 2001, 2005). The particular contents of the habitus are the result of the objectification of social structure at the level of individual subjectivity. Bodybuilding has become the objectification of gay social structure, which forms collective habitus (tastes). Individuals who yearn to be inducted to this gay ghetto gain muscles to meet the criteria as transcribed below:

"I centered on my appearance and outfits when I was younger. The standard of handsomeness lied in appearance instead of muscular bodies. However, this trend has shifted for the past decade. Muscle is everything gay men care now." – Oscar

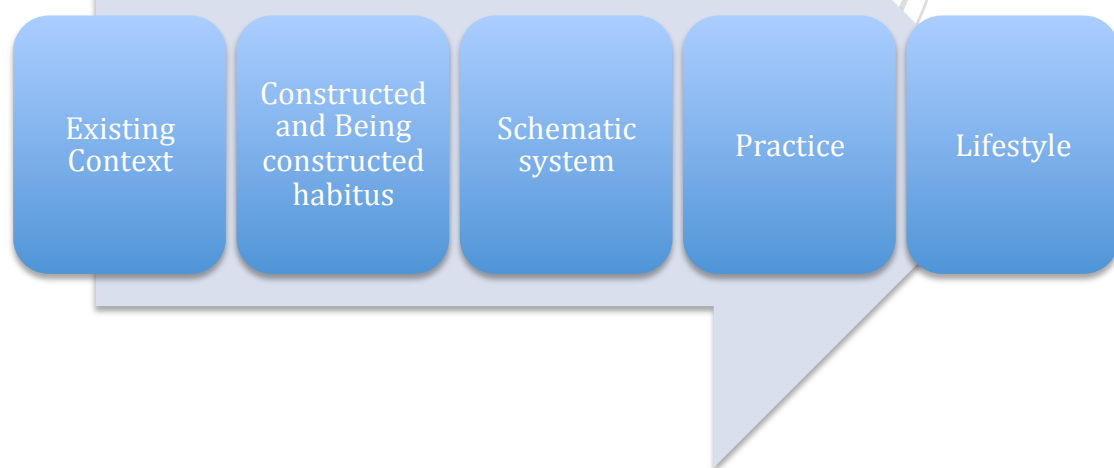
"Gay men followed fashion trends, from outfits to accessories decades ago in Taiwan. People whom we considered as handsome icon were always with slim-fit figures, model-like height, and glamorous attire. But now, muscular figure takes precedence over appearance. Muscles rule gay ghetto." – Tom

"Gentle-looking and slim-fit guys used to be embraced, but gay-favored type of men has been shifted to those who are tanned and muscular. This change could be ascribed to the influence of gay pornography, where most of the porn stars possess ideal-fit body physiques. I often think being gay is harsh because muscular figure is hard to maintain." – Ken

Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1992) argues that habitus embodies the lived conditions within which social practices, hierarchies, and forms of identification are made manifest through the choices of individuals, but where those choices already are

predisposed by an existing social position. This can explain the prevalence of bodybuilding within gay community. Gay men tend to encounter muscular images through their life experiences, such as their gay fellows and gay pornography. They are fully aware that obtaining muscles guarantees higher hierarchy in gay community, so they begin bodybuilding. Their practice gradually forms habitus (lifestyle). Bourdieu's habitus can also illustrate the public belief that men who work out or obtain muscles are gay because it is likely that people associate particular behaviors in particular occasions with specific groups. General public receive messages from their life that friends who attend gyms are probably gay or from TV portrayals that muscular men who are also good-looking are gay. Then they relate these learned experiences to the assumption that muscular image is gay lifestyle (habitus).

Figure 4.1 Formations of Habitus



4.2.2 Traditional Media Use

Prior to the era of Internet, it was not easy for gay individuals to meet acquaintances or have access to male nudity. To satisfy their social and sexual needs, they appealed to magazines, gay pornography and photos with naked male models on. These images they perceive increase not merely their obsession with muscular male nudity but their desires to possess a muscular physique.

