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# NATURALLY STRIATED MUSCLE: EXAMINING THE IDEOGRAPHIC CRYSTALLIZATION OF

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NATURALLY STRIATED MUSCLE:  
EXAMINING THE IDEOGRAPHIC CRYSTALLIZATION OF <NATURAL>

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies

Department of Communication Studies  
Graduate School  
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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TITLE: NATURALLY STRIATED MUSCLE: EXAMINING THE IDEOGRAPHIC CRYSTALLIZATION OF <NATURAL>

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Jonathan Gray

In U.S. America and much of the Western world, *natural* is a venerated symbolic placeholder for any number of assumed virtues and ideals. Present conflicts have brought forward questions about what *natural* (which I argue functions as an ideograph) should mean in contexts that seem to call for a formal, enforceable definition. In this study, I use the vocabulary of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and the context of bodybuilding to work towards a theory of how ambiguous ideographs become "striated" or "crystallized." Within this discussion I present instances where *natural* has been employed as a vehicle to cause harm, and I offer an advisement to rhetorical scholars on how we might approach striated ideographs in the future.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THE STAGE

On September 27th, 2013, one of the most hyped professional bodybuilding contests of all time was set to begin at the Paradise Casino and Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada. Though a handful of athletes were legitimately contending for the title, it had been marketed worldwide as the ultimate showdown between two legends: Jay vs. Phil. Jay Cutler, four-time champion and the most recognized name in the sport, was making his return from a devastating biceps injury that had kept him off the stage and forced him to relinquish his crown. In the meantime, “The Gift,” Phil Heath, had become the dominant presence in the sport. Today he was attempting to defend his Mr. Olympia title for the second time. A third contender, crowd favorite Kai Greene, was hopeful that he would finally be able to break through his streak of three consecutive runner-up finishes. All three competitors made it to the final grouping in a field that was more competitive than anticipated.

Ten thousand rowdy bodybuilding enthusiasts packed the Orleans Arena to capacity for the final pose-offs and results. As the final tiered groupings were called onto the stage, fans loudly urged judges toward their favorite for the gold medal. Kai Green appeared more prepared than ever and received thunderous applause. Jay Cutler showed that he still had a body to be reckoned with. However, he was unable to live up to the massive amount of hype surrounding him and finished 6th, still not fully on track from his season lost to injury. In the end, Phil Heath won the event again with his massive 23-inch biceps, and miniscule 29-inch waist packed into a rock hard 5’9” 255 lb. frame that held only 6 percent body fat (Smith, 2013). With this title, Heath won \$250,000, the largest prize ever awarded in a bodybuilding competition. This was a part of a record \$1 million total winnings given out across the seven Olympia events (Black, 2013). Commentators remarked that this result signaled a new era in men’s professional

bodybuilding, and that we should appreciate this moment where we are witness to one of the most muscular, most symmetrical bodies of all time. As in every other Olympia event, neither Phil nor any competitor was subjected to drug testing.

Meanwhile, just two weeks prior on September 14th, 2013, urine tests were administered in preparation for the Victorian Natural Physique Championships being held in Melbourne, Australia. One of the competition's top performers and favorites, Marc Marcoccia, registered a testosterone count of 16.9 to 1, nearly three times the maximum value. Further testing revealed that Marc was also positive for the endogenous reference compound pregnanedio, a metabolic result of steroid usage ("Hall of Shame," 2013). After deliberation by the governing body of the sport, the International Natural Bodybuilding Association (INBA) committee deemed that the appropriate action was to ban Marc for life from competing in any other natural bodybuilding events. Marc forfeited his chance to win the prize: a 10-foot trophy. He was also denied return of his \$150 entry fee. Never again could Marc claim to be a "natural" bodybuilder. Today his picture is a highlighted entry in the INBA website's "Hall of Shame." While impressively lean and aesthetically built, Marc's measurements were all significantly smaller than Heath and the other finalists of the Olympia event.

It seems that the INBA is fairly protective of the depiction of *natural* that is displayed on the medal stands of their events. To this day, every instance of an adult failing a test has resulted in a lifetime disqualification and a revocation of any prizes won. The competition for Mr. Olympia, however, has never had an instance where an athlete has been disqualified for performance-enhancing substance use. This is because the Olympia events do not explicitly claim naturalness for their competitors, nor do they test to determine what substances are entering the athletes' bodies. To this group, natural is a plot of ground best left undisturbed. The



growth, and the process of becoming something beyond expected human limitation, is what is held sacred. The methods of achieving these alterations are not. This dissertation project discusses rhetorical and philosophical constructions of *natural* and the consequences these constructions might offer. It seems bodybuilding, and the structures it creates around what is natural and what is not, may hold insight into what influences larger perceptions about what a natural human body is and is not allowed to be. If we investigate the process further, it is possible to learn what can and does happen when we regulate powerful, value-laden words such as *natural*.

### **Hardening the Natural Body**

Perhaps some of us have noticed people cringe when they see the cover model of a muscle magazine. Many of us have witnessed someone express disgust at the sight of a female bodybuilder who no longer appears feminine enough to the onlooker, or have heard mutterings about a physique at the beach that looks too good to be true. In these situations, the refrain “that’s just not natural” often arises. Inside of the sport of bodybuilding, much of this type of outrage is directed towards those who claim their bodies to be natural, and naturally developed, and then directly violate the governing body’s imposed definition of natural. The sin is the *appearance* of competitors’ deceit, hypocrisy, and exposure. The acts involved in illegal drug usage are largely an afterthought. The communicative process of deciding what natural *means* ends up being a delicate issue in a sport largely concerned with brawn.

Within bodybuilding circles and elsewhere, bodies are lumped into particular categories. Within these categories they may be venerated for their appearance and accomplishments or discarded and shamed for their actions or attributions. The difference in the categorization of these bodies is often not necessarily factually grounded. Rather, it depends on semi-arbitrary

definitions involving subjective types of evidence. Interpreting this evidence means embarking toward a determination of whether a body is natural or unnatural, a designation that offers a potential lifetime of reverberating consequences. This meaning-making potential assures that the repercussions of defining natural within bodybuilding, or choosing not to do so, will go far beyond the awaited results of individual competitors' urine tests.

For this project, I will use the context of bodybuilding to provide a larger argument about what occurs when constructions of a value-laden term, in this case *natural*, begin to “crystallize” or take recognizable regulatory form. I will first discuss how *natural* functions as what McGee (1980) refers to as an *ideograph*. Next, I intend to return the conversation to how <natural> is deployed in bodybuilding subculture. Following, I will trace histories of formalized usages of <natural> in order to illustrate the power this particular ideograph holds. Next, I intend to use the vocabulary of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to develop a further understanding of what is happening as “striations” (or clearly developed boundaries) appear around an otherwise ambiguous ideograph. I conclude by offering a directive for approaching crystallizing ideographs in a “machinic” (Coonfield, 2006) way that may prove applicable across contexts.

Though the context I use to discuss <natural> bodies is bodybuilding, there are several places in this study where I will invoke other conflicts of bodily naturalness for consideration. I intend my argument to implicate the potentials of <natural> for their relation to issues such as racial inequalities, gender/sexual-based violence, and discrimination based on (dis)ability status. It is my objective to offer an analytic lens that encourages the reader to periodically “try these issues on” to my line of argument about constructions of <natural> and locate the parallels within other pressing issues of defined human naturalness. For this reason, I will at times, both point to the implications of these issues directly, and at other times strategically allow the reader

to locate the parallels that he/she finds most applicable. As communication scholars, I believe that the way we discuss and classify bodies always has meaningful material consequences both within the immediate context of study and beyond the scope of what we may first consider.

### **Statement of Authorship**

Before progressing further, I find it necessary to expressly locate myself within this scholarship. I do this in an attempt show my relation to the subject, and to establish a point of reference as I refer to observations, practices, and decisions I have confronted and continue to interact with. I will first say that, out of respect to those who compete in the sport of bodybuilding, I do not rightly consider myself a bodybuilder in any real way. I have for the last three years, however, undertaken an extensive project of body re-building using bodybuilding techniques and philosophies. These practices first emerged as a health-related hobby and then evolved into a type of personalized approach to considering my life circumstances. At a particularly intense period of time I ate very little and exercised away whatever I did consume. It was a grueling process of positive self-discipline, unhealthy commitment nearing obsession, and enlightening self-discovery. I watched as my body dropped 30 lbs (from 189 to 159) in a two-month span. I then rebuilt my physique over the next several months through resistance training, goal oriented planning, and a more realistic, but still restricted, caloric intake. Eventually I achieved a weight around 175 at a lower percentage of body fat. Today my pursuit of a re-imagined body continues, and my goals and abilities continue to shift.

I do not claim my experience to be typical, representative, or close to the standard of any level of competitive bodybuilding. I do feel, however, that my research and depth of experience gives me a unique, if incomplete, insight into a part of bodybuilding subculture. This experience has also necessarily influenced the way I view and understand constructions of <natural>. I have

confronted questions of my own bodily naturalness within a culture and subculture of muscularity and masculinity, and I have spent much time pondering its significance. From this experience, I have learned much and realized I have much left to learn. I will, throughout this project, commit to a scattering of personal voice that speaks to my understanding and nuanced involvement with the topic matter. I will share vignettes and observations to elaborate my own place within the context of this study and to illustrate my arguments. I do this as a reminder that theoretical arguments always concern real people. Also, I intend to use my experiences to add texture to the rhetorical vocabulary I employ throughout this study. In the following section I begin to outline the theoretical backdrop of my study by discussing how <natural> operates as an ideograph.

### **An Ideograph, Naturally**

Renowned rhetorical scholar Michael Calvin McGee first used the term *ideograph* in his 1980 contribution to the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* entitled “The ‘Ideograph’: A link between rhetoric and ideology.” In this piece, he uses *ideograph* to describe a mode of entry for particular words and phrases into widespread political consciousness. He contends that a few abstract, dogmatically drenched words enter discourse in a way that effectively captures, creates, and/or reinforces particular ideological positions. McGee sees the ideograph as a way of understanding how specific, pointed uses of political language relate to more abstract ideas of public ideology. This relation draws power from the term’s linguistic standing and harnesses the power to influence perception about concrete issues.

Ideographs are thus uniquely potent elements of persuasion. Condit and Lucaites (1993) add, “Ideographs represent, in condensed form, the normative, collective commitments of the members of a public” (p. 83) and they “typically appear in public argumentation as the necessary

motivations or justifications for action performed in the name of the public” (p. 84). Ideographs are capable of encapsulating thoughts, feelings, and politics into the needlepoint of a single word or phrase such that they become especially difficult to dismiss from a position of conventional ideology. The term has now been employed across rhetorical studies. Ideographs (identifiable by their encasing chevrons) continue to be unearthed in diverse areas by scholars, in some cases, across disciplines. Examples include <liberty>, <property>, (McGee, 1980), <equality> (Condit & Lucaites, 1993), <human rights> (Stuckey & Ritter, 2007) and even <cigarettes> (Moore, 1997) and <schizophrenia> (Kim & Berrios, 2001).

Ideographs hold special rhetorical and communicative significance because they allow communication scholars the ability to study political ideology by examining specific enactments of language use. Rhetorical critics can explicitly show how key words and phrases in political discourse reveal underlying cultural commitments and values. Through the ideograph, McGee (1980) offers a tool for understanding highly abstract concepts of ideology. This course of study is uniquely communication driven and distinct from, perhaps, an etymological discussion of language, the difference being that the ideograph is concerned with the creation and practice of meaning making, not the temporal evolution of the word itself. The ideograph is a study of active rhetorical, communicative practice.

McGee (1980) stops short of listing particular itemized standards for what constitutes an ideograph. Rather, he leaves it up to the critic to argue that a term “shows mutability between contexts” (p. 8) in such a way that underscores the term’s rhetorical weight. It is through engagement with the places in which a particular term or phrase appears that proves its ideographic qualities. I argue that due to the inherently ambiguous and rhetorically powerful personality of <natural>, it too functions as an ideograph. In the next section I illustrate the

required mutability of <natural> in ideological discourse. I use this discussion as a precursor into my investigation of the term's more standardized usage within bodybuilding and its potential for impact in contexts beyond. McGee argues that the study of an ideograph should "never be limited to its use in formal discourse" (p. 9). I take up this challenge to explore the various avenues where <natural> is used in this nation. I also strive to highlight the connections and theoretical distance between <natural> and the human body. From here I will focus my argument on how <natural>, as an ideograph, becomes potentially dangerous whenever it enters into particular contexts (like bodybuilding and law) that dictate what it means to be a <natural> human.

### **Natural in the U.S. American Cultural Consciousness**

It certainly appears that <natural> and the human body are rarely more distant than one degree of separation, even if this degree is their direct opposition. What is <natural> is distinguished from both the human and the cultural, but also works as the concept through which we as Westerners culturally judge other such concepts (Soper, 1998). <Natural>, as an ideal, appears to be at once both essentially human and entirely human-averse. Thus <natural> carries "an immensely complex and contradictory symbolic load" that continues to be difficult to sift through (Soper, 1998, p. 2).

Thinkers such as Lukács, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas have long struggled over where exactly humans and social processes fit into what is <natural> with few agreed results (Vogel, 1996). In his own attempt, Foucault (1978) once described the distinction between natural and unnatural (the perverse) not as any metaphysical requirement, but as an effect of discourse. He explains, "There is no [inherent] reference to a common natural foundation. People are not perverse or 'mad' naturally, but rather by way of categorization." (p.

14). <Natural> can thus be considered a type of human byproduct. Perhaps, as a conceptual grounding, an understanding of <natural> is necessary in some respects, but it can never be entirely separated from the human discourse it emerges from. From Foucault's comments we could reason that one thing that is certainly not <natural>, is our current conceptualization of nature and the <natural>.

The U.S. American public understandably seems to struggle with conceptions of <natural> as well. <Natural> is as complicated as it is common. As Soper (1998) states, "its complexity is concealed by the ease and regularity with which we put it to use in a wide variety of contexts. It is at once both familiar and extremely elusive" (p. 1). We grasp at <natural>, but distrust whatever it is we are able to capture. At the same time, this difficulty does not seem to have dissolved our collective interest. In 2008, Mintel's Global New Products Database found that *all-natural* was the second most used claim on new U.S. American food products (Shanker, 2008). A recent study by the Shelton Group, an advertising company focusing on sustainability, found that "natural" is the most popular, or at least most recognized, sales pitch when it comes to food labeling. When the study asked, "Which is the best description to read on a food label?" nearly 25 percent of consumers answered, "100 percent natural" (Shanker, 2008). U.S. Americans seem to agree that putting <natural> things into our bodies is preferential action. What exactly these <natural> things are, however, is less widely agreed upon. Those asked to discern the qualities of a <natural> product are often unable to define <natural> beyond a description of "not artificial" (Shanker, 2008). Our knowledge of <natural> remains primarily defined by its contrast toward that which it is determined not to be.

One way to attempt this exclusion is by valorizing <natural> through a deployment of a theoretical set of phenomena which are thought to be given before any prior human contact. If

we haven't messed with it, it is <natural> and so, better. This is consistent with Testa and Harris's (2005) analysis that found that "people regularly claim that the natural is superior to the artificial or synthetic without any real grounding for the separation of the two. They know butter is natural and margarine is artificial and thus, butter is better" (p. 178). The question remains, how much human interference is enough to make this type of binary distinction? U.S. Americans seem to have a longing for the natural, but have difficulty pinning down what exactly this desire looks like.

This difficulty is likely lodged within a paradoxical historical relationship that has produced the current understanding of what <natural> constitutes. As Eder and Ritter demonstrate in their 1996 book *The Social Construction of Nature*, the conceptions of nature we seem to operate from now find their roots in a flawed imagining of an ecological nature. This ecological understanding presumes all of nature to be a space defined by its lack of human interference even as nature is delineated and created through this same human interference. Simultaneously, there is said to be an internal part of humans that must remain tethered to the natural world. This explains, in part, the collective desire for consuming the "natural" food items we prefer. Somehow nature is, in a sense, both that which we are not and that which we are within.

This illogicality is also the struggle between many western Marxists and thinkers like Engels. These parties have long disagreed about whether <natural> is an observable state or a type of social dialectic (Vogel, 1996). Collectively, it seems we want to remain a part of <natural> but want <natural> to be theoretically absent and untainted by humanness. Obviously, this is a difficult proposition. Norman (1996) writes, "The injunction to not interfere with nature in terms of the 'natural/human' contrast would rule out the morality of every conceivable human



action” (p. 86). Through this logic, the ideograph <natural> is human-made, but somehow what <natural> describes is a state devoid of humanness. <Natural> is thus a state never fully reachable. The closer humanity comes to the <natural>, the less <natural>, and less desirable, this thing becomes. Yet, most Western civilizations have also developed a standard for humanity that surpasses actions found in nature. Humans are morally, and often legally, obligated to live above the constraints of what is considered natural. John Stuart Mill once denounced instinctual action all together as “the actions of the wickedest of men,” and Baudelaire pronounced that we will find nothing in the wholly natural person that “is not ghastly” (Soper, 1998).

This contradictory definition leaves an ideographic <natural> as an idea that can only be viewed and understood from a distance. For Sider (1995), this means that analyzing *perfect* naturalness is not possible, for naturalness will always remain a relative matter. From this perspective it is more right to question to what extent <natural> can be attributed at all to nature since its delineations are at best inconsistent and more than likely always a product of convenience and agenda. It is unfortunate then, that when naturalness *is* named and enforced, it is often done in binary ways. Legally speaking, a person is either a naturalized citizen or they are not. Similarly, a food product is deemed either worthy of a label reading “all natural” or it is not. A bodybuilder’s urine and blood reveal that their body is <natural> or it is not. The disparity between the continuum of where <natural> exists and the dualistic way it is deployed may account for much of the confusion surrounding what the ideograph can and should mean.

Nevertheless, we continue to adore naturalness. Rozin et al. (2004) found that U.S. Americans believed <natural> to be healthier, more appealing to the senses, and kinder to the environment. The researchers also found that the reasons for these preferences were primarily rooted in moral and aesthetic principles that understand <natural> as a near universal good. Testa

and Harris (2005) interject that this positive attitude towards <natural> happens despite the fact that “there is no reason to prefer the natural *per se*, as natural *per se* is within itself morally neutral. Some people are naturally healthy and happy, and this is good, yet it is equally natural to be unhealthy and unhappy” (p. 180). The impossible desire for a distinct semantic ownership of <natural> persists, and its meaning inspires discussions across a wide variety of topics. Being one of few places where naturalness is explicitly defined, bodybuilding is placed on the front lines of determining what is and is not <natural>, especially in relation to the human body. This is an especially ripe ground to attempt to answer one of the culminating questions of debates surrounding <natural>: What is <natural> and unnatural, and does either designation constitute a moral argument for or against it? For this reason, I look to bodybuilding in this study as an exemplar and springboard toward grasping the potentials of a formalized <natural>, one that attempts to come closer to answering this question.

### **Incarnations of Natural within Bodybuilding Subculture**

To understand the breadth of the ways constructions of <natural> can escape contexts to have a larger impact in other areas, it is first important to understand how <natural> can come to operate in a formalized way. One place this frequently occurs is in the subculture of bodybuilding. <Natural> exists as a less ambiguous type of threshold when it comes to weight lifting and muscle-centric sports. A lifter is <natural>, or *natty*, until they are not. Once he/she leaves this designation he/she often cannot return to it. The moment this identity of natty is shrugged off is often the same moment when the athlete pricks him/herself to inject his/her first dose of testosterone or other anabolic-androgenic steroid (AAS). This begins a lifter’s first “cycle” or regimen of various substances that accelerate the muscle building and recovery process. These substances were once referred to as “juice” and now primarily as “gear.”

This moment is also, from a phenomenological standpoint, an intensely complicated one. Though the threshold of <natural> is forever passed, it does not, for these lifters, always symbolize a moment of loss. To an openly geared lifter, this moment is about moving to a different realm of competition with oneself and others. The transition allows the body to surpass the constrictions of genetic destiny. As insinuated in the examples provided in the outset of this study, prize money, awards, and venues for recognition are all greater for geared athletes that achieve bigger, more muscular physiques. This is because of the enormous revenue associated with the untested division of the professional level of bodybuilding.

The \$250,000 Phil Heath earned from winning his third Mr. Olympia was certainly a significant monetary achievement. However, it is only possible because of the much more lucrative business that arises from the popularity of professional bodybuilding. Sports supplement companies use professional bodybuilders and physique models to attract customers into what has become an \$83 billion industry (“Sports nutrition,” 2008). New product lines are launched daily, and have fostered intense competition between products and brands. The popularity and success of a sport supplementation product is dependent on consumer belief that ingredients will have performance-enhancing and muscle-growing effects.

When professional bodybuilders appear on the labels of these supplements, or endorse them in advertisements, they send a message that connects the athlete to the product. Since these professional bodybuilders are not subjected to any drug testing, a public is left with an insinuation that these athletes have achieved their physiques through the use of the <natural> products they are marketing. Though it seems illogical to believe that these results can be achieved “naturally,” a general lack of understanding about the science involved in nutritional supplementation makes it difficult to unequivocally reject the products. When this reasonable

doubt is coupled with a desire for bodily improvement, it is easy to connect the athlete's success to the product if even in a small capacity.

This presumption works to the advantage of supplement sellers. Sports supplements only have to prove to the FDA that they are safe for human consumption, and will not cause a positive drug test, in order to make the shelves. The products sport scientific-sounding and intriguing names like "P6 Black: Androgenic Nootropic Matrix" and "N.O. Explode: The Pre-Workout Igniter." Such products often do not need to authentically demonstrate that they perform any significant muscle-building benefits, and companies are largely permitted to conduct their own lab tests for effectiveness. For this reason, producers only need to inspire a belief that the product *could* work if used correctly. The active ingredient in any of these supplements will almost always prove to be marketing success.

These products are especially appealing to those who have not crossed the threshold of gearing referred to earlier. Those individuals who do not want to deal with the potential effects of AAS, human growth hormone (HGH), or other drugs may turn to supplementation as a safer and legal way to try to increase their lean body mass, trim fat, and bulk up (Black, 2013). Supplementation allows athletes to maintain their <natural> status both in the ways they view themselves and externally in regard to the rules of their respective sports. This is an especially important factor in drug-tested amateur and professional sports, and reserves a lofty place for athletes within a plane of moral high ground that our culture's adoration of <natural> creates.

Even holding knowledge about the limited effectiveness of the products I've described, I confess I have spent a considerable amount of my restricted income on supplements that I know are unproven to work. The desire to achieve quicker gains in strength and muscle mass is alluring even if it exists primarily in myth. I remember being excited for the debut of the acid-

green “Iron” series from MusclePharm brand for the sole reason that it was the first supplement line ever endorsed by bodybuilding legend, Arnold Schwarzenegger. I have spent \$40 dollars on a small tub of “Resurrect PM” powder primarily because record 8-time Mr. Olympia Ronnie Coleman was flexing on the label, and I have snickered to myself when I’m in a store with someone who checks out with something I have decided is only a box of nonsense. At these moments I force myself to ignore that a majority of my purchases were because the product was on sale.

In making my buying choices, I perceive an opportunity to gain an advantage of growth for a discount. This is in spite of the fact that clearance prices are generally another sign that the product does not work. The allure of the athlete selling his/her results as <natural> is often too much to resist for athletes who are unsatisfied with their current results or for the beginner looking for an easy fix to an extended period of sedentary behavior. The buyer essentially hopes to buy AAS in a form that does not legally count as AAS, does not require needles, and does not affect any inward or outward perception of self. The ideographic power of <natural> embedded within a muscle-building product inspires hope that a legal, safe, magic pill or powder exists that can take an unassuming physique and craft it into the most aesthetically pleasing body in the gym. This is often enough to try just one more product. The ideal is to be both perfectly proportioned, perfectly symmetrical, and somehow remain perfectly <natural>. Sports supplements claim to hold the possibility of gaining advantage without any forfeiture of moral superiority.

