

Listening to a Culture Descriptive Transcripts

Slide One

[White background and black text centered in slide with decorative brown arrows on upper left and lower right of content]

Listening to a Culture

Amy Lim

Instructor

ENGLWRIT 112

20 November 2020

Slide Two

[White background and black text on slide with audio icon in lower right corner]

Introduction

My original paper was written from my point of view—the perspective of an “outsider.” I’ve never wrestled or played a competitive sport in general. Because of my lack of experience, I believe I lack the authority to dive into my topic deeply. As a result, I would like to invite the true “insiders” of wrestling to talk about their experiences to hopefully curb ignorance about the severely under-researched eating disorders in male high school wrestlers.

[Audio when clicked] Author’s voice: To excel in the sport, many wrestlers resort to dangerous weight cutting tactics, often similar to those of well known eating disorders in mainstream media. These mainstream eating disorders, however, are usually only portrayed in female patients. As a result, all eating disorder diagnostic criteria are modeled after extreme-weight-loss oriented symptoms, such as those present in Anorexia. However, research shows that male patients are more likely to exhibit “muscularity oriented disordered eating” (MODE). Such

disordered eating does not result in extreme weight loss, which accounts for the lack of eating disorder diagnoses in boys and male-focused eating disorder research overall.

Slide Three

[White background and black text on slide]

Definitions

Weight Cutting: losing weight quickly prior to a wrestling competition to qualify for a lower weight class, as weighing the least may be advantageous in competition.

Water Weight: extra water held in the body as weight easiest to lose.

Weight Class: in wrestling, weight classes divide competitors on weight to bring fairness to the competition.

Eating Disorder: a psychological illness of abnormal and detrimental eating habits, impacting the body physically.

Muscularity-oriented disordered eating (MODE): a severely under-researched eating disorder characterized by muscle leanness and extreme exercise observed in male patients.

Anorexia: an eating disorder characterized by the refusal to eat most commonly diagnosed in female patients.

Bulimia: an eating disorder characterized by binge eating followed by excessive vomiting commonly diagnosed in female patients.

Slide Four

[Slide divided into two halves. Left half white background with black text, right half blue background with image and audio icon in lower right corner]

[Left Side]

Silence—Eating Disorders in Adolescent Males

Interviewed former high school wrestlers showed a strange eagerness to share their unhealthy wrestling experiences with me, a stranger on the internet.

[Right Side]

Image of hand moving weight on body scale. Caption:

“In the United States alone, eating disorders will affect 10 million males at some point in their lives. But due in large part to cultural bias, they are much less likely to seek treatment for their eating disorder” (NEDA).

[Audio when clicked] Interviewee A: I’d assume their eagerness to share is due to the silence they’ve endured for so long—their entire high school wrestling careers. Mainstream American culture condemns any and all femininity in men, especially young boys (high school aged boys). And because eating disorders are traditionally stereotyped as “women’s diseases,” many male wrestlers are afraid to acknowledge their illnesses and seek help. Additionally, mental health issues are extremely stigmatized for men as well, also being perceived as “feminine.” They have no opportunity to share their struggles, and their dangerous habits continue and become normalized.

“Interviewee A,” a former high school and collegiate wrestler, shares his experiences with the dangerous weight cutting culture in wrestling in the following slides.

Slide Five

[Slide divided into two halves. Left half white background with black text, right half blue background with image and audio icon in lower right corner]

[Left Side]

MODE Anorexia and Bulimia

My initial research is not reflective of all the “real world” experiences of many high school wrestlers. Interviewees claim to have experienced some sort of eating disorder, often naming anorexia. However, MODE was not named, though many interviewee accounts extensively detail MODE’s symptoms.