“I bought photos with naked male body in newsstands when I was a pupil. These photos were full frontal nudity and they triggered my obsession with muscular male nudity. When I became a juvenile, I started to purchase foreign fitness magazines, in which there were abundant muscular models. Although it was long before I began workout, these photos featuring muscular male body did have great influence on my early concepts of what is called perfect body physique.” – Tom

“When I realized that I was interested in naked male body was in my junior high school. I bought gay magazines and photography portfolio featuring muscular models. I also watched gay pornography, where most of actors have great body shape. These experiences shaped my notion of perfect physique, guiding me to take up bodybuilding.” – Oscar

“I appreciate watching western gay porn since it is mosaic-free and also I prefer gay porn actors who have athlete-like figures. Every time I watch them, I project myself on them, imaging that some day I can attain body shape like those porn actors. This offers me motivation to train muscles.” – Ken

According to three informants, one of their mutual inspirations of workout is gay magazine where they can appreciate numerous muscular models and these magazines also nurture their notion of being muscular. This happens to all of three informants in their juvenile age because gay magazines can satisfy their curiosity about men’s body when exploring their gay identity.

Gay porn is another accessible means. The muscles-clad porn videos and magazines of the 1970s and 1980s were influential in the muscle boy ideal becoming a conventional gay ideal – subsequently establishing and promoting a gay gym subculture. Gay men fantasized about big dicks and even bigger muscles. Alvarez

(2010) suggested that the level of beefcake evolves in a way that the models keep getting bigger and more muscular with every decade. He also argued that gay-related media cause positive pressure in gay men to exercise, eat healthy and work out. Dyer (1985) stated succinctly that the narrative structure of gay porn is analogous to aspects of the social construction of both male sexuality in general, and gay male sexual practice in particular. Gay porn portrays how a gay man should resemble and this matches the findings of this recent study that informants reported that watching gay porn induces stress to work out and shape out the concept of ideal gay body physique.



4.2.3 Muscles As Capital in New Media Use

“In the future everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes.”

– Andy Warhol

People tend to show the best of themselves, and they always need a venue for display. Gay guys are no exemption. They used to show their muscles via traditional means by taking their shirts off on the dance floors. The approach of social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, provides gay guys a different venue to display their body by uploading their shirtless pictures taken at the beaches or gyms. Friends on their Facebook “like” their photos, encouraging them to work out much harder and take more naked pictures in return for their friends “likes”. These exposed photos also stimulate their gay fellows on Facebook to take up workout since they yearn to gain popularity by having muscles.

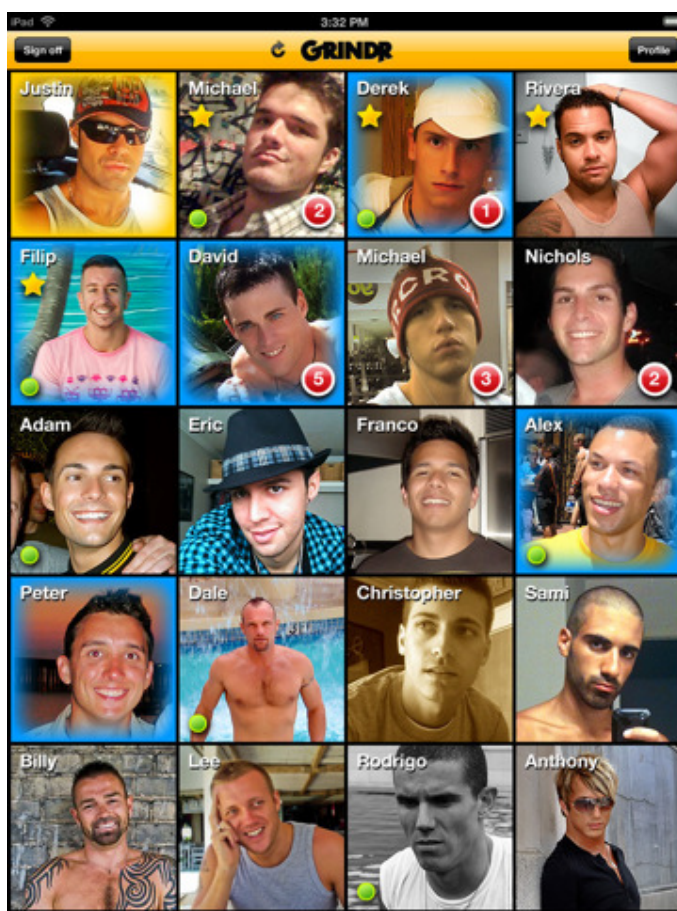
“Almost every muscular gay man seizes each possible moment to display their body. They take topless or sometimes nearly naked photos everywhere, posting on Facebook to gain friends’ compliments and “likes”, which leads them to more ascetic muscle-building process since they survive on this vanity. Sometimes I feel that gay guys on Facebook actually care not as much about appearance as muscles. The standard of good-looking guys has changed from it was. Internet has changed almost every aspect in life, including gay culture. Social networking commercializes each gay individual: each looks glamorous on their profile, but when you pick them home, you will then realize the reality.” – Tom

