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2 **“It’s not just you come into the gym and do your weight training”:** A narrative
3 **exploration of muscularity’s role as identity capital.**

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Abstract

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The current study explored muscularity and weight training’s role as capital in people’s identities across various contexts. Eleven weight trainers from two gyms were interviewed (3 females, 8 males) about their desires for muscularity and the role it played in their lives. Thematic narrative analysis identified narratives that framed the individuals’ muscular desires, behaviours, and importance. Muscularity formed a versatile resource - identity capital – that was a key part of the individuals’ body projects. These body projects and identity capital facilitated the individuals’ identity performances in a range of contexts (e.g., occupation, gender). Three narratives emerged (*individualist*, *illusionist*, and *promoter*) that highlighted the intertwined tangible (e.g., leanness and strength) and intangible (e.g., control and self-empowerment) attributes associated with muscularity and weight training that facilitated successful identity performances. These narratives achieved goals of self-empowerment (Individualist), self-protection (Illusionist), or self-advertisement (Promoter) which enabled successful identity performances. The current findings advance existing literature by suggesting muscularity is a versatile form of identity capital that can facilitate multiple identities (e.g., occupation, gender) and contexts. The potential benefit to an individuals’ sense of self also highlights the positive effect of muscularity weight training as a tool for self-promotion and personal growth.

Keywords: muscularity, identity, narrative, gym culture, body project

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Introduction

Identity can be described as the integration of multiple self-images over time (Erikson, 1968), which highlights the potential multiplicity and variability of people’s identities in modern society. Constructing identity in late-modern society is a complex task that encourages people to individualise their identities, continually construct their sense of self, and adapt to obstacles and opportunities that arise within their ever-changing social lives (Côté, 2016). To negotiate late-modern demands, there is a need for “self-work” as part of identity construction (Smith Maguire, 2008). Therefore, the body has become a site for “production and display of self” (Smith Maguire, 2008, pp. 59-60) and thus a salient aspect of identity and self-expression (Erikson, 1968).

Sport, the gym, and weight training environments are spaces where individuals can engage in self-work and refine their bodies and muscularity as part of the construction and enactment of subcultural identities (Andreasson, 2014; Coquet et al. 2016; Smith Maguire, 2008; Monaghan, 1999). Modifying, maintaining, or improving body aesthetics and performance through dieting, going to the gym, and weight training represent “body work” (Coffey, 2014; Gimlin, 2007; Shilling, 2011), which becomes part of a body project (Featherstone, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Shilling, 2013). Body projects themselves, however, are not an end point, but instead they are an ongoing process of identity work that secures “a sense of who one is and who one wants to be” (Orbach, 2009, p. 237). The interplay between body projects and identity work highlights the body a vessel for self-improvement at an existential level (Bordo, 2003; Giazitzoglu, 2018; Wagner, 2017) and the need to further understand the role of body projects, and specifically muscularity, in wider identity contexts.

Muscle-specific body projects are driven by two features: appearance (e.g., a lean muscular body) and performance (e.g., a strong and productive body; Stewart et al., 2013), both of which are acknowledged as forms of capital that are accrued through body work and

1 aid peoples' body projects and identity performances (Cranswick et al., 2020; Edwards et al.,
2 2017; Harvey et al., 2013; Hutson, 2016; Kling et al., 2018; Kotzé et al., 2021). Currently,
3 existing literature frames muscularity in several different forms of capital, such as bodily
4 (Wacquant, 1995), physical (Shilling, 2013; Stewart et al., 2013), and masculine capital (de
5 Visser et al., 2009; Edwards et al., 2017). Despite the variations in their context, building
6 these forms of capital appears to help enhance one's social worth, status, distinction, as part
7 of multiple identities (Adams et al., 2010; Bridges, 2009; Frew & McGillivray, 2005; Klein,
8 1993; Phoenix, 2015). For example, muscularity holds symbolic value in many gendered
9 (e.g., Edwards et al., 2017, Wagner, 2017; Worthen & Baker, 2016), occupational (e.g.,
10 Courpasson & Monties, 2017; Johansson et al., 2017), and sporting identities (e.g.,
11 Giazitzoglu, 2022; Wacquant, 1995), which allows people to successfully navigate these
12 contexts and identity performances.

13 Existing literature demonstrates an understanding of the interplay between the body
14 and identity, but there seems to be a need for a wider perspective that embraces muscularity's
15 utility as a universal resource across multiple identities and contexts. For example, existing
16 studies often focus on muscularity's role in specific identities, such as masculinity (e.g.,
17 Edwards et al., 2017), femininity (e.g., Edwards et al., 2022) and contexts, such as fitness and
18 sport (e.g., Cranswick et al., 2020; Harvey et al., 2013) and physical or masculine
19 occupations (e.g., Courpasson & Monties, 2017; Kotzé et al., 2021). Additionally, assigning
20 muscularity to a specific form of capital, such as masculine capital (de Visser et al., 2009),
21 may downplay muscularity's versatility and transferability across multiple identities and
22 contexts. The current study therefore aimed to explore the role of muscular body projects in
23 multiple identities. Specifically, through narrative analysis, the study sought to understand the
24 meanings, impact, and utility of muscularity within weight training individuals lives both

1 inside and outside the gym. What follows is a brief discussion of the theoretical concepts and
2 existing research that informed the current study.

3 **Theoretical Background**

4 The current study draws on the ICM (Côté, 2016) and identity performance and
5 mastery theories (Goffman, 1959; Sampson, 1978) as a lens for exploring the narratives
6 surrounding muscular body projects and identity management within the weight training
7 individuals. Adopting a broad and non-specific subcultural or identity lens meant the current
8 study could provide an insight into the wider meanings, impact, and utility muscular body
9 projects, desires, and behaviours have on the wider context of people's lives and identities.