[Right Side]

Image of male upper body with ribs showing. Caption:

“To not eat or to throw up what you have eaten or to try to throw up even if you haven’t eaten in order to make weight, they are right alongside bulimia and anorexia”

[Audio when clicked] Interviewee A: Were these methods similar to those of eating disorders you know of today? Yeah. Yeah. If someone’s close to weight, they may try to throw up if they’re not able to... or if they’re not willing to do the cardio workouts or the wrestling workouts necessary to sweat. They may starve themselves or simply not drink anything. So that is right alongside bulimia and anorexia. To not eat or to throw up what you have eaten or to try to throw up even if you haven’t eaten in order to make weight, they are right alongside bulimia and anorexia.

Slide Six

[Slide divided into two halves. Left half white background with black text, right half blue background with image and audio icon in lower right corner]

[Left Side]

Weight Cutting Methods

High school wrestlers oftentimes look “healthy” and “normal,” as MODE is not usually characterized by extreme weight loss. Dangerous weight cutting methods are “integral” parts of

wrestling culture. So, MODE symptoms go unnoticed and undiagnosed, forcing young men to suffer in silence.

[Right Side]

Image of legs running on treadmill. Caption: “Cardio sessions, running on the treadmill, getting on a stairmaster, those were things we would do after practice.”

[Audio when clicked] Interviewee A:

So as far as weight cutting methods that I used and that I’m familiar with from my time wrestling in high school and my time wrestling in college, a lot of it was, you know, making your body run at a deficit. And what I mean by that is take in the least amount of calories possible and work out as much as possible in order to get your weight down. Cutting water weight is probably the most important part of weight cutting because you’re not losing healthy weight. It’s not like you’re losing excess fat. If you’re cutting weight, it’s already assumed that you’re fairly trim. Weight loss in a healthy manner is gradual; it’s slower. Weight cutting is for short term weight loss. You’re expecting to put weight back on once you’re off the scale.

The weight that comes off the easiest is water weight, so while operating at a deficit, not eating and working out as much as possible. You may throw on [a] sweatsuit, you know, a sweatpants, a hoodie. We would tape our cuffs of our sleeves; we would duct tape them shut so that way the heat would not escape. We would tie our hoodies tight around our faces, you know, with the hood up. We would tie them tight, so that way, again, heat would get trapped. We’d wrap duct tape around our waists, again, to keep the heat trapped in the sweatpants or in the sweatshirt... same thing with the ankles of our sweatpants. Or you’d tuck your sweatpants into your socks... you’d pull your socks high and then you’d tuck them in there.

Another thing is underneath the layer of sweatpants or sweatshirts, putting on clothing of a wicking material... like you'd think Under Armour, rash guards, tights, anything that can keep your body heat up. Those are some of the ways you could speed up the weight cutting process and losing that water weight. Cardio sessions, running on the treadmill, getting on a stairmaster, those were things we would do after practice. So once you have a sweat going from a tough wrestling practice, you'd jump on a treadmill, you'd jump on a stairmaster to keep the sweat going.

It was pretty important to bring a few changes of clothes to practice. So that way, when one shirt was soaked, or a sweatshirt was soaked, it would actually start to cool you down because that's what sweat is supposed to do. But when you're losing water weight, you're sweating. And that sweat, the main purpose of it is to cool you down. When it starts to cool you down, you don't sweat as much, so you take off the sweaty shirt, put on a dry shirt and that way your body stays warm and you keep sweating. So you may go through three, four, five shirts or sweatshirts in a practice. If you want to continue to keep sweating, you just keep changing your shirt.

Another thing we would do is once a practice is over with, and everyone has a sweat going, before the sweat dies, everyone huddles together and uses body heat to keep the sweat going. So a group of two or three would sit as close as possible to each other, they may link arms, and bend over that way their body heat keeps them sweating. Exhaling the hot air from their lungs into a concentrated area that coupled with the close proximity of their bodies, increases the temperature and makes them sweat more. So these were some of the tactics we used to cut weight.

Slide Seven

[Slide divided into two halves. Left half white background with black text, right half blue background with image and audio icon in lower right corner]

[Left Side]

Pervasive Body Image Issues

In my early research, lasting psychological effects were not emphasized. But, every interviewee noted lasting psychological effects, particularly poor body image. Surprisingly similar body images experiences in interviews clearly point to the fact that men's mental illness and health are especially overlooked.