“Whenever I see my friends on Facebook post some photos with muscles, I fancy that that would be perfect to be like or to be with them. Some people even grant full access to their photos of nudity with their penis covered. Gradually, their fan-like friends worship them like superstars. It is the rule of supply and demand. Facebook offers them a stage to show the results of painstaking workouts and their fans’ responses induce them to keep posting seductive pictures.” – Oscar

“I enjoy appreciating my friends’ posting nude photos with muscular physiques. Their photos are pleasing, and if gorgeous appearance goes with muscles, that’s eye-candy. Also, their pictures prompt me to attend gyms more frequently. I see them as my role models, realizing how to improve myself.” – Ken

Facebook has become a prevailing venue for gay individuals to display muscles and gain popularity. This manifesto is apparent: the more sexually explicit you are, the more popular you become.

The success of applications on smart phones, both for Apple iOS and Android, also has significant impacts on gay guys' bodybuilding habit. When iPhone 3G was released, Apple introduced App Store. Numerous applications were then invented, among which gay individuals downloaded Grindr most. Grindr is a geosocial



Picture 4.1 Snapshot of Grindr

Grindr is a geosocial networking application geared towards gay, bisexual, and bi-curious men.

networking application geared towards gay, bisexual, and bi-curious men. It first ran on iOS in 2009, and supported Blackberry OS and Android devices later on. Several similar geosocial networking applications followed, such as Jack'd, Scruff and Scout. On Grindr and other similar applications, as shown in the picture, gay men are arranged in grids by proximity with GPS.

Gay individuals only have to peruse through fingers and decide whom to chat with. This application was innovative and soon embraced by gay men worldwide. It is convenient to find friends or occasional sex. Body served as capital is significant here.

In order to be noticed, nude photos are the devices. Most of gay men have cult of muscles and surely those guys with fit or muscular physiques obtain more capital in this man-hunting game.

“Grindr is like a meat market, and gay men there resemble merchandise. They seem to be arranged on the shelves waiting for consumers. Muscular figures are gay men’s capital, which guarantee them to be “sold” out soon. Muscles on Grindr also mean social status in gay community. It is cruel but real. The winner takes all, and that is the rule. Follow it if you want to participate in this man-hunting game.” – Oscar

“Scruff and those kinds of applications are new war field for gay men. We train muscles more often than before, taking alluring pictures wherever we can to upload. Muscles appear to be the indispensable criterion to make friends or find occasional sex there, and sexy appearance becomes a plus. It is still difficult for gay men to find friends openly, and these proximity-based applications assure us of a secure and private friends-making environment. Fun, excite and unexpectedness are the benefits of these applications. Those guys with gorgeous body always incite me to do workouts harder.” – Tom

Most gay men, if not all, can not only fulfill their sexual needs instantly but also expand their gay social nexus through these gay-oriented applications. If a gay man who wants to be initiated into this community, a smart phone and fit-muscular body shape are essential.

Gay men adopt such new media to meet fellows, and muscles function as their capital. Popularity is commensurate with how muscular one is. These new media, both social networking and applications on smart phones, are easy and instant to access and this competitive nature cause gay men to work out even harder.

4.2.4 Self-esteem restoration and gay identity improving

Gay men sometimes have low self-esteem in relation to heteronormativity, coming out, and living in a predominantly and often intolerant and bigoted straight society.

When gay men are old enough to be in a relationship, they can be hurt. They cannot tell their family members or friends about their shattered feelings, which sometimes will turn into suicidal behaviors. A number of gay men shift their concentration to taking up new hobbies, and bodybuilding is one example.