Competitions that involve testing have unique and very particular guidelines toward determining whether a competitor is <natural>. These rules, though they appear differently amongst factions, challenge the ambiguity embedded within the ideographic <natural>.

Bodybuilding first regulates <natural> by creating separate divisions for tested and untested competition. Tested competition essentially determines the naturalness or unnaturalness of a body. Until this determination is made, a competitor assumes the benefits of <natural> status regardless of an appearance that might suggest otherwise. These competitors effectively “pass” for <natural>. Competitors are deemed unnatural when they become caught in one of many specific requirements that the governing bodies of the sport offer. These requirements come in the form of long lists of banned substances such as: stimulants including ephedrine or cocaine; narcotic analgesics such as methadone and morphine (but codeine is okay); evidence of anabolic agents such as clotebol or a testosterone count greater than a six to one ratio (unless for a medical condition); diuretics such as mersalyl and mannitol; HGH; blood doping; and many other substances and practices. Blood and urine tests can also be administered every 60 days that an athlete remains in the professional circuit (“Banned substances,” 2008).

The striations natural bodybuilding offers have divergent effects. The regulations supposedly provide a working definition of what <natural> means for built bodies by posing themselves as “clean, pure, and innocent,” the antithesis of the chemically-enhanced. The definition is only enforced in one niche of the sport and even here the definition changes between the sports’ governing bodies. Within the natural bodybuilding world, different definitional requirements and testing procedures create a further “moral hierarchy of difference” (Garratt, 2014, p. 2). This makes the concept of natural proliferated by the sport “not nearly as pure or complete as it seems” (p. 2). For example, the Natural Physique Association (NPA) operates under a “lifetime natural” policy and adheres to the World Anti-Doping Agency’s (WADA) standards of testing. This includes a full-spectrum urinalysis for banned substances, including recreational drugs, which is processed at the WADA laboratories in London. NPA also uses

rigorous polygraphic and forensic testing (in the form of a 90 minute, \$600 athlete-pay exam) that has an accuracy rate above 98%.

Despite these rigorous standards, rival division British National Bodybuilding Federation (BNBF) claims moral superiority due to the fact that they test competitors both during qualifying competitions and after events. Of course, the NPA retorts that these tests are not WADA certified like the type they conduct, and are thus less reliable. They also point out that BNBF is only concerned with a competitor's last seven years of natural/unnatural behavior (Garratt, 2014, p. 2). These arguments are further complicated by the fact that most natural bodybuilding organizations do not have the budget to consistently test competitors up to the standards laid out in their protocols.

The pretense surrounding the argument about whose <natural> is most morally superior is largely defunct for one primary reason: There exists no test anywhere that can fully validate claims to lifetime naturalness by any standard. Therefore, divisions who claim a more realistic standard for determining naturalness have, in a strange way, a more accurate assessment of who within their competitions is, at the moment, a natural competitor. Thus they are able to more consistently judge a status of <natural>. Even so, even this more narrowed claim remains inconsistent and shaky. It is the business of those creating masking agents to be ahead of current testing procedures. Likewise, testing facilities can only search and detect the presence of substances known to exist, and can only punish for those currently banned. At best, claims of distinctions between <natural> and unnatural within these divisions align far more closely to claims that they are presently unable to prove incidence of disallowed substances.

Where debates rage over what constitutes a <natural> body on the tested side of the sport, the untested side thrives off of the ambiguity they are afforded by not attempting to regulate

natural at all. Unbridled by constraints, testing procedures, suspicion, and infighting, corporations and (to a lesser extent) untested athletes reap the financial benefits of the deniability that the tested division creates in its regulatory practices.

### **Impact on Bodybuilding Subculture**

In less regulated locations, definitions of a bodily <natural> play out quite differently. Even so, the seeming importance of natural/unnatural status remains. In the training rooms where muscular bodies are molded, questions of naturalness arise as bodies compare themselves to other bodies. Here, people with different commitments to <natural> practices interact without any clear designation of who fits where. Those who are less muscular often critique the larger lifters, and justify their own bodies by accusing the other of being unnatural. The assumption is that anyone could achieve that level of result if he/she were willing to make the moral concessions that this person apparently has elected. This critique is rarely done in front of those being “accused” for reasons relating to fear of bodily harm, inability to substantiate accusations, and lack of consequence for any evidence that proves someone’s “unnatural” body.

Though there is certainly no formal testing done in this space, distinctions develop. I recall asking training partners if they think “that big guy has been geared for a while” while admiring (or *miring* in bodybuilding circles) what I regard as the big guy’s aesthetically superior physique. If we agree he is a longtime user, I no longer feel as much shame when he lifts more than I am able to or if he has a more sculpted core. Though (in most cases) these individuals likely do not care what I think of them, the practice of making these distinctions is an interesting one. This is especially salient if we consider <natural>’s function as an ideograph. Why, as a cultural collective, should we feel the need to determine who and what is <natural>? What does it mean when we reassure our own bodies as permissible by painting another body as not (or



less) <natural>? Such questions are immensely consequential, but perhaps not so easily answered.

<Natural>, as an ideograph, remains both imminent and illusive even despite attempts to tie it down. Though the way we have positioned <natural> as it relates to humanity makes it theoretically impossible, we still encourage and enforce naturalness between human bodies and on human action. When we corral the ideograph to mark which bodies are <natural> and which are not, we engage a deeply problematic potential. Likewise, leaving the ideograph without any formal regulation might also create potentials for harm. Thus, regulation of <natural> has proven to be a difficult practice with a long and sometimes unfortunate history in U.S. America.

In this dissertation, I intend to specifically discuss the ways U.S. Americans formally striate the ideograph of <natural>. I also plan to explicate the consequences and potentials of this course of action. The following is a description of the chapters to follow.

### **Preview of Chapters**

In Chapter Two I will examine the historical deployment of <natural>. First, I canvass attempts to formally and/or legally constrain <natural>, and I discuss some of the motivating force behind these actions. I trace these instances of formal naturalness as they move from describing objects and towards living organisms. This progression culminates in a discussion of how purposed, direct depictions of <natural> have been used to stratify and harm bodies, and how bodybuilding has historically been directly involved in this process.

In Chapter Three I weave a discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) smooth and striated spaces into a consideration of steroids in bodybuilding, and further, to striated bodies in general. Here, I make a turn through the abstraction offered by Deleuze and Guattari toward a specific, active site of constructions of <natural> and unnatural. Through this discussion I outline

a philosophical/rhetorical approach toward recovering the unnatural body in ways that are often missed. I approach this, in part, by bringing into question our cultural insistence on striating <natural>. Here I discuss inquiries into how our collective interactions with the ideographic <natural> might be altered such that we see unnatural as not inherently shameful or morally inferior, but productive and necessary. This chapter functions to create the argument that says: If we center instead the <natural> body within the theo-critical gaze and understand the processes that go into striating what is and is not <natural>, we might break our culturally embedded assumptions of <natural> as idealized form, and productively alter our collective appreciation for and employment of <natural>.

In Chapter Four, I center the discussion of bodies on an applied investigation into alternative considerations of <natural> and unnatural bodies. Here, I apply the turn I offer in Chapter Three by beginning a direct challenge to the ingrained assumptions of, and formalized references to, “natural” superiority. I do this through contextual explanations of what a less bodily violent <natural> might look like in given scenarios. I first bring into question our methods of knowing and recognizing <natural> within any given context. I especially focus on the place of *natural law* within broader discussions of morality. I then parallel this discussion with my applied metaphor of “unnaturally” built bodies. I argue that within a given setting, an “unnatural” body can become the transgressive body that we ought to strive to become rather than a fearful specter we attempt to formally exorcise. I contend that these unnatural bodies are bodies that might be read differently, expand notions of the possible, and challenge institutional stagnation. Thus they are the bodies necessary for any type of real *becoming* [in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) use of the term]. I briefly incorporate some existing conceptual offerings such as Haraway’s (1991) cyborg as ways we can envision productive blending and blurring of the

illusionary natural/unnatural dichotomy. I investigate how our transgression of formalized naturalness destabilizes many of our problematic normative conceptions about bodies. It is my intention to substantiate alternate ways of understanding how we can productively valorize the unnatural body as resistance to a mythic, morally superior <natural>. This chapter represents my attempt to theoretically rebuild <natural> through both new and existing vocabularies.

In my final chapter, I offer concluding remarks to unify my argument and provide an advisement on how to approach the formal stratification of ideographs in the future. I interpret Coonfield's (2006) "machinic" approach to understanding the uses and potentials of objects and concepts to ideographs. Here I explain why I believe neither a full dismissal of a formalized <natural>, nor a clear definitional agreement on what <natural> *is*, provides the most hopeful trajectory. I outline an approach that requires a different philosophic attitude toward <natural> as well as more flexible and contextual decision and policy-making methodologies. I close by offering a minor example and explanation of this approach in action.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF A CAPTURED <NATURAL>

#### Introduction

As shown in Chapter 1, <natural> is one of the most influential symbolic placeholders within the English language. As an ideograph, <natural> carries a unique and powerful directive force, especially when focused toward a specific communicative goal. Its combined ambiguity and widely held aura of moral superiority makes <natural> a prime instrument in persuasive arenas. There currently exist no universally accepted statutory or regulatory definitions of “natural” that easily traverse codes of definition, regulation, or law. This lack of regulation allows for widespread employment of a term that has been shown to be especially influential.

For this reason, both courts and governing agencies have long been forced to improvise in order to settle disputes regarding the heavy term. This improvisation comes to primarily rely on situational applications of an “I’ll know it when I see it” approach (Fraley, 2014, p.1). This leads to an ever-evolving, largely unsatisfactory benchmark for what <natural> “is” that is largely lodged in temporal cultural convention and convenience. In U.S. America and many other Western settings, this convention often means defining nature by setting it dichotomously against humans and their interventions or against particular humans or human actions. This type of distinction carries numerous consequences where rulings are determined by exacting interpretations of the ideograph. In the following sections of this chapter, I canvass the legal history of <natural> and cite exemplars of rulings involving regulatory definitions of <natural>. I order these subsections as I do to showcase the increasing danger of a defined <natural> as it more closely approaches human bodies. I then move this history into conversation with that of

the <natural> within bodybuilding. It is my intent to showcase the interrelated use and development of the ideographic <natural> within these contexts.

### **Applications in Patent Law**

One of the most consistent consequences of separating the human from the <natural> involves patent law disputes. Disagreements in this realm concern designations of “natural” that can sink the patentability of a product or process. Section 101 of the Patent Act states: “Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture or composition... may obtain a patent therefore...” (Patent Law, 1952). However, though this language has been interpreted broadly, it excludes “laws of nature, natural phenomena, and abstract ideas” from being considered for patent coverage (Diamond v. Diehr, 1981). This provision exists so that the forces that govern all scientific advancement and behavior cannot be owned by any single entity. For instance, there will be no patent given on the forces of gravity. However, the lines are often not this easy to draw. Thus courts have advised caution with such restrictions saying, “too broad of an interpretation... could eviscerate patent law as all inventions at some level embody, use, reflect, rest upon, or apply laws of nature...” (Mayo Collaborative v. Prometheus Labs, 2012). There will always be a part of the <natural> world contained in any product or process that occurs within a world confined by laws of nature. The difficulty, then, is creating a consistent surgical point where humanness can be detached from naturalness enough to forfeit ownership of a phenomenon. As eluded to earlier, this divide has proven to be immensely philosophically complicated. Understandably, patent courts have been quite slow to make this cut in a consistent way, though there have been efforts.

The United States Patent and Trademark Office *has* attempted in the past to make a type of surgical divide that would offer further reaching guidance. Under existing advices, a natural

thing is to be understood as “the handiwork of nature” that “occurs without the hand of man [sic]” (Fraley, 2014). However, since there are certainly no processes that have had zero interaction with humankind before they arrive at the patent office, this advisement still must function as a sort of partitioned spectrum. On one end, there is minimal human intervention; on the other, a product or process that could not possibly happen without willful human interference (Fraley, 2014). The patent office must still decide at which point on this range lies a patentable idea. This decision process becomes a negotiation of how much deliberate human interference is enough to claim something as “unnatural.”

At the same time, the patent applied for must not too closely approach that which is regarded as human essence either, else it can become natural once again. Though human breath is entirely a product of human action, a patent court could not rightly allow a patent on human respiratory function. Devices used for breathing are likely, however to receive a patent. Similarly the human process of sleep is not patentable, but a whole range of products, processes, and interventions associated with sleep are granted sole ownership rights. This is all to say that any divide between the human and the <natural> cannot be expected to remain clean and distinct. There is a flow between humanity and natural-ness that does not easily lend itself to definite decision-making: to be apart from humanity is to be considered <natural>, to be within or innate of human is also largely considered <natural>, but the result of the conscious action of a human is much more difficult to legally classify.

The purpose behind particular distinctions can be seen in differences between individual court rulings. In *Funk Bros. Seed Co. v. Kalo Inoculant Co.* (1948), the Court ruled that offering a new mixture of bacteria to apply to seeds (making them healthier and more prolific) was not protectable by patent since it was considered only a *discovery* of an already natural process. This

process, it was ruled, could have occurred in existing conditions without purposed human intervention. However, in *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* (1980) the Court ruled that a genetically engineered bacterium used to break down crude oil could be patentable since the bacteria were not “naturally occurring” and were the result of human engineering. The result of these rulings, and many others like them, create a murky backdrop for understanding what is and is not <natural>. It seems that even a living creature can be considered unnatural and thus patentable if the utility of the associated innovation has been strongly established. <Natural> thus can easily become entwined in definitions of convenience and capitalist perpetuity.

Such patent cases showcase at least two relevant points for this study:

1. Distinctions in and amongst the ambiguity of <natural> must often be drawn to favor one party over another since prior advisements are, at best, only situationally applicable and they too likely once functioned to advantage only one side.
2. Once a product (or even a living organism) is deemed unnatural, it is not only unprotected as its own entity, but it is permitted to be exclusively owned. As these distinctions draw closer in proximity to bodies, the stakes are raised and the differences become cloudier.

### **Applications Concerning Wildlife**

Continued concern for a legal human/nature divide is evident in rulings concerning protection of certain animal species. Perhaps the best examples of this are the provisions located within *The Endangered Species Act*. These provisions forfeit protection for animals not living in their “natural” habitat, that is, those who have been geographically moved by humans. This is true even if the species is offered protection in what is considered their “home location.”

Relocated animals are considered “experimental” populations and thus not worthy of the same type of conservation efforts. Examples of these experimental populations would include even the re-introduction of formally “native” species such as the Mexican gray wolf in New Mexico and Arizona, and the California Condor in the Grand Canyon region. This vocabulary highlights how even a single act of human interference/intervention can affect the <natural> status of a creature, and permanently disqualify it from protection protocols.

Policy-related definitions of natural wilderness areas are similarly affected by their level of human interaction. *The Wilderness Act of 1964* defines wilderness as “undeveloped” and “retaining its primeval character...without permanent improvements for human habitation.” It exists to preserve areas “where the earth and its community...are untrammelled by man [sic], where man [sic]...is a visitor who does not remain.” The act also gives power to the office of the Secretary of Agriculture to actively determine which areas are suitable wilderness sites. These sites are meant to be areas that are roadless for at least 5,000 contiguous acres.

Proximity to humans and their traveling patterns forfeit a region’s eligibility for consideration of protection. In fact, it is the primary determining factor in the <natural> worth of a particular region. According to Jamison Colburn (2007), the way we preserve what we consider to be natural now “bears only a passing relation to biodiversity and habitat protection,” and serves primarily as a way of combating any blurring of the human/nature dichotomy (p. 38). From these policy stances we can glean that, legally speaking, human (synthetic) interference in the processes of wilderness discredits and (apparently unredeemably) devalues this wilderness to the point where it no longer deserves association with the term. <Natural> status in these cases is defined, valued, polluted, and then devalued all by way of human action. In real ways, the designation of <natural> goes far in determining what lives and dies.



Succinctly, humans have the legal capacity to make certain species of animals, and even certain plots of land, unnatural. This is significant in that it showcases the ways definitions of <natural> are controlled on both ends by human action. This revelation would inspire little belief in the actuality of any type of pre-existing <natural> that can offer significant moral guidance (even though <natural> is widely cast in this role). Perhaps it is useful to retrace the winding trail of logical thought that provides us with this widely accepted conclusion:

- a. Nature is often constructed as that which humans decide to be adequately inhuman or at least free of significant human interference.
- b. When this demarcated nature comes into significant contact with humanity, it may very well lose its claim on naturalness.
- c. Despite this forfeiture, this “new” creation is not afforded the protections of humans.

Close connection between the human and <natural> seemingly creates something that is fully neither. This is a conceptual parameter that I will explain more thoroughly later.

### **Applications in Food Regulation**

As was established in Chapter One, the term <natural> carries a profound market value in the food industry. This is largely derived from the moral and health-related superiority that U.S. American audiences still attribute to the term. Products labeled “100% natural” are widely considered to be the best options when available. The next closest label that inspires goodwill toward a product is similar: “all natural ingredients.” Though Western culture seems to desire a <natural> that is outwardly and obviously distinct from humanity, we also expect our interior being, our flesh, to be fueled and begot of the <natural>. For such reasons, <natural> foods are in

especially high demand insofar as they can hold claim to the designation. This terminology has also proven to be quite difficult to regulate.

In 1982, the Food Safety and Inspection Service ushered in the first modern guidance system for food labeling as it relates to natural-ness. The guideline specified that anything that contained ingredients that were “artificial or synthetic” should be considered unnatural. The FDA also interpreted the distinction through an informal policy offered in 1991. This defined natural food products as those in which “nothing artificial or synthetic (including colors regardless of source) is included in, or has been added to, the product that would not normally be expected to be there” (Negowetti, 2012, n.p.).

Unfortunately for those attempting to apply either of these guidelines, no additional advisement was supplied to clarify definitions of “artificial” or “synthetic.” The FDA considered outlining a more formal definition that would define natural in both the food and cosmetic fields, but decided against it. The primary reason for this change, of course, is that the agency realized there was no simple definition that would satisfy all cases, and that nearly any food or cosmetic product is “processed” in one way or another (“What is the meaning of 'natural' on the label of food?”, n.d.). The only sufficient advisement would involve a high number of specific requirements that would need to be adjusted for context and updated over time. It was determined to be far simpler to allow individual decisions to be made independently. A number of cases have involved commercial competitors who dispute one another’s specific marketing claims. Recent battles have revolved around uses of particular ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) (Goulet, 2012).

Multiple court cases have requested that the FDA intervene and create a type of formal statute for “natural” and “all natural,” but to date they have refused to do so. In 2008, the FDA

formally announced that they would leave “natural” undefined in their guidelines and that they had no plans to ever introduce regulation on the term. This has left a number of cases pending, unlikely to be resolved absent the power of regulatory intervention. It has also led to a large number of out-of-court settlements, plaintiff dismissals, and concerned customers.

For example, in November 2012, a Colorado woman sued the Pepperidge farmers, makers of many popular snack products, in relation to their line of “Naturally Made” Goldfish Brand crackers. This was done after she claimed they were “using inappropriate and misleading labeling” on their product by calling it “natural.” These crackers are made from flour, oil, milk, salt, and not much else. The cheddar variety used in the product is “baked with real cheese” and contains no artificial preservatives (Watson, 2011). As far as mass produced snack products go, this was arguably one of the more benign options on the market shelves. The problem, the woman said, is that the snack did not fully qualify as “natural” because it contained at least traces of genetically modified soybeans.

Also, in the summer of 2012, lawyers sued General Mills over the contents of its Nature Valley granola bars, claiming that “Nature” was not indicative of the contents of the food and the advertising surrounding the “goodness” of the snack was misleading. In the same year, plaintiffs targeted the GMOs in Kashi breakfast cereals that advertise with the phrase “Seven whole grains on a mission.” Targeted as well have been the genetically modified “all-natural corn” in Kix. ConAgra recently dealt with a round of accusations for making “dubious claims of ‘natural’ on four varieties of Wesson cooking oil, all of which derive from genetically modified crops” (Trauth, 2013, n.p.). Naked, a brand claiming to produce “all natural juice products,” has similarly experienced accusations of GMOs appearing in their recipes.

The abundance of these cases, and the inability to consistently resolve them, further highlights the ideographic qualities of <natural>. It also demonstrates the socio-cultural and political power afforded to the ideograph. <Natural> status is something U.S. Americans desire and praise; however, it is also an abstract commitment that they feel a cultural prerogative to protect and purify. Westerners want what they eat to be <natural>, and in turn express a rooted desire to remain themselves biologically (understood largely as inwardly) <natural>. What is <natural> impossibly becomes both that which we want within us, away from us, but also only that which is not in close enough proximity to us that either party is corrupted. Humans and nature have become both co-constitutive and co-destructive. Therefore, the supposedly separate entities have a social and legal prerogative not to infect one another lest they risk becoming culturally devalued or morally unacceptable. This inclination to cleanse what is <natural>, both from humanity and internally within populations of people, has incited multiple instances of violence towards particular bodies.

### **Historical Human Violence of a Captured <Natural>**

<Natural>, though heavily guarded, is widely observed as a term with positive connotation. However, the formal distinctions I have highlighted have shown that <natural>'s existence is predicated on the theoretical exclusion of things deemed unnatural by authoritative voices or supposed majority opinion. Though these distinctions certainly can be argued to have shown productive results on occasion, there are times when these same distinctions are inherently harmful. The greatest harm occurs when the “items” that are distinguished between are bodies. Distinctions of <natural> have led to many indefensible practices, and among these are some of U.S. America's biggest judicial atrocities. I detail these examples as historical proof

of the ways this country has systematically employed <natural> to privilege, segregate, physically relocate, and execute bodies.

The *Indian Removal Act of 1830* was the incredibly perverse result of a preference of one construction of <natural> over another. Under constitutional law, native tribes were to have sovereignty over all aspects of government save "the single exception of that imposed by irresistible power" which referred to foreign diplomacy with European governments. Chief Justice John Marshall named these privileges "original natural rights" in the Supreme Court case *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* ("Native American Rights," 2008). Instead of operating from this construction, the Indian Removal Act relied more closely on an outdated precedent that understood "natural" citizens to be "All persons born in the United States with the exceptions of children of foreign ambassadors, *Indians*, and, in general, people of color." ("Native American Rights," 2008, p. 3).

The definition of <natural> chosen by the court meant that Native American bodies were not legally considered <natural>. (This is an especially hypocritical and ironic determination considering the comparative geographic heritage of the people involved.) Since these peoples were deemed legally unnatural, they were no longer protected under constitutional provision. Thus, they could be forcibly removed from their homelands. President Andrew Jackson justified this by saying the action

will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the government and through the influences of good

counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community. (Chandler, 2011 p. 155).

This decision played into the deaths of at least 6,000 Cherokee on the Trail of Tears. By choosing this legal precedent to operate under, the Supreme Court decision enforced a definition of <natural> not based on any consensus of historical meaning, but instead on a convenient translation begat from the utility of the decision for a particular group: powerful, land owning Whites. In doing so, both the Court and the executive branch showcased the violent power of the ideograph regulated in relation to humans. (For a more thorough deconstruction of the Indian Removal Act, see Black, 2009; Cave, 2003).

Citizenship rights for Native Americans were dealt with again and further solidified in the case of *Elk v. Wilkins* (1884), which denied John Elk the right to vote in the state of Nebraska. The Court held tightly to the precedent that citizenship was established solely by the federal government, not the states, and that Native Americans were not included in the guarantees of citizenship. This meant these people were not extended the right to vote by the Fifteenth Amendment. The Court emphasized that the rulings of Congress did not ever intend for such rights to be established for Native (somehow unnatural) persons. The precedent set in *Elk* would stand until 1887, when Congress approved the *Dawes General Allotment Act*, which granted citizenship to Native Americans on the condition that they disavow tribal affiliation and allegiance (Washburn, 1975). It wasn't for another three years that Native American men were extended the full right to vote through the *Indian Naturalization Act of 1890*.

