

Macho Man: Narcissism, Homophobia, Agency, Communion, and Authoritarianism—A Comparative Study Among Israeli Bodybuilders and a Control Group

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The present study quantitatively examined the ethnographic social–psychological profile suggested by A. M. Klein (1993) for American bodybuilders using Israeli bodybuilders. Eighty male gym trainees and 80 men who have never trained completed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and Bem’s Sex Role Inventory, the Attitudes Toward Homosexuality (AHS) and the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scales, and a demographic questionnaire. The bodybuilders showed the highest levels of narcissism and traits socially desirable for men and exhibited the highest scores on both agentic and communal traits. Their AHS and RWA scores did not significantly differ from the other 2 groups, but their political affiliation was significantly more right wing. Cultural and methodological differences between Klein’s study and the present study as well as personality factors involved in bodybuilding are discussed.

Bodybuilding is a subculture of hyperbole. In its headlong rush to accrue flesh, everything about this subculture exploits grandiosity and excess. Not only are the bodies in this world large, but also even descriptions of them are extravagant . . . There is nothing new about compensating for self-perceived weaknesses. Probably most of us seek to conceal flaws or insecurities . . . For men, it is often the use of the body, and in particular muscles, that is relied upon to compensate . . . Although masculinity is socially, not biologically, determined, use is made of certain biological conditions, in this instance the male physical form as a means of assisting in the determination of masculinity. (Klein, 1993, pp. 3–4)

These opening sentences of Klein’s (1993) ethnography on gender construction among bodybuilders express his attitude toward the practice of bodybuilding. Klein conducted his field study of bodybuilding in some of the world’s best-known gyms. In studying the social and political relations of bodybuilding competitors, Klein explored not only gym dynamics but also the internal and external pressures faced by bodybuilders. *Little Big Men*, the title chosen for his book, expresses his critique of masculinity. Through his study of hustling among bodybuilders, Klein constructed a social–psychological male configuration that includes narcissism, homophobia, hypermasculinity,

and fascism. “Because they exist as exaggerations, these bodybuilder traits come to represent one end of the continuum of modern masculinity” (Klein, 1993, p. vi), termed by Klein as “comic-book masculinity.” Was he not carried away? Was the fact that his study is impressionistic not biased by his own prejudices about bodybuilders? Is the same pattern of masculine machoism, described by Klein, typical to Israeli bodybuilders as well? This study compares the four personality traits impressionistically investigated by Klein through valid and reliable quantitative measures of narcissism, homophobia, sex roles, and authoritarianism among Israeli bodybuilders and a control group.

Personality traits of bodybuilders were directly investigated a few decades ago. In one study, using the Thematic Apperception and Sentence Completion Tests, weightlifters differed from a control group of nonweightlifting athletes in abnormally acute feelings of masculine inadequacy, exposure from early in life to a depriving and frustrating environment, a failure to identify with an adequate male object, an excessive amount of narcissism, and underlying dependency feelings (Harlow, 1951). Leithwood (1967), using a 16 factor personality test, found that weightlifters and bodybuilders differed from the general population on the following characteristics: intelligence (more), conscientiousness (less), adventurousness (less), shrewdness (less), and self-sufficiency (more). A more recent study that separated personality components revealed deviation from the normal population on 2 of the 16 personality factor variables for bodybuilders and weightlifters: namely, for bodybuilders, surgency (less) and suspicion (more), and

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for weightlifters, dominance (more) and suspicion (more; Darden, 1972). Earlier studies using various personality measures also suggested that weightlifters deviated from other athletes as well as from the general population (Henry, 1941; Thune, 1949). These studies generally agree that bodybuilding and strength building represent an overcompensation for inferiority feelings. Defensive self-sufficiency has been recently recognized as one of the consequences of masculinity messages regarding socially desirable traits for men (Good & Sherrod, 2001). No distinction between bodybuilders and weightlifters has been made in these studies. It is also difficult to determine whether weightlifting was the cause of the changes or whether certain personality traits were responsible for selecting weightlifting as an activity.