10 ***Identity Capital Model***

11 Côté's Identity Capital Model (ICM; 2016) recognises the need to embrace multiple
12 identities and sociocultural mobility. The ICM proposes two overarching forms of identity
13 capital (tangible and intangible), which represent sociological and psychological resources
14 respectively. Tangible capital is associated with palpable or socially visible concepts, such as
15 wealth, professional networks, and reputations. Intangible capital reflects an individual's
16 personality characteristics and concepts, such as self-esteem, cognitive abilities, and
17 capabilities to negotiate various obstacles, environments, and contexts (Côté, 2016; Côté &
18 Levine, 2002; Kroger, 2007). Developing a portfolio of both tangible and intangible identity
19 capital can provide individuals with the agency and ability to negotiate the uncertainty and
20 unpredictability of late-modern society, which minimises the risk of social exclusion,
21 hindered development, and contributes to coherent identities (Côté, 1996; Côté & Levine,
22 2002, 2016; Côté, 2016). In doing so, individuals can achieve healthy identity transitions and
23 functioning, as well as resolving adult and social identities (Côté, 1996, 2002, 2016;
24 Eriksson, 1959). Rather than reducing muscularity to a narrow category of capital,
25 interpreting it through an ICM lens may allow a flexible perspective of the body as identity

1 capital that does not attribute it to just physical resources (e.g., strength) or narrow identities
2 (e.g., masculinity). In doing so it can be appreciated that muscularity and the associated
3 behaviours have both tangible (e.g., appearance and strength) and intangible (e.g., self-
4 esteem, dedication, and commitment) effects that can help build, revise, and maintain
5 multiple identity performances (Caza, 2018; Giazitzoglu, 2018; Symon & Pritchard, 2015).

6 *Identity Performance and Mastery*

7 The identity performance theory is grounded in the proposal that identity
8 performances are not just about possessing traits or attributes, but also about *doing* identity so
9 that people can “*be* who they are and *become* who they will or should be” (Huot & Rudman,
10 2010, p. 73). Goffman (1959) proposed that people perform their identities in line with how
11 they see others and how they are thought, or wish, to be seen by others (Huot & Rudman,
12 2010). Part of the performance is negotiating the “frontstage” (i.e., social identities) and
13 “backstage” (i.e., personal identities) to achieve a desired impression (Goffman, 1959; Hout
14 & Rudman, 2010). This controlling of social images and personal qualities also reflects the
15 concept of identity mastery, which consists of managing internal and external factors (e.g.,
16 personal feelings and others’ impressions respectively; Sampson, 1978). Body projects, and
17 muscularity as capital, seem to demonstrate a corporeal efficiency in constructing and *doing*
18 identities by embodying and symbolising desirable skills and characteristics, which helps
19 individuals negotiate the personal and social elements of their identities (e.g., Courpasson &
20 Monties, 2017; Cranswick et al., 2020; Giazitzoglu, 2022; Harvey et al., 2013). Drawing on
21 theoretical concepts, such as ICM, identity performance, and mastery could therefore help
22 advance the understanding of how muscularity may be used as a broader form of capital to
23 master and control various identity performances.

24 **Existing Research: Muscularity and Identities**

25 *Muscularity and Gender: Negotiating Masculinity and Femininity*

1 Women’s bodies have been commonly recognised as a salient aspect of their identities
2 (Kling et al., 2017) and socially evaluated based on appearance (Murnen & Don, 2012;
3 Smolak & Murnen, 2011). There is, however, an increasing realisation that men’s bodies are
4 also part of an identity performance that can display desired social images (Cranswick et al.,
5 2020; Edwards et al., 2017). With the diversification in women’s body work and ideals
6 towards bodybuilding, strength training, and a muscular and toned physique, it is apparent
7 that members of both genders are engaged in muscle-related body work and projects as ways
8 of performing and negotiating their gendered identities (Edwards et al., 2017, 2022; Hockin-
9 Boyers et al., 2020; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018; Walters & Hefferon, 2020; Wagner,
10 2017).

11 Several studies provide an in-depth insight into the performance of masculinity
12 through the body and gym practices in the bodybuilding and weight training subcultures (e.g.,
13 Atkinson & Monaghan, 2014; Edwards et al., 2017; Klein, 1993; Wagner, 2017). For some
14 men, the body is a site of communication and symbolism of masculinity and a form of
15 physical capital that embodies the skills and capabilities to establish and validate their
16 masculine identities and worth (Adams et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2017; Giazitzoglu, 2018;
17 Klein, 1993). The muscular appearance is also tied to the practices men endure (e.g., lifting
18 heavy weights) and their capabilities (e.g., strength, pain tolerance) which in turn validates
19 their masculine status (Coffey, 2016; Wagner, 2017). The conflation of masculinity and
20 muscularity has positioned men’s bodies at the core of their identities (Edwards et al., 2017;
21 Wagner, 2017). Their bodies thus become something to “tinker with”; a body project of value
22 that represents what it means to be a man (Wagner, 2017, p. 583).

23 For women, traditionally a muscular toned physique goes against Western feminine
24 ideals (Grogan et al. 2004; Shilling & Bunsell, 2009). More contemporary views of female
25 ideals, however, appear to hold muscular and toned physiques as more attractive and

1 desirable than the traditional thin appearance (Boszik et al., 2018), which potentially blurs the
2 gender boundaries. But fitness media representations of the athletic female body ideal (e.g.,
3 #fitspiration) still project thinness, as well as muscular tone, as a significant characteristic
4 (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018), which creates a “paradoxical
5 body ideal” (Ilief-Martinescu, 2016) that moves between a “minimalist look and a solid,
6 muscular, athletic look” (Bordo, 1989, p. 90). The oscillation between ideals preserves the
7 need for women to carefully negotiate muscular body projects and feminine identities.

8 For both genders a visual appearance and strength is what gets noticed (i.e., tangible
9 identity capital), so is crucial to identity, but the associated practices and consequences (i.e.,
10 intangible identity capital), such as pushing the body to its limits with weights, committing to
11 strict eating and training regimes, developing independence and confidence, also serve to
12 contribute to the overall identity performances (Atkinson & Monaghan, 2014; Edwards et al.,
13 2022; Shilling & Bunsell, 2014; Wagner, 2017). As one’s physique is a by-product of weight
14 training, the two (the body and the training) become intertwined as symbolic resources within
15 identity, so people will invest in body work to achieve and not “lose that body” (Coffey,
16 2016, p. 181).

17 ***Muscularity and Occupation***

18 As may be expected, it is evident that the body, and muscularity, plays a vital role in
19 identity construction and performance for health and fitness occupations, such as personal
20 trainers (Harvey et al., 2013; Hutson, 2013) and strength and conditioning coaches
21 (Edmonds, 2018). Muscularity in these health and fitness occupations embodies and
22 advertises individuals’ knowledge, skills, and credibility and thus becomes a significant form
23 of capital within a context where the body is an object for consumption and professionals are
24 pressured into following consumer industry standards (Fernandes-Balboa & González-Calvo,
25 2018).