The same logic that was used against native peoples in 1830 played out similarly in the *Dred Scott Decision* in 1857. Chief Justice Robert B. Taney ruled that the U.S. Constitution permitted the unrestricted ownership of black slaves by white U.S. citizens. In a 7–2 decision,

the Court declared that slaves and emancipated Blacks could not be full U.S. citizens. Full rights were reserved only for those considered *natural* citizens: a definition that was still limited only to Whites born within the United States. The decision's wording clearly demarcates the place of the Negro within early 18<sup>th</sup> century U.S. America, saying:

The alien is excluded because, being born in a foreign country, he cannot be a member of the community until he is naturalized. But why are the African race, born in the State, not permitted to share in one of the highest duties of the citizen? The answer is obvious; he is not, by the institutions and laws of the State, numbered among its people. He forms no part of the sovereignty of the State, and is not therefore called on to uphold and defend it. ("Dred Scott vs. Sandford," 2008)

Because of this ruling, slavery was not only allowed to persist in Southern states, but the decision insinuated that it should be allowed in all U.S. American territories. This regressed abolitionist movements by several years. The residue of the legal distinction between the <natural> bodies of White folks and the "unnatural" bodies of color is still felt in the legacy of racism in U.S. America. (For more see Fehrenbacher, 1981; Graber, 1997; Luna, 1998.)

Even after the overturning of this legal precedent by way of the *Naturalization Act of 1870*, the U.S. American judicial system continued to actively define which peoples within the nation's borders were <natural> and which were not afforded this privilege. The specific guidelines of the 1870 *Act* give "aliens of African nativity and persons of African descent" the ability to become naturalized citizens of the United States. On the surface this decision appears to be one of inclusiveness toward a population long treated as legally inferior. Unfortunately, it was not so altruistic. The language of the *Act* continued to exclude Asians and Native Americans

from citizenship along with any other non-whites of non-African lineage. Moreover, the law became symbolically taxing and, in effect, provided a target for violence against Blacks as their claims to legal citizenship were increasingly trumped by social and political subordination and physical backlash.

Twelve years later, Congress addressed Asian citizenship directly in the *Chinese Exclusion Act*. This was a United States federal law signed by President Chester A. Arthur on May 6, 1882, that became one of the most significant and long-lasting restrictions on free immigration in U.S. history. Following the end of the California gold rush and Civil War, Chinese workers became the targets of significant racial animus from working class whites in Western states. Despite the fact that Chinese immigrants and their children comprised less than 1 percent of the U.S. population, Congress felt they must intervene to assuage racial fears that Asians were “stealing” jobs from white U.S. Americans (Gyory, 1998). Under this act, Chinese immigration was restricted, and in many cases, entirely outlawed. People of direct Asian heritage were disallowed legal naturalization, and their very presence was considered suspicious. Fear of persecution forced Asian ethnic groups to cluster within poorer metropolitan areas, especially San Francisco. Non-White immigrants and their families became a visual construction of the body that did not belong, the unnatural(ized) body.

The *Exclusion Act* was renewed in 1892 and then ruled permanent in 1902. The Act gained significant legal traction and formed the basis for other race-based exclusion measures including successful efforts to deny naturalization to Hindus, Japanese, most Middle Easterners, and East Indians. It also made possible *Executive Order 9066* issued February 19, 1942. In this order President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the deportation and incarceration of “anyone” under the authority of regional military commanders. This power was used to declare that all



people of Japanese ancestry were disallowed from inhabiting the West Coast of the United States. This included all of California and much of Oregon, Washington, and Arizona. The only exception was for those interned in government camps (*Korematsu v. United States*, 1944).

Approximately 5,000 Japanese Americans relocated outside the exclusion zone (Heine, Harihara, & Niiya, 2002), and 5,500 community leaders that had been arrested after Pearl Harbor remained in custody (About the Incarceration, 2014). The majority of mainland Japanese Americans were evacuated (or, more accurately, forcibly relocated) from their West Coast homes during the spring of 1942. In total, somewhere between 110,000 and 120,000 Japanese people were detained, 30,000 of which were school-aged children (James, 1987). Across the 10 internment camps, nearly 2,000 deaths were recorded, primarily from diseases traceable to sub-par living conditions. Many families suffered total forfeiture of any and all possessions they could not carry on their person.

In 1943 the *Magnuson Act* was passed, which finally nullified the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This paved the way for Chinese immigration to the U.S., at a still severely tempered rate of 105 individuals per year. This *Act* was not based in altruism either, but rather as a response to the wartime efforts of Japan to portray the U.S. as a racist and imperialist threat to all of Asia. It was also an attempt to appease China, and help foster a trans-Pacific alliance with an emerging power (Ngai, 2004). *The Magnuson Act* also allowed many formally restricted ethnicities to finally apply for the naturalization they had been long denied.

### **Legacy of Natural**

In the previous sections I detailed how a variety of U.S. American legal systems have approached designations of <natural> in the past. I explained how patent law operates under

definitions of <natural> that appear to be largely based on utility and profitability. I also highlighted how our legal protection for the <natural> world is dependent on imperfect definitional standards that enable humans to “denaturalize” nature toward possibly harmful consequence. I then discussed the history concerning the ways this nation has legally constructed the naturalness of bodies. From the totality of this data there appears to be at least one consistent theme: The process of formalizing <natural> operates along a predictable pattern. Governmental authority withholds designations of <natural> (or changes current designations) in order to insulate a particular dominant group or ideology. The power of an ideographic <natural> is able to be drawn upon by only a select few.

Eventually, cultural or environmental pressures accumulate to the point where definitions must be altered. This necessary change operates as a double-edged sword. Though broadening the definition of who can be natural(ized) appears to be a move towards equality, the concurrent move suggests otherwise. The terminology of <natural> is rarely (if ever) dissolved. Rather, it is only being moved. In this movement, <natural> becomes more inclusive for some, but further distances those who it does not accept within its parameters. The distinction remains, and with it the advantages or disadvantages of attributed status. Individuals and groups would not require access to a legal status of <natural> if it did not carry a necessary advantage, or in other realms, they would not flee from it if it didn't still carry negative connotation. Even in the process of inclusion, <natural> continues to cast negatively-read difference elsewhere.

Clearly, even with the overall positive regard <natural> yet claims, deployment by operationalizing the ideograph can be supremely dangerous. <Natural> has a legal history steeped in violent use as a justification for mistreatment and enforced supremacy. It is important to understand that <natural> becomes most perilous when its ambiguous, ideographical standing

is harnessed and thus undermined by enforceable definition. Normally, an ideograph's power exists in its fluidity. Any ideograph can mean many things and be attached to many things, but is never intended to refer to any *specific set* of things. When it is effectively tied to a particular, recognizable definition, ideographs should theoretically lose their latent ubiquitous power. History surrounding <natural> suggests this is not the case. Even through instances of regulation, <natural> has maintained its weighty influence.

Any time a body is considered unnatural within a culture that treats <natural> as an admirable ideograph, the potential exists that this body will be disciplined or harmed for its deviation. This potential is compounded when <natural> carries both the force of law and the ideological/moral gravity of an ideograph. This type of conflict is illustrated now in legislative debates concerning things such as immigration policy and LGBTQ rights. In both cases, lawmakers and pundits call forth a discriminating <natural> in an effort to push to the center particular viewpoints by pushing to the margins the needs and desires of other groups. The power of a directed <natural> is both pervasive, imminent, and possibly dangerous. Thus it is important to investigate the constitutive power of the word wherever it arises as a dividing force. I turn now to an examination of the specific history of bodybuilding in an attempt to demonstrate how <natural> can progress from unused term, to ideal form, to a "necessary" label used to distinguish between bodies.

### **History of Bodybuilding and <Natural>**

Bodybuilding and associated activities have long held unique influence over the ways particular bodies come to be recognized. In this section, I begin to trace bodybuilding's history (primarily men's bodybuilding) as it relates to Western appreciation for the aesthetic and

<natural> male body. To properly give a history of bodybuilding as sport and practice, it is first important to define what it is that bodybuilding describes.

In its most common treatment, the term *bodybuilding* can be used to cover a wide spectrum of activities. These range from the individual gymnasium workout using weights all the way to the professional competitions sponsored by national and international federations (Dutton & Laura, 1989). One widely accepted way to define bodybuilding is as the use of weight/resistance training in order to improve muscularity (in size or tone). This definition can be used to distinguish the practice from weight bearing sports like powerlifting or Olympic lifting that are more concerned with effective strength and technical ability to move weight (especially as it relates to the person's size). This definition would also then mark bodybuilding as distinct from practices that use weights to improve performance in other sport (e.g., like a football player lifting weights to become more explosive on the field, or a way of rehabilitating muscles after injury).

Though this type of definition might most accurately describe what bodybuilding effectively is on its own, the deployment of this definition would rule out the majority of people who employ the activity's tenets. Many people who do indeed use weight training to increase muscularity would reject *bodybuilder* as a term that applies directly to them, much as I did in my introduction. Most folks are more likely to describe their activity as "doing weight training," "working out," or "trying to get/stay fit." This is done in much the same way as a person who occasionally plays pick-up basketball is reluctant to call themselves a "basketball player" or an individual who tinkers with their car might not readily self-identify as a "mechanic."

The threshold of activity frequency seems to be much higher for weight trainers than it might be for the basketball hobbyist or mechanical enthusiast, however. If a person played

basketball or worked on their car for three hours a day, five days a week, and also constructed their diet, sleep pattern, and activity level around conditioning their body for the activity, it becomes significantly more likely that this person would self-identify as a basketball player, mechanic, or any other specialist. The difference then seems to be that people who describe what they do as “only weight training” are not necessarily training for a particular contest of any sort. Even someone who is only training to increase musculature will still often refrain from accepting the title of “bodybuilder.” Dutton and Laura (1989) suggest that this reluctance can be traced to two primary roots:

1. The individual does not want to accept any social stigma associated with bodybuilding.
2. The individual believes the term bodybuilding is more properly restricted to competition bodybuilding and its technical requirements and judging criteria.

I would add to this a third qualifier that, combined with suggestion two, describes my own reasons for not accepting the title of bodybuilder:

3. The individual does not view his/her progress and/or development as up to the standard of someone rightfully considered a bodybuilder.

Although bodybuilding is more rightly understood as a process than an achievement, there is a certain assumption of accomplishment that accompanies the designation. Often this accomplishment can be measured through direct competition.

Organized competition seems to be the largest (at least perceived) difference between those who do only *bodybuilding training activities*, and the widely held understandings of *bodybuilding as a distinct practice*. In the dominant usage of the terminology, those who actively

compete in bodybuilding competitions are the truest bodybuilders; those who do not weight train at all, and have no desire that relates to increased muscularity are certainly not. Between these two poles exists a spectrum of activities that is more or less bodybuilding. For example, someone who trains rigorously for competition, has not yet entered an event, but intends to join is a bodybuilder to some and not others, but would likely self-identify as one. Similar is the case of the person who made a career of bodybuilding but no longer actively competes or even trains. I would place myself below both of these individuals on a theoretical spectrum because, although I desire increased musculature and weight train to achieve this result, I do not currently have any intention of competing.

This spectrum of definitional “bodybuilding” resembles the type of ambiguity that <natural> has shown throughout its formal history. Despite the loose adaptations of the term we are likely to encounter in its discussion, I believe it is still possible to discuss a history of bodybuilding, as well as its interrelation of ideographic <natural>, as a recognizable set. For the purpose of this study, I look to a history of bodybuilding as defined through its *interest in the public aesthetics of the muscular body as achieved by means of methodical training*. In the following section I describe some of the historical conditions that brought Western culture to arrive at this practice, and I highlight the historical moments and periods where the cultural significance of the practice has fluctuated and propelled us towards current understandings. I begin this description with a discussion of one of the first historically significant names in “modern” male bodybuilding, Eugen Sandow.

### **Eugen Sandow and Early Modern Aesthetic Muscularity: Recreating the <Natural> Body**

The appreciation of the display of aesthetic muscular form in the Western tradition dates at least as far back as the ancient Greeks. These were a people who strongly believed in the

human body's capability to reflect the ideal beauty of the gods. Compared to men, gods were long depicted in works of art as more powerful and more perfectly proportioned. The gods showcased their supreme energy in their stature, strength, and muscularity. This symbolically represented a distinction between the two types of beings, but (as do many myths) allowed for the possibility of direct physical interaction between men and gods. Much like the story of Hercules, humans retained the ability to achieve similar status to gods through training and deed. As athletic competition gained popularity throughout the Greek empire, sculptures of the gods began to depict a transcendent human potential for strength and robustness. To become better built—to emulate the gods—was to become more perfect. Ancient influences persist in readily recognizable ways. For example, the pose of the subject in Michelangelo's "The Athlete" is still the inspiration for one of bodybuilding's competition poses. Arnold Schwarzenegger, during his dominant run in competitive bodybuilding throughout the 1970's and early 1980's, was said to have finally brought flesh to what artists could once only imagine.

Most historians of modern bodybuilding point to Eugen Sandow as the pivotal figure in the popularization of aesthetic muscularity in the industrial age and beyond. This is largely because he continues to be remembered as the first recognizable bodybuilder. This recognition is, of course, largely attributable to intuitive assessment and lack of holistic historical scope for this era, but it is not without merit. Sandow first gained recognition in 1889 by winning England's "World's Strongest Man" competition. Following the win, Sandow toured internationally throughout England, Australia, South Africa, and Continental Europe. At first, the majority of his touring duties were similar to the already-established circus strongman act. He would bend iron pokers, wrestle animals, and lift large objects as spectacle. He did, however, offer one significant addition to the traditional routine: he would enter a glass booth with music

accompaniment and perform a series of poses that highlighted his muscular frame. This part of the routine impressed then unknown promoter Florenz Ziegfeld so much that he signed Sandow to a ten-week contract to perform at the Chicago World's Fair and then a new four-year contract directly afterwards. The attraction was so successful that Ziegfeld was able to pocket upwards of \$250,000 in the short span in which they worked together (Dutton & Laura, 1989).

The significance of Sandow's new attraction was that he was no longer being promoted as the world's strongest man, but instead as the world's *best-built* man. This departure is noteworthy because it marked the first modern instance of endeared muscularity for muscularity's sake. It was not the function of the large body that impressed audiences; it was the allure of a superior/awe-inspiring human physique. The invention of the photograph and the timing of its increased popularity also proved to be an important factor in the growth of muscular aesthetics. In a time before advanced photo editing technology, this art form was progressive, but limited in how it was only able to capture people as they were. For bodies to have a similar impact to the classical depictions in paintings and illustrations, the body must look like a sculpture. Sandow was one of the first to popularize the human image of a classical idealized form.





*Figure 1.* Eugen Sandow. (Sandow, 1907)

On the heels of Sandow's popularity, many others began to try to find ways to emulate him and his success. This included both attempts at stage careers and also those who built bodies for display in other types of venues. In some cases, the growth was simply attempted for use in everyday life. Later in his life, Sandow was able to turn his popularity into a successful business career as an instructor and a promoter of muscle and fitness events. The new types of activities that Sandow popularized gained a substantial following and piqued interest across myriad venues. Eventually, his practices and those of his discipleship were in the public eye enough that they began to require their own terminologies.

Though his physique remains legendary and in many ways innovative, the practice that Eugen Sandow and his contemporaries were especially adept at was uninhibiting and making public a type of behavior that has arguably always existed. Dutton and Laura (1989) refer to this practice as the fundamental human trait of "*natural* interest in the look of the human body" (p. 29, emphasis added). In their description, humans have always been interested in how we look in

one capacity or another. This is true whether it relates to primal genetic/reproductive favoritism, or culturally-related class indicators. Over time, we have found ways and reasons to culturally or religiously stigmatize the practice of looking too closely. We have even gone as far as diagnosing the practice as *scopophilia*, or the questionable exercise of obtaining pleasure by looking at bodies. The history of art and fashion can be used as simple evidences for the argument that this behavior exists broadly, as can the way body images have been effectively tied to self-esteem. During this first era of bodybuilding, however, training the body was best understood as the science of perfection.

### **The Perfectible <Natural> Body**

Using Sandow, his students, and his peers as guides, the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw an uptick in bodybuilding enthusiasts, also known as physical culturists. These innovators and their followers began work on ways to most effectively promote and create the bodies that had become such a popular viewing attraction. This was undertaken as most things were in this time period: as a product of expert knowledge to be captured in scientific method. A great number of “textbooks” became available for purchase with titles indicative of the way the body was being recognized: *The Science & Art of Physical Development* (Pope, 1902), *Treloar's Science of Muscular Development: A Text Book of Physical Training* (Treloar, 1904), *The Construction and Reconstruction of the Human Body: A Manual of the Therapeutics of Exercise* (Sandow, 1907), and *MacFadden's Encyclopedia of Physical Culture: Volume 5* (MacFadden, 1912).

This turn of the century scene was a world that might seem odd to many of us now, especially those tied to bodybuilding activity. In this age, bodybuilders and muscle men were “teachers” and “professors” who taught courses in “physical culture” in gyms, known as

“colleges,” “schools,” and “institutes.” An instructor’s credibility was found through the development of their own body and later the bodies of their students. Sandow was even bestowed with the title “Professor of Scientific Culture to the King” (George V) in 1911 (Scott, 2008).

Beyond being the distributors of bodily knowledge, bodybuilders also became especially useful as living models of anatomy. The maximum visibility of their musculature made easier lessons within the context of medical school and human anatomy/physiology courses. These bodies were not understood as markedly unusual or strange, but rather as useful enlargements of the <natural>. Through scientifically understood practices geared at hypertrophy and body-fat reduction, their bodies were exactly what they were supposed to be. They were the magnified truth of human physique which was easier to observe and understand. Essentially, they were bodies “enlarged to show texture” much like the images on the front of a cereal box. From this realm of perception, bodybuilders/physical culturists were not unnatural at all; rather they were <natural> more fully performed and easier perceived.

This is not to say there was a lack of hierarchies for physiques in this era. In fact, the standards of greater perfection were relatively laid out. The perfectly built body was one that profiled as “rationally developed,” “efficient,” and “well formed.” This is strikingly similar to the ways a high-end industrial product might be described in this same time period. At the other end of the hierarchy was the “unhealthy,” “malfunctioning,” or “misshapen” body (Liokaftos, 2012). This type of physical frame began to be understood as the product of inadequate attention and poor process. The discourses of the time did not categorically separate these types of bodies as pass/fail, however. Rather, both types of bodies existed on the same continuum of normality in a way that mirrored the ancients’ perception of gods and humans. Likewise, these variations of

body size, shape, and tone were understood to lie on the same plane. They just demonstrated different points of arrival.

Thus, bodybuilding came to be understood as the scientific/technological advancement that allowed bodies a process with which to traverse the hierarchy and become more “normal” in function, or otherwise stated, more <natural>. Bodybuilding was both a practice and a science in the minds of this era. Those who aligned themselves with this viewpoint rejected the biological body (its genetics and current state) as the sole organizing principle that decided what *should* occur. Bodybuilding was “the terrain and the vehicle for agency and change” when it came to deciding the “nature” of the human body (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 75). Succinctly, bodybuilding was not understood as an attempt to defy nature or a <natural> body, but rather as a way to more fully (and more excellently) resemble a <natural> human form. This form became understood as what humans *should* be, or at least should aspire to be. There existed both current and historical models for this achievement in art and literature, and a science-endorsed outline on how it could be achieved. The <natural> body of the industrial age became one that closely resembled the classical body from art history. This, of course, was not a coincidence.

The newly industrialized West created the perfect backdrop for this philosophy that venerated the built classical body for several reasons. First, as I have already shown, the modernist tone of the day held a great appreciation for any process that could be standardized, scrutinized, improved, and taught. Bodybuilding functions as an activity of strict process and progression and, at the time, it offered improvement for the most fundamental unit of competing nations: the population. Bodybuilding allowed for enhancement in outside perception both on the level of form (aesthetics) and function (health/vitality). This same methodical process also offered a second parallel goal of bodybuilding and modernity: championing nature. By ignoring

the formerly assumed constraints of the human body in favor of technological improvement, those involved with bodybuilding did not attempt to *defy* nature as we might call it now, but instead to bend it to humanity's will as a resource. By understanding bodily progress as a product of scientific control, Western industrial-age philosophies easily assimilated bodybuilding tenets in the same vein as they would understand building dams or digging canals. This was another way for "man" to redirect nature toward his purposes.

There were indeed many ways bodybuilding ideals were in sync with the ideals of the turn of the century. However, the third, and perhaps most pervasive, reason for bodybuilding's sudden influence in the industrialized West was because of the ways bodybuilding openly *opposed* behaviors associated with this "new" modern way of life. Physical culturists of this time strategically included iconography and vocabulary that were steeped in anti-modern rhetoric (it should be again noted bodybuilding itself is at least a partial product of modernity) (Liokaftos, 2012). In doing so, physical culturists were able to prey on the dissonance of those unaccustomed to the type of lifestyles now available. Weak, sickly, and "malformed" bodies were understood as "an expression of 'unnatural' urban/industrial environments" (Liokaftos, 2012, p.78).

Thus the practices of bodybuilding were a way to return to the roots of humanity that were believed to exist more correctly during the Classical Age. Classical art, and the bodies that resembled it, were used to imagine a more "idealized 'natural' equilibrium" (Liokaftos, 2012, p.78) that better transitioned bodies that *worked* (in the physical/scientific sense) toward bodies that operate machines to do work. The classical body was understood as "a concrete embodiment of an apparently transcendental standard of perfection and harmony" (p. 78). Much as there was

understood to be a most efficient way to work and a most proper way to solve a problem, there was assumed to be a given ideal of bodily stature that was, quite literally, set in stone.



*Figure 2.* Michelangelo's *Victory*. (Michelangelo, 1532)

The highest aspiration for those aligning with the physical culturists was to “attempt to restore the transcendental aesthetic of ‘natural order and form’” (Bailey, 1998, p. 39). The early bodybuilding community sold the pursuit of health, beauty, and strength as a type of citizen duty; what Bailey (1998) refers to as “rational recreation” (p. 39). To choose not to make your body more <natural> through bodybuilding was to risk being caught up in a language of individual irresponsibility and shame. Thus influential books, such as the well-known *How to Pose* (Saldo, 1914), created a lingering image of the body that, in its <natural>/ideal state, was the end result of a process of education and cultivation of a person's body and mind. Popular titles spoke of the

perfect body in terms of its ability to imagine, contemplate, concentrate, and then create perfection—imagery remarkably similar to a sculptor with an unshaped block. This perspective offered a view of humanity whose current undisturbed, unworked bodily state (what we might call a <natural> state now) was utterly unnatural. It was only through strenuous and continued work that a person might produce (or more accurately in modern terminology, mechanically reproduce) the perfect <natural> body. From this perspective, the stone was always meant to be cut, and there was a correct way to do it.

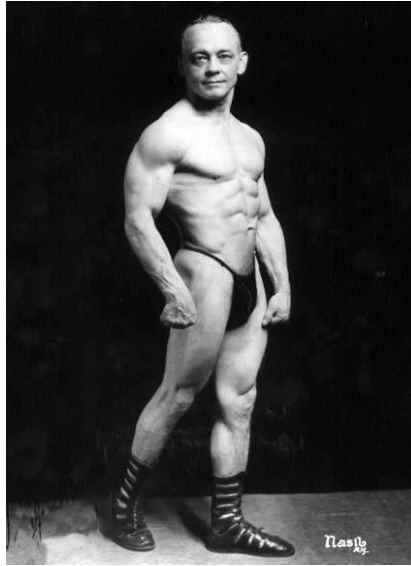
This type of guidance marked bodybuilding's first foray into formally (though still vaguely) determining which bodies were and were not <natural>. The building of the body was recognized as a <natural> remedy to industrial ills both in its goal (restoring the body to what it should be) and in its methods. As a consequence, creating the built body involved engaging in <natural> behaviors like “being exposed to the elements, natural therapy, avoidance of drugs and alcohol,” and in every way possible mimicking the <natural> behavior of the human animal (e.g. running, feats of strength) (Wedemeyer, 1994, p. 28). In tandem, these methods were designed to combat and cure the degenerative effects of modern civilization. It was also seen as a more <natural> way of achieving health and balance than the medical orthodoxy of the day. Bodybuilding practices were sometimes prescribed as treatment for ailments such as “weak constitution,” constipation, stress, headaches, lethargy, and insomnia. Building the body meant achieving a more respectable balance in a world of rapid change.