More recent studies focused on the positive effect of weight training on psychological well being (e.g., Tharion, Harman, Kraemer, & Rauch, 1991; Tucker, 1982, 1983). Studies of the last decade compared the behavior and personality traits of anabolic steroids users and nonusers among bodybuilders and weightlifters (as one undifferentiated group), although cause and effect relations were difficult to detect. In a study based on in-depth interviews with male weight trainers with primarily a bodybuilding emphasis, participants described their anabolic steroids experience in a very favorable manner and perceived increases in muscle mass, strength, peer recognition, social status, sexual performance, and vocational performance (Olrich & Ewing, 1999). Another study revealed that bodybuilders and weightlifters using anabolic steroids scored significantly higher on Exhibitionism, Entitlement, and Exploitative factors of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1981) and significantly lower on empathy than their counterparts who did not use steroids (Porcerelli & Sandler, 1995). Other researchers suggested that pathological narcissism may be a risk factor for both bodybuilding and the initiation of anabolic steroid use (Yates, Perry, Ellingrod, & Uzych, 1996). In a study of 75 bodybuilders, anabolic steroids users demonstrated greater somatic concerns, hostility, and aggression than did nonusers (Moss, Panzak, & Tarter, 1992). Male bodybuilders, using anabolic steroids, also reported more frequent, more intense, and lengthier episodes of anger with instances of violence and lack of control than nonusers (Lefavi, Reeve, & Newland, 1990).

Narcissism, homophobia, hypermasculinity, and authoritarianism—the four personality variables typical to bodybuilders (Klein, 1993)—have never been investigated together in bodybuilders nor have they been compared between bodybuilders and a control

group. Narcissism may have adaptive aspects (Freud, 1914; Kohut, 1971, 1977, 1986), but the components found among bodybuilders (Exhibitionism, Self-Absorption–Self-Admiration, and Exploitativeness–Entitlement factors of the NPI and lack of empathy; Carroll, 1989; Klein, 1993; Porcerelli & Sandler, 1995) overlap the diagnostic criteria of narcissistic personality disorder according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed.; American Psychiatric Association, 1994). *Homophobia* is defined as a fear felt by heterosexuals when near homosexuals, as well as self-hatred experienced by gays (Weinberg, 1972). As a range of negative attitudes, it works to control male identity by legislating what is acceptable and to be incorporated into the male identity, as well as what is to be avoided (Plummer, 1999). Klein (1993) identified homophobic attitudes among the bodybuilders he investigated, which took the form of harassment of gay males in the gym, hypersensitivity around homosexuality, and selling of sex to gays by a certain segment of the bodybuilding community. It seems that these homophobic attitudes are in line with the internalized agentic instrumental traits stereotypically associated with men, which involve repressing emotions as a sign of strength and invulnerability associated with masculinity. Boys are often called various derogatory names referring to girls, or gay men, if they express any sign of vulnerability, and, hence, fail to meet cultural standards of masculinity (Good & Sherrod, 2001). The traditional approach to gender roles is based on a view of masculinity and femininity as two polar opposites on a single psychological continuum; at one pole is instrumentality, identified with masculinity, and at the other is expressivity, linked to femininity (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Bem (1974, 1977, 1978, 1981, 1983) and others (Gilbert, 1981) rejected the traditional approach, claiming that socialization of the genders to stereotypic gender roles limits the ability of both men and women to react appropriately to different situations. Bem (1977) developed an alternative system of classification based on scales measuring masculinity and femininity and proposed four distinct personality types: sex typed, including men high in masculinity and low in femininity and women high in femininity and low in masculinity; cross-sex typed, made up of men low in masculinity and high in femininity and women high in masculinity and low in femininity; androgynous, consisting of individuals with high scores in both femininity and masculinity, regardless of biological gender; and undifferentiated, composed of those with low scores in masculinity and femininity, irrespective of biological gender. According to Bem (1977), androgynous

types, who have both instrumental and expressive traits, are more flexible in their behavior and can perform both male and female tasks without discomfort. Although the validity of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1977) as a measure of masculinity and femininity has been questioned (e.g., Good & Sherrod, 2001), both agency (focus on self and forming separations) and communion (focus on others and forming connections) are required for optimal well being (Helgeson, 1994). If bodybuilding is a manifestation of hypermasculinity derived from insecure male sex-role identity (Pleck, 1981), then one should expect to find the highest level of agentic traits and the highest rate of agentic men among the group of bodybuilders in the present study.

Authoritarianism is described as a syndrome of conservative attitudes; religious, national, or attitudinal intolerance; inflexibility at the cognitive and emotional levels; and personality traits that stem from deep personal conflicts and are reflected in compulsiveness, inordinate recourse to defense mechanisms, and distorted satisfaction of repressed drives (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Without attempting to test bodybuilders on authoritarian measures, Klein (1993) found that there are nevertheless behaviors and attitudes of an authoritarian nature that have striking parallels in the world of bodybuilding and described the sociopolitical orientation in the gyms to be conservative. On the basis of the literature reviewed, it is hypothesized that bodybuilders are more narcissistic, homophobic, agentic, and authoritarian than the control group.