1 Outside the gym and fitness environments, however, the body and a muscular
2 physique have also been shown to be a central feature of several occupational identities, such
3 as security, firefighters, and the police force (Courpasson & Monties, 2017; Coquet et al.,
4 2016; Kotzé et al., 2021; Perrott, 2019). Through bodily practices and developing bodily
5 capital these individuals can project physical fitness, “hardness”, “toughness”, intimidation,
6 and violence (Courpasson & Monties, 2016; Kotzé & Antonopoulos, 2021; Perrott, 2019).
7 These instrumental qualities can facilitate job success and thus identity construction and
8 performances (Courpasson & Monties, 2016; Kotzé & Antonopoulos, 2021; Perrott, 2019).
9 Within these roles, there tends to be a consistent undertone of masculinity that mediates the
10 relationship between muscularity and these occupational identities, which may not be the
11 case in roles not governed or facilitated by masculine traits.

12 Some literature has demonstrated that a muscular, toned, and athletic physique may
13 also be a commodity and source of capital for both men and women in corporate and
14 executive working settings (Haynes, 2012; Johansson et al., 2017; Meriläinen et al., 2015).
15 The term managerial athleticism has been used to conceptualise a muscular and lean physique
16 and its desirability in these corporate settings (Johansson et al., 2017). In corporate and
17 executive roles, a muscular athletic body seems to be an external presentation of competency,
18 worth, and control (Haynes, 2012; Johansson et al., 2017). As a result of these social
19 connotations and potential stereotypes associated with muscularity, employers seem more
20 likely to employ individuals whose bodies align with managerial athleticism (Meriläinen et
21 al., 2015).

22 **Method**

23 The interviews and data in the current study were collected as part of a wider
24 ethnographic study exploring the various subcultural identities within two different gyms.
25 The two gyms were chosen as they represented some of the different cultures and body

1 projects associated with weight training and muscularity, with one housing appearance-
2 focused training cultures (e.g., physique competitors) and the other more performance-
3 focused (e.g., powerlifters). The aims of the ethnography were to a) explore the socially
4 constructed body projects and meanings associated to muscularity in different weight training
5 subcultures and b) understand muscularity's potential role as a form of capital in weight
6 training individuals' multiple identities. The scale of the findings associated with these aims
7 was deemed too large to compress into one study without losing the rich detail, which was
8 the rationale for presenting two separate articles. The current study presents the data and
9 narratives associated with aim b), which predominantly came from the semi-structured
10 interviews. The findings associated with aim a) and the detailed ethnographic observation
11 methods will be presented in a separate article.

12 The ethnographic observations did not directly inform the current findings, but they
13 helped identify 11 key figures across both gyms who demonstrated a clear investment in
14 muscular body projects. Participants were invited for interview to discuss their experiences of
15 the gym, weight training, and muscularity, which provided rich detail and narratives on
16 muscularity's wider identity implications. The participants were purposively sampled based
17 on their engagement in weight training at least 3 times per week, demonstrated their muscular
18 interest through conversations and behaviours (e.g., discussing and evaluating their own or
19 others' physiques or strength), and were seen to frequently use legal dietary supplementation.
20 Of the 11 participants who volunteered for interview, 3 were women and 8 were men.
21 Despite this skewed distribution, it was a proportionate representation of the observed weight
22 training culture at both gyms. The men were aged between 20 and 42-years-old, and the
23 women between 29 and 52 years at the time of interview. This age range generally
24 represented the age groups who were observed within both gyms. Table 1 presents the
25 demographic information and number of interviews with each participant.

1 Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. For the
2 ethnography, all members were made aware of the first authors presence and role within the
3 gym, as well as the study aims and procedure via the owners who had received a copy of the
4 study information sheet and signed a gatekeeper consent form. Posters were also placed on
5 notice boards in the changing rooms and around the gym to aid awareness of the study and
6 my presence. When training and walking around the gym [insert initials] also made a
7 significant personal effort to spread awareness to all members and those who asked about the
8 project. For the interviews, the participants also signed individual consent forms that
9 signposted the nature of the study and interviews, the audio recording, and confidentiality of
10 their responses. To ensure confidentiality each participant was assigned a pseudonym and any
11 identifiable information was removed or altered.

12 **Philosophical Underpinning**

13 The current study was ground in an interpretivism epistemology (Balarabe Kura,
14 2012; Markula & Silk, 2011; Saunders et al., 2015; Thorpe & Olive, 2016). The interpretivist
15 philosophy draws on ontological relativism, which assumes “multiple realities” exist and are
16 socially constructed, malleable, and dependent on an individual’s psychosocial and
17 contextual experiences (Markula & Silk, 2011; Papathomas, 2016; Smith & Caddick, 2012;
18 Thorpe & Olive, 2016). The epistemological assumptions of interpretivism are based on
19 social constructionism, which embraces knowledge as a product of relational interactions and
20 not simply “out there” (Papathomas, 2016; Smith & Caddick, 2012, p. 61). The interactional
21 assumption of knowledge development aligned with the aim to understand the varied role
22 muscularity played in the participants multiple identities. Additionally, drawing on social
23 constructionism meant that the researcher’s values and involvement in the research process
24 facilitated the data collection.

25 **Situational Context**

1 The ethnography took place at two independently owned gyms in separate [location to
2 be inserted after blind review] towns. One, referred to as Cast Iron, housed established
3 powerlifting and strong man training subcultures. The second site, Revival, was as health
4 club and had a broader agenda, accommodating members looking to lose weight and exercise
5 for health reasons as well as a variety of muscle-oriented trainers (recreational lifters,
6 physique enhancers, sporting athletes, and both competitive and non-competitive
7 bodybuilders). Over both sites there were approximately 150 and 350 yearly members
8 respectively, all able to choose from a range of membership rates from £20.75 to £29.75 per
9 month, along with a large number of pay-as-you-go users. Men predominantly used Cast
10 Iron, with a small number of women inhabiting the gym floor. Revival demonstrated a more
11 balanced demographic regarding sex, with women intermingling the men in the weights areas
12 of the gym despite having an exclusive ladies-only area. At both gyms, individuals from
13 different social backgrounds and professions were observed and interviewed (see Table 1).