Alternatively, bodybuilding advocates surprisingly had no tolerance for excess, artifice, extravagance, or generally overdoing it. Though the image we have of bodybuilders now involves men and women who have pushed themselves to the maximum possible size and musculature and beyond, the “best built” bodies of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century looked quite different.

“Balance” and “grace” were essential elements of the ideal body (Treloar, 1904). All-around development was privileged over size of particular muscle groups (unlike the massive arms, chest, and thighs required now). Bodybuilding laid claim to an elevation of human form that most closely approached what was culturally viewed as the <natural> order of life. Overly developed bodies were relegated to the realm of the “grotesque, disproportionate, and unnatural bodies of strongmen” (Lambropoulos, 1989, p. 77).

These unsightly body frames denoted a type of class designation that was reserved for unlevied specialists or even the circus side-shows which bodybuilding first worked to distinguish itself against. By contrast, bodybuilders/physical culturists remained harmonious, educated, balanced, and offered an air of upper-class distinction, even if it was only in appearance (Lambropoulos, 1989). Even the desk jockey or pencil pusher could work themselves into “the body they were meant to have.” Ideally this type of body would also appear <natural> and at ease as if they were not overtly trying to express their superior figure. Instead these people were expected to carry it as if it were always meant to be there. Such was the description of top bodybuilder Otto Arco who boasted the “cut of a heroic statue, and at the same time an elegant line of grace and movement” (Calvert, 1925).





*Figure 3. Otto Nowosielsky (Arco). (Calvert, 1925)*

This early era of bodybuilding becomes especially important to this study for two primary reasons.

1. The era demonstrates direct historical precedence for the categorization of bodies through the use of an ideographic <natural>.
2. This era shows the propensity of bodybuilding to intervene in and influence dominant dialogue about all bodies, especially in relation to <natural>ness.

This second reason deserves further explanation. Although only certain bodies practice bodybuilding directly and even fewer might classify what they do as bodybuilding, all other bodies are in some ways implicated whenever a standard emerges and moves. During this era, bodybuilding both created and extended its influence by creating a public forum for built bodies, by standardizing the ideal body, and by generating a scientific method of achieving this body. By the early 1920s, nearly all of U.S. America and Western Europe incurred extended exposure to the tangible results of the growing physical culturist/bodybuilding movement. Because of this

new type of intense bodily awareness, witnesses could not be considered casual observers to these built bodies anymore. They were forced to locate themselves within an aesthetic/<natural> vs. malformed/unnatural hierarchy and adjust their behavior accordingly (or not). Both of these factors would continue to play significant roles in the next major era of bodybuilding even as definitions over what should constitute this <natural> form became less unanimous.

### **Muscle as “American Manhood” or “Muscle for Its Own Sake”: Bodybuilding’s Middle Era**

The time between the 1940s and 1970s saw a number of organizational and philosophical changes in the physical culturist/bodybuilding movement. National and international structures for bodybuilding competition were formed, and new governing bodies began to dictate their specific rules and parameters. In the post-World War II era, the global shift left the United States to take over from a rebuilding Western Europe as the center of the world’s bodybuilding stage. This period also saw the rupturing of the physical culturist movement into factions working to promote their own interpretations of the definition and purposes of bodybuilding and the ideal/<natural> body. The most prominent example of this fissure can be found between the two major bodybuilding contests held during this time. These were the Mr. America contest, which was sponsored by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and the Mr. Olympia contest sponsored by the International Federation of Body Builders (IFBB).

In this section, I will use these two entities to briefly outline the ideological battleground that bodybuilding created and participated in during this time. I will narrow my focus to an examination of how differing ideas about bodybuilding and pursuits of the aesthetic body had a significant impact on understanding what comprised culturally acceptable, and <natural>,

behavior. It is my belief that this middle era provides further evidence both of the ideographic power of <natural> and the influential ability to categorize that is held by bodybuilding.

### **The AAU and “A Champion America Can Be Proud of”**

The Mr. America contest was first formed by the AAU in 1939 and had a lasting run time of nearly 60 years (Liokaftos, 2012). Like its physical culturist predecessors, this group maintained a focus of all-around development, still distrusting excess. In many ways, the contest operated as an answer to the popular “Miss America” pageant which debuted in 1929. The stated goal of the “Miss” pageant now is to “provide young women with a vehicle to further their personal and professional goals and instill a spirit of community service through a variety of unique nationwide community-based programs,” (Participate and Earn Scholarships, 2014). However, at its inception this contest represented an attempt to locate perfect specimens of womanhood, specifically in the realm of conventional feminine beauty. Similarly (and also purposefully contradictory), Mr. America sought to showcase the “ideal representation of American manhood” in every aspect possible (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 106). This involved making judgments about physicality, morality, and even the mentality of contestants. Aesthetic muscularity was still the most judged attribute in determining a Mr. America. However, the physical appearance was intentionally understood more as a byproduct or a derivative of larger commitments more suitable for the model U.S. American youth. A good and well-balanced body was marketed as the <natural> result of a lifestyle focused on the rugged strength, health, and patriotic character befitting a citizen of post-war superpower. Much of this involved intentional ignorance toward the lifestyle and commitments required to win the event.

By 1955, the standards for determining a winner continued to progress towards “more balance” in the competitors’ qualifications. The AAU’s organizational fear of an appearance of

too intense a focus on the aesthetic appearance of men's bodies seems to have been enough motivation to seek countermeasures. Searching for the "ideal representative" now meant sifting through additional criteria like "character, education, career aspirations, and athletic ability" (Fair, 1999 p. 17). The procedures for determining the winner also moved beyond simple stage posing and included an interview process and an assessment of the functional strength of the competitors denoted by adequate performance in the Olympic weightlifting events.

Interestingly, a criterion of "general appearance" was instituted as well. Instead of turning the focus away from the body of the competitors, this contest requirement turned tighter scrutiny on the "heterosexually coded surfaces of the body" (Liokaftos, 2012). In 1957, the head of the AAU committee on weightlifting and bodybuilding, Bob Hoffmann, outlined the relative importance of these new standards in an interview found in *Strength & Health Magazine*:

[T]here should be an endeavor to select the best all-around man, a man who will be a credit to the title he bears... The following system of scoring is employed: 5 points for Symmetry of Proportions, 5 Points for Muscular Development, 5 points for General Appearance, Skin, Hair, Posture, etc., and 5 points for Athletic Ability (Fair, 1999).

Hoffman went on to further outline the requirements of "General Appearance" saying that the contestant should have impressive teeth, posture, and carriage on the platform. He must also be a "good-looking man" in a "handsome, manly sort of way" (p. 65) He was also to be devoid of features like "buck teeth, small chin, lined face, irregular skin, shortage of hair, bald spots, varicose veins, stretch marks, and flat feet" (p. 66) The contestant was also to be a "wholesome type of man" with high moral standing, well-educated, alert, and friendly. Above all, Hoffman stipulated that we should be "proud to call him Mr. America" (p. 66).

As the list of descriptors grew, a clearer sketch of the perfect U.S. American began to grow. Instead of merely reflecting the prevailing attributes of the times, the continued adjustments of the Mr. America contest became an active contributor to the definition of the perfect, pure, or <natural> state U.S. American men should display. Also, the AAU continued to push forward the philosophy that these standards of perfection should be achieved “naturally,” or at least, without obvious, obsessive effort. As one of the original bodybuilding judges, Bernarr Macfadden was especially vocal about this standard, saying, “all development should be natural” and that bodies should become a manifestation of “what nature intended for the proportions of the body” to be achieved through the normal rigors of life (Fair, 1999, p. 23). As increasing importance was placed on factors beyond the classically sculpted bodies of competitors. Those who claimed bodybuilding as their exclusive practice started to gain an unsavory reputation as wasteful and vain. Bodybuilders were increasingly understood as those with “nothing better to do with his time than spend four to five hours a day in a smelly gym doing bench presses and curls” and who “wears his hair long and gilds the lily by having it waved” (Fair, 1999, p.169).

The behavior of this “cult” of bodybuilders was a violation of the traditional, upright masculinity that formed much the foundation of post-war heteronormativity. Over obsession with “look” over strength, function, and ability was unmanly, improper, and unnatural (Liokaftos, 2012). Thus, the Mr. America contest took up the duty of creating and upholding a model of pure Americanism. This included creating safeguards against the contest being only a “male beauty pageant.” Oddly, a bodybuilding contest became a foremost contributor to the notion that pursuing muscular development for its own sake was peculiar and more so, a type of unnatural gender dysfunction.

In some ways, the contest's popularity and requirements belied its own commitments to their idealized modes of exceptionalism and heteronormativity. Though they claimed an aversion to obsession with appearance, the contest's parameters created a standard and showcase for the most conventionally attractive men of the nation. Sculpted bodies paired with intense requirements for "general appearance" garnered appeal beyond supposedly rugged, heteronormative, manly coding, and effectively encouraged behavior the organization supposedly abhorred. Though highlighting athleticism and facial features was cited as an attempt to avoid sexualization of the aesthetic male body, these attempts largely failed. In fact, as bodybuilding contests gained more regional and local traction, so did so-called "blue" or "beefcake" magazines that extolled the nearly flawless figures, faces, and features of the most recent champions. Such "undue preoccupation" with male aesthetics was supposedly relegated to place of "degenerate" and "lesser" masculinity (Hooven, 1995). Lowest on the continuum of masculine behavior was the ever widespread fear of the infiltration of homosexuality. Though "muscle magazines" proliferated the standards of <natural> U.S. American perfection, these publications also actively contributed to the sexualizing of the male form, despite their supposed efforts otherwise. Bodybuilding circuits and publications also served as a device for promoting some types of sexual services and networks (Hooven, 1995). By attempting to standardize an image of the ideal American, Mr. America created a display of "ultimate naturalness," and simultaneously provided an avenue of expression for behaviors and even lifestyles the forming organization would long name as "unnatural."

### **The IFBB and "Muscle for Its Own Sake"**

In 1965, a new and differently-oriented contest emerged that challenged the landscape and inherent purpose of bodybuilding. The IFBB and its co-founder, "trainer of champions" Joe

Weider, announced Mr. Olympia as a method of breaking bodybuilding out of an age of sideshow and quiet embarrassment and into a self-celebrating age. Weider wanted to push the limits of human potential, and remove restrictions that encouraged only moderate growth. Unlike Mr. America, that could only be entered once, Mr. Olympia was designed as a “contest of champions.” It intended to attract those who had devoted a lifetime to developing their physiques and, through competition, the organization incentivized further growth. According to a statement in a 1965 issue of *Muscle Builder Magazine*, the competition committee for Mr. Olympia wanted “to see just how far they can go... how big muscles can be built. We must establish a contest for the greats – and through this contest the greatest of the greats can emerge” (Weider, 1965, p. 3).

Mr. Olympia marked the first major investment in and showcase for “pure bodybuilding.” The IFBB considered their organization to be the representative of the pinnacle of self-determination. They viewed bodybuilding as an underserved collective of inspired individuals who had been repressed for too long by rules that turned some of the world’s best athletes into either a sideshow or an afterthought. For the first time, building muscle for the sake of building muscle was a practice that could be openly celebrated. Behaviors that Mr. America had long called irresponsible, wasteful, and unnatural, now had a type of “international brotherhood” (Fair, 1999, p. 21) where they were welcomed, encouraged, and promoted.

Though the premises of Mr. Olympia were especially resonant with those already entrenched within a sub-culture of bodybuilding, constructing bodybuilding as a <natural>, acceptable practice to the remainder of society proved to be a challenge. At the time of the contest’s inception, the AAU was an especially powerful sports program, and offered the highest level of exposure for those involved in competitions related to bodily aesthetics. The AAU also required their athletes to maintain amateur status. Those who claimed membership within IFBB

(a professional organization) were effectively weeded out of mainstream exposure. To attempt to gain credibility for the professional bodybuilding movement, the IFBB and its members had to, in essence, re-define a subset of <natural> masculinity (Fair, 1999). This meant confronting the primary point of disagreement between the two organizations: ability vs appearance, or “surface vs. substance” (Liokaftos, 2012).

As discussed prior, the portrait of ideal/<natural> manhood during bodybuilding’s “middle period” both reflected and influenced bodybuilding standards. The Mr. America contest did much to showcase and promote an aesthetic ideal of “rugged, functional manhood” that could be seen manifest through strength, functional fitness, proportion, character, and facial attractiveness. The IFBB ushered in a contrasting definition of masculinity that offered pursuit of aesthetic muscularity as “a legitimate index in itself for a sense of male selfhood” (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 119). To spread this perception, bodybuilders aggressively attacked any perception that bodybuilding for its own sake was problematically narcissistic, and thus a failure of manhood. Many times this was accomplished through a “they’re just jealous” rhetoric encapsulated in this article taken from a 1967 publication of *Muscle Builder Magazine*:

Every muscleman eventually hears the stinging remark: “you’re just a mirror athlete... and I got a friend half your size that can lift twice as much.” Well brother, that hurts... and when it comes from other weight men who are more knowledgeable... it hurts twice as much... Of course we know anyone who derides bodybuilding does it out of pure jealousy. [They] secretly crave a handsome physique, but haven’t got the ambition to work for it... Only the bodybuilder exhibits perfect muscular development and a high degree of strength too. (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 120)



Through this commentary, we see how bodybuilders did not always attempt to abolish established indexes of masculinity, but chose to show how a built body could be viewed as in alignment with the seemingly more <natural> values like hard work, strength, and dedication.

Another approach used by bodybuilders to alter public perception of their activity was the perpetuation of an aura of “hipness” and intrigue that surrounded the bodybuilding lifestyle. Bodybuilders appeared self-assured in their profession, lifestyle, and in their bodies in a way that showcased an attractive confidence. Their seemingly counter-cultural sentiments and distaste of traditional bodily expectations were in alignment with the uneasy social climate in the U.S. American 1960s. The practice of becoming something better through hard work and self-advancement was also easily consumed by those who leaned towards notions of liberal individualism (Eagleton, 1990). By claiming their practices to be a demonstration of “pure bodybuilding” and “the crowning of personal achievement,” while simultaneously advocating for broader definitions of appropriate personal pursuits, the IFBB and its athletes offered a product with elements that both social conservatives and radicals could latch on to, even if it could not be appreciated fully by either.

This middle era of bodybuilding is important to this investigation in a number of ways. The primary point to recognize is how the era illustrates the interwoven essence of <natural> and bodybuilding between the 1930s and 1970s. This is shown both through the ways bodybuilding deployed <natural> in order to discipline the actions of its contingency, and also by the way bodybuilding (as a distinct practice) attempted to defend itself from outside scrutiny. In this era, unlike the early era that preceded it, bodybuilding’s assertions on what the <natural> body

should be appear to be was equally matched by societal pressure pushing back against what society perceived to be excessive within bodybuilding.

The two largest divisions of bodybuilding can be seen to take contesting approaches to assertions of unnaturalness. The AAU and the Mr. America contest curbed its emphasis on aesthetic bodily features toward more widely accepted, <natural>, performances of masculinity. The elite bodybuilder, under this definition, must rely on physical imperatives of morality, complete development, strength, and attributable skill. They were beholden to “post-war gender politics that aligned physical culture with patriotism and proper citizenship” (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 132). The winners were supposed masculine role models for U.S. America’s male youth. This, of course, casted an unnatural, “unmanly” Other that “ranged from the ‘narcissistic’ and the ‘weak’ to the ‘perverse’ and the ‘queer’” (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 132). The division essentially attempted to defend itself against fears of unnaturalness by delineating and casting out that which it thought unsavory. The AAU “pruned away” the unnatural in hopes that what was left would still fit within, and also continue to define, what is <natural>.

The newly formed IFBB with its Mr. Olympia contest took a quite different approach and eventually came to prevail. The leadership and its members defended what they did as “pure” and also an acceptable outcropping of traditional virtues of masculinity. Instead of shunning practices that focused overtly on aesthetics, IFBB bodybuilders produced the built male body as both an object of desire and as a superior achiever. In their depiction, taking care of oneself (including looks) was “a legitimate index of masculinity” (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 132). The duty of “rational recreation to achieve the natural” that was depicted during bodybuilding’s early era was progressively drawn into a paradigm of potentiality and continual development (Hoberman, 2005, p. 45). This focus would generally last into the most recent era of bodybuilding (which I

detail more fully in the next chapter) and continues to operate within a landscape of bodily naturalness that has become ever more formalized.

### **Conclusion: Formations of <Natural> Bodies**

In this chapter I outlined and intertwined historical precedents of <natural> across a series of venues. Both within the realms of historical legality and inside organized bodybuilding, <natural> has been given way to cast its ideographic weight through methods that make (often problematic) distinctions between items, creatures, and human bodies. The practices and decisions outlined in this chapter create a backdrop that denotes both the power and pervasiveness of <natural> especially as it approaches segregation of human bodies. In the following chapter I will couple this historical account of <natural> with more recent manifestations of the term and explanations of what <natural> is now doing. Here, I have shown how an ideographic natural has taken concrete, enforceable form or has “crystallized.” Next, I will describe the theoretical process of the ongoing crystallization of <natural> and use this theoretical model to discuss the consequences related to the hardening or “striating” of ideographs more generally. In order to make sense of the process of ideographic crystallization, this study will turn to the vocabulary of Deleuze and Guattari to explain what is conceptually accomplished when philosophically loaded terms such as <natural> begin to take recognizable, consequential forms. I intend to use this analysis to point to the impact of practices that enforce concrete meaning on ideographs, both specifically in bodybuilding and well beyond, and also to highlight methods of resistance towards associated undesirable effects.

## CHAPTER III

### SMOOTH AND STRIATED SPACES

#### Introduction

As illustrated by the brushes with conflict outlined in the previous chapter, determinations of <natural> are far from simple matters. When a decision is made in relation to the definition of <natural>, consequences will likely arise that reach beyond the realm where the debate first appeared. In my investigation thus far, I have shown that there seems to be a collective search for and appreciation of <natural> in and outside of bodybuilding. However, evidence suggests that the fluidity of the term itself makes far-reaching delineations complicated, if not impossible. I have also displayed the functions of <natural> as an ideograph in U.S. American culture and how it has enjoyed widespread usage in political rhetoric. If <natural> can be both ideographical and deployed as a definable term, the potential certainly exists for the rhetorical weight of the term to enact discriminatory action against those bodies that do not fit within a conventional construction of <natural>.

As historical examples have shown, this discriminatory action, when carried to high levels of legislation, can be extraordinarily violent. This is certainly a primary concern of any crystallizing <natural>. However, operating without any standardization, the ideograph can offer free reign over a word that still holds the benefits of an overall positive and influential connotation. This freedom can be argued to be a potentially productive state, but the lack of regulation surrounding <natural>'s relation to, for example, certain products, can create similarly dangerous potentials where a poorly informed population is led to use substances with harmful bodily consequences. If <natural> can mean anything, it can easily be manipulated to cause harm. This doubled-edged potential for trauma brings about a number of theoretical questions

relating to how to properly and judiciously approach the crystallization of ideographic <natural> and similar terminologies. In this chapter, I apply an existing theoretical lens to the process of ideographic crystallization in hopes of uncovering the potentials of this action and our collective responsibilities toward these terms.

### **Smooth/Striated**

The process of capturing or crystallizing an abstract space such as <natural> and then regulating this expanse mirrors Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) descriptions of smooth and striated spaces. Smooth and striated spaces are opposite, but co-constitutive, dynamic areas of thought, regulation, and ideals. These spaces exist because of and in spite of one another and, over time, serve to alter the understanding of what a practice or belief means. At the most simple level, a smooth space is one that is without demarcation, borders, or regulation. Deleuze and Guattari offer the uncharted ocean as a model example of a smooth space. Before humans were able to map or find locations in open water, we were forced to assume the oceans continued endlessly. It was an area, mass, and volume of immeasurable vastness and uninterrupted continuity. Human activity, outside a system of formalized economy, can also similarly be considered a smooth space, as it exists without the need for distinctions between tasks. This distinction between smoothness and striation in human activity illustrates the difference between doing what is wanted and needed, and doing what is authoritatively required.

A striated space exists when a smooth space is captured, charted, and regulated. The ocean, in some respects, lost much (but never all) of its smoothness with the development of navigational instruments that allowed charting of a ship's position even days from any shoreline. If we discuss people instead of water, it is rules, regulation, expectations, government, and economic forces that work to striate human activity. What would once be considered the simple

fluid movements of living become striated into *work, play, education*, etc. as these tasks become more or less economically valuable. Outside these delineations, human activity is intersubjectively flowing chaos: activities between people occur as they need to, and societies do not impose impermeable boundaries on themselves. In this smooth existence, activity is self-regulating through evolving desire. Requirements are always being pushed, tested, and re-evaluated as necessity or curiosity requires.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe human activity in this condition as a type of nomadic “war machine,”—a collective that resists control. Though the term appears violent rather than restorative, war is not the purpose of this assemblage, but rather a consequence of constant confrontation with an overly controlling State. The nomadic war machine can be thought of as a device of social organization that fosters constant creativity and actively opposes measures that constrict and homogenize human behaviors. The machine is thus the smooth, revolutionary force marching on the horizon, “bubbling up” from a shared public desire to move. This is the type of smooth force that opposes unjust systems of rule. Smoothness is disrupted whenever activities achieve recognizable value that can be partitioned and marketed. More organized systems of statehood work to engulf the smoothness of the action of the war machine and fit this action within a more prescribed system. For example, when the war machine itself becomes subsumed by a State, we call it a military. Instead of being a force of ever-progressing ideals, this newly purposed machine becomes an enforcer of political and economic aims.

The authors (1987) describe this process as the enactment of an “apparatus of capture.” An ordered state theoretically uses this apparatus to alter the meanings of activity to fit within the larger economic venture—to *capture* meaning for larger purposes. For example, through the apparatus once-smooth territory becomes striated land as the landowner and the prices of rent

foster direct comparison of plots of ground. Smooth bartered exchange becomes striated installments of money when taxation and the banker establish currency and determine value. Likewise, work is only distinguishable from other activity when it is given a name, a market value, and determined to be the result of surplus labor. From this point on it is understood as a less desirable task to undertake. As one might expect, a capitalist economy requires the extensive use of capture as these economies are constantly market and value driven.

As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain, however, there is never such an easy distinction between a smooth and striated space, nor does there exist any perfectly smooth or completely striated space. The two create one another even as they work to be distinct, and thus are often both necessary. One explanatory analogy is that of fabric being sewn. As stitches are added, the once-smooth space of a cloth has demarcations, sections, and inscriptions of striation. At the same time these stitches are added, new smooth spaces are formed between the marks that did not exist or at least were not noticeable prior. New smooth spaces are rendered through striation. Looking from the other direction, discovery of these smooth spaces also works to highlight their borders. The cloth was never truly a smooth space (since it was made up of its own stitches, and had been cut) but it did represent a type of relative smoothness in its unaltered form. Striated spaces are often recognized in the creation process of the smooth.

It is not difficult to apply Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) understanding of smooth and striated spaces to the complicated distinctions of <natural> that result from its regulation in bodybuilding. First, as the previous chapters have shown, bodybuilding is a sport largely about distinctions between smoothness and striation. The winning competitors are often those who demonstrate the most muscular visibility and separation. This is sometimes referred to in technical judging practices as the complexity and striation of visible muscle mass. As far as

competition goes, striations are almost always more suitable for winning. In applying Deleuze and Guattari's terminology to the ideographic crystallization of <natural> that occurs within bodybuilding, we are offered a chance to better examine the dynamism between smooth and striated spaces and the consequences of ideographic striation.