[Right Side]

Image of stomach with Not Good Enough sketched on center. Caption:

“I thought I was getting out of shape because I was getting farther and farther away from my competition weight, but I was six feet tall and 157 pounds... the body weight that I'm at now is healthy. I struggled coming to that realization.”

[Audio when clicked] Interviewee A: In the long run, I definitely, you know I'm five years removed from competing at the college level, I noticed I had body image issues once my weight began to regulate. I wrestled 157 pounds all four years of college, and I now walk around at about 175 to 180. And as my weight began to climb to what it is now, I had body image issues. I thought I was getting out of shape because I was getting farther and farther away from my competition weight, but I was six feet tall and 157 pounds. What I didn't realize is that's not something I can maintain all year. It was only something I maintained when I trained six days a week, three hours a day. That's the only environment that could support my frame at that weight. Whereas now that I'm not doing that, I don't have that kind of training regimen. The body weight that I'm at now is healthy. I struggled coming to that realization.

Something else I noticed was once I was no longer cutting weight, I noticed in my mid twenties, it was almost like a second puberty. I noticed more chest hair. I noticed more facial hair. I

noticed changes in my shoulders. I began to pack on more muscle. I was essentially letting my muscles develop at that point, instead of focusing solely on cardio and keeping them lean. They were healed. They were growing. That's part of what I mentioned before with my weight gain.

Slide Eight

[Slide divided into two halves. Left half white background with black text, right half blue background with image and audio icon in lower right corner]

[Left Side]

Other Long Term Effects

Long term physical effects were not uncommon in among interviewees. On the other hand, my initial research named physical effects and covered them in depth. I believe true anonymity allowed interviewees to be more inclined to share their experiences.

[Right Side]

Image of man clutching stomach as if in pain. Caption: "I know some people have acid reflux disease if they've tried to make themselves throw up too much."

[Audio when clicked] Interviewee A: Lasting health effects outside the body image issue, no real health effects. I don't have any issues with my intestines. I don't have any issues with my stomach or anything. I know some people have acid reflux disease if they've tried to make themselves throw up too much. A lot of wrestlers, in order to, this is actually a strategy for cutting weight, a lot of wrestlers will turn to tobacco. They'll turn to dip. And because they use dip, the nicotine kills their appetites, so they don't eat as much... they don't feel like they need to eat as much. Plus, when you dip, you spit, so spitting is a way to lose water weight. So a lasting health effect, not for me, but I've seen on other wrestlers is an increase in the use of tobacco products, which obviously runs down a whole rabbit hole of health issues on its own... cancer of various kinds.

Slide Nine

[Slide divided into two halves. Left half white background with black text, right half blue background with image and audio icon in lower right corner]

[Left Side]

The “Hero”

Interviewees describe their coaches as “heroes” and torturers. So, what are the effects of the overbearing coach appearing so prevalently throughout high school wrestling?

[Right Side]

Image of two male coaches at the side of the mat at a wrestling match. Caption: “They did their time and now they’re coaches, and they’ll help us get through our tough weight cuts so that way we could be coaches. It’s a cycle...”

[Audio when clicked] Interviewee A: Coaches, honestly, they were wrestlers themselves. Did they like seeing us put ourselves through that? No, but there was an unspoken rule that it’s part of the sport. And, you know, they did their time and now they’re coaches, and they’ll help us get through our tough weight cuts so that way we could be coaches. It’s a cycle, and some weight cuts are easier than others. And some coaches are more sympathetic toward wrestlers than others. And some coaches are vehemently against weight cutting. Others just kind of shrug their shoulders... tell you to get back on the treadmills. So it just kind of depends on the situation that you’re in. My coaches were supportive about it, and they were smart to intervene if it got too extreme.