14 **Interview Procedure**

15 Audio-recorded, semi-structured, interviews with 11 of the gym characters were
16 conducted. Each interview ranged from 30 to 90 minutes and were conducted at a time and
17 place of the participant's choice. The interview settings varied with some taking place in the
18 quiet staff rooms or corners at both gyms, or in Revival's open coffee lounge. Additionally,
19 some participants would email [initials] any extra thoughts that arose from the meetings.

20 The formal interviews were semi-structured, with the aim of eliciting rich narratives
21 around the individuals' experiences of the weight training culture and the underlying
22 meanings they attached to building muscle. Each interview covered a range of specific topics
23 that were informed by the capital and identity-related literature (e.g., masculine capital;
24 Edwards et al., 2017, ICM; Côté, 2016) and the participants' own beliefs and bodily self-
25 perceptions. During the interviews, an active-listener approach was adopted to allow the

1 content to emerge naturally and minimise any researcher dominance, which also aided the
2 flow of the interview. Rapport and relationships between [initials] and participants were built
3 over time through his presence at the gyms, leading to more insightful and comprehensive
4 interviews, revealing more personal and rich narratives.

5 Informal conversations also occurred which were often initiated during training
6 sessions, at the reception desks, or after spotting another member (supporting someone during
7 a specific exercise for safety). These conversations would often start with discussions of
8 training routines and motivations, but sometimes provided rich insight into bodily perceptions
9 and deeper contextual meanings to their muscular projects.

10 **Narrative Analysis**

11 When analysing the interviews, thematic narrative analysis was used with the goal of
12 exploring the “told” content and “what’s” of individuals’ shared experiences (Reissman,
13 2008, p. 58; Smith, 2016). Using a thematic approach allowed the identification of central
14 and common elements in the events that shaped their experiences and meanings (Smith,
15 2016). Thematic narrative analysis focuses on specific stories and accounts to make sense of
16 the “events and cognitions” shared by individuals, which can then be theorised across large
17 data sets (Reissmann, 2008, p. 58; Smith, 2016).

18 The initial analysis involved narrative indwelling, whereby [initials] immersed
19 himself in the participants’ stories, reading them several times, listening to the audio
20 recordings, and use inductive coding to generate initial notes, themes, and subthemes (Braun
21 & Clarke, 2006; Smith, 2016, p. 234). This process encouraged [initials] to think with the
22 stories and identify a core narrative theme that participants constructed to frame their
23 interaction with the gym environment and muscularity. Additionally, to facilitate the
24 identification of narrative types, we applied and adapted a series of questions proposed by
25 Bohm (2004; what, who, how, when, why, by what means, and for what reason). These

1 questions were tailored to the current study’s aims; what is the importance of muscularity?
2 Who is impacted by their muscularity? How does muscularity impact their lives/identities?
3 When does muscularity impact their lives/identities? Why does it have such an impact? What
4 strategies do they undertake to optimise muscularity? What is the purpose for optimising
5 muscularity?

6 Throughout the analytical process we adopted an iterative and abductive approach,
7 moving between the data, codes, and existing theoretical concepts to construct the selective
8 codes. Abduction involves “imaginatively thinking about intriguing findings” (Charmaz,
9 2009, pp. 137) and “creatively inferencing” findings to create a situational fit between the
10 data and theory (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 168). Being theoretically sensitive without
11 being committed to preconceived theories is key to abduction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967;
12 Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) and allowed us to be open and bring a broad theoretical
13 background to the emerging findings and coding process. Specifically, the abductive analysis
14 aimed to draw on multiple theories to stimulate new theoretical contributions and concepts,
15 such as the narrative typologies identified in the current study. The analysis of the data and
16 the development of the current narrative typologies were informed identity-related theories,
17 such as identity capital (Côté, 2016), identity performance (Goffman, 1955, 1959), and
18 identity mastery (Sampson, 1978).

19 The analysis revealed three narrative types (internalist, illusionist, and promoter),
20 which had three distinct goals (themes) that underpinned them; self-empowerment, self-
21 protection, and self-advertisement respectively.

22 Findings and Discussion

23 The current findings demonstrate the identity-related meanings the current individuals
24 assigned to their muscular desires and behaviours. Investing in weight training accrued both
25 tangible (e.g., physical strength, muscularity) and intangible (e.g., self-esteem, coping

1 strategies) capital (Côté, 2016), which, in line with the ICM, facilitated the creation and
2 enactment of successful and coherent identity performances in various aspects of life.
3 Specifically, like Goffman's (1959) frontstage (social) and backstage (personal) identities and
4 Sampson's (1978) identity mastery theory, the current participants drew on their muscularity
5 and the associated identity capital to negotiate their personal and social identities within their
6 overarching identity performances.

7 Three narrative typologies (Individualist, Illusionist, and Promoter) that framed the
8 participants' identity performances were identified in the current study, with the accrued
9 identity capital facilitating self-empowerment, self-protection, or self-promotion respectively.
10 These narrative typologies share similarities with the proposed motivations in the existing
11 research, such as empowerment (Walters & Hefferon, 2020), compensation (Klein, 1993) and
12 promotion (Harvey et al., 2013), that also aim to build identity capital and achieve a coherent
13 identity. Adopting the current narratives allowed the participants to achieve successful and
14 coherent identity performances within given contexts. The following discussions integrate
15 and contextualise the narratives within existing research.

16 **Individualist Type**

17 Two women (Annie and Leanne), but no men, expressed this narrative type, which
18 may reflect the current sample but does not necessarily imply a gender difference, but could
19 inform future exploration. The themes of the individualist type were self-empowerment and
20 independence, which were internally driven, and focused on enhancing their personal,
21 backstage, identity (Goffman, 1959). Enhancing personal identities allowed a perception that
22 social images were more self-controlled, meaning the individuals could reflect their "true
23 self" socially (frontstage; Goffman, 1959), with less need to conform to instilled social norms
24 or seek external validation. Muscularity, weight training, and increased physical strength
25 formed tangible capital that empowered the individuals and increased their intangible capital,

1 such as self-belief, independence, and self-satisfaction, which all facilitated coherent and
2 successful performances across multiple identities.

3 The narrative explains how a commitment to weight training and the resultant strong
4 body project provided identity capital that enhanced a personal sense of self and perception of
5 capabilities, which allowed the individuals to construct a coherent identity performance
6 across different facets of life as Leanne described: “[Weight training] has showed me I can
7 achieve things I didn't think I would be able to do. I now use the same determination and
8 positive approach to other areas of my life.”