### **Smooth/Striated Muscle**

Complicated distinctions between smooth and striated naturalness, like those outlined in previous chapters, continue to play out in exceptionally nuanced ways across contexts. Constant interplay between the need/motivation to define <natural> and the likely impossibility of this venture is, at the theoretical level, muddy. To understand the application of smoothness and striation to the context of this study of naturalness, it is useful to consider a depiction of what a theoretical initial striation, or capture, of <natural> might look like. It requires that we imagine a starting location of smooth space that includes all products, people, and practices without *a priori* evaluations of their worth. The development and consequent application of a mechanism within the state apparatus of capture that values <natural> above unnatural in any realm of difference offers the first striation in this otherwise smooth space. No matter where on the metaphorical cloth it occurs, once this stitch is made we are now left with a grand but ambiguous theoretical distinction between the two planes (<natural> and unnatural thoughts, beings, and practices). This grand distinction offers little clarity across contexts save the presumed distinction arising from the semantic differential between the two opposing designations. However, the difference remains. Although a definition of <natural> may be meant to apply only in one location, the “imaginary” line of striation that divides the newly formed categories also divides in its assumed extension. This is metaphorically similar to how a person in New York might claim they live north of Arizona’s Grand Canyon. Although the landmark does not reach



nearly far enough east (or west) to divide New York, a relative location based on current position can still be assumed.

Because of the premise imposed by a divide, striations further offer the potential of violence as <natural> thoughts, beings, and practices begin to crystallize and push individuals/actions that do not fit within the convention of current striations towards the margins of society. As striations increase, divides become more recognizable. As divisions become more explicit, categorizations become possible. As further confrontations between <natural> and unnatural arise (like legal definitions of the term or regulatory action related to what <natural> means) the dividing lines grow more bold and become distinct. The easier it is to determine a person's naturalness, the simpler it is to designate their worth within an apparatus of capture.

When applied to our specific context of bodybuilding, striations of <natural> come in many forms. Striations might, in one example, look similar to the standard of <natural> that is supposedly forever broken when a loaded syringe is forced to penetrate skin and spill its contents into human tissue. Though, theoretically, there is a divide between bodies that fit this definition and those who do not, this striation does what all striations do: create more, smaller patches of smooth space where the definitions are not so distinct. For example, a substance user may be able to use a masking agent that circumvents testing procedures, allowing this person to remain technically <natural> by a particular organization's rules. Conversely, a false positive test could send a person who has not passed this threshold of substance usage to the realm of the unnatural. The primary stitch is always far from a perfect divide, and it leaves a number of practices and people fighting to cross a theoretical chasm even as it moves. An example from another sport provides a helpful illustration of this. Vitor Belfort is a former champion of Mixed Martial Arts. Later in his career he was known for his incredible, almost bodybuilder physique despite his

advanced age. At the time, Testosterone Replacement Therapy (TRT), a hormonal treatment for men experiencing low free testosterone levels, was legal in the division where Belfort fought, the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). After complaints from younger fighters that TRT was giving an unfair advantage to particular athletes, UFC banned TRT use for their fighters in 2014. Shortly afterward, Belfort pulled out of his Middleweight title fight, realizing his body would no longer be considered passable by the UFC or the Nevada State Athletic Commission (Erikson, 2014). Without changing his behavior, Belfort was trapped by an evolving definition of <natural>.

The hope of the individual is to escape being pinned down or penned in with each new application for a distinction. In bodybuilding these appear in the form of questions like: Does my body appear <natural>? What happens if I *accidentally* come into contact with a banned substance? Or like Belfort, what if the standards shift such that previously legal substances that I have used are now banned? Though striations insinuate a distinct divide, they do not often provide partitions that promote consistent clarity, nor do they satisfactorily allow ways of considering the uniqueness of individual cases. Striated space is always rendered incomplete and not fully applicable, but within bodybuilding especially, striations abide.

### **Governing Bodies**

Bodybuilding first striated <natural> in its Early Era through specific and pointed distinctions between what a <natural> and unnatural body should look like and be able to accomplish. This was a way of separating enlightened, <natural> humans from the weakness that was said to accompany modern living. Bodybuilding's Middle Era further striated <natural> behavior as it related to displays of national, gendered, and sexual identities. In doing so, the governing bodies of the sport attempted to draw borders around what was acceptably <natural>

appearance and gender performance. Today's bodybuilding world continues to striate <natural> in a number of ways. These striations offer interesting, challenging, and often contrasting depictions of the term. I believe that the way bodybuilding creates and contests definitions of <natural> is useful in understanding how we might act more responsibly in relation to the crystallization of ideographic <natural> and ideographs more generally. Perhaps the most impactful place to investigate the <natural>/unnatural divide within rhetoric surrounding bodybuilding today is within the concept of “the freak.”

### *“Freaky” Bodies*

The previous chapter's description of the early era of bodybuilding portrayed a practice that was primarily concerned with health, moderation, well-rounded behavior, proportion, and functional strength. The winners of bodybuilding competitions were those who did not appear to take themselves or their size too seriously, and modeled ideal citizenship in both appearance and (theoretically) in behavior. However, the sport has greatly evolved since its inception, and now hardly resembles its origins or former champions. In many ways, modern bodybuilding has become the antithesis of its early form. From the 1980s onward, bodybuilding has existed within a period where notions, vocabularies, and imagery of what has become known as the “freaky” body have become dominant. It is important to note that the word “freak” often comes with heavy negative connotation. I elect to use the term here both in recognition of its popularity within muscle-centric sports, and as a way of teasing out additional meanings for the terminology in relation to naturalness.

Free from the constraining regulations of the AAU and its Mr. America contests, the IFBB and professional bodybuilding emerged in the 1970s as a very different governing entity. Athletes vying for the sport's titles found themselves in direct competition with one another,

instead of within pursuit of an ideal based on classical themes of the past. Athletes were also allowed to compete for however long they could maintain a worthy physique. Joe Weider's dream of creating the contest of champions was more than realized in his initiation of Mr. Olympia. Legends emerged and competed in spectacular and innovative ways that audiences had never seen. Giant bodies with immense muscularity became the new standard. Names like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Lee Haney, Dorian Yates, and Frank Zane dominated competitive stages.

Between 1970 and 1992, these four men accounted for twenty of the twenty-two Mr. Olympia champions, and their dominance has hardly been matched since. Schwarzenegger has been called by the Guinness Book of World Records "the most perfectly developed man in the history of the world" (*Guinness World Records*, 2005, 2004). At 6' 2" and a competition weight of 240 lbs., he still towers above most bodybuilders today. Schwarzenegger is especially remembered for his incredible 57" chest. It has been said that he was almost single-handedly responsible for bringing the large male chest into popularity. With his six consecutive Mr. Olympia championships (seven overall), he remains one of the most popular names in bodybuilding, even despite his retirement. Lee Haney broke Schwarzenegger's record by winning eight Olympia titles of his own. Though his 5' 11" frame may not have been as overwhelming as Schwarzenegger's, Haney's chest-to-waist ratio seemed nearly impossible to judges and peers alike. The hourglass contour of his body seemed to defy physics. Haney's shocking muscularity came to a peak in his chest and latissimus and then trailed to a vanishing point at his waistband. His physique exploded out the other side of his trunks with thigh definition that had never before been reached.



*Figure 4. Lee Haney (Haney and Rosenthal, 1993)*

Dorian “the shadow” Yates, was known to come out of nowhere to win major events. He would seclude himself for months and then appear with a physique that left audiences gasping. A six-time Mr. Olympia champion, Yates pioneered High Intensity Training to achieve otherworldly girth and definition. At only 185 lbs., Frank Zane could not claim the size of the other legends of the day, but he became known for packing as much muscle into his frame as humanly possible. He held the second thinnest waistline of all Olympia champions (winning three titles) and is one of only three men to ever defeat Arnold Schwarzenegger in a bodybuilding contest.

With the greatest names in the sport propelling it forward, each competition became more memorable than the last. To dethrone a champion, something new and compelling had to be on display. A fresh human form became the unofficial requirement to be able to take home each year's growing purse. A model of constant progress was established. Each champion was (and is)

expected to be bigger and more unbelievably muscular than the previous champion, even those competitors who were defending their title. Understandings of the limits of human muscularity also advanced rapidly. The nutritional, exercise, and pharmaceutical sciences found growth alongside the bodies that utilized them. Due to the break-neck growth curve fostered by the sport's innovators, the gap between champions and their audience grew to be enormous. Winning bodies could no longer effectively carry directly inspirational qualities for the everyman; they were functionally unreachable. Rather, these built bodies were something more than what humanity had become accustomed to. They had become superhuman, unnatural, and even “freaky.”

The practice of continually surpassing expected limitations for the human body has become one of the primary purposes of bodybuilding in its current age. This has sparked a revolutionary vocabulary within bodybuilding that embraces and celebrates the extreme and absurd. Pain is progress, punishment is dedication, and to outwork is to outwit. The spectacle of the built body is framed within a drama of human nature that is always in an upward arc (Hoberman, 2005). From this has emerged a subculture that produces, signifies, and appreciates the unnatural, freaky body for the very reason that it is above and beyond expectations of the possible and the acceptable. Bodybuilding greatness is now a bottom-up standard that moves as it is pushed by its greatest innovators and extremists. The best built bodies of today are “the latest miracles in a continuous trajectory of human achievement” (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 135). The most creative, and the most successful, experimenter can be looked at as a role model of physical human progress. The “freaks” are not simply outcasts and physical outliers (though they are this too); they are also athletes so proficient at their pursuits that their existence is barely comprehensible to many viewers. Here, at the cutting edge of bodybuilding, we find appreciation

for the unnatural for the same reasons that it is normally shunned. Bodies like those carried by champions are not “supposed” to look like they do. <Natural> bodies, as we have come to understand them, cannot conceivably perform in these ludicrous ways.

The unnatural bodies at the highest levels of bodybuilding exist in an elite, qualitatively different realm of performance that has become largely unfathomable to those outside of the practices themselves. Here, bodybuilding, which once shunned the lazy, unnatural, and “malformed” bodies of the early industrial era, venerates the unnatural in ways that push boundaries and expand human potential and purpose. This is significant to this study because it effectively calls into question both the superiority and accepted definitions of <natural>. If human limitation is expanded, the scope of what is <natural> is thrust under review. The further the limitation is expanded, the larger the scope of normal <natural> behavior appears to grow. If unnatural “freaky” bodies are the ones that are praised for fostering this momentum, perhaps unnaturalness can be, situationally, both preferential and productive.

As with all striations, however, the distinction between unnatural/<natural> is still not complete here, even within a subculture that supposedly holds “freakishness” in high regard. Coupled alongside notions of freakishness are rhetorics of <natural> superiority, often appearing in discourses involving genetics and predispositions. Though freaky bodies showcase other-worldly self-discipline, commitment, innovation, and willingness to exceed, they are also revered for having elite <natural> biology that incurs definite advantage. In fact, elite bodybuilders often explain how they discovered their <natural> gift for body development accidentally or as a result of picking up weight training for sports or to imitate the “hard body ideal” emanating from the 1980s and 90s (Johansson, 1999). <Natural> talent is what separates those who can succeed from those who are simply willing to try. Thus, in many ways, <natural> talent is at least as necessary

as the unnatural willingness to defy convention. Within bodybuilding communities, unnaturalness is the celebrated result, but a level of <natural> influence is required. Though this may seem to be another failure of unnaturalness to gain a distinct upper hand, the interplay between these striations shows a potential for synergy that could prove hopeful. This realization becomes important when considering the purposes and potentials of more striated appearances of <natural>, including the separate and unequal divisions within the sport of bodybuilding.

### *Testing Naturalness*

Bodybuilding has effectively striated <natural> by creating separate divisions for tested and untested competition. This represents the most formal and readily recognizable distinction between the terminologies within the sport. In devising this separation, bodybuilding, as an organization, designates one division as the domain of the <natural> while working to actively obscure the other division's relation to the term. Under this language, tested competition works to determine the essential chemical/biological naturalness or unnaturalness of a body. Until this determination is made, a competitor assumes the formal benefits of <natural> status despite an appearance that might suggest otherwise. Competitors become unnatural by getting caught in one of many specific striations that the governing bodies of the sport offer. These striations include: any evidence of stimulants such as ephedrine or cocaine; narcotic analgesics such methadone and morphine (but codeine is acceptable); evidence of anabolic agents such as clotestbol or a testosterone count greater than a six to one ratio (unless for a medical condition); diuretics such as mersalyl and mannitol; Human Growth Hormone; and blood doping (“Banned Substances,” 2008).

There is even a complicated formula available that is used to help determine a competitor's <natural> physical potential for lean mass. It takes into consideration height in



inches, ankle circumference at the smallest point, wrist circumference measured on the hand side of the styloid process (the round, bony protrusion at the joint), and the body fat percentage at which you want to predict maximum lean body mass. With this formula, someone who is 5'9" tall with above-average wrist and ankle size would reach a maximum body weight of 203 lbs. at 12% body fat. Surpassing this by a statistically significant margin would suggest a competitor is not <natural>. Phil Heath, the bodybuilding champion described in the introduction to Chapter 1, competes at a weight of 255-260 lbs. at this same height of 5'9" with only 6% body fat. Heath is currently considered to be the apex of the "freaky" body progression within bodybuilding. Obviously, when the formula is applied to him, the result is a resounding pronouncement of unnatural, yet from a rules perspective, Heath is not subject to testing and thus assumed (functionally) clean. Because of this assumption, Heath retains all the benefits of an otherwise <natural> competitor. This same formula has been able to successfully predict winners of natural bodybuilding events at an astoundingly accurate rate. The closer natural competitors get to the upper limits of this formula's expectations, the closer they have come to the limits of <natural> possibility. In online forums, lifters and fans estimate measurements to try and settle debates concerning whether the impressive physique pictured could possibly be <natural>. Even with clear circumstantial and anecdotal indications that a body is "enhanced," the stigma does not stick in the same way it would to a failed test. A bodybuilder's unique usefulness in the marketing world is often tied to whether or not their results appear as legally reproducible. Without definitive proof, a champion's body is marketable. Thus, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue, these striations are directly tied to economic potentiality.

However, once a bodybuilding athlete is deemed unnatural, they often maintain that designation for life. This is unlike most professional sports where the punishment is served after

a finite time, even if a stigma lingers. For example, in U.S. American professional football, a player can return to competition after missing four games (or one fourth of a season) for the first time they are caught with performance enhancing drugs. In baseball, the penalty for a first offense is 50 games (about one third of a season) and has so far also resulted in an unofficial loss of qualification for the sport's hall of fame. (Apparently, there is no place for unnatural athletes alongside the heroes of the past.) Bodybuilding's history is littered with those who vehemently denied any connection to performance-enhancers and were eventually proven, through testing, to have lied. Because <natural> exists as a type of forever threshold, participants in natural bodybuilding competitions must submit to a polygraph test to help prove they are lifetime natural. If their bodies are shown be unnaturally enhanced in the past, the label remains, even if fluid tests disagree (Shepley, 2015).

The striations natural bodybuilding offers have multidirectional effects. Though they provide a working definition of what <natural> is, the definition is not universal. However, as with all striations, the divide is assumed to extend beyond the sport. The list of banned substances in bodybuilding marks other bodies as “enhanced” or unnatural, even if they aren't directly connected with the sport. Since bodybuilding has such historical authority over ideals associated with the body, its definition of biological/chemical naturalness matters.

The striations of natural bodybuilding also offer new smooth space that funnels profit to athletes who now have the benefit of the doubt and the benefit of lucrative sponsorships. Untested competitors, like Phil Heath, can exist in the liminal smooth space created by the striations of natural bodybuilding and use this space to become more financially viable. Untested competitors are often upheld as the closest human offering of an ideal physique, but they are not required to disclose fully to their discipleship how it was actually obtained. In fact, cultural and

economic forces strongly discourage athletes to be honest about any drug usage. This is true for the legal and regulatory reasons listed earlier, but divulging this information may also mean losing a claim of inherent superiority. This claim could be forfeited either in the realm of <natural> genetics or in claims to super-human dedication and training. Because it does attempt to divulge what goes into creating the bodies shown on stage, the tested division of bodybuilding casts valuable ambiguity on the non-tested division. It is through this deniability that corporate sponsors and top athletes have a platform to become profitable: Other people have been tested and failed but our division's athletes have no such failure on their record. The (arguably necessary) lack of transparency has encouraged a dialogue that attaches particular forms of fear, disgust, and moral bankruptcy to overly muscular bodies in the form of assumed drug use.

### *The Chemically-Enhanced Body*

The first natural bodybuilding competitions occurred in the mid 1980s and coincided with the spreading, nation-wide fear of anabolic steroids. Although performance-enhancing substances have been used in competitive events since their origin (Donohoe & Johnson, 1986), public fear of "impure" sports was escalated by the failed drug tests of elite athletes at the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. Canadian Ben Johnson, known at the time as "the world's fastest man," was found to be using anabolic steroids after his impressive victory in the 100 meters. Many regard this event as the moment where steroids were no longer the secret of the gym and instead became front page news (Assael, 2007). In 1990, The United States Congress passed the Anabolic Steroid Control Act. In the face of significant counter-evidence from many experts, the act made all non-medical anabolic steroid use illegal. The substances were immediately labeled as Schedule III drugs under the Controlled Substances Act. This meant their usage was legally the same as methamphetamine and opium. In 2004, the act was amended in order to also outlaw

prohormones, a previously legal line of nutritional aids used primarily by the bodybuilding and weightlifting communities. With increased attention and these new rulings, steroids became firmly entrenched within the U.S. American rhetoric of the war on drugs. Performance-enhancing drugs have since been found to have extensive influence across the modern sporting world. U.S. Americans took increased notice after steroids began to blemish the “purity” of baseball, the sport most directly tied to U.S. American exceptionalism (Butterworth, 2008). Fear of steroids escalated to a type of “moral panic” (Cohen, 1973, p. 38) in the years following. Steroids and like substances are now widely believed to have significant negative physical and emotional health effects in addition to the “unfair” edge they gave to athletes. Steroids are thought to be the precursor to uncontrolled behavior, severe health problems, and even fatalities (Monaghan, 2001). Today the vocabulary of anabolic substances is so prevalent that it is not unusual to hear someone describe an extreme phenomenon as an average scenario “on steroids.” Because of its now widespread use as “an all-purpose, fear-generating, rubric akin to terrorism or global warming” (Liokaftos, 2012, p. 158), the term *steroids* could likely be successfully argued to function as its own, primarily negative, ideograph. Similar to <natural> but perhaps lesser used, steroids is a descriptor and qualifier across contexts, and carries an ideological and political agenda with significant historical force.

Bodybuilding's close association with both real and ideographic steroids, as well as other anabolic or illegal substances, has brought the sport a significant amount of negative attention. Realizations have been made that couple elite physiques with the knowledge that many, if not all, elite bodybuilders use some form of these drugs. Bodybuilding became largely recognized as the epicenter of drug abuse within the sporting world. To many, drugs were at the “psychological core” of the sport. Thus both bodybuilders and bodybuilding practices have been characterized as

unstable, irrational, risky, and even pathological (Liokaftos, 2012). These beliefs are reinforced by media portrayals of the results of “roid rage.” In 1998, *Sports Illustrated* published an article entitled “The Muscle Murders” (Nack, 1998). In this especially popular write-up, the danger within the “insular, narcissistic subculture of hardcore bodybuilding” (p. 100) was printed for the world to see. This publication became emblematic of the journalistic approach to steroid usage within the sporting world. Simply by association with steroid usage, the bodies involved in bodybuilding have often been understood by much of the outside world as more irresponsible than impressive. To be a bodybuilder is to claim a largely maligned identity. This is perhaps why people like myself elect other identity markers instead. Bodybuilders are often characterized as “monstrous” individuals, both in size and in absence of morality.

Not surprisingly, within the sport of bodybuilding, a much different view of steroids is held. Drug use for bodybuilding purposes is often an extremely calculated and technical process involving cutting-edge research and scientific innovation. What is considered entirely irrational by outsiders, is entirely rational among the elite performers of the sport. Using the technological advancements of today's age is part of the logical progression of a sport that is almost uniformly concerned with pushing the potentials of the possible. Within a paradigm that values efficiency, results, and the maximization of performance, use of performance-enhancing substances fits in neatly amongst a largely shared mentality of constant growth. That being said, bodybuilding is not nearly the “everything goes” atmosphere that it is often depicted as. Within “hardcore” bodybuilding communities there is a type of code that informally outlines the proper usage of pharmaceutical technology. Anabolic and other potentially dangerous substances are to be used in rational, educated, and responsible ways. This approach to drug use classifies the practice as a calculated and informed risk towards a goal of individual enhancement within a larger project of

the self (Monaghan, 2001). Many outside of bodybuilding view the use of drugs as a defilement of authenticity and find the use of drugs to achieve self-fulfillment as disturbing (Parens, 1998). However, many others do not share these reservations. Within bodybuilding circles, drug use, responsibly administered, is accepted and is effectively a “naturalized” practice. It is a behavior that comes with the territory of constantly pushing human potential.

Even within bodybuilding culture, however, there are classifications of fake and unnatural practices and people. This is still true even in relation to a body's chemical makeup. Bodybuilders, especially those of previous eras, chastise those competitors willing to “abuse” pharmaceuticals in order to achieve a particular look. Today's winning competitors must be large, fat free, and “dry” (meaning no subcutaneous water retention, allowing muscular striations to be easily perceived). This means that competitors now inject more than just anabolic steroids; they must also consider using growth hormones, insulin (as not to lose mass during periods of dieting), and diuretics. Many bodybuilders believe there is a threshold that takes drug usage too far, though they admit it is difficult to name. Another interesting case is that of Synthol, a legal, oil-based substance used to temporarily inflate the size of muscles at the point of injection. Interestingly enough, the majority of bodybuilders find the use of this substance repulsive as it doesn't give a clear articulation of the work an athlete has put in towards gaining their musculature. Bodybuilders often claim an ability to read the effort and development that is inscribed on a body (Monaghan, 2001). Absent of these markers, a body can appear synthetic or unearned to the trained eye. Abuse of drugs and use of Synthol do not fit in the bodybuilding version of narratives of authenticity, and such users can be labeled as fake or *negatively* unnatural even within hardcore bodybuilding communities.

As these examples illustrate, a chemically-enhanced body is far from a static definition.

Insiders and outsiders of bodybuilding communities carry very different standards towards the meaning of performance-enhancing drugs, and also what constitutes appropriate interaction with these substances. However, the vocabulary of both groups foregrounds the apparent “unnaturalness” of a person’s features through proximity with certain dosages of drugs (whether real or assumed). Though the striations are less distinct within hardcore bodybuilding communities, striations yet exist. There appears to be a functional line associated with pharmaceutical usage that has the power to sort out the super-human from the sub-human. The differing beliefs concerning these <natural> vs. unnatural practices can be tied to what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) understand as the contrasting principles of “becoming” and “progress.”

### **Smooth “Becoming” and Striated “Progress”**

As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe it, smooth space is “where all becoming happens” (p. 486). In their understanding, *becoming* is the quest toward a desire that exists not out of a recognizable deficit or lack, but out of a pursuit of being something other than the already determined role in which one has presumably been cast. This type of becoming can only occur in smooth space because if there are delineations already existing, one is only able to move between already existing categories created through the apparatus of capture. In this case, one is not becoming when they change from a natty to a geared athlete; they are simply being cast in a different role by the governing state. It could be argued, though, that, free to use chemical enhancements as they see fit, bodybuilders are better able to *become* since they are not reduced to once-limiting categories of bodily human potential. Free from testing, these athletes are free to be more than a category determined by the content of their urine and blood. Untested bodybuilders thus uniquely demonstrate resistance to what is supposed to be a normative human limitation and also work to expand a definition of what it might mean to be (or be within) a

human body. “Freaky” bodies are able to become something different from what governing bodies (what Deleuze and Guattari call the “superior organism”) allow them to be when these bodies operate within smooth spaces. For reasons such as these, smooth space is often the desired realm for resistance towards an oppressive force.