Method

Subjects

One hundred sixty men (mean age = 25.99 years, $SD = 3.01$), 80 gym trainees and a control group of 80 nontrainees, participated in the study; 66.9% were bachelors, 31.3% were married, and 1.9% were divorced. Ninety-one percent were native Israelis, and the rest were immigrants from the former Soviet Union. All the subjects were Jewish; 80.6% defined themselves as secular, and the rest were traditional. Of the subjects, 33.8% were secondary schools graduates, 37.5% were undergraduate students, and 28.8% were college or university graduates. Both groups were matched with respect to demographic variables, on which statistical comparisons showed no significant differences with the exception of age, which was significantly higher in the control group

($M = 26.62$ years) than that of the trainees ($M = 25.36$ years), $t(158) = 2.71, p < .01$.

Measures

Demographic questionnaire. Items on gender, age, country of origin, education level, religious level (secular, traditional, orthodox, or ultra-orthodox), family status, and political affiliation (party and prime minister voted for) were included. Items on duration (hours), history (months), purpose (bodybuilding, losing weight, or fitness improvement), kind (aerobic, lightweights, heavyweights; marking more than one possibility being possible), and number of weekly trainings were also included.

NPI. Because of the total length of the research form, only the Self-Absorption–Self-Admiration subscale on Raskin and Hall's (1981) NPI was included. This 9-item factor expresses traditional aspects of narcissism, typically associated with bodybuilding (e.g., mirroring and self-objectification; cf. Klein, 1993). This measure consists of statement pairs from which subjects are asked to choose the more self-characterizing statements. Responses defined beforehand as narcissistic received 1 point, and the narcissism total score was computed as the sum of narcissistic responses divided by the number of items. In some pairs, the first statement expresses a narcissistic response, whereas in the others, the second statement expresses such a response to avoid response set bias. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this subscale in the present study was .71, which is slightly above those found in previous studies (Emmons, 1984; Yaar, 1998).

Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale (AHS). MacDonald and Games's (1974) AHS includes 28 positive and negative (to avoid response set bias) statements toward homosexuality, to which subjects are asked to agree or disagree on a 9-point Likert-type scale. Cronbach's alpha of the original scale was .94 and that of the Hebrew version was .87 (Lieblich & Friedman, 1985). Only the 18 items left after Mendel's (1988) factor analysis of the Hebrew version were included, for which Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .95 in the present study.

BSRI. The BSRI first appeared in 1974 and was later revised (Bem, 1977). It includes 20 feminine, 20 masculine, and 20 neutral traits, chosen from among 200 personal traits that the subjects viewed as positive with respect to men and women. A trait was defined as masculine or feminine if it was consistently described as being more desirable in American society for one gender or the other, respectively. The judges were male and female American students at

Stanford University. The subjects were asked to determine on a 7-point Likert-type scale to what extent they were characterized by each trait. A Hebrew version of the BSRI was found valid and reliable in Israel (Safir, Perez, & Lichtenstein, 1982), although item analysis resulted in slightly different clustering of the three kinds of traits, suggesting that item analyzing is needed for every new sample. Division into four personality types was done according to the method developed by Bem (1977) after having considered the suggestions of other researchers in the field (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975). Separate means were calculated for the masculine and feminine items so that each subject received a masculinity and a femininity score. The division into four personality types is with reference to the median masculinity and femininity score of the sample. Sex-typed men are those whose masculinity scores are above the median and their femininity scores below it, cross-sex-typed men are those whose femininity scores are above the median and their masculinity scores below it, androgynous men are those whose masculinity and femininity scores are both above the median, and undifferentiated men are those whose masculinity and femininity scores are both below the median. Given the controversy around the validity of the BSRI as a measure of masculinity and femininity (e.g., Good & Sherrod, 2001; Helgeson, 1994), the four personality types mentioned above are considered agentic, communal, agentic-communal, and undifferentiated, respectively, in the present study. Factor analysis, followed by VARIMAX rotation, produced 17 agentic traits, creating a scale for which Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .88, and 25 communal traits, creating a scale for which Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .91. The other 18 traits were found to be neutral.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA). A valid and reliable Hebrew version (Rubinstein, 1995, 1996) of Altemeyer's (1988) RWA scale was used. The scale includes 30 statements to which subjects are asked to agree or disagree on a 9-point Likert-type scale. One half of the items are formulated from an authoritarian point of view, and the other half are framed from the opposite point of view to avoid response set bias. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the RWA in the present study was .86. One item of the RWA, having to do with homophobia, was omitted to avoid confounds and artifacts, and because findings of previous studies suggest strong positive correlations between these two variables, items of both scales were mixed in the questionnaire to conceal the variables investigated.