9 Similarly, Annie expressed the impact powerlifting and her strength had on her
10 personal capabilities, but also the ability to create a personal identity performance that was
11 not dictated by traditional social norms or expectations:

12 It's not just you come into the gym and do your weight training...[powerlifting] has
13 just made me realise what I am capable of I suppose...I don't feel like I need validation
14 off anybody else anymore...I think most people will realise that they want to be more
15 than what they are socially supposed to be, like a mum, or a wife... I'm a single
16 mother...I want him [her son] to see me as a strong person, and that I can achieve these
17 things [strength and independence], and that his mum is probably stronger than most
18 men are (Annie, Cast Iron).

19 Similar to existing research, Annie reflects how weight training and muscular development,
20 women offered an escape from traditional social ideals and a chance to rebel against
21 restrictive feminine ideals (Edwards et al., 2022; Lyng, 2005; Worthen & Baker, 2016).

22 Furthermore, it is apparent that for both women objective strength improvements and
23 intangible effects of training provided the capital for to renegotiate their identities, create a
24 “different view of themselves” (Brace-Govan, 2002, p. 416). This demonstrates how
25 investing in such body work and muscular projects increased a sense of control,

1 accomplishment, and personal enhancement that could be translated into the women's
2 identities and wider aspects of their lives (Bunsell, 2013; Edwards et al., 2022; Shilling &
3 Bunsell, 2014; Walters & Hefferon, 2020; Worthen & Baker, 2016), as Leanne described:

4 I am now a totally different person. The effects of that 'different person' who has new-
5 found confidence, energy, determination and drive made me rethink a number of areas
6 of my life which I hadn't previously had the courage to face (Leanne, Revival).

7 A strong and functional body provided Leanne with control over her identity performance,
8 which created a new sense of security over her life and provided her with the personal
9 capabilities to counter any challenging events that may threaten her identity:

10 When I doubt myself, or am finding things difficult, I remind myself that if I can
11 achieve what I have done through my training and apply that same determination and
12 effort... The discipline, determination and effort required [to build strength] is
13 something I draw on hugely. Frankly before I started working out this way, I was rather
14 an emotional mess, but not anymore. I can still have emotional issues to deal with, but I
15 don't allow myself to get overwhelmed. It can be hard but feeling stronger in body and
16 mind helps enormously (Leanne, Revival).

17 Annie also explained how her strong and muscular body project allowed her to control her
18 identity performance and "be different". Although social aspects were still important in these
19 women's identities, they constructed a performance through their body projects that did not
20 need to conform to traditional expectations, as Annie explained:

21 I've just accepted that it's a good way to be different [being muscular and strong]
22 because everyone else is just holding themselves back, trying to play [traditional] roles,
23 rather than being themselves... the woman's always [expected to be] the small, weak,
24 one kind of thing... [for some women] it's [weight training] almost the fear of stepping
25 out of those social norms for sure (Annie, Cast Iron).

1 Some research describes a socially induced “glass ceiling” on women’s physical strength
2 (Dworking, 2001) and a fear of becoming “too muscular” (Angier, 1999, p. 293) or “looking
3 too much like a guy” (Krane et al., 2004, p. 320). Additionally, the act of weight training and
4 bodybuilding is often labelled as a masculine activity and therefore women involving
5 themselves in such activities has been perceived as deviant and stigmatic (Chananie et al.,
6 2012; Worthen & Baker, 2016). These social perceptions mean that weight training women
7 are required to negotiate the “edge” of the boundaries between masculinity and femininity
8 (Bell, 2008; Worthen & Baker, 2016). The current findings, however, echo contemporary
9 research showing that weightlifting and a muscular body project can offer women liberation
10 and empower them to challenge essentialist and oppressive feminine ideals (Edwards et al.,
11 2022; Walters & Hefferon, 2020; Worthen & Baker, 2016). The act of pushing the body to its
12 limits and developing strength allowed the current women to renegotiate and reframe the
13 body as a personal process rather than a social object (Walters & Hefferon, 2020; Tylka &
14 Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Reducing the social focus, through an individualist narrative, may
15 help reduce the prominence of gender boundaries and challenge the gendered logic
16 traditionally applied to women’s bodies (Coen et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2022; Walters &
17 Hefferon, 2020).

18 The individualist narrative type demonstrates a focus on weight training and muscular
19 strength as valuable sources of identity capital that enhance one’s perceptions of their
20 personal capabilities. Enhancing personal elements of identity allowed coherent identity
21 performances that could negotiate challenges, adversity, and societal norms, in ways that
22 avoid their disempowering effects and provide a sense of internal control in all aspects of life.
23 Identifying this narrative type provides an additional interpretive lens to understand identity-
24 related reasoning for seeking strength and muscularity’s role in constructing, mastering, and
25 performing identities. Such findings may specifically help future studies explore the shifting

1 female ideals and the more socially visible engagement of women in muscle building
2 activities.

3 *Illusionist Type*

4 Three participants (two male and one female; Milo, Loki, and Mohini respectively)
5 expressed an illusionist narrative. The illusionist narrative had a goal of self-protection, but
6 unlike the previous narrative there was no predominant focus on one aspect of identity, it was
7 more about maintaining exclusivity between the personal and social. Muscularity helped
8 mask the personal qualities perceived to be incompatible or undesirable within one's social
9 identity performance. This allowed individuals to maintain their personal sense of self and
10 worth, whilst creating an illusion for their social identity that met social expectations and
11 resulted in a successful and coherent identity performance.

12 The two men, Milo and Loki, made the link between muscularity, lifting weights, and
13 hegemonic masculinity and how building a muscular physique gave control over a masculine
14 image and could compensate for not having an "alpha" or masculine personality".
15 Specifically, their responses echo existing research that express a muscular and fit physique
16 as tangible capital that carries intangible connotations of power, dominance, aggression, and
17 self-assurance and facilitates a hegemonic masculine performance (Bridges, 2009; Klein,
18 1993, 1995; Monaghan, 1999; Wagner, 2017). For example, Milo alludes to masculinity's
19 prominence in men's identities and how muscularity allows him to portray desirable
20 characteristics:

21 "[As a man] it's almost like the centre of everything, in some respects, is
22 masculinity...the guys who are big they project the whole alpha male...everyone can't
23 be the alpha male, they can't be. But everyone wants to be the alpha male...some
24 people can be the alpha male in their personality without ever being big. [Through]
25 their whole personality...I definitely would say that I am still insecure when it comes to

1 my alpha maleness. Because I am not the loud aggressive one...you can actually
2 control looking more like it [alpha male] this way, the rest of your traits may not go
3 there [masculine] but you can actually sort of control that aspect of it [muscular
4 image]...So much is visual as well. So much of everything we do. Like you analyse a
5 person in what 0.3 seconds or something? It's the first thing, you will look at someone
6 and it's the first point of call.