In contrast, striations can work to limit smooth space and becoming, and are necessarily resisted as vehicles of oppression. Divisions create classifications of superiority and demarcate the realms of the possible. Within striated territories, it is often required that a person or thing fall within one of a set of already approved categories. Supposedly all-encompassing groupings such as gender binaries demonstrate how striations can take this oppressive form. Without leaving another option, this particular striation requires a person either choose a distinction they might not fully avow to, or endure marginalization. Some advocates offer incorporation of yet another striated space that promotes a third gender option as a remedy to binary representations of gender. An example of this would be the legislative action in Germany that offers intersex children (or rather, their parents) “X” rather than “M” or “F” as options for birth certificates and passports (Hoover, O’Neil, & Poutiatine, 2013). Though it can be argued that a third option includes and is considerate of more bodies, the striation also can be said to further marginalize bodies that still do not fit into any of the three categories or those who wish to unyoke themselves from the potentially troublesome designations altogether. At the same time, there are times where gendered distinctions can be useful. It would, for example, be difficult to look at gender discrimination lawsuits without a classification of gender on which to rely.

This is also the case regarding questions of (dis)ability status. A person is often forced between accepting the stigmatizing striation of being understood a disabled body (even if this is not how the person self-identifies), or they are compelled to assimilate to conditions that are not



fully accessible to their body. Again, it is not the particular striations that are at fault, rather the lack of freedom emanating from the level of striation. The designator “disabled” is not inherently problematic. Rather it is the larger context surrounding disability that works to inhibit fluid interpretations of what it means to be a disabled body that brings issue. Less “complete” striations could benefit those bodies that are inadequately labeled within this particular vocabulary. In this study's particular bodybuilding context, these theoretical striations mirror closely the categorizations between tested-natural, and tested-fail, two semantically impermeable poles that I have shown do not fully reflect a spectrum of human experience, especially across different communities.

In contrast to the negativity surrounding striated space, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) also remind us that striated space is still “where all progress occurs” (p. 486). Thus striated space offers a considerable amount of potential beyond violence. Before praising striated space for this distinction unconditionally, it is important to note here that there is certainly more reservation in the way Deleuze and Guattari deploy progress than the way it is typically understood. For progress to exist, there must first be some standard by which it can be measured or at least understood. For this reason, it would be impossible for progress to occur in anything other than the striated space formed by possibly problematic demarcations. This does not mean progress should be assumed as always “wrong” either. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer a different understanding of progress—as unbound potentiality. This progress is movement that is not foreseeable through the lens of historical goals, but instead is a reformulation of a future based in ever-evolving desire. Thus progress for these philosophers is anything but linear. Instead it involves constant reformulation, backtracking, and pursuit of new directions. Progress must be understood as part of the will of a population, and not as a device that controls their actions.

It is not much of a stretch to argue that it would be *progress*, in one usage of the term, for measures to be enacted that effectively discouraged dangerous drug usage in children or that more equally compensated illegal-drug free competitors with sponsorships. This progress, if isolated from the consequences that may also result from the enactment, would largely be regarded in a positive light. It is the intervening and concurrent variables in this equation that can be understood as troublesome: Such action would potentially eliminate the space for becoming that untested competition allows and further separate and stigmatize certain bodies as definitively (and possibly irredeemably) unnatural. It is likely impossible to enact any umbrella measures that consistently distinguish between the productive and the problematic variables. How then are we to act in a socially just, reflexive way in relation to our approach to striations if a “smooth space alone is [also] never enough to save us” (p. 500) as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest? Perhaps there are ways.

### **Why <Natural>? Casting the Gaze Back**

These contested understandings of <natural> exist as potential arenas for resistance and reclamation as well as potential problems. A different construction of <natural> may discourage people, especially youths, from prematurely destroying their organs with potentially dangerous substances unwittingly. On the other hand, the desire for this distinction certainly does not excuse or attempt to deny the potential of delineations of <natural> to violate human rights. The historicity of the ideograph, as well as the way it has been deployed to cause harm, is not escapable, nor should it be. This conflict is one that could easily lead an otherwise concerned individual down a path of inaction that leads to an equally problematic status quo. The given options certainly appear to be a paradox, but they do not have to be.

I believe one possible course of action involves turning the theo-critical gaze that

stigmatizes the “unnatural” back on to the ideograph itself. Investigation into the historical uses of the term has revealed a landscape for the use of <natural> that does not nearly approach the moral superiority the term has inherited. The most recent eras of bodybuilding are one example where vocabularies appreciating “unnaturalness” have developed that perhaps challenge the assumed superiority of <natural>. Another way this can be accomplished is by highlighting the smooth spaces between areas of supposed distinction between <natural> and unnatural. Thus far I have illustrated bodybuilding's capacity to striate <natural> but I believe it has the potential to do more, and in some ways, it already has.

### **Combining <Natural> Animal and Unnatural Machine**

Throughout its history, bodybuilding has revealed itself to be technophilic in at least one of many ways. At its beginnings, physical culturists may have resented the technological advances that lessened the need for physical labor, but answered this distaste by implementing their own technological language of bodily improvement. Though certain technologies were said to be at the center of blame for the “soft, malformed” bodies of the day, it was also technology that allowed an escape from this lifestyle. The most recent eras of bodybuilding have relied extensively on technological melioration as well. This has come in the form of advancements in exercise science, improved exercise machinery, and progress in the areas of nutrition and pharmaceuticals. Bodybuilding is a sport heavily involved with breaking longstanding barriers, and technology often is what makes significant breakthroughs possible. It is often bodybuilders who invent or popularize the technologies of growth. Bodybuilders and cutting edge technologies have been intertwined for many years.

If human action is considered unnatural (as the arguments of Chapter Two appear to illustrate), it stands to reason that human technology would be understood as more unnatural yet.

Technology, by definition, is essentially human in origin and intravenous to a status quo. It is what humans have used to usurp our order in the food chain; it is what has disrupted potential courses of history; and it is the means to overthrow a presumed <natural> order. Technology is the medium of human expansion. Humanity often separates the moral platitudes of “science” and technology because of these implications. If we are to listen to popular sentiment, science is simple recognition or discovery of an already existing <natural> order, while technology directly influences and redirects this order (Soper, 1995). Technology that is not widely understood often further incites fear and questions about humanity's cosmic place and our potential to overstep it. It is no surprise then that bodybuilding's unnaturalness coincides with its proximity to technology. This distrust is perhaps more uniquely tied to bodybuilding than some other technological fields. Bodybuilders are likely more susceptible to accusations of unnaturalness than those who work in, say, mechanical engineering because bodybuilders are seen to be tampering with the fibers of an individual's living existence, not just tools that can be picked up or discarded at will. In this regard, bodybuilding is more akin to genetic engineering.

Bodybuilding illustrates an apex of human technology, and full use of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) “apparatus of capture.” Particular movements, regimens, and programs are meticulously developed, tested, and reformulated to coax the best possible results out of human anatomy. Over time, information on muscular hypertrophy and related subjects has grown and has been more widely disseminated. A person can now find out exactly what they are projected to be. In my time involved in bodybuilding activities, I have used programs that have been specific enough to tell me how many reps and sets of which exercises to do on each day of the calendar year. I have even worked from a manual that directed me on a precise number of eggs and blueberries to eat in a day, and was scaled to my specific weight and body type. Years of

research and experience tell me that I am classified as a mesomorph (a medium weight-gainer), with below-average bone size genetics and favorable muscle insertion-point aesthetics. My arms are of average length and my legs are fairly short for my height, but my torso is longer than average. Because of these attributes, I dwell in a frame that would fit best in a bodybuilding “fitness” event, and I could likely never make it to any competitive stage where the “real” muscle men and women roam. My potentials have been clearly documented and thoroughly striated through bodybuilding's technological advancements.

The interesting foil to bodybuilding's conceptual place as technophilic is its coinciding animalistic representation. This represents the other side of the chemical/technological “freak” described earlier. Animalism is described by Liokaftos (2012) as being based in the constructions of human sex/gender difference that are formed through biological binaries. Animalism is a search for the <natural> primordial self by tracing humanity to its most fundamental and basic purposes (Fussell, 1991). Within bodybuilding culture, pursuing the animal self is a positive desire. It is not understood as destructive, impulsive, or irrational, but rather as reverence toward, and capture of, a force more primal and powerful than one's own (Hoberman, 2005). Animalism becomes an embodied practice of reversion towards supposed hormonal instincts and drives, but also towards progress that was not historically attainable. In this way, bodybuilding yet holds to its Early Era roots. Bodybuilders push past the laziness, weakness, and deterioration in the selves they were given, and push towards a raw, boundless, uncontainable self in a primal form (Liokaftos, 2012). Even in its similarity, the modern incarnation remains distinct from the vision of the first bodybuilders because this effort is no longer understood to be a social task for everyone, but rather an intense experience for those who elect a path of extraordinariness. To be only human is understood as elected mediocrity. By becoming animalistic, a person significantly

adds to their bodybuilding potential.

This animalistic mode of production in bodybuilding again finds parallel to the language of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The scholars refer to processes such as these as pursuits toward “becoming-animal.” This refers to a type of a movement where the subject no longer chooses to occupy a realm of stability but rather enters into a nomadic mode of existence where they are always an anomaly and inaccessible to any true form of definition. This change is a move from a unified body, marked by pieces, borders, and completion, to “flesh” which is in a continuing state of re-articulation, transformation, and growth. In becoming-animal, a person “smooths” their flesh so that it is more difficult to classify within current vocabularies, harder to predict, and more difficult to control through existing means. A person can never fully become-animal as long as they retain personhood, but within certain “plateaus” (intense moments that challenge the normal) this realm of transformation can momentarily manifest on a particular body. There are moments where I have felt this animalism, especially during particularly difficult workouts. At moments where I felt my body begin to fail, I have disassociated from an existence as a distinct being seeking to be whole, and been forced to accept myself as an articulation of formed flesh. In the midst of these plateaus I am ignoring civilized thought for a desire to become something different than what I am expected to be. When I have allowed myself to accept the transformative pain of being “just flesh,” I have found my most fruitful progress.

Invoking this type of animalism is not a widely embraced practice outside of bodybuilding and hardcore athletic circles. In the previous chapters I have discussed how, although humans prefer the <natural>, we require a morality that surpasses that of nature. Humans desire to be <natural>, but only to the point that we remain distinct from it. Otherwise nature and humanity might sully each other with their proximity. Elite bodybuilding practices

take the pursuit of naturalness too far by conventional standards. Through seemingly ridiculous training and food regimens, bodybuilders punish themselves to achieve an animalism that has little regard for the “better judgment” of humanity. They are *beasts, freaks, machines*, and *animals*, and are often referred to as such. Sometimes these references are done amongst other athletes in complimentary ways. “You were a beast in here today, brother” is about as high a compliment as a gym environment has ever bestowed on me. Because of this perception and vocabulary, bodybuilders are seen as both overly technophilic and also too animalistic. Said another way, these individuals are both too <natural> and not <natural> enough. The elite built body paradoxically represents the combination of both poles, apparently without adequately representing the more “normal” middle ground. Still, bodybuilders are able to innovate, and circumvent seeming limitations. Here we find a type of synergy between too <natural> and too unnatural, one that might challenge the efficacy of both ideographic striations.

Although the machine and the animal are often relegated to opposite sides in discussions of naturalness, they exist together in the realm of elite bodybuilding. The two represent the constitutive elements of the “freak” body named earlier. Liokaftos (2012) refers to the machine and the animalistic as the covalent parts of an aesthetic of intensity. He believes this intensity is on full display within bodybuilding, and that it is especially recognizable in particular images. One example is the image of a lifter shown exerting maximum effort while pulling on a futuristic-looking weight machine. With a contorted facial expression and bulging muscle definition, the “animal inside” intermingles with machinery to accomplish a single task.



*Figure 5.* Bodybuilder using preacher curl machine

(Tumminello, 2012)

Here seemingly opposite components converge toward synergistic effect. The animal body and mentality is under control of a highly technical program designed toward peak growth. Within the paradigm of intensity, the civilized, scientific body meets the primal body and creates something that is fully neither but also not a tempered version of either extreme (Mognahan, 2001). This bears significance into the investigation of ideographic <natural> for two reasons:

1. The paradigm of intensity within bodybuilding shows the slippages of smooth and striated spaces of <natural> in tangible practice. <Natural> vs. unnatural does not play out cleanly. Even within the world of bodybuilding, a place that purposely striates the terms, the two types of spaces cannot fully remain distinct and are both necessary.
2. The paradigm of intensity showcases the capability of a single body to house positive characteristics of both the <natural> and unnatural, and harness (and perhaps sometimes unharness) both potentials to accomplish new conceptions of the possible.



In the following chapter I operate from these premises to directly investigate the supposed superiority of <natural> and our (in)ability to read it. I believe the way <natural>/unnatural intermingle synergistically within bodybuilding offers an illustration of our greatest hope towards confronting the paradoxical problem of smooth and striated spaces. It is my hope that in using bodybuilding as a particularized example of a larger rhetorical phenomenon, we can gain a further understanding of how ideographic striation can be more productively confronted.

## CHAPTER IV

### RECONSTRUCTING <NATURAL>

#### Introduction

In the first three chapters of this study I have explored the ideographic power of <natural>, especially in relation to bodies. I have shown <natural> to have extensive influence in the ways U.S. Americans attach significance, value, and morality to particular actions and, as a result, how these attributes become attached to people. I have also illustrated organized bodybuilding as an arena where determinations of <natural> vs. unnatural are both expressly and implicitly enforced, providing a larger precedent for even those not directly involved with the sport. Finally, I applied the framework and vocabularies of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) smooth and striated spaces to demonstrate the theoretical process of ideographic crystallization and its consequence. I concluded the previous chapter by alluding to the idea that an apparatus of capture can striate a previously smooth space of resistance towards oppressive ends. However, I have also noted that the interplay between what is smooth and what is striated leaves opportunity to challenge existing conventions if certain rhetorical approaches to existing terminology are taken up.

In the current chapter, I center the discussion on the philosophical and ideological groundings of <natural> toward an applied investigation into alternative considerations of <natural> and unnatural bodies. Here, I apply the turn I offered in Chapter Three by directly challenging the ingrained assumptions of, and formalized references to, <natural> superiority. I do this by interrogating the merit and necessity of <natural>. I then move to a theoretical

explanation of what a more practical and responsible <natural> might look like, still (mostly) within the confines of our current paradigm.

I use this chapter to bring into question our methods of knowing and recognizing <natural> within a given context. When we discuss naturalness and recognize where <natural> has gone through an apparatus of capture, it is important to recognize what it is we are making reference to. Only after this recognition is made can our practical approaches to the uses of ideographic <natural> be tailored to become less harmful. It may also be possible to retain the influential characteristics of <natural> to help guide just action. A primary intent of this chapter is to encourage a number of considerations to be taken before an ideographic <natural> is deployed. These considerations involve the following guiding questions that I will explore in this chapter:

1. What is the philosophical reference point beckoned forth when <natural> is used to describe bodies and processes?
2. What is the specific communicative utility of choosing <natural> as a descriptor given this reference point?
3. What are the consequences of reifying an iteration of naturalness through this choice?

By investigating these questions, it is possible to critique not only the results of a crystallizing/striated/regulated <natural>, as has been done so far in this study, but also analyze the purpose and necessity of <natural> more generally. If these considerations are successfully satisfied, it becomes possible to envision a less dualistic <natural> than is normally assumed. This deeper investigation also holds the potential to provide useful insight into the reasoning that labels certain people and practices as unnatural.

It is my belief that within a given setting, an “unnatural” body can become the transgressive body of influential change that we ought to strive toward *becoming*. This opposes the convention that treats the unnatural more as a fearful specter we attempt to formally exorcise through striated standardization. The philosophical and metaphysical arguments I make here all lend evidence to a contention that unnatural bodies are bodies that might: be read differently; expand notions of “the nature of a kind” and the possible; and challenge institutional stagnation. I intend to show that these bodies are the very bodies necessary for any process of “real” becoming. To do this, I offer ways we can envision productive blending and blurring of the illusionary natural/unnatural dichotomy. I also investigate how our transgression of formalized naturalness destabilizes many of our problematic normative conceptions about bodies, including those relating to race, gender, and sexuality. It is my intention in this chapter to substantiate alternate ways of understanding how we can productively valorize the unnatural body as resistance to a mythic, always morally superior, <natural>. I believe the first step in this process is complicating the assumption that <natural> is always preferential.

### **<Natural> Superiority?**

<Natural> presently exists as an entrenched ideograph that carries various connotations of superiority. If a person or object is/acts/appears recognizably more <natural> in form or substance, this entity will often hold a majority preference over a less <natural> option. Our collective preferences for <natural> food, bodies, and behavior showcase just how prevalent and even instinctual this partiality has become. However, this construct of <natural> superiority is neither required nor philosophically stable. As I have shown already, <natural> is term that is anything but stable, and is often, at best, arbitrary. Investigation of this instability is one avenue of uprooting the seemingly irreproachable, ideographic <natural>.

One instable attribute of <natural> involves disagreement about which philosophical realm of origin <natural> can most rightly claim. There are several schools of thought governing premises of nature and <natural>, but there are a few approaches that bear recognition here. Some, like environmental historians, assign a particular agency to <natural> that allows its characteristics to remain seemingly self-determined over time (Demerritt, 1994). Nature is said to have a <natural> will that brings about its own redefinition. A status of <natural> is considered a domain with unique, pre-existing characteristics. The benefits of this perspective are that it allows <natural> to have some root as a “signified” beyond only a symbolic referent. From this point, it is possible to discuss <natural> as more than passing ether, but doesn’t require the term/entity remain only static. On the other hand, this perspective largely ignores interpretations of <natural> as a type of social construct. Instead, those who consider <natural> to have agency prefer a representation of the ideograph as inherent to, and contingent on, a larger force above and beyond the immediate influence of symbolic human usage (Demerritt, 1994). In summation, this perspective places humans as mere observers and recognizers of a powerful outward entity.

Meanwhile, more interpretive groups, like cultural geographers, almost entirely ignore any imagining of nature or naturalness that would represent it as an autonomous actor (Gerber, 1997). Instead, people of this persuasion view <natural> entirely as a social construct without any necessary ties to how things “truly are.” Nature is a human invention, devoid of any necessary material root, and only exists during its symbolic use. Usefully, this perspective makes <natural> and its problematic definitional qualities quite open to manipulation. However, this type of thinking leaves very little room for any tangible or agreed-upon reference, thus making it especially difficult to ensure that any decided change is being rightfully applied. Within this

paradigm, humans are the creators of nature, but nature only exists as far as social agreement allows. There is no anchor for the term beyond what we allow it.

Debates about the origin and proper depiction of <natural> fall firmly within the nature/culture dualism that has long been entrenched within the Enlightenment of Western thought. Choosing to align with either dualist depiction does little to resolve the problematic potential of <natural>, as it leaves concerned parties either without a point of reference or without agency to make significant change. To successfully re-imagine <natural>, it is likely that both of these perspectives must be cast aside, or perhaps combined, for a type of hybrid. When this is done, <natural> can become an exemplar of what Gerber (1997) refers to as a “natural construct.”

In her definition, Gerber (1997) stresses the evolving symbiotic relationship between the observable material realities of a phenomenon and the ways we come to explain and understand them. Gerber’s primary example for explaining this perspective is through the human body. She notes that both humans as physical bodies, and humanity as an exclusionary concept, evolved concurrently, and trying to highlight one part of this development as responsible for the development of the other is impossible. The material, embodied, cell-based, bi-pedal human has developed simultaneously alongside the tool-using, word-creating species such that these developments, intermingled, are the only possible answer to “what is a human being?” Gerber reminds us that for knowledge to exist about any subject there must also be a center of experience and action with which to process the abstraction. In this case, the material body thus receives “real,” material information and processes it into transferable knowledge that then gains temporal contextuality, and may continue to develop as necessary. In this sense, the human body is both real, in flux, and socially constructed.

Gerber's definition of natural construct strongly resembles Haraway's (1991) concept of the cyborg. Both concepts reject the ideas of clean boundaries between conceptions of nature and human. Instead there is a "chimeric, monstrous" world of fusions (p. 175). In this case, the fusion can be understood as between that which predates humans, and that which we socially create and enforce. Both of these perspectives focus on the materiality of life, but still through the perspective of the importance of symbol choices in defining our world. Like both of these authors, I believe that breaking down the essentialness of categories without wholly discarding these categories is often necessary, especially if the goal is to successfully recreate a more justice-based <natural>. Though our current use is unsatisfactory, the material reality to which it refers (if we can agree such a thing exists) still requires attention. Certain grammars are always political and require constant investigation in order to recognize their marginalizing impact. Ideographs are prime examples of such instances, and <natural> lends itself as an exemplar.

If the model of "natural constructs" is applied to investigation of ideographic <natural>, a type of potential is unlocked. In this application, the term is granted a rooting in material reality that can allow for practical application, and <natural>'s place as only a presumed pre-human authority is simultaneously uprooted, or at least loosened. Without a place of securely guarded mythology to suppress interrogation, assumptions of naturalness must prove merit either through a "real" basis in observable material reality or through symbolic human utility. This approach probes what <natural> does and should mean as it dissolves the footing of appeals to tradition. Also, if this approach is applied, careful "regulation" of the influential term again becomes possible, if and when there is a justly founded, evidentiary basis for the implementation. In summary of this applied perspective, if a status of <natural> is to be claimed, it must refer either to a currently observable state of order, or arise out of communicative necessity.

Obviously such an application is largely theoretical and is unlikely to immediately come to pass. This type of paradigmatic change is difficult to enact, and it would take much for any significant alteration to appear even if we were granted our imaginary implementation. However, the conjectural use of this standard leads to a line of investigative questioning that may actually yield productive results toward changing the ways <natural> is currently deployed. This is where our listed considerations come directly into play. First, the question must be asked: what *is* the common grounding (in either material reality or shared philosophical reasoning) that <natural> can claim? Is there a reference point or points that can be conceded? Secondly, if we are to apply a standard of communicative utility to the usage of <natural>, what would/should such a standard look like? Answering these first two questions should provide adequate guidance to confront the third: Does this use of <natural> in this instance do more to reify an existing problematic natural, or does it productively alter our vision of <natural> in the context it is used? In answering these questions, it is unlikely that a universal yardstick will be found on how, exactly, <natural> should or should not be used. In fact, if this approach is successfully undertaken, there can be no assumed yardstick. Regardless, the pursuit of these questions may outline the critical rhetorical process required to re-imagine a more socially just ideograph. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to foreground the significance of the first two questions, and begin a discussion of the third that will be more adequately addressed in the concluding chapter.

### **What is <Natural>?**

Although I have previously established that <natural> is largely indefinable, the pursuit of more responsible treatment of bodies, interpreted through the use of ideographic <natural>, requires recognition of the philosophy that dominates the conception of <natural> we hope to



alter. As Hausman and Kennedy (1975) remind us, most of our conceptual thinking as it relates to naturalness is traceable to the early philosophy of Aristotle. Aristotle believed that the nature of things is derivative of their categorical qualities, even more so than anything scientific empiricism can grant. He understood all qualities of an object or organism to fall into categories of either *essential* or *accidental* characteristics. Essential qualities are those required for a thing *to be* a thing. Humans are *essentially* rational and symbol using creatures. Sand is *essentially* grainy. On the other hand, sand is not unmade sand if it is wet or has a reddish hue. And (theoretically) humans should not lose their humanness based on pigmentation, size, or hair length. To Aristotle, when we refer to objects or beings, we are referring to their *nature*. Discussions over attributes or properties dwell within the less consequential realm of *accidentals*: Humans are *accidentally* taller than six feet or *accidentally* have blue eyes. A thing being <natural> then becomes dependent on it having the necessary characteristics of its kind. Through distinctions related to essential qualities, objects are *natured*.