Procedure

The participants were recruited by a research assistant (a fitness and bodybuilding trainer himself) who administered the questionnaires to trainees at his own gym and turned to other trainers and instructors in courses for bodybuilding trainers at the Wingate Sport Education College in Netanya (the leading institute of the kind in Israel). All the questionnaires were administered to trainers and trainees, who were identified as bodybuilders on the basis of both visual impression and close acquaintance with their personal bodybuilding (rather than just fitness improvement) training plans. The bodybuilding trainees were recruited from three different gyms and one bodybuilding trainers course at the Wingate Sport Education College. Because some of the bodybuilders in the gyms have not reached the intellectual level required for filling in the questionnaires, only secondary school graduates, undergraduate students, and college or university graduates were selected for the study. An index of the items on training routine and purpose (see the *Demographic questionnaire* section) was developed to double check the identification of trainees interested in bodybuilding.

This index was developed by consulting a bodybuilding course instructor and another three experienced professional bodybuilding trainers, who assisted in defining the criteria for the discrimination of bodybuilders from other gym trainees. Using this index, along with the close acquaintance of the administering trainers with their trainees, resulted in grouping the 80 gym trainees into 56 bodybuilders and 24 fitness improvement trainees (not interested in bodybuilding). These trainees were not excluded from the study but were defined as a separate group in the data analysis. The control group was selected only after data collection among the trainees had been completed. An attempt has been made to maximize similarity between the control subjects in all demographic variables. To be included in the control group, one had to state in one of the demographic questionnaire items that he had never had training before or during the study period in a gym or in another training environment. The control subjects were recruited from three colleges and one university, using frequency distributions with respect to the demographic variables. The similarity in these variables was almost complete, with the exception of mean age being slightly but significantly higher in the control groups (1.26 years). The study was presented as an attitude survey that includes items on training routine. Response rates were 92% among the gym trainees and 89% among the control subjects.

Results

Interrelations Between the Dependent Variables

Pearson coefficients were computed to examine the relations between the dependent variables and are presented in Table 1. The strong positive and significant correlation between authoritarianism and homophobia is most remarkable. As mentioned earlier (see the *Measures* section), the one RWA item referring to homosexuals was excluded from the scale. A weak positive yet significant correlation was found between the agenetic and communal traits, and weak negative (yet significant) correlations were found between both agenetic and communal traits and narcissism. The correlations between homophobia and both agenetic and communal traits are weak yet statistically significant but in opposite directions. The theoretical implications of the interrelations between the dependent variables are addressed in the Discussion section.

Differences Between the Groups in Levels of the Dependent Variables

The hypothesis predicts that the levels of narcissism, homophobia, agenetic traits, and authoritarianism of the bodybuilders would be significantly higher than those of the control group subjects. However, a decision was made to refer to the 24 fitness improvement trainees (who did not aim at changing their looks) as a separate group to find out whether they may be considered a middle group between the bodybuilders and the nontrainees as far as the dependent variables are concerned. Means and standard deviations of the dependent variables among the members of the three groups are presented in Table 2.

Narcissism. Statistically significant differences in the hypothesized direction were found between the

three groups with respect to this variable: The bodybuilders were the most narcissistic, followed by the fitness trainees, and finally the nontrainees. According to Scheffé's test, each group differs from the two other groups at $p < .05$, but the mean difference between the bodybuilders and the nontrainees reached the level of $p < .01$. The effects of age, education, and religiosity, used as covariates in the analysis, were all nonsignificant.

Homophobia. No significant AHS differences were found between three groups, hence the hypothesis is not supported as far as homophobia is concerned, although the effect of religiosity as a covariate is positive and statistically significant, $F(1, 154) = 9.57, p < .01$.