7 Loki epitomised the creation of a masculine image through his physique. He was a large
8 successful powerlifter and well-known figure around Cast Iron. Many of the gym members
9 described Loki as arrogant and "big-headed", but also commented on the assertion and
10 control his "phenomenal" physique and "ridiculous" strength brought to his role as a
11 powerlifter. Like Milo, however, Loki described muscularity as a resource that created an
12 illusion of masculinity that was not who he felt he was. Instead, he revealed a more timid and
13 introverted personal identity:

14 I would say there is a lot masculinity attached to weightlifting... if there is any word to
15 describe me it is not masculine...I am not a very alpha personality... an alpha
16 personality is someone who is very dominant in their actions and psychology, the sort
17 of person who becomes the centre of attention and thrives off it...[Dominance] is
18 something that needs to come across sometimes because I do a lot of teaching and
19 coaching in different things [school sport and powerlifting] and it's beneficial...but it's
20 not something that comes naturally to me or that I thrive off.....[Being big and
21 muscular] helps convey me as a more dominant personality, but it doesn't really affect
22 how I am...

23 Echoing existing research (e.g., Coffey, 2016; Wagner, 2017), the muscular body, practices,
24 and physical capabilities (e.g., being able to squat over 200kg for multiple repetitions) Loki
25 demonstrated in the gym and the resultant arrogance and dominance were all part of a

1 masculine identity performance. This masculine performance was something that benefitted
2 his coaching identity outside the gym (e.g., controlling and managing his athletes) and his
3 identity as a powerlifter within it. Engaging in an illusionist narrative maintained a coherent
4 identity story despite contrasting personal and social expectations and performances.

5 Existing literature discusses muscular development and physique enhancement as a
6 compensatory resource for men's masculine identities (e.g., Klein, 1993). When one's body
7 is perceived to be misaligned with a social identity performance or does not represent desired
8 capabilities, some individuals may compensate by developing a muscular physique through
9 excessive training, substance use, and risky decisions (Edwards et al., 2017; de Visser et al.,
10 2009; de Visser & McDonnell, 2013; Giazitzoglu, 2018; Klein, 1993). Engaging in such
11 behaviours and increasing muscularity allows the men to earn "man points" or masculine
12 capital, which also recompenses any lack of masculine traits or marginalised behaviours, such
13 as weakness, low self-esteem, and homosexuality (Edwards et al., 2017; de Visser et al.,
14 2009; de Visser & McDonnell, 2013). Compensation, however, suggests a loss, defect, or
15 deficiency, but Milo and Loki's narratives did not refer to perceived defects or look at their
16 personal qualities with negativity. Instead, the narrative was a way of creating an illusion of a
17 different self that was compatible with social expectations and protected and separated their
18 true selves. This echoes Goffman's (1959, p. 57) metaphoric term the "mask" which
19 represents one's ability to deceive in face-to-face interactions, without needing to "become
20 somebody else" (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013, p. 102). For example, Loki explained, "I
21 was going to compare it to looking at something through a lens, the lens can change how
22 something is perceived without any change to the object itself."

23 The illusionist narrative, however, does seem to also offer compensatory benefits
24 through muscularity, which echoes the aforementioned existing literature. Additionally, the
25 current findings also demonstrated muscularity's role illusionist role beyond masculinity and

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1 allow people to differentiate their social images and personal traits in other identities. For
2 example, Mohini also alluded to masking and how the development of her physical strength
3 allowed to her to “hide” her personal sense of insecurity and timidity, and project a confident
4 and robust image in her role as a lecturer:

5 I do feel that being in the gym and lifting weights really does add something to me.

6 Like I often doubt myself, I get anxious really easily, and just generally worry about
7 what people think, but that’s just me I can’t change that...When I am in the gym, this
8 doesn’t matter, my strength does away with it all...Being strong and looking strong
9 adds an extra layer to me, it covers up the real me. That shy woman. Which is great
10 when I have to stand up and engage with a room full of students, I can be confident, I
11 can tell them what to do, and they buy into me...So yeah, the lifting and strength gives
12 me extra layers to protect the real me.

13 The illusionist type enabled the coexistence of contrasting personal and social elements of
14 identities without hindering the individuals’ sense of self. Specifically, muscularity allowed
15 individuals to navigate different social requirements, images, and expectations despite these
16 sometimes conflicting with their personal and core values, characteristics, and beliefs. The
17 current findings demonstrate a narrative theme that frames muscularity as form of identity
18 capital that can act as a protective resource, creates a desired illusion, and allows one to
19 perform multiple identities across ever-changing social contexts whilst maintaining their
20 sense of “true self” (Mohini) or “real me” (Loki).

21 *Promoter Type*

22 Six men discussed a promoter narrative theme (three health and fitness professionals,
23 two high school teachers, and one IT worker). When adopting the promoter narrative,
24 participants had a goal of self-advertisement, which was externally driven by their social
25 identities and the socially instilled connotations associated with muscularity. Despite the

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1 social drive, there was more coherence between the personal and social aspects of identity
2 than in the previous two narrative types whereby the perceived personal capabilities that
3 complemented a social identity performance were accentuated and transferred. This
4 coherence reflects one's ability to draw on personal identity to add to one's social identity
5 performance (Goffman, 1959). Muscularity, strength, and weight training provided tangible
6 capital that symbolised and advertised the intangible qualities (e.g., knowledge, commitment,
7 dedication) that were suited to the individuals' social identity performances.