Once an object is natured, it is limited in the types of alterations it can undergo. Too much change, and the object would no longer contain the essential elements of its type. Transversely, objects are only capable of changing insofar as their type allows. For example, if an acorn becomes a tree, this change is congruent with the expectations of its type, and verifies its place as a <natural> acorn. However, if the acorn somehow hatches to become a tiger, the object was not ever rightly considered an acorn at all. In Aristotle's philosophy, any change or deviation that occurs is merely simple and foretold actualization. A thing does exactly what it is capable of, as determined by its nature. From this viewpoint, all change is teleological rather than causal— that is, what happens later explains the reasoning for what is happening now. This perspective, though nearly always evidentially correct, has the distinct advantage of hindsight for

making determinations and is not especially applicable beyond evaluation afterward. “If it happened, then it was supposed to” is hardly a socially or scientifically useful approach when attempting to correct or predict behavior.

The primary challenge in applying this simple philosophy is determining which attributes can and *should* be classified as essential or accidental. As we might imagine, this is a difficult and consequential process. Many of us learned at a young age that biology uses a version of this system of order to classify types, all the way from kingdoms to species. These classifications are often longstanding, but their applications are muddled as new information about genomes and ancestral trees are discovered. For example, one general rule for the classification of species is that they cannot cross produce fruitful offspring with another species. However, many species within the genus *Canis* can and do produce offspring capable of reproduction; like dogs and wolves. Over time, our assumptions about essential categories are loosened or confirmed through observed evidence, though we are often reluctant to make significant changes to organizing principles. Even if it is correct to do so, large-scale changes are not preferential to conceding exceptions to the rule.

In application to the context of human bodies, this classification method makes considerable difference. Scientifically, there is very little modern dispute over the essential characteristics of what it means to be human. However, phrenology and other pseudoscientific practices have used such definitional patterns to attach categorical value to persons and groups. For example, from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century until after the Second World War, a significant number of popular, supposedly scientific, studies proliferated the belief that Caucasians descended from temperate climates were a more evolved partition of the human species (Barkan, 1992). More recently, facets of social, educational, and legal practices continue to make important

determinations about essential vs. accidental human characteristics and behavior, including definitions of <natural> and unnatural bodies. This is especially true in relation to treatment of people with “unusual” bodies. Certainly the extreme bodybuilders mentioned previously would be included here. They are larger, and more proficient at muscle growth than the *essential* human. For similar reasons, those with profound mental and/or physical disabilities do not immediately (or easily recognizably) seem to fit some of the definitional characteristics of social humans. There has been significant resistance related to rights and accommodations for these populations, partially traceable back to their designated place amongst expected bodily performance. Aristotelian thinking believes that uniformity and remaining “at rest” are the <natural> state of things. Divergence from any understood state of being requires some sort of explanation; consistency requires none. Of course, the location of this place of rest is largely dependent on the interests of populations and individuals who have inherited the privilege to define such parameters. Either way, once a system of agreement is in place for an object (that is, the object becomes “natured”), deviations encourage scrutiny. This inquiry happens because any deviation insinuates a departure from our assumed <natural> order. Often it is simply the classification that is wrong, but ingrained schemas are not easily toppled. It is far easier to pronounce non-expected actions or features as a violation of a prescribed order.

Under this Aristotelian framework, it would logically follow that all exhibited characteristics of humans would be explainable as part of their kind: If humans do something, this action must be human action by definition. However this does little to establish any shared forward vision for human activity or morality. For this reason, striated, normative grounds are established either through direct regulation, social pressure, or tradition. As striations increase, expectations grow firmer and an apparent uniformity develops: smoothness out of high striation.

As a result, over the course of human history, nearly every noticeable human characteristic has at some time either been considered a deviation from the <natural> or at the very least, a symptom from a deviation of the natural (Hausman & Kennedy, 1975). Over time these deviations have been medically treated, penalized, exiled, persecuted, or praised depending on their level of deviation and utility.

One reason for this confusion is that *natures* are only attributable to kinds and not individuals. Individual cases can only be described as derivative of the larger kinds and not natures unto themselves. This can explain some of the fear and discouragement that accompanies practices such as bodybuilding. As a rule, humans maintain an average body fat percentage between 18.5 and 30% (“What is a Normal Body Fat?”, n.d.). Top bodybuilders exhibit levels between 4 and 7% body fat, numbers considered nearly impossible or at the very least, extremely dangerous at the weights these champions maintain. In the same thread, the average human biceps measurement is around 13.5 inches (“What Is Average Bicep Size?”, n.d.). Male bodybuilders cannot win Mr. Olympia with less than 22-inch arms, and some elite performers have even managed to double the human average. These athletes demonstrate unique performance, genetic disposition, and metabolism that are considered unnatural for human kind, and would be classified as deviant. However, if natures were instead applied to individuals, these performances (while still outstanding) would obviously require the results be looked upon as within the realm of the possible. To take this further, in this particular example, a bodybuilder with an especially low level of body fat would be understood as within his/her realm of variance and one of the world’s top athletes. A non-athlete with this same condition would likely be considered pathogenic and in very ill health. One person, under different comparative measurements, is either <natural> or is not (in one sense of the word). Thus, the status is almost

entirely dependent on the measuring stick that is used to determine whether or not a practice is or is not <natural>.

Because of its immediately identifiable impact, the “measuring sticks” used to determine <natural> status can be thought of as one of the “philosophical reference points” required for meaningful discussions about a more responsible ideograph. Such measures are often, luckily, much more identifiable than any stable definitions of the abstract ideograph. As the argument of this study presumes, there are always dangers associated with the implementation of these measuring devices. This is, of course, immediately relatable to the regulatory measures and striations discussed and critiqued in previous chapters. As I have shown, such references can be both contextual and outwardly influential, as was the case with early bodybuilding standards and Western body ideals. However, the remaining issue with using “measuring sticks” as the type of reference point we seek is that it does not provide any elements of an intercontextual <natural> that can help guide action that guards against particular unjust uses of <natural>.

For this type of protection, and also to understand the ideological power of <natural>, a more expansive reference for the word becomes necessary. Hausman and Kennedy (1975) explain there are two roots for our current use of <natural>, but both “are focused on man [sic] and his [sic] condition” (p. 93). The authors describe the two roots as fatalism and determinism, both of which involve specific understandings relating to eventual purpose and future. In Hausman and Kennedy’s definition, determinism is the belief that for any given event there exists a set of conditions that, if repeated, would also repeat the event. Fatalism is the contention that human choice and action are entirely irrelevant to the course of events.

These approaches are often the basis of very different philosophies and even theologies, but they share a particular thread that connects ideas about what <natural> comprises and may

offer us our philosophical reference. Hausman and Kennedy (1975) surmise that the basic premise of naturalness extends to our assumptions about the universe. There is a generally shared belief that there is a universal flow of things, temporal or otherwise, that is widely referred to as “the course of nature” (p. 96). There are many incarnations of this course across and within cultures, but the most basic premise remains similar: a chain of happenings will occur and has occurred up to now. Whether a person believes this course is predetermined by a guiding force or represents a type of evolutionary eventuality will largely shape their perception of the importance of this “course.” If the course is predetermined, we are again working from an Aristotelian teleological view of things: Whatever is happening is doing so because this is what is required to meet the always-existing eventual ends. The alternate view is causal; as a result of *these* occurrences, *this* is what must result.

From either of these given perspectives, the course, or a theoretical *original* course, represents the “course of nature” we seem to hear about so often. Here I have detailed a rather simple philosophy, but this elementary element is important to recognize: Things happen as they are supposed to (or were intended to) until for some reason, they do not. Each of these prescribed or expected happenings is <natural> and has its place so long as probabilities are met. The unnatural must then be understood as undue interference or manipulation of this course. In such a dichotomous understanding, anything that deviates from the course is a subversion of nature and disrupts the flow. Such things are often considered in unhappy terms. Of course, to project such a flow assumes a temporal universe with a generally understood course of direction. If there was no recognizable change, and the universe remained wholly static, nothing *unnatural* (from this definition) could happen, as there would be no changes in course. Out of this line of logic, one could rightly assess that “the unnatural” is also the very catalyst of change (or *becoming*) that

interrupts a given condition or striation. This is an important realization and one that props up arguments about the unnatural body being a conduit of becoming.

Still, the question remains, what exactly is the direction and substance of this flow? Certainly there is no end to answers, but a few possibilities are worth assessing. Some might view the course of nature as a movement from less complexity toward more intricacy, a type of evolutionary advancement. Another perspective would presume greater understanding and intelligence of our world and universe across time. Some may view biological balance and population stability as ends, or perhaps the completion of God's will and fulfillment of His kingdom on earth. Astrophysicists discuss the eventual energy death of the universe as a long-term progression towards nothingness. A socially concerned viewpoint might consider the <natural> order as a progression towards a less violent future from a bloody past. Whatever the perspective, there is a shared accounting for an extrapolation of past events inviting future prognosis. Such expectations define the <natural> as events that align with the larger process and that are a part of the understood "patterned progression" (Hausman & Kennedy, 1975, p. 98).

It has already been said that interference with such a <natural> order would be a plausible definition for the unnatural. However, there are also interpretations that muddy this and bring back into question our understanding of this interference. For example, the appearance of a deadly virus that threatens all life could conceivably "naturally" occur under the definition of "not purposefully created." Lack of interference, allowing the <natural> course to continue, would result in the eradication of life on a large scale. This sudden end would destroy any number of interpretations of <natural> courses. Humanity would not socially progress, violence does not cease, and biological complexity is only diminished. However, other depictions of the course might view this as entirely akin to the progression of time, and a mechanism for bringing

balance to the planet. If a method of combating the virus was created, order could be restored through many definitions. In this case, interference preserves a <natural> order. This engages a definitional question for unnaturalness: is interference in a non-forecasted process unnatural action, or was this a force of preservation for the <natural> order that offered rescue from an unnatural virus? This decision hinges on how the virus is interpreted, and whether this even falls within a paradigmatic <natural> order of human physiological well-being.

Of course such a question, like many others I have presented thus far, is largely unanswerable without first deciding the philosophical starting point on which such conclusions would be formed. However, this is precisely the value in this exercise of questioning, as this abstract play is turned back to our particular contexts. An unmasking of this philosophical grounding for pronouncements of <natural> or unnatural, removes mysticism from the process, and offers accountability back to the decider. Entrenched schema without recognizable reference would no longer provide adequate grounds for pronouncement. Even without agreement on what the “flow” of <natural> order is, acknowledgment that such decisions relating to naturalness are based on a particular engagement of this idea allows some common thread towards discussion of reformulation of the ideograph. Specifically applied to our context, we can ask: “What sort of <natural> course are we assuming when we choose to consider chemically enhanced bodies as unnatural?” Is it that we believe the course of humanity is to avoid contact with particular substances? Could it be that a vision of <natural> order involves not developing beyond a certain size or musculature unfamiliar to our immediate history? Is it possible that our concern with the potential redefinition of human possibility might forcibly influence how we perceive the human “kind?” Confronting these inquiries restores a certain amount of agency to a discussion that is often based in longstanding convention and expired references. It is always difficult to tangibly



connect the overarching elements of an ideograph, as their power exists partially through their ambiguity. However, for there to be the near universal appeal for a terminology, some level of connectedness must exist. If a theoretical <natural> course is taken up as our point of convergence in this discussion, one of our considerations for the deployment of a more considerate ideographic <natural> is at least partially met. In the following section I will discuss the next listed consideration, the utility of the word.

### **Utility of <Natural> and Natural Law**

Though it is far from perfect, a <natural> “course” or “flow” allows for some convergence in discussions of the otherwise ambiguous ideograph and its implications. Here we can, at least, be mostly assured that there is some measure of common ground. The next facet of consideration before deployment of a more responsible <natural> based on tenets of a “natural construct” revolves around the specific utility of the word choice. There are several elements to consider within language choice. Primary among these elements is the past usage and historicity of the word. In the early chapters of this study, this was my particular focus. Over time, <natural> has been used as a locus of control over particular modes of existence, and has also been used in exclusionary language. Within bodybuilding, the use of <natural> has shown the capacity to definitively divide particular bodies between lines of naturalness and produce conventions for bodily standards. This usage is one of the primary justifications for this study. If investigation stops here, and only the violent capacity of <natural> is considered, it would seem that any utility the word may hold would be largely nullified. However, the ingrained character of <natural>, like most ideographs, means that it is at best unlikely, and more realistically impossible to eliminate the language fully from our collective vocabularies. Even if it could be procured, such action would also dismiss the potentials of a word that has demonstrated the

capability to motivate and mobilize, even if many instances of this power's use have been unjust in the past.

The options left to us, then, involve understanding both the theoretical and specific utility of using a word that can guide our strategic action. Why does this particular term hold influence, and how/when can it be responsibly employed? One way to envision this use is to purposefully separate the referent course or flow of <natural> from the connotative features that follow. This process involves detaching those things that *generally happen* from those things that require some sort of agreement for its occurrence. To do this, we must actively decide to what extent <natural> refers to what *does* happen, or whether it is only being employed as a normative force (Trigg, 2005). This perspective would force us to confront questions like: “is it <natural> for some humans/bodies to thrive more than others, or have our expectations merely normalized its occurrence?”

Making this distinction is, to some extent, an anti-instinctual process to undertake as it is especially easy to extrapolate what “always” happens as part of a <natural> flow, even if this happening is only local in significance (both physically and temporally). After all, our existence as *natural constructs* is dependent on experience and shared experiences that accompany material reality. However, what appears to be, and is often described as, <natural> is often little more than the proficiently familiar. Conversely, something that defies the convention of the readily familiar is very likely to be classified as unnatural. Thus, the way <natural> is often used is not really connected to the reference point of a continuous flow. In fact, it is quite likely that such uses of <natural> “may not have much to do with the character of the world” (Trigg, 2005, p. 13) at all, but arise out of a peculiar will to segregate. This type of undue deployment of <natural> theoretically strips the term of ethical authority through its appearance in continuous

“crying wolf” scenarios. Pronouncing each regularity as fully attributable to static nature, muddies our ability to determine what is and is not essential. When we quickly apply a label of <natural> to a set of expected experiences, we make the mistake of deriving what *ought* to happen from what is currently happening. In doing so we impose a limited contextual viewpoint on an undecided future and an inappropriately expansive jurisdiction. This type of action both narrows the potential of what <natural> can be, and too broadly projects the (often incorrect) determinations that are made.

Our material world does certainly have its regularities, but these regularities are not wholly predictable by humans, and their causes and changes are not always predictably managed. This has not stopped humans from attempting to undertake this process of determining the constitutive elements of the <natural> flow. At different times, this has resulted in cultural imperatives to justify particular understandings of the world. Among these were/are the willingness to accept the <natural> inferiority of women, and the <natural> order involved in humans owning other humans as property. These atrocities are directly tied to the ways in which <natural> as both an abstract term and a symbolic referent was pursued and reified by a particular authority. However, in a move that may at first appear as contrary to much of this study, I must pause my indictment of our present and historical uses of <natural> in order to fairly discuss the term’s utility.

This discussion becomes necessary for two primary reasons. First, when we refuse to investigate any organizing properties of a <natural> order, and if we operate under the assumption that no such thing exists, we do not free ourselves from the existence of a normative naturalness, we only move its location and name. Second, by casting out all assumptions relating to naturalness, we instead impose a depiction of a different <natural> order, a paradoxical

insistence on a static (<natural>) state of the world where naturalness cannot exist. Such a world without transfer and change would exist outside the realm of sharable experience, and would rely totally on the experience of individuals to provide themselves direction. This perspective yields indelible consequences in much the same way impositions of <natural> do. Instead of imposing a morality set justified through the use of an authoritative <natural>, we instead elect to deny the existence of any far-reaching, sharable morality. Without this resource, we lack the capacity to collectively indict the very violent practices that <natural> would otherwise be accountable for. We make the inadvisable trade of common interest for individualized whims. Some agreement must linger here if change is to be successfully hoped for.

It can be accurately claimed that I am now asking for much from a particular word. On one hand I wish to free terminology from its violent, normative tendencies. On the other, I require that <natural> retain properties of collectiveness so we might be allowed to make changes necessary to the way we use ideographic language. This is difficult theoretical ground to tread, but I believe the considerations involved in making <natural> into a “natural construct” allow us to at least tenuously travel on this ground. I also believe alternatives already exist (although imperfectly) within our existing vocabulary that have reference to both naturalness and shared moral purpose. One such alternative is the theoretical existence of natural law, or the supposed guiding principles for what happens, or should happen, with or without the application of human negotiation. Like the flow or course of nature referred to before, there are certainly many understandings to explore of what natural law entails. Many of these perspectives are nearly indistinguishable from the ideas of a <natural> course. Such perspectives understand natural law to govern the world in a prescriptive manner, suggesting that all events play out in patterns of cause and effect that are observable, and with the correct perspective, predictable.

Another widely held perspective, the one I wish to confront here, is that there is an innate order to the <natural> world that governs morality, and our ideas of appropriate action. These supposed irrevocable “ten commandments” of nature encompass much of the moral logic for our basic laws, governance, and regulatory behavior.

Of course, natural law is a discipline of study in its own right. There are entire treatises on the subject in several philosophical eras from Plato to Hobbes, Augustine, Calvin, Hume and many more. There are also countless biological and sociological studies done on both humans and animals. One recognizable study on this topic was done by de Waal (2002), who looked at great apes for insights into a history of an evolutionary moral development. He wrote that there seems to be some recognition for moral behavior beyond just survival for the animals, and that it might be heavily socialized to the point where it only appears to be innate. For much of humanity, natural law (sometimes read as equivalent to God’s law) was sought out as a type of roadmap for human activity. Operating under this premise, correct human activity involved finding out the task we were meant for, and then accomplishing it in the way we were purposed. Natural law carried a moral force that governed through referent power traceable back to whichever human origin story or theology most resonated. Certainly many of these elements still exist in modern theology and also, to an extent, in metaphysics. However, as modern science has carved away at many of our ancient teleological beliefs about prescribed purpose and predestination, natural law has somewhat diminished in both scope and in its ties to moral behavior. Neo-Darwinist thinking has melded with beliefs about natural law in a way that presumes a natural order to be violent, genetically motivated, and in many ways contrary to much of what human law now exists to protect. Natural law is now mostly thought of as the evolutionary pecking order that provides odds for or against our survival chances. In this school

of thought, natural law is at best morally neutral and merely describes regularities in a non-purposive way. It is beyond the scope of this study to pursue every angle of perspective surrounding natural law, but I believe there are alternative views on the topic which incorporate well with our vision of natural constructs of ideographic naturalness.

To gain a useful perspective on natural law, we must again displace, or suspend, the dualism associated with natural law for a more reasoned account of the term's usefulness. The scientific, Neo-Darwinian procurement of natural law does little to describe the processes of human life. Humans are not entirely programmed by biology, and even if we were, acceptance of this fate would forfeit all human agencies and make morality a moot consideration. Even so, human freedom cannot rightly be considered absolute. There are costs to be paid whenever certain preferences are railroaded within a particular context in favor of immediate satisfaction. There is some basic level of agreement on which of these costs are acceptable and which overstep seemed boundaries. Murphy (2001) refers to these agreements as "fundamental reasons and certain goods that are grounded in the nature of human beings." (p. 2). To make any type of moral or social progress, we must first accept the loose existence of this "nature." However, this nature contains the potential to become problematic whenever we attempt to describe it as a static state, and striate it within an apparatus of capture. When we undertake this striation, we mistakenly grant something useful in thought or as guidance a place as foundational canon. Certain things are against human interests, but our method of deriving this is often flawed. For example, flawed methodology manifests in striations like legislation in two primary ways: 1. laws no longer represent the social, political or economic climate of the context they are now applied to, but the policy remains due to force of tradition; or 2. A measure has a "backfire" effect despite good intention. An instance of this second type of misapplication can be found in

measures like the Child Labor Act of 1986. Though this action legally banned child labor in India, the legislation has been shown to have *increased* the amount of child labor and *decreased* the wages of child workers (Bharadwaj, Lakdawala, & Li, 2013). Although it is likely in larger human interest to dissuade usage of child labor, the application of the new striation did not produce this result. This does not mean the measure itself was unethical or inconsistent with a moral “natural flow,” but rather it means that the method of enforcement was inadequate for the climate in which it was applied.

Discourse about natural law often gravitates towards grandiose, overarching pronouncements of good and evil. These depictions most often claim their origins in untouchable places such as the mind of philosophers, the Will of God, inherent to nature, or some combination of these locations (Hittinger, 2003). By framing the discourse around natural law in this way, we are granting authority to a method of thinking that is difficult to revoke. Hittinger suggests it is not necessary to grant this type of power to this terminology, and that doing so takes away greatly from the real utility of natural law. To him, natural law constitutes (or should constitute) an “authority-free zone” (p. xii). This dispersion of authority is accomplished not by granting credence to an authority assumed to purvey natural law (God, nature, tradition, etc.), but instead by allowing the very existence of the social agreement to serve as guidance. Whether or not a supreme force exists, there needn’t be an appeal to an outward authority in order to determine the essential and acceptable characteristics of humans. This is a very democratic viewpoint on the surface, but it is one with a core, requiring both recognition of a material, <natural> reality and the acceptance of non-necessity in our current interpretation of that reality. It also requires an aggressively progressive view of natural law. If natural law is that which best

describes and guides responsible human actions, then it must also be responsive to changes in what we know about human capability as well as humanity's current condition.

Natural law should not be confused with how humans are *naturally* inclined to behave if we have hope that it can describe some sort of moral platitude. Many of our so-called <natural> tendencies have proven to be far from conducive to the best interests of humanity. Human nature, like a supposed natural course, must continue in perpetual ambiguity if we are to ever find use of the term. What is conducive to human's nature is not necessarily what we most readily recognize, nor does it always pre-exist in our human convention (Trigg, 2005).

Recognition of required action is often in direct conflict with what is easiest to do, also.

Humanity has proven to be its own worst enemy at various times across our existence and neither authoritarian rules nor the individualistic pursuits of people have proven to offer adequate provisional guidance. If natural order is accepted as simply the path of least resistance, there is little hope for the social progression of humanity. Proper guidance requires re-evaluation of existing standards, and the willingness and reasonability to adapt these standards when new information comes to light, or when previous measures no longer adequately account for a changing social scene. Herein lies the utility of <natural> broadly reasoned: it offers a connective thread toward discussions of reasonable human action, and issues a non-authoritarian reference that can be used as guidance and can also be rearticulated. Natural law, when thought of as grounded, reasonable basis of action, provides guidance out of a smooth space. It is free from prescriptive-style dealings with change, and yet instills a prerogative toward justice. In doing so, the concepts of <natural>, and natural law, at least exhibit potentials beyond nefarious uses. This theoretical ground carved out by reconstructing the terms shows that it is possible to undertake our second consideration for the use of <natural> (evaluating its utility) and still find its use



productive. <Natural> *can* be utilized responsibly. This certainly does not mean that it has been or will be.

### **Conclusion: Consequences of <natural>**

The previous two sections have carved theoretical space for the reclamation of <natural> for means beyond its current use. It is shown that our current definitional standards are not a requirement of the current paradigm and that there are ways to re-imagine the term's possibility. This theoretical play is important, as unlearning oppressive behaviors often requires some type of displacement of the old. It is even possible to find common ground across debates about naturalness that can lead to better acceptance of difference and change. However, simply noting that <natural> can be reclaimed does not mean that it has been, or that it even is progressing in that direction. Prior experience tells us that, when exposed to apparatuses of capture, spaces tend to become more striated over time, rather than smoother. This particular consideration is where pragmatic dealing with real usages of <natural> must regain center stage, and marks the culpability of individuals in any movement or redirection of the term's clout.