Sex roles. The level of agenetic traits found among the bodybuilders is significantly higher than that of the control group but not of the other trainees, and the effect of communal traits, used as a covariate, is significant, $F(1, 156) = 5.82, p < .05$. No statistically significant differences in communal traits were found between the three groups when the agenetic traits were used as a covariate. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) revealed a significant effect of education level on both agenetic, $F(1, 154) = 4.40, p < .05$, and communal, $F(1, 154) = 4.12, p < .05$, scores (without interaction effects with respect to the division of subjects into three groups). A closer look at the agenetic and communal traits is provided by analyzing the distribution of the four trait combinations within each group, as presented in Table 3.

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the agenetic subjects' percentage is the highest and the communal subjects' percentage is lowest among the bodybuilders. Chi-square analysis of this distribution is statistically significant, which is in accord with the highest agency level found among the bodybuilders group via the ANCOVA results presented above (see Table 2). The results, up to this point, support the hypothesis derived from Klein's (1993) claim regarding hypermasculinity among bodybuilders. However, the fact that the percentages of agenetic-communal subjects among the two groups of trainees are higher than their percentages among the nontrainees (about 8–10% difference) is opposed to Klein's claim (see the Discussion section).

Authoritarianism and political orientation. No significant RWA differences were found between the three groups (see Table 2). The effect of religiosity as a covariate was positive and statistically significant, $F(1, 154) = 9.88, p < .01$. However, examining the subjects' political orientations indicated that electing Ariel Sharon (see Table 4), the candidate of the political right, to be Israel's prime minister was the

Table 1
Intercorrelations Between the Dependent Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. NPI	—	.11	-.18*	-.19*	-.01
2. AHS		—	.17*	-.18*	.80**
3. Agency			—	.24**	.18*
4. Communion				—	.22**
5. RWA					—

Note. NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory; AHS = Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale; RWA = Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations of the Dependent Variables in the Three Groups

Variable	Bodybuilders (<i>n</i> = 56)		Fitness trainees (<i>n</i> = 24)		Nontrainees (<i>n</i> = 80)		<i>F</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
NPI	0.65 _a	0.14	0.55 _b	0.21	0.38 _c	0.14	10.59**
AHS	3.66	1.77	3.54	1.65	3.48	1.42	0.10
Agency	5.68 _a	0.09	5.42 _b	0.13	5.29 _b	0.07	8.23**
Communion	4.90	0.80	5.10	0.67	5.07	0.72	0.69
RWA	4.89	1.00	4.78	1.01	4.58	0.83	0.83

Note. The higher the scores, the greater the levels of the dependent variables. Means with different subscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$, according to Scheffé's test. NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory; AHS = Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale; RWA = Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale.
** $p < .01$.

highest among the bodybuilders, followed by the fitness trainees, and finally the nontrainees, who preferred the political left candidate.

Because the elections for prime minister took place during the process of data collection for the present study, one may consider them a more valid measure of political orientation compared with voting for the parliament, which had taken place 3 years prior to the study. Voting patterns for the parliament among the three groups, as presented in Table 5, nevertheless confirm the pattern found with respect to electing the prime minister, although the statistical significance level is slightly lower.

Discussion

In the preset study, I examined Klein's (1993) impressionistic findings of the social-psychological profile of American bodybuilders using valid and reliable measures. The results partially support the hypothesis derived from Klein's ethnography. The narcissism level found among the bodybuilders investigated in this study was significantly higher than that of the fitness trainees, who were significantly more narcissistic than the nontrainees. However, no significant differences between these groups

were found with respect to homophobia, which is contrary to Klein's impression. Klein's claim concerning hypermasculinity among bodybuilders is almost fully supported by the findings. The bodybuilders were found to be significantly more agenetic than the other two groups, and the rate of agenetic subjects among them is also the highest. However, no significant differences were found between the three groups with respect to communion. The rate of agenetic-communal subjects among the bodybuilders is similar to that found among the fitness trainees. Both rates are 8–10% higher than that found among the nontrainees. If Klein's and others' (Harlow, 1951; Henry, 1941; Thune, 1949) claims about bodybuilders being insecure about their masculinity were true, then one would expect the rate of agenetic-communal subjects in this group to be relatively low. Most impressive is their overwhelming support (almost 80%) of the right-wing leader, Ariel Sharon, who represents aggressiveness and dominance in both Israeli political and military scenes. Suffice to say that during the speech of his competitor in one of the internal election campaigns within his own party, he took control of a microphone and simply started shouting louder than his opponent, thus physically stealing the floor.