8 The health and fitness professionals demonstrated how the development and
9 maintenance of appropriate bodies is central to their professional identity performance (e.g.,
10 PTs and S&C coaches; Edmonds, 2018; Harvey et al., 2014; Hutson, 2013). Specifically,
11 muscularity formed tangible identity capital that highlighted their knowledge, skill set, and
12 competencies. These findings echo existing literature suggesting the body acts as a “business
13 card” and an expression of expertise among personal trainers, which helps to attracts potential
14 clients (Edmonds, 2018; Harvey et al., 2014; Hutson, 2013, p. 18), as Thor (gym owner and
15 PT at Revival) explained:

16 Owning this place means that you have to look like you know what you are doing...You
17 know, if a financial advisor turned up in a Ferrari I suppose you'd make damn sure you
18 listened to him. If he's turned up in an Escort diesel you'd think well, you know, what
19 sort of advice is this fella' going to give me...It's the same in here... They can tell from
20 looking at me that I have been through the process, I have learned all the things that I
21 suppose they need to learn that would be advantageous to them....So, for me I suppose
22 it's commercially important to be muscular...it makes for a successful business, which
23 puts money in the account and then the business can function so for me that's important
24 (Thor, Revival).

1 Similarly, Ronnie (bodybuilder at Revival and nutritionist) described how the body work
2 behind their physique was also valuable for their identity performances:

3 I think it [being muscular] just puts you, like as an expert [referring to health and
4 nutrition knowledge]...Walking it [being muscular and in shape] and talking it, you
5 have got to be your own business card. So, what people see is two guys [him and his
6 business partner Lou] that are in shape, that is a much better advertisement...it shows
7 that we know what we are talking about and that we put the hard work in ourselves, you
8 know practice what we preach.

9 Engaging in aesthetic labour and body work allowed the participants to embody necessary
10 competencies and accrue identity capital (Harvey et al., 2013; Shilling, 2004). Without
11 engaging in the body work and investing in their own body projects the current individuals'
12 knowledge and abilities may have been questioned by potential consumers (Harvey et al.,
13 2013).

14 A muscular physique and a commitment to exercise, such as weight training, however,
15 can also project positive messages and characteristics that transcend beyond the gym and
16 health and fitness environment (Doğan, 2015). For example, two of the current men (Dorian
17 and Arnold) discussed how their muscular body projects and associated identity capital
18 helped them display desirable personal qualities in their social identities as high school
19 teachers. Dorian, specifically, described his muscularity's ability to communicate positive
20 messages about his personal qualities (e.g., professionalism, hard work, and confidence),
21 which allowed him to generate instant positive impressions within his role as a high school
22 teacher:

23 As part of my teaching consultancy role, I am very much aware of fitness, muscularity,
24 and strength and what this lends to my appearance to others, as these people
25 [Department for Education] don't know me, and I haven't had time to build up

1 relationships with them. In that sense, strength and muscularity allows me to rapidly
2 say something about myself to new people...I believe it [his physique] speaks to my
3 disciplined professionalism, as it can be seen as a manifestation of my maintained
4 routines and hard work. (Dorian, recreational weightlifter, Revival)

5 Similarly, Arnold perceived that his teaching role required control, ability to demand respect,
6 and confident management of others (i.e., his students). A large muscular physique allowed
7 him to project these personal capabilities into his social identity performance as a competent
8 teacher:

9 It [muscular physique] has a massive effect...I can walk in and they [pupils] will
10 instantly shut up and listen. It's like a respect, or fear, I don't know but I can stamp
11 authority on it...Sounds big headed but like I said, I love that I can walk into a room
12 and people, the kids will just shut up, and I can get control and get that respect.
13 (Arnold, Revival)

14 Within the promoter narrative, a muscular physique (i.e., tangible capital) accentuated the
15 individuals' possession of intangible capital - which represented their personal qualities (e.g.,
16 knowledge, confidence, and control). This promotional interaction between their personal
17 qualities and social images achieved successful mastery and performance of their different
18 identities, which allowed for an optimal navigation of their occupational roles.

19 The current participants conveyed a promotional role of muscularity that aligned with
20 the idea of managerial athleticism and advertising one's possessed skills and capabilities that
21 meet socially desired qualities and enhance one's identity performance. As a result, those
22 who inhabit an athletic body and engage in associated body work (e.g., healthy eating and
23 training) are seen to have higher capabilities to cope, manage stress, and tolerate high work
24 demands (Johansson et al., 2017; Meriläinen et al., 2015). This was expressed by Dwayne:

1 Like the work environment I am in, it's a very heated environment so it's a lot of, you
2 have to present yourself...I think generally if I can look physically fit or present myself
3 in a suit... look like I am carved out of stone...in a career sense [that] will instantly, my
4 boss will assume that I'm just hardworking you know. Hardworking because I've
5 obviously kept myself in shape. Er, I am well presented so that again that goes with
6 hard work or conditioning. So [I am] organised and hardworking. So, before he even
7 knows anything about me, you know what I can actually do in my job, the guy's got a
8 great impression of me. Whether I can do the job or not by that point he has probably
9 about 80%, his decisions are made whether I'm worth the time.

10 Similarly, Dorian echoed the teaching benefits that constructing an ideal executive
11 appearance (i.e., athletic and muscular) had and how it created the impression of an active
12 “doer” who has “high energy”, which is admired by those around them (Johansson et al.,
13 2017; Meriläinen et al., 2015, p. 12):

14 I also believe this [physique] transmits a message to the students that you are active,
15 lively and switched on, rather than the image transmitted of a tired, inactive and
16 distracted teacher. Students tend to mirror their teachers, who often act as role models,
17 so being in shape helps to make this a positive environment for students. (Dorian,
18 recreational weightlifter, Revival)

19 The valorisation of an athletic and muscular physique in various contexts seems to create a
20 culture whereby overweight, flabby, bodies are condemned (Giagitziglu, 2022; Johansson et
21 al., 2017). Some executive environments appear to “correct” those whose bodies deviate from
22 the muscular, toned, athletic ideal (Johansson et al., 2017, p. 1155), which serves to fuel the
23 potential stereotype that overweight bodies lack seriousness, can be a source of alienation,
24 and are bemoaned in some social contexts (Giagitzoglu, 2022; Haynes, 2012; Johansson et

1 al., 2017; Meriläinen et al., 2015). Arnold alluded to this stereotype in his teaching context
2 and the perceived impact this had on their teaching capabilities:

3 ...you see other teachers walking around who aren't in shape, you know a bit fat and
4 out of shape, they often struggle to keep control and the kids don't always seem to
5 respond to them...Having a good physique, and being bigger helps me portray my
6 ability to do this, without it I wouldn't be able to bring that [into the classroom].