“I started bodybuilding when I broke up with my ex-boyfriend in 1998. I felt that I accidentally had plenty of free time that used be spent on him. Bored, I joined a gym aimed at straight guys, where private trainers were willing to help members work out with right positions. I became fit-muscular few months later, when I am acquainted with another man, Mike. He possessed muscular physique, perfect pectoral and abdominal muscles, taking pride in his alluring body. Both his attitude and sex appeal stressed me; thus, I started to drink high protein beverages, lift heavier weights and do more sets. I gained 10 kilograms in a year and became muscular. Workout changes not merely my physique but also my personality. I was an introvert and unconfident. My muscles grew bigger, and so did my self-esteem. More people stared at me and tried to chat with me in the gym or on the dance floor, which equipped me with confidence. Muscular image has turned into my asset and capital.” – Tom

“Feeling abandoned, grief-stricken and craving for a new self after the person I like left me, I began devoting myself to this never-ending workout life. At first, I worked out at home, fearing that other gym goers would laugh at me because of my skinny figure. I bought bodybuilding machines and trained muscles by myself. Two years later, I became stronger, so I decided to attend gym to improve muscle size. Friends started to notice my physique change and more people made a pass at me in the gym. I became confident of myself and I cast aside all the accessories and started to be dressed simply.” – Oscar

Both Tom and Oscar start taking up bodybuilding after a relationship is ended.

The reason why they begin workout is that they want to make themselves look better, yearning for a new self and life. They attend gyms often to become muscular, which is the mainstream image in gay ghetto. Change is not merely shown from the exterior but also the interior. Becoming muscular brings them higher self-esteem and more confidence than the time when they did not work out. They value themselves through

their gay fellows and friends' compliments, which bring them self-esteem and confidence. We can adopt reflexive embodiment to explain this phenomenon, which argues that gay men attend gym to discipline their ideal body shape is due to achievement of the self in generalized others' eyes. They care about how other people look at them, and when they go to gym, they see their peers are muscular. Pressure will then take place, so they work out hard to complete the self-image in others' eyes.

The end of relationship is not always a trigger for bodybuilding. Feeling inferior in one's family or having undergone verbal abuse at school can also result in bodybuilding. Once a gay man realizes that his sexual preference is different from other men in his family or at school, pressure happens. If he encounters verbal abuse from their peers, situation can aggravate. To fight this despised feeling and regain self-esteem and confidence, they resort to bodybuilding. By getting muscular, they can have inner strength to combat this stress caused by turmoil of his gay identity.

"I grew up in a big family in Australia, and I am the youngest among all my cousins. They excluded me from their life circle, distained and criticized me. I felt lonely and unconfident, so I isolated myself. Things got exacerbated when I realized my gay identity at 14. I thought no one in the world could accept me, the authentic me, and if my cousins knew my sexual preference, the oppression on me would get even worse. Hence, I concealed my gay identity and pretended that I was straight. My attitude changed when I started to work out. I was acquainted with many new friends in the gym, and this helped me improve my confidence. As I gradually became muscular, many of my friends sent me their compliments and nodding acquaintances in the gym or clubs also showed their interest in me. I built up my self-esteem through their praises." – Ken

"I was feminine and skinny when I was a teenager, so my classmates always insulted me by calling me sissy boy or faggot. Undergoing through these verbal abuses has a huge impact on my subsequent decision to bodybuilding. Bodybuilding enhances my self-value and belongingness in gay community, offering me inner strength to deal with discrimination. I no longer feel isolated and deserted by this society." – Oscar

Being enumerated by family members or verbal abuses by peers at schools spawn inferiority. Thus, trying to mend the feelings of being scorned, Ken and Oscar

changed their physiques and this led them to higher self-esteem and confidence by receiving compliments. This is also reflexive embodiment, which corresponded to Duncan's (2007) research findings that muscular body generates both social status and self-esteem.

Indeed, gay individuals can restore their lack of confidence and low self-esteem through bodybuilding. Once they gain muscular physique, people around them will look at them in admiring ways, which helps gay men rebuild their confidence, self-esteem and self-affirmation.

Being muscular and staying fit can also improve one's acknowledgement of gay identity.

"Being gay is tired because one always has to stay alerted if his physique stays fit or muscular. Once a gay man becomes fat, his popularity will soon vanish. But when I attend my school reunions, I always feel proud that I am not straight since straight guys usually gain weights from their middle age or after getting married, becoming ugly no matter how gorgeous they used to be." – Oscar

"I always whisper to myself that thank God I am gay when I see middle-aged men around me. They just do not care their figures and appearance but their career, which is sad." – Ken

"My coworkers in my age are fat and they always look older than their actual age because they do not have a habit of workout or exercise. Thus, whenever I feel lazy or busy for gym, I whisper to myself that if I do not work out hard, I will be one of their allies some day. This really works." – Tom

For fear of getting fat and old, gay individuals keep a routine of workout no matter how busy or lazy they are. Bodybuilding enhances their gay identity.