Table 3
Distribution of Agenetic-Communal Traits in Percentages (and Absolute Numbers) in the Three Groups

Trait	Bodybuilders	Fitness trainees	Nontrainees
Agenetic	30.4 (17)	8.3 (2)	13.8 (11)
Communal	8.9 (5)	20.8 (5)	25.0 (20)
Agenetic-communal	35.7 (20)	37.5 (9)	27.5 (22)
Undifferentiated	25.0 (14)	33.3 (9)	33.8 (27)
Total	100.0 (56)	100.0 (24)	100.0 (80)

Note. $\chi^2(6, N = 160) = 13.35, p < .01$.

Table 4
Distribution of Voting in the Elections for Prime Minister in Percentages (and Absolute Numbers) Among the Three Groups

Group	Candidate		Total
	Ariel Sharon (right)	Ehud Barak (left)	
Bodybuilders	78.8 (37)	21.3 (10)	100.0 (47)
Fitness trainees	63.2 (12)	36.8 (7)	100.0 (19)
Nontrainees	47.0 (31)	53.0 (35)	100.0 (66)

Note. The table does not include 28 abstainees, consisting of 16.1% of the bodybuilders, 20.8% of the fitness trainees, and 17.5% of the nontrainees. $\chi^2(2, N = 132) = 11.65, p < .01$.

As for the interrelations among the dependent variables, most outstanding is the strong correlation between authoritarianism and homophobia. Its implications are discussed within the framework of the authoritarian personality theory (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1981, 1988, 1996), used by Klein (1993) to characterize the sociopolitical attitudes related to the mechanisms used by bodybuilders to defend their masculinity. The weak, yet significant, correlation between masculine and feminine traits could, to some extent, support Bem's (1974, 1977) claim about femininity and masculinity being orthogonal variables that can coexist within one person. The weak, yet statistically significant, correlations of narcissism with both masculinity and femininity could both be understood as expressing one's attitude toward other people (e.g., leadership as an example for a masculine trait and compassion as an example of a feminine trait). Narcissism, in contrast—and the Self-Absorption–Self-Admiration factor used in this study—expresses in particular one's preoccupation with oneself. Although the correlations of homopho-

Table 5
Distribution of Voting in the Elections for the Israeli Parliament in Percentages (and Absolute Numbers) Among the Three Groups

Group	Political block		Total
	Right	Left	
Bodybuilders	75.5 (37)	24.5 (10)	100.0 (49)
Fitness trainees	61.9 (13)	38.1 (8)	100.0 (21)
Nontrainees	51.4 (36)	48.6 (34)	100.0 (70)

Note. Subjects were grouped into blocks because of small numbers of voters for marginal parties. The table does not include 26 abstainees and 4 subjects who chose the category "other" and could not be classified to either of the political blocks. $\chi^2(2, N = 140) = 7.26, p < .05$.

bia with both agentic and communal traits were weak but statistically significant, their directions are reversed; that is, the higher the agency scores, the greater the level of homophobia, but the higher the communion scores, the lower the level of homophobia. This might be of special interest because the communal traits were examined in this study among men only, which could imply that men who let themselves express communal traits would be more tolerant toward homosexual men stereotypically perceived as more feminine than heterosexual men. Finally, authoritarian submission (one of the RWA dimensions; Altemeyer, 1988) could be expressed by the higher correlation between authoritarianism and femininity than the correlation between authoritarianism and masculinity, although both relations are rather weak.

The differences between Klein's (1993) results and the results of this study may be attributed to three factors: (a) the time elapsed since Klein's study (about 10 years), (b) cultural differences (American vs. Israeli), and (c) different research orientation (qualitative vs. quantitative). As for the time factor, the number of gyms in Israel has considerably grown in the course of the last decades. The rate of bodybuilders among Israeli gym trainees is, however, considerably lower than their rate among their American counterparts, especially as far as the gyms in which Klein conducted his observations, where professional bodybuilders train as almost a full-time occupation. Practicing bodybuilding almost exclusively can hardly be found in Israel. In the course of the last decade, Israel has observed ever more Israeli homosexuals coming out of the closet. More specifically, as far as physical training is concerned, some of the recently opened gyms in Israel's central cities, particularly in Tel-Aviv, are clearly defined as gay friendly, and a large portion of their clientele is openly gay. This study was not conducted in these gyms. It is not impossible, however, that the general decline in homophobia in Israel during the last decade may effect differences in homophobia, which may have been found between bodybuilders and a control group had the study been carried out 10 years ago. Because many studies have found a strong positive relationship between homophobia and authoritarianism, as was also the case in this study, the lack of significant authoritarianism differences between the investigated groups is in accord with the nonsignificant homophobia differences.