7 The suggestion of a promoter narrative theme builds on existing research (e.g., Courpasson &
8 Monities, 2017; Coquet et al., 2016; Kotzé et al., 2021; Perrott, 2019) by offering an insight
9 into how muscularity accentuates desirable personal qualities in people's social identity
10 performances both inside and outside of the gym and fitness domains. The muscular
11 promotion of desirable qualities in an individual's occupational identity, may help explain
12 why muscularity becomes validated in some environments and why individuals then feel an
13 increased feeling of competency (Coquet et al., 2016; Kotzé & Antopolous, 2021; Klein,
14 1993).

15 **Conclusions**

16 The current findings build on the framing of muscularity as various sources of
17 embodied capital in existing literature (e.g., masculine, physical, and bodily; de Visser et al.,
18 2009; Shilling, 2013; Wacquant, 1995) by suggesting a more flexible interpretation of
19 muscularity as identity capital that is applicable in various social contexts. This broad
20 versatility suggested that interpreting muscularity as a form of identity capital avoids
21 imposing narrow and restrictive cultural assumptions, narrative, and connotations (e.g.,
22 masculine construction) onto the desire for muscularity. For example, framing muscularity as
23 masculine capital or physical capital in the gym, may predetermine muscularity as a resource
24 exclusive to those contexts or identities. The current study, however, demonstrates that

1 muscularity can be versatile and coherently benefit a range of social environments and
2 identities, not just the gym or men.

3 Identifying the three identity narratives and their different narrative goals provides a
4 lens to interpret and better understand the meaningful affinities for muscularity and
5 commitments to enhancing one's physique. The findings strengthen the concept that body
6 projects are an integral part of identity and identity performance, but they also contribute to
7 existing literature by offer a wider picture of the symbolic value muscularity and weight
8 training has in multiple identities and contexts, such as gender, health and fitness, and
9 occupation.

10 Additionally, the current narrative findings capture muscularity's tangible and
11 intangible effects that contribute to coherent and successful identity performances.
12 Specifically, the current participants appeared to align their muscularity with appropriate
13 narrative types in attempt to successfully control and master the personal and social elements
14 of their identities in multiple contexts (Côté, 2016; Goffman, 1959; Sampson, 1978). These
15 findings support existing suggestions that a muscular physique is a resource that helps with
16 production and display of self (Smith Maguire, 2008) and enhancement of self-perceptions,
17 such as empowerment, self-esteem, and self-worth (e.g., Edwards et al., 2022; Klein, 1993;
18 Walters & Hefferon, 2020). The narratives also capture how muscularity does not simply
19 "cause" these intangible effects but is entwined and synonymous with them. Thus,
20 muscularity becomes a symbolic representation of the intangible capabilities and
21 characteristics achieved through muscular body work.

22 The current findings may inform future research of the potential in exploring
23 muscularity through an identity capital lens, and its potential benefit in aiding identity
24 construction and performance in multiple broader contexts, which may help transition from
25 an apparent gender and fitness focus in the muscularity and identity literature. Additionally,

1 the current narratives are only three of potentially many, so future work could build on the
2 current study and explore additional narratives that may frame people's muscular desires and
3 their maintained investment in muscularity. Such exploration may inform a move away from
4 a focus on muscularity within an inadequacy and compensatory narrative and increase the
5 awareness of other roles of muscularity, such as promotion and personal growth. The current
6 study might be seen to suggest that the narratives were exclusive to the individuals, but the
7 ability to move between narratives was not explored and so future research could investigate
8 the flexibility of narrative use as people move between contexts.

9 **Limitations**

10 The current study explored the narratives in two specific gyms, whose demographic
11 may differ from other gyms. The narratives in the current study may be some of many and
12 represent the socially constructed nature, diversity, and complexity of muscular desires. The
13 findings, however, do inform the future research and inspire an exploration of other weight
14 training subcultures and the personal stories they may shape. A second limitation was the
15 potential for withholding of information due to the potential sensitive and personal nature of
16 the topic area. When exploring muscularity and bodily concerns and desires, especially in
17 men, the issue of emotional integrity may limit the findings. Traditional societal views may
18 restrict people's willingness to share their true feelings and desires through a fear of being
19 judged or marginalised, which could encourage them to withhold or exaggerate information
20 and experiences (Shepard & Rickard, 2012). Prolonged engagement with the individuals as
21 part of the ethnographic study developed rapport and helped build trusting relationships,
22 which reduced the participants' fear of judgement.

23 Similarly, all members of the research team had their own biases regarding
24 muscularity, for example during the interviews the first author's investment and interest in
25 muscularity may have unintentionally influenced the participants' accounts. The aim of

1 narrative analysis, however, focuses on subjective, multiple, realities and the social co-
2 construction of stories (Papathomas, 2016). The researcher's interests, therefore, were
3 potentially beneficial in constructing individuals' stories and perceptions through shared
4 experiences and muscular desires. The co-construction benefits became evident during
5 participant-interviewer interactions, for example by sharing his own experiences [initials]
6 encouraged the participants to further share their own stories and agree or challenge [initials].
7 Excessive researcher partiality was minimised by emphasising individual experiences and
8 expressing interest in the participants' own experiences.

9 **Implications**

10 The current study demonstrates the different roles muscularity and weight training
11 plays in supporting various identity performances. This could help inform professionals who
12 work in sport, health, and exercise settings of the need to embrace muscular desires, body
13 image concerns, and related activities as integral parts of peoples' identities. In doing, so we
14 can provide adequate support for individuals who may display maladaptive or dysfunctional
15 behaviours in relation to their bodily perceptions and practices by ensuring interventions
16 align with the narratives that house their motivations and desires.

17 Additionally, understanding how muscularity can aid identity negotiation in various
18 contexts, it may inform employers and managers of the added benefit of allowing time and
19 space for weight training and exercise. Specifically, embracing the importance and utility of
20 body work in people's identity performances may help optimise their "sense of self" and
21 allow them to successfully manage their identities within occupational contexts, thus
22 optimising positivity, self-worth, and productivity.

23 To conclude, the current study demonstrates muscularity's role, as identity capital, in
24 multiple identity performances and contexts and proposes three narratives that highlight the

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- 1 potentially positive effects of muscularity and weight training on people's sense of self and
- 2 social and psychological development.
- 3

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