4.2.5 Gay labels in Taiwan

This part emerges from informants' talks that they all bring up the issue of gay label. Besides, several gay movies focus on bears and drag queens. There is a new American TV series featuring New York gay social life, which presents various aspects of gay groups. Gay labels have become eminent and heated issue the past decade. One can see different labels join parade on gay pride in different countries, such as bears, wolfs, drag queens and "water boys" especially in Taiwan. Gay labels have been widely discussed among gay community; however, almost no journal articles or published thesis center on this eminent issue.

The gay world is often represented as some sort of homogeneous whole that has the same culture. That is a lie. It is actually broken down into a handful of substrata to which each gay belongs (Moylan, 2010). According to gay labels categorized by an anonymous author appearing on several web pages², there are 16 gay labels in Taiwan as shown in appendix, among which this study is going to discuss bears and wolves since they are the most prevalent and mainstream types in extant gay ghetto in Taiwan. This study will discuss pigs as well because they are generally the "evolution" of bears.

Regarding bodybuilding, bears and wolves usually have a workout routine, and they obtain high social status in gay community, ranking top on the pyramid of gay labels.

"Bears have occupied gay world now. They are omnipresent. The base of bears in Taipei is located in Ximen, where several bear bars in Red Building Area. When you step out of exits of Ximen MRT station, you will be overflowed with bears. Ximen branch of World gym has also been taken over by bears. I am personally into them, attracted to those chubby-muscular guys. Bears exist forever!" – Oscar

"Every one says I am a bear, but I label myself as a wolf, an excessively

² <http://www.wretch.cc/blog/sos19862/2440708>. Retrieved on Oct 15th, 2012.

muscular one. Wolves represent sex icon and they acquire a lot of sex appeal. Every gay manages to be wolf-like. Once they are transformed to become a wolf, popularity will ascend significantly. Wolves obtain the most desirable capital with them, both appearance and muscular physique. It is easy for them to pick a guy out on all occasions. Competition for gorgeous guys is keen in gay world, but wolves are exempt from those games since they have no adversaries. However, wolves are untouchable because you will never know when you lose them.” – Tom

Oscar and Tom mention the competitive nature and prevalent types in gay ghetto. The look of wolves is typical with mustache, fit-muscular body and cool face. Gay men who date a wolf generally feel insecure because they may lose them at any minute since their wolf date is popular.

Pigs, bears with slack muscles, are the low-ranked type in gay community. Pigs love to eat lots of cuisines, but they rarely work out. They think they are as gorgeous as bears; however, that is just self-complacency.


“A lot of pigs think they are bears, but that is hilarious. Bears are muscular with facial hair, but pigs are with slack muscles, pale skin makes them disgusting. Bears someday will turn into pigs if they do not keep working out, which means decadence. I have seen some of my bear friends gain weights and popularity once they owned decreases immediately.” – Tom

Apparently, bears and wolves are two mainstream types in gay ghetto now. Most gay individuals in different labels attempt to work out hard to achieve this goal. Once they attain the wolf or bear image, they still cannot cease bodybuilding lest they should be degraded to rank of pigs.

Figure 4.2 Ranks and Flow Mode of Gay labels



Gay labels in Taiwan (Asia) changed immensely from western classification. There are 16 substrata altogether.

Label	Feature	Symbolic image
Dragon (龍族)	Masculine, straight-look, high social status	

Fox (狐族)

Like to dress up,
luxuries lovers, care
about appearance



Adonis (幻族)

Gorgeous, shiny smiles



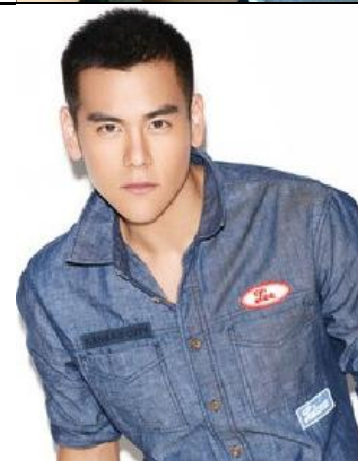
Tiger (虎族)