Slide Ten

[White background and black text on slide with audio icon in lower right corner]

Conclusion

Eating Disorders stemming from weight management in wrestling is a very obviously glaring issue that needs to be addressed and made aware. MODE is virtually unknown to the general public, which may play a role in lack of diagnoses. A change in culture must be made, as young men's psychological well-being proves to be an afterthought, as stigmatization, stereotyping, and sexism remain pervasive in American culture.

[Audio when clicked] Author's voice: In the beginning of my project, I feared I was exploiting others for my personal gain—to fuel my genuine curiosity about eating disorders in wrestling. However, I now believe that my project will bring the much needed exposure and voice to silent sufferers in the high school wrestling community. Hopefully, I am able to make others more aware of male high school wrestlers and their struggles with eating disorders and weight management to create meaningful change.

Slide Eleven

[White background and black text]

Works Cited

“2020-21 High School Wrestling Rules Changes Address Weigh-In Procedures, Hair Length Restrictions.” NFHS, Apr. 2020

Abbott, Gary. “NFHS Reports High School Wrestling Participation Up for Boys AND Girls in All Categories for 2017-18.” Team USA,

United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee, Aug. 2018.

“Eating disorder.” Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eating_disorder. Accessed 19 November 2020.

“EATING DISORDERS IN MEN & BOYS.” National Eating Disorders Association, 2018

Frew, Harriet. "When poor body image stops you socialising." *Eating Disorder Therapist*, 2018, rethinkyourbody.co.uk/blog/2018/04/16/when-poor-body-image-stops-you-socialising.

Gibbs, Aimee E. "Weight Management in Amateur Wrestling." *Sports Health: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, vol 1, no. 3, Sage Journals, May 2009. pp 227-230

"Interviewee A." Message to Amy Lim. Nov. 2020. Private Message via Reddit

"Interviewee A." "Re: Weight Cutting." Received by Amy Lim, 10 Nov. 2020.

Slide Twelve

[White background and black text]

Works Cited

"Interviewee B." Message to Amy Lim. Nov. 2020. Private Message via Reddit

"Interviewee C." Message to Amy Lim. Oct. 2020. Private Message via Reddit

"Interviewee D." Message to Amy Lim. Nov. 2020. Private Message via Reddit

"Interviewee D." "Re: Wrestling Questions." Received by Amy Lim, 10 Nov. 2020.

"Interviewee E." Message to Amy Lim. Nov. 2020. Private Message via Reddit

"Interviewee F." Message to Amy Lim. Nov. 2020. Private Message via Reddit

Murray, Stuart B. "Boys, Biceps, and Bradycardia: The Hidden Dangers of Muscularity-Oriented Disordered Eating." *Journal of Adolescent Health, Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine*, 2017. pp 352-355

Palmer, Mark. "Apple Valley wrestling coach Wasmund retires." *Intermatwrestle, Rev Wrestling*, 2017, intermatwrestle.com/articles/18233.

Slide Thirteen

[White background and black text]

Works Cited

“Promotion of healthy weight-control practices in young athletes.” *Pediatrics*, vol. 116, no. 6, American Academy of Pediatrics, Dec. 2005. pp. 1557+

Rehman, Najibah. “Freezing the ‘hunger nerve’ could help with weight loss.” ABC News, ABC News Internet Ventures, 2018,
abcnews.go.com/Health/freezing-hunger-nerve-weight-loss/story?id=53912867.

Stankovich, Chris. “Learn Why Listening to the Coach Helps Athletes Play their Best.” Advanced Human Performance Systems, 2017.

Upadhyay, Lipi. “7 signs your everyday acidity has taken a more serious turn.” India Today, Living Media India Limited, 2017,
www.indiatoday.in/lifestyle/wellness/story/acidity-acid-reflux-gerd-chest-pain-sore-throat-nausea-bad-breath-heartburn-lifest-1047206-2017-09-18.

Valle, Carl. “Curved Treadmills: Pros and Cons That You Should Know.” SimpliFaster, simplifaster.com/articles/curved-treadmills-pros-cons/. Accessed 19 November 2020.

“Wrestling.” Sports Regulations, OHSAA, 2019, pp. 174-179.