The difference in research methods between Klein's (1993) study and the present study is not merely a methodological issue. Klein is quite judgmental in the expressions he used (e.g., "comic-book

masculinity," "little big men") to describe bodybuilders. Support for "hustling" among bodybuilders can also be found in at least two Internet Web sites, which sell pornographic videos of bodybuilders. On www.muscleweb.com, the line between practicing bodybuilding as a field of sport and pornography is rather thin. Each bodybuilder is featured in two separate videocassettes, one presented as merely a training cassette, implying that it is purely a guidance video, whereas the other one, called "Life-Style Video," includes shower and stripping shows. An unequivocal message is presented on Dynamic Studio's www.musclehunks.com, which offers only pornographic videos in which the bodybuilders not only completely take off their clothes, but also masturbate in front of the camera. These two Web sites provide figurative descriptions of the pornographic videos as well as links to other Web sites offering male strippers. However, Klein characterized the bodybuilders he investigated, including the hustlers, as typically conservative and rigid authoritarians who adhere to traditional gender roles (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1981, 1988, 1996). Can male bodybuilders, stripping for the pleasure of women, really be as rigid and conservative as Klein described bodybuilder hustlers who offer sex for money to gay clients? Stripping is traditionally performed by women for the pleasure of men, and feminists claim that it is one of the ways in which women's bodies are abused. Logically, it follows that men stripping for women may be considered a kind of sex-role reversal. If this is the case, then could it not be possibly reasonable to consider male bodybuilders who strip for women to be innovators, perhaps even male feminists, rather than conservatives, as Klein regarded hustling bodybuilders? It is questionable whether Brannon's (1976) "blueprint of manhood," which typically includes antifemininity, is applicable to bodybuilders who strip for women.

Klein (1993) considered both pathological narcissism and authoritarianism as characteristics of bodybuilders. The correlation between these two variables in this study is actually null. Does bodybuilding necessarily reflect some kind of psychopathology? More comparative studies between bodybuilders and control groups, using modern measures of psychopathology, are called for to answer this question. Studies attempting to do so were conducted many years ago, and their results are not unequivocal (Darden, 1972; Harlow, 1951; Henry, 1941; Thune, 1949). Pathological (rather than adaptive) narcissism is one of the most consistent traits characteristic to bodybuilders and was also found in the present study. Studies in which bodybuilders' narcissism was measured com-

pared anabolic steroids users with nonusers without comparing them with individuals who are not bodybuilders (e.g., Porcerelli & Sandler, 1995). Only one study, using a control group of psychology students, showed a significantly higher level of narcissism of bodybuilders on the subscale of Self-Absorption-Self-Admiration, which was also used in this study (Carroll, 1989). Modern studies of bodybuilders have also found higher levels of narcissism, psychosomatic anxiety, hostility, aggression, and more episodes of anger and violence only among bodybuilders who use anabolic steroids compared with bodybuilders who do not use them (Lefavi et al., 1990; Moss et al., 1992). These bodybuilders have not been compared with control groups of nontrainees. The possibility that narcissism may be the cause for both bodybuilding practicing and the use of anabolic steroids (Yates et al., 1996) cannot be negated. Even if bodybuilders are more narcissistic and violent than the general population, a question has to be raised as to whether practicing bodybuilding reinforces these tendencies or rather sublimates them, hence preventing them from being expressed destructively. This question should of course be addressed by systematic comparative studies of various measures of functioning, mental health, and social adjustment of bodybuilders versus control groups composed of narcissistic and aggressive nontrainees. Studies indicating that weight training increases psychological well being may partially answer this question (Tharion et al., 1991; Tucker, 1982, 1983). The experiences of the bodybuilding trainers, who assisted in operationally defining bodybuilding in this study, give another perspective of men's motivation to practice it. Their descriptions of both themselves and their trainees indicate that size does matter, thus supporting Klein's (1993) impression about bodybuilding being "a subculture of hyperbole." "Getting bigger," "looking bigger," and "having a big chest and back" are, according to these trainers, the core of the terminology used by bodybuilders. They have also reported a strong desire of both themselves and their trainees to be identified as bodybuilders. The tight and exposing clothing they wear for almost every occasion provides more behavioral evidence for their narcissism. In-depth interviews with the trainers in the present study revealed that the wish to be more sexually attractive is not the major motivation for both themselves and their trainees to practice bodybuilding. Actually, quite the opposite is true: They seemed to be aware of the fact that masculine "pumped" looks might even deter women. Their major motivation for bodybuilding, as they reported, is precisely to look threatening so that "nobody will