Cute, not sissy, bottom



Leopard (豹族)

Short, cute, top



<p>Cat (貓族) Cute, innocent, spoiled</p>	
<p>Sheep (羊族) Appearance not attractive but good in personality</p>	
<p>Wolf (狼族) Fit-muscular, sporty, masculine with mustache</p>	
<p>Bear (熊族) Large, hairy, often with facial hair</p>	

Pig (豬族)

Fat, slack muscles, bear
in disguise, omnivorous



Goblin (妖族)

Overtly sissy with girly
appearance



Monster (魔族)

Overtly sissy but with
masculine appearance,
long-haired



<p>Monkey (猴族) Fit-skinny, easy-going, casual</p>	
<p>Skeleton (骨族) Bony and tall</p>	
<p>Phoenix (鳳族) Visual, Japanese or Korean style</p>	
<p>Father (父族) Senior gay</p>	

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1 Reflection

Having analyzed interviews from informants, I reflected on my process of bodybuilding. I started workout after a relationship ended, just hoping to fill up my free time. I joined California Fitness Center, which is now World Gym, because it was the largest fitness chain and plenty of gay men work out there as well. I dared not to lift weights in front of other gym-going fellows until I obtained a few muscles. I became fit, and I was acquainted with many friends in the gym. I found more people than before stared at me when I wore tank tops, which gave me confidence and enhanced my self-esteem that I had been lack of since childhood. My mom scolded me when I could not meet her expectation and my dad insulted me with humiliating words when I came out to him. All these incidents led to my low-esteem and lack of confidence. However, having a fit-muscular body helped me rebuild confidence and self-affirmation. When I heard my informants talking about their workout life, I could identify with them since I have similar experiences to theirs.

Besides, when asked about why they started bodybuilding, they all started with the typical answer: health concern. However, as the interview proceeded, they revealed that workout is for muscular body to gain popularity and confidence. I suppose that gay men are used to telling an answer that fits political rightness concerning sexual preference issue since they live in a patriarchal and straight-dominant society and gay men have been taught to follow the social norm.

There are many labels in gay community; however, there are only three labels were mentioned during interviews. Muscular image (bears/wolves) is the mainstream type that most gay men are seeking for. The cult of muscles still prevails in gay ghetto.

Obtaining wolf or bear image ensures success in gay social life.

5.2 Conclusion

According to literature review and analysis from interviews, the findings of this present study are enumerated as follows:

1. That men have the cult of muscles could be found in ancient Roman Empire, where homosexuality was a part of gay gym culture. We can see a great quantity of muscular sculptures admiring muscles and masculinity. Gay also existed in ancient Roman and Greek culture, which can be observed from paintings depicting two muscular men showing intimate postures. In recent years, gay pride takes place in many countries. Through media or the Internet, the image of muscular gay men who participated in the parade is broadcast worldwide. This bred the trend of bodybuilding and muscular image became mainstream type in gay community. Also, Bourdieu argued that habitus could be understood as a structure of the mind characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and taste. Since gay men live in the similar environment, taste and life style can converge. Being muscular then becomes the prevailing value in gay community.
2. The concept of Bourdieu's field can be applied to not only gym but also whole gay community. Gay men work out in the gym to accumulate body capital, which is a necessity if one yearns to succeed in obtaining high social status in gay community. Once a gay man accrues enough body capital, his sex appeal can earn him more opportunities in finding a partner than other gay individuals who are not muscular. Most gay men understand the profits of bodybuilding, so they flock in gym to gain more body capital, especially before gay pride or significant gay parties because body capital is extraordinarily required in these occasions. According to informants, gay pride parade and big gay parties are the venues where gay men compete with each

other with muscles. Men who have bigger and sexier muscles win this battle, and appearance comes second. Body capital is crucial in gay ghetto due to its keenly competitive nature.

3. Bodybuilding can restore gay men's self-esteem and confidence. Being gay in a patriarchal and straight society in Taiwan can induce pressure, which can lead to diminishing confidence and self-esteem. Besides, it is difficult for gay men to maintain a relationship now due to the change of dating mode with the rise of geosocial applications (Austin, 2012), and a gay man dares not to reveal his shattered feelings to people around him after break-up because he still stays in the closet, which can also result in serious stress. Thus, a gay man will appeal to bodybuilding for a change. When a gay individual grows muscular, compliments from their friends will assist them in rebuilding confidence and self-esteem, let alone more admirers around him. Bodybuilding can be deemed as a journey of restoration of self-esteem, enhancement of confidence and self-affirmation.

4. Becoming muscular can strengthen self-recognition of gay identity. According to informants, they feel proud to be gay when they see other straight fellows in social occasions because their straight counterparts usually do not maintain figures. It is believed that gay men obtain better tastes and care about appearance more than straight men, and most of gay men attempt to live up to this general belief as a result of completing the self in others' eyes. Feeling oppressed and constrained in the straight society in Taiwan, gay men diminish this feeling by getting muscular and maintaining glamorous appearance.

5. Bears and wolves are two prevailing gay labels now. This is related to accumulation of body capital. Being labeled as either ensures high body capital and social status in gay community. Most gay men strive to be bears or wolves to gain

popularity. They maintain this image by attending gym often for fear that they should degrade to pigs once they stop bodybuilding. Pigs are one of the least popular groups in gay community.

We can conclude that bodybuilding is associated with gay labels, social status, body capital, habitus and self-esteem improvement.

5.3 Suggestion

1. This study mainly emphasizes on the mainstream labels such as bears, pigs and wolves. However, there are 16 gay labels in Taiwan. Future studies can center on if other labels attend gyms and how important is bodybuilding to them since other labels may have different value and lifestyles from prevailing gay groups.
2. Informants in the present study are all selected in central Taipei. Considering digital divide, different living environment, and the discrepancy between urban and rural life, gay men in other parts of Taiwan may have divergent views as to tastes and the ideal body physique of gay men. Future studies can examine geographical disparity of informants, or they can discuss if gay individuals in other parts of Taiwan also value bodybuilding and where they work out since there may not be gym chains in the places they live.
3. The age difference of informants in present study ranges significantly (age of 25, 28 and 40). Future studies can focus on the criteria for prevailing labels in different age range. In addition, they can also center on the meaning of bodybuilding for specific age range, such as age of 20-30, etc. Findings may well be more detailed with this approach.
4. According to interviews and data analysis, muscles can represent capital: the bigger, the better (richer). It seems that gay men have the myth of size. There was news in Taipei in 2011 reporting that men who have penis exceeding 18 centimeters

can be admitted to the sauna at free of charge³. This can be evidence that size does matter in gay community. Since size can serve as capital, future studies can do research on why gay men would rather train muscles as body capital than undergo penis enlargement operation. Findings can explain if gay men opt for more cost-effective way to accrue body capital.





³ Retrieved September 27th, 2012 from <http://www.appledaily.com.tw/appledaily/article/headline/20111031/33780032>.

Appendix

Western gay men can be categorized into 8 types and described as follows

(Moylan, 2010; Witherspoon, 2012):

Label	Body Type	Symbolic image
Twink	Thin, smooth, often blond, usually with longish bangs and often with highlights.	
Twunk	Essentially, this is a Twink with muscles. This can also apply to twink as they get a little older.	

Bear

Large, hairy, often with facial hair



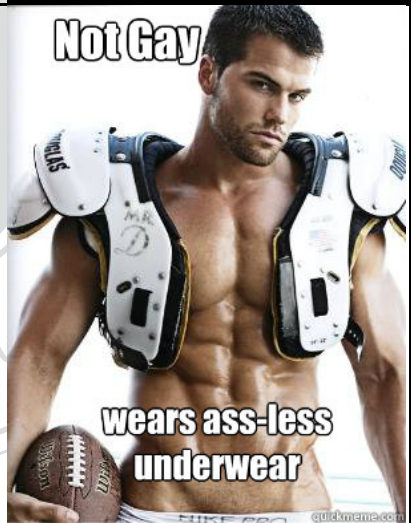
Cub

Cubs are bears in the making. Cubs are smaller, younger and have less hair (usually) than their Bear counterparts.



Gay jock

Athletic, muscular, straight-like



Circuit boy

Muscular, waxed,
preened, most usually
with tribal tattoos



Gay-lister/ peacock

Body toned by the
personal trainer, hair
done by celebrity
stylist, uppity gay



Drag queen

Either big, buxom
Divine style or svelte
and RuPaulesque



Scenes of Gym

1. World Gym





2. Taipei Gym





3. Community sports center



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