harass you.” Their life stories support findings of early studies, according to which insecurity is their major motivation (Harlow, 1951; Henry, 1941; Thune, 1949). Their willingness to voluntarily admit their insecurity was quite amazing. It did not take indirect projective personality tests, used in the early studies mentioned above, to reveal this insecurity. This is definitely opposed to the typical defenses (e.g., projection) of the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1981, 1988, 1996), which characterizes bodybuilders according to Klein (1993). One trainer attributed his practice of bodybuilding to being a beaten child and admitted that he still feels vulnerable and threatened by physical violence, hence it is essential for him to show off his muscles and big body on every occasion. Another trainer recognized his tendency toward both obesity and general anxiety, and insecurity was the major motivation for bodybuilding training for him. Addiction was another motive in the interviews. One trainer, a 39-year-old man who looks like a typical bodybuilder, claimed that his current look does not satisfy him anymore and that to look bigger and even more threatening, he would consider using anabolic steroids had he not been aware of their damage. Another described the addiction to trainings among his trainees: “Being unable to make it for a training means a tragedy for them.”

Bodybuilding training requires extraordinary self-discipline and perseverance, severe diet control, strict sleeping patterns, demanding training that cause a lot of physical pain, and giving up ordinary lifestyles and their accompanying pleasures. Repetitive failures to keep a diet maintain an immense industry. The low prestige of bodybuilding might be the cause for traits like self-discipline and perseverance to be ignored when manifested in bodybuilders, whereas they are so highly appreciated by society in other realms (e.g., academia), as may be the case with Klein’s (1993) study. The demanding lifestyle of bodybuilders necessitates a high level of impulse control, the lack of which is included in Raskin and Hall’s (1981) NPI, so often used in the study of bodybuilders. The partial support for Klein’s impression in another culture during another period of time using different methodology is quite impressive. However, the results of the present study suggest that bodybuilders’ personality profiles may be much more complicated than presented by Klein. Comparative studies of bodybuilders using nontrainees control groups and updated measures of personality and mental health measures are therefore needed. Such studies have not been carried out for decades. One of the common prescriptions of masculinity ideologies is that men should be

tough and “give ’em hell” (Brannon, 1976). This stance of toughness and aggression can lead to violence (Good & Sherrod, 2001). This motive of masculinity, as expressed in the interviews of the bodybuilders in this study, suggests that bodybuilding training may be considered sublimation of these aggressive drives associated with masculine ideology. The adaptive function of bodybuilding as a prevention mechanism against the destructive consequences of narcissism and aggression has to be considered as well. Klein’s claim about hypermasculinity may also be challenged in the context of gender roles on the basis the insignificant homophobia differences between bodybuilders and nontrainees and the higher rate of agenetic-communal subjects found among bodybuilders compared with nontrainees in the present study. Masculinity, in our society, is far more complex; multiple dimensions are necessary to describe a single conception of masculinity ideology (Fischer, Tokar, Good, & Snell, 1998; Thompson & Pleck, 1995). Masculinity ideology refers to beliefs about the importance of men adhering to culturally defined standards for male behavior (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Leighton, 1998). This construct derives most directly from a line of research concerning attitudes toward masculinity (Thompson, Pleck, & Ferrera, 1992). Theoretically, it grows out of the gender role strain model of masculinity (Pleck, 1981), as well as the social constructionist perspective on men (Brod, 1987; Kimmel, 1987). Pleck et al. (1998) concluded that masculinity ideology is a distinct component of men’s involvement with their gender role, which is independent of masculine gender-related personality traits. It is now clear that the BSRI measures the degree to which individuals report instrumental (masculinity) and expressive (femininity) traits of a gender-related and socially desirable nature as being descriptive of their personalities rather than masculinity ideologies (Fischer et al., 1998; Friexe & McHugh, 1997; Good & Sherrod, 2001; Good, Wallace, & Borst, 1994). Given the modern theories and measure of masculine ideology (Fischer et al., 1998; Friexe & McHugh, 1997; Good & Sherrod, 2001; Good et al., 1994), comparing bodybuilders and a control group on measures of masculine ideology is recommended for future research.

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