Before responsible usage of the term <natural>, it must first be determined that both the reference and the utility of the usage are recognized, and then the rhetor must acknowledge whose perspective is being reified through the employment of the ideographic power of the term. The same choice of language can combine any number of results for the three considerations. For example using <natural> within an argument promoting traditional heterosexual marriage invokes a static and authoritarian view on the topic and reifies a perspective that is harmful to particular groups. Meanwhile, using <natural> to reassure a youth struggling with questions about their sexuality accomplishes a completely opposite set of results. It still refers to a particular course of things, but doesn't claim deference to a particular authority for the sake of an

easy answer. Instead, the use is lodged within an evidence of experience and progress, and is employed to care for pain and/or promote understanding. These are two fairly straightforward examples, but if we were to delve deeper, there are instances where helpful/not helpful is not such an easy distinction. If we consider the example of a person explaining the abusive behavior of their child as <natural> because “boys will be boys,” the immediate utility is helpfulness in the sense that it is used to protect the child. However, this use of <natural> reifies problematic gender roles, justifies violence, and consults the authority of an assumed binary. Again, those with a particular social awareness might be quick to recognize this instance as one where the utility does not usurp the reference or historicity of the term.

As a final example, I wish to offer a scenario specifically applicable to the context of this study. Consider a public service message that encourages a population to avoid steroid use because it is unnatural, makes people look unnatural, and could do long term harm to their bodies. This information is largely evidentially backed; many studies suggest that irresponsible AAS use can be harmful. The statement also offers the utility of preventing injury and ridicule to a significant population. However, this statement also reifies particular long-standing assumptions about the human body and its associated expectations. If we apply the list of considerations to this particular scenario, we are left asking whether this reification of bodily norms is essentially more helpful or harmful. Even if we are decidedly against the use of steroids because of harm we have observed them to produce, we must consider that such a statement refers to a particular authority on the articulation of a human body, one that is not necessitated by existential requirements but that exists out of convention. This is an instance where a rhetor must take deliberate thought on the language choice and decide if it properly meets the standards of a justifiable use. Is this convention worth supporting because of the harm it might prevent? In

answering this question I decide what statement to make about the “course of nature,” and I must also confront my place in it.

Decisions that involve justification of word choice become an important battleground in the forging of any ideograph’s future. The importance is amplified when we wish to overhaul a long period of connotation and convention and create something different than what we have historically experienced. <Natural> can use its rhetorical power to ease pain instead of create it and promote progress instead of halting it, but only if and when its usage is directly associated with that purpose. Surely, plenty of the responsibility lies within each individual rhetor who must constantly consider the impacts of their language. If we are to claim more moralistic use of language as a possibility, however, we must also accept a larger theoretical shift around how we use and understand <natural> that likely extends to other ideographs as well. If we are looking to a different vision of natural law to provide the guidance that individual whims cannot, we must involve ample consideration of the type of <natural> world we wish to create. In the final chapter of this study, I continue to confront the third consideration of a less violent <natural> in a more theoretically nuanced and generalizeable way. I do this work by investigating the consequences involved in the reification of particular visions for the term, and I conclude with an advisement toward how communicators, and especially communication scholars, can rhetorically approach the striation of ideographs.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD A “MACHINIC” DEPLOYMENT OF IDEOGRAPHS

#### Introduction/Review

Throughout this study I have called attention to the places where an ideographic <natural> has “crystallized” within regulatory language and, in doing so, has created a device for the striation and categorization of bodies and practices. Using the world of bodybuilding as an exemplar, I have foregrounded the ethical and moral compromises that defining <natural> often seems to require. I also pointed to specific instances where an ideologically weighty <natural> has been employed to privilege a particular group over another and, in turn, caused harm. There was sufficient evidence to show that <natural> is both a particularly influential ideograph, and that its uses are not always grounded in ethical responsibility. From this point, I turned to examine the theoretical progression involved in crystallization of the terminology, as well as the process of selecting the particular word <natural> for use in regulatory language. Through the vocabulary of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I depicted the ways <natural> has been striated by an apparatus of capture to divergent effect. I pointed to the ways these authors illustrate that smooth and striated places can interact to create new areas of thought and application. In applying this vocabulary to ideographic striation, I offered the possibility of productive and responsible change to our current iterations of <natural>.

In the previous chapter, I explored a theoretical advisement for reclaiming the given power of <natural> in ways that have the potential to promote healing and justice. In this advisement, I offered three considerations for outlining the use of the terminology: First, the symbolic reference of <natural> must be considered (What am I invoking when I say <natural>?). Second, the utility of the term must be measured (What am I using the ideographic power of the word to accomplish?). Finally, an assessment must be made concerning the

consequences involved in reifying the language in the particular way chosen. In this final chapter, I close by focusing on these considerations collectively with a particular mind to the third. How do we approach the contested meanings of <natural> responsibly without creating the type of regulation that stabilizes power within a particular domain? I believe this action is possible through the application of a profound but simple existing theoretical approach that has an eye on both context and potentiality.

### **Instruments and Machines**

Contested understandings of <natural> exist as arenas for resistance, reclamation, and potential problem. Rarely are large-scale praises or indictments of the term's usage fully possible (though situationally, such judgments may become possible). Even through commitments to more responsible usage of ideographs, defining "proper" usage is still quite difficult. In earlier chapters I looked into the prescriptive and descriptive ways that bodybuilding has used <natural> to serve the purpose of striating bodies. Bodybuilding, as a practice, has had significant impact on which iterations of human form are acceptable, healthy, and most perfectly developed. Within organized divisions of bodybuilding, the ideograph has been used to create (often ambiguous and semi-enforceable) standards for what can be considered the correct chemical makeup of a <natural> human.

In using the context of bodybuilding, we are provided with an adequate example of the double-edged character of <natural>'s usage: Consider a new striation of <natural> concerning AAS and like substances that is legally dictated to define which substances should not be taken by bodies who wish to remain considered <natural>, in sport or otherwise. Such a measure may be fairly effective at discouraging some youths from harming their organs and shortening their life spans with potentially dangerous substances. As we become more familiar with the side

effects of substances, perhaps the definition set forth by a governing body shifts to include certain supplementation behaviors or training activities that are sufficiently dangerous. The number of overdoses and tissue injuries might decrease by an observable amount and this would, of course, be considered a productive development.

On the other hand, any desire for the utility of this formalization of <natural> must be tempered to recognize the potential of such striations to harm through their precedence. If youths are deemed *unnatural* through simple pharmaceutical or supplement usage, little is done to rectify the cultural forces that drove the use of the substances in the first place (culture of competition, negative self-worth, sexual/peer pressure, desire for otherwise impossible progress, etc.). Instead, a person who obtains the usually unshakable label of unnatural likely will have *less* incentive to readjust any dangerous behavior. If my body is unredeemably unnatural, and I cannot repair this status, why should I continue to adhere to a code that categorically relegates me to a lower level of bodily existence? There is certainly utility in using <natural> in this way, but the precedence it creates makes this action somewhat self-defeating in many scenarios. The historicity and lasting character of the <natural>/unnatural dichotomy must be continually recognized in decision processes that involve sufficient scope, less the violent potential of <natural> return in new form.

If <natural> were to be reclaimed or disbursed in a way that allowed the dualism involved between natural/unnatural to be blurred, perhaps the distinction of bodily unnaturalness would no longer carry the full weight of judgment. However, without this deterrent, all purpose for the regulation would likely be lost as well. Neither adding <natural> to regulatory language, or outright removing it allows us a safe place of easy-mindedness toward the subject. Constant re/evaluation of all language use is important, but the significance is magnified in discussions of

ideographs because of the rhetorical significance they are granted. Adherence to a cycle of awareness and appraisal is a tall task, but it is likely a necessary one if responsible language use is indeed our goal: Is this language choice responsible? What ends does it serve? The indecision that comes with carrying multiple considerations for the use of <natural> within each and every context is difficult. Such a task can be read as the type of call to action that leads an otherwise concerned individual down a path of inaction. This inaction, of course, continues toward repetition of a problematic status quo. If every language choice becomes so largely consequential, it perhaps seems difficult to communicate at all. After all, are the answers to the given considerations even knowable? Even if I am committed to near constant attention, isn't it possible that I still "do <natural>" wrong? Through these questions we hear the echoes of those who fear a culture steeped too deeply in "political correctness." Regardless, an attitudinal shift must occur for significant change in the usage of <natural> to be found. The given options of approaching <natural> appear to be somewhat of a paradox in practice, but they do not have to be.

Here I hope to successfully apply to ideographs what Coonfield (2006) calls a "machinic understanding" juxtaposed to the "instrumental" way concepts are often deployed. Coonfield suggests that we spend far too much time asking, "What IS it?" (in relation to a word, concept, or even tangible items) and in doing so, we "thus delineate everything in advance of the answer" (p. 297). In Coonfield's estimation, we spend an undue amount of energy asking what something is/should be for and what its intended purpose is before ever giving it a chance to expand its utility in practice. Coonfield uses the actions showcased in the many movies of actor Jackie Chan as a vivid example. Whenever Chan is put in a difficult situation, he observes his surroundings in a new and advanced way. Objects are no longer limited to their "intended purpose." Instead,

Chan has the unique ability to re-imagine and “machine” items so they combine with him to fit the purpose and needs of his given context. This way, a lobster becomes more than a potential meal, it is a way of fending off a knife-wielding attacker. Similarly a rake isn’t just a landscaping tool, it is the perfect item to use to vault out of an open window before the explosion occurs. Chan’s ripe awareness, and capacity for escaping apparent limitations appears to be a type of super power, but it does not involve anything supernatural at all. No longer just instruments, these ordinary items he finds interact with Chan to become part of a “machine” that can accomplish more than what could be imagined for the item alone or the actor by himself.

Instrumental versus Machinic is a modern terminology, but shares a very similar philosophy to that of Thomas Aquinas’ theory of existence vs. essence. Through Aquinas’ understanding, anything that we have formed a conception of can be said to “exist” in the sense that it is contained within our world of reason. If we refer to it, we have created some form for its entry into our plane of existence, no matter whether it is material, philosophical, literary, or allegorical. However, the *esse* of the thing, or its actualization of potency, is what determines for Aquinas what the thing “really is.” To determine the *esse* of a concept, you must linger in what it does and what it can be used to accomplish. If the work of reasoning ends at acceptance or non-acceptance that a concept exists, our logic for belief slips into problematic circular, self-referential thinking. This is the type of reasoning that leads to literal and figurative “witch hunts.” The reasoning plays out under this progression:

1. An evil exists because linguistic authority/tradition declares its existence.
2. Anything we declare to dwell within the realm of this existence is also evil by association.



3. Our continued pursuit of this evil maintains its existence and extends its applications.

We can see quite easily how this might apply to instances of ideographs entering regulatory language. A divide is created within ambiguous language; legislation is created that further fosters this divide and *captures* the newly formed differential; and continued, non-substantiated use of the captured terminology ensures that the divide perpetuates. For <natural> to actualize its conceptual existence, it must have a recognized purpose. Whether this purpose is instrumental or machinic is determined by the ways we employ the ideographic power we have already created within the terminology we now use. This is where the necessity for responsible language use returns (Goodwin, 1965).

In our context, we too often “instrumentalize” <natural> in static ways through our regulatory behavior. This action prevents the word from being considered in anything other than already-existing modes of dialogue. Acting in this way severely limits the ideograph’s scope of potential to only places and methods where it is already been shown to have use. Based on the history of employment of <natural>, this would likely doom its usage only to places where it continues to standardize and discriminate between bodies, either directly or indirectly. Coonfield (2006) argues, instead, that responsible use of language and theory always works to move the instrumental toward the machinic and asks, “Of what is it capable? With what else does or can it connect?” (p. 298). In considering the capacity of <natural> in specific, contextual relationships with bodies, we perform a much different action than when we *impose* the word *on* the bodies. Considering possibilities of application instead of labeling turns focus toward potentials and not categories. What <natural> *can do* is realized as the “function of its capabilities under particular conditions as it enters into relations of composition/decomposition with other bodies” (p. 296).

Shortly, what to do with <natural> must become far more important than what, exactly, <natural> means if we are ever to unlock its more ethical uses.

For communication scholars and rhetoricians, it is part of our calling to investigate the places where language is especially impactful. We share a belief in the power of the symbolic word and we research, teach, and mentor others so that the power associated with communication might be administered more justly. In recognition of this commitment, we should then be particularly interested in the places where considerable communicative power resides. In this case, responding to our educational calling involves seeing that constructions of <natural>, or other ideographs, are not limited to what “it is” now or even for what (or for whom) it was intended. Within the process of teaching and learning responsible language use, we shape the *esse* of the influential concepts we discuss. Failing to do so allows the circular logical patterns that ensnare bodies in harmful ways. Those of us in the communication discipline cling to a mantra that says, “Communication is consequential.” For this belief to be realized in practice, we are required to go beyond simply relaying the existence of terminologies to a place where our purpose is helping “machine” these terminologies responsibly. We must search for the productive, liberating potential embedded within the ideographic power attached to words. In this search lies hope for an agency that looks forward and also does not require a total dismantling of, or a return to, past deployments of ideographs. We cannot cause <natural> to reach non-existence through our criticism, language practices, or even through renewed attention. However, we can locate machinic usages for <natural> that mold its purpose, its *esse*, into new actualization.

More specifically, taking a machinic approach means that we must examine the potential of <natural>, not as a definitive state of being (as it has been deployed), but as an ideographical

springboard of potential that will come into relation with peculiar contexts, non-dominant practices, and bodies of different capabilities. There are endless applications of this thought process and many of them provide options that exceed the scope of past usage. Returning to our extended example within the context of this study provides an opportunity for application. Through this machinic lens, bodybuilders could participate in seemingly *unnatural* actions as they relate to AAS and other performance-enhancing substances, but still be understood as important, <natural> variances of bodily experience. The behavior is not necessarily encouraged, as it rubs up against a shared ethic of public health, but the person is also appreciated for their impact on the growth of human possibility. The individual, and especially their variance in bodily performance, has a place in the “flow” that is the <natural> progression of things. Each innovator and marker of difference expands understandings of human potential. This approach paves the way for a larger appreciation of what humans can be and re-evaluation of our constructions relating to what we “should” be. Further, all types of bodies reside within a shared <natural> flow, even if the descriptor <natural> must mean different things in relation to each body. The measuring stick that evaluates the individual can be drastically different even under the larger guidance of a shared moral/ethical commitment that comprises a reformed “natural law.” I believe, by taking this perspective, it is possible for a body to both stretch understanding of human capability, and still matter individually.

The striations of <natural> have produced a high degree of variance in their outcomes. Certainly there are instances where the overall results of regulatory implementations have been good. However, the more severe consequences have been highlighted within the pages of this study for a reason: They best showcase the far-reaching effects of large-scale ideographic regulation. We would hope that results like the Indian Removal Act that used <natural> to decide

who was fit to belong in a certain land would not be repeated, but there is reason to believe we are not free from this usage. The requirements of “naturalization” laws are still codified in ways that make it easier to detain, arrest, and deport non-white residents. This is especially true in southwestern states that give police forces the right to detain “anyone suspicious.” Arizona specifically has a stated goal of “attrition through enforcement,” in order to “make life so difficult for undocumented immigrants—and their unwanted ‘networks of relatives, friends, and countrymen’ that they will all leave the state” (Guttentag, 2012). Obviously this is an intentional impediment to avoid allowing these inhabitants to achieve naturalization through the outlined (but heavily contested) five-year residency protocol. Being <natural>ized still is immensely legally consequential. Access to basic civil rights can hinge on which side of the designation a person is allowed. It is not difficult to find ways where the terminology still striates bodies, and it is unlikely to be brought to a full-stop under <natural>’s current regime of usage.

<Natural>’s implementation may hold difficult consequences, but like our consideration of <natural> law in the previous chapter, the consequences are not required in a fatalistic way. What if, instead of focusing on the striations that have been, we instead continue to ask, like Coonfield, “what can [<natural>] do?” I contend that in answering this question the terminology is afforded a chance to “become” in a way that only the newly created smooth space can allow. For <natural> to be anything other than a categorical qualifier, it must expand beyond the territories and definitions already in use. “Becoming,” in the understanding shared with Deleuze and Guattari (1987), allows the word to transform into something it was not envisioned as before. Such becoming requires us to ask questions that break the basic categorizing principles of the word down to its “essential elements.” These types of inquiries interrogate where the value for <natural> or any other ideograph has arisen, and what it is now doing. It leads to questions

about why the borders around naturalness are located where they are and about consequences that may arise from their deployment: When I place the borders of <natural> *here*, who am I cutting off, and who am I working to benefit? This type of becoming allows for works such as this study that critique any and every understanding of <natural> that claims to be *self-referentially* <natural>.

This genre of work implores audiences to explore the affective and intensive potentials of an ideograph to ask how they might be re-organized or even disorganized to foster a more just and usable platform for human action. The language and the people who use it shape each other continually. Our recognition and responsible integration of this knowledge determines what we will do with the symbolic power granted to the ideographs we have already created. Certainly endless potential for new becomings of the word exist if we choose to shoulder the burden of fostering the becoming through machining practices. Much of this study pointed out where bodies have been deemed unnatural. If we take this as a starting point, we elect the challenge of reformulating our ideographic language. This means we ask questions like: What if “unnatural” bodies were instead understood as a fleshed critique of the assumed <natural> body? If we continue on this pursuit we would find innumerable modes of expansion, such as a productive intersection of rhetorical studies and disability studies. Here is a machinic point of convergence where our assumptions about naturalness can dissolve and are reformed. We “machine” both realms of study towards a synergistic usage that might not be in either’s immediate description. People and bodies that fit within the former descriptor of “unnatural” might then become recognized as dynamic conduits of becoming and appreciated both for the individual’s unique experience and also for their importance within a constant movement of human development. This would also bring into light the places where the markers of difference have produced

marginalizing effects on the “different” bodies. In this “machine,” difference is not ignored, but it is not subjugated to a place beneath a separate <natural> order. Instead the <natural> order is forcibly reconstructed so that it can better accommodate for a population once intentionally removed from its jurisdiction. Meanwhile, forced inclusion into any designation can be limiting to the expanse of human potential and, in doing so, return the language to a place of harmful striation. For this reason, it is possible that machining the ideograph might also mean opening <natural> to critiques of exclusivity or valorizing iterations of unnatural instead of dissolving them within a more inclusive category. For any route to be successful in reformulating <natural>, however, the word must come to mean something other than a discriminating force; it must be machined to do something different than its adopted purpose within our apparatus of capture.

When this machinic approach to <natural> becomes a part of reflexive and responsible language use, challenges within our own bodily experience gain a new platitude of purpose within a now-unsettled <natural> flow. For example, I live life through a body that experiences an anxiety condition. It is at times negligible or even beneficial to my pursuits, and at other times it is extremely limiting. Though this type of bodily experience is not uncommon, it exists within a construct of non-normal. Conventionally, there is something unnatural about the way my body emotionally processes certain phenomena. My entries into the world of bodybuilding (I still prefer the term weight-lifting for myself) and academia offer fleshed critique of places where I do not necessarily assume the profile for full entry (as small as this critique might appear). The *esse* of these systems is expanded through my entry in much the same way that a champion bodybuilder expands the *esse* of the human body through their innovation and progress.

Meanwhile, those with more visible or profound physical or mental disabilities critique the entry standards of the worlds *I* inhabit, as well as the assumed naturalness of my body's function. I am largely able-bodied and capable of the majority of weightlifting movements and the activities associated with academic work. There is an access to the privileging power of <natural> that I have that many others do not. Also, being White and cisgendered, I am unlikely to have to ever face questions concerning my <natural>ization. These factors of identity play a role in each new environment I encounter. These types of recognition become important. Undertaking a process where we first critically assess our own place in relation to conventions of <natural>, and then encourage revolutionary becoming for the term, can both start to limit the harm done through the word's usage, and expand the populace that has access to its ideographic pull. As we attempt to smooth <natural> back out, we have the opportunity to redistribute its persuasive power, and actualize the potency of the ideograph in new ways.

Again, ironically, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) remind us that this smooth space of becoming is possible, in part, because of the striation emanating from crystallized constructions of the word. If we have no formal understanding of <natural> to critique, and no power structure to examine, both our criticism of the term and the ideograph's potential for healing are moot. Like all things, problematic behaviors have their dialectical role in unfolding progression. This being said, such a realization should not dissolve our vigilance toward recognizing striation and regulation of ideographs. Inviting dangerous and destructive use of terminology only further embeds the word within a system of usage we hope to eventually escape. However, recognizing that even problematic uses of ideographs have a place within our purpose helps prevent debates surrounding the use of <natural> from being reduced to simple if/then scenarios. The external

consequences of regulating such a term do not become void, but our avenues of escape are not limited only to breaking down all convention.

In my chosen example, the realization that enforceable standards of <natural>ness can be injurious does not make concern for the safety of those who may be otherwise influenced to use certain substances less legitimate. If the primary goal is to prevent harm and encourage healing, rooting out and destroying all regulation is not alone a viable behavior. Ideographs are not required to function as a word reduced to only inclusive and exclusive capabilities, even if this is how they are sometimes deployed. Instead, ideographs represent a cultural text rich with potential for both becoming and progress. These are the political ingredients required for the complicated play between smooth and striated spaces. It may make sense to prevent labeling particular foods, substances, and practices as <natural> if doing so reduces the amount of ingestion of harmful substances and curbs the suffering of a population. It may also make sense to repeal such legislation if it somehow generates a harmful stratification between bodies that incur segregation. It is likely that the most just answer is not either of these definitive ends of the spectrum.

The play between smooth and striated does not end, nor should we desire it to. Once we reach the point of static agreement on what <natural> is across context (unlikely as this may be), its ideographic power dies. With it dies the potential for employing the ideograph within avenues of healing and growth. What would remain would only be the skeletal structure of regulation, held firmly by an apparatus of capture. However, if this play between smoothness and striation is encouraged over practices that simply formalize the term, hope is not inherently tied to any one of an ideograph's determinations. Just as a smooth space may never be enough to save us, striation need not be the instrument of our demise.



### **Closing Thought: My Body as Illustration**

As an illustration of the approach I advocate, I end this study by briefly examining an implicit question related to the reading of this dissertation. Though I have talked some about my experiences, I have not disclosed whether or not I consider myself to qualify as <natural> under the definitional standards of bodybuilding that I have shown extend to “regular life.” I have not told you whether I am *geared* or *natty*. It was my performative intent to avoid making this distinction. I have woven wording that obscures easy answers to this question throughout the pages of this project to promote the play between smooth and striated spaces. By designating myself under either characteristic, I make a decision to enact a conception of the ideograph of <natural> that is instrumental and not machinic. This is consequential action.

If I present myself as a geared athlete, I perhaps gain further credibility and insight into the topic in the eyes of my audience. This would be gained at the cost of a set of presumed legal/moral/ethical violations. If I claim <natural>, I free myself of the stigma that comes along with a geared or unnatural body identity, but potentially further crystallize problematic conceptions of <natural>. Either choice may function to reinforce ideas of what <natural> *is* rather than what it *can do*. By choosing not to align myself in a category, I force potentially productive questions to be asked instead of defaulting to existing answers: Why does a body’s <natural> status matter? Who is not <natural> to me? How does my perception of this dissertation change if I read it from either of the author’s possible identity designations? What shared conclusion might we draw if we substitute the <natural> of bodybuilding to <natural> as it is invoked in discussions of the bodies of sexual minorities or the bodies and experiences of people with disabilities? This is not to say that failure to identify with a designation is the only way, or even necessarily always the most generative way of sparking productive questioning of

ideographic striation. Advocacy through direct recognition of a status of bodily naturalness or unnaturalness is necessary as well in many scenarios. Rooting out and recognizing the harmful applications of discriminatory language is always an important step in reclaiming or reformulating vocabularies. Though I have located many of the places <natural> has been used harmfully in this study, there are undoubtedly more bodies and practices negatively affected by a designation of unnatural the current regime of ideographic naturalness. Only when these experiences are also considered, is a proper machining of <natural> possible.

In the case of my own bodily naturalness, I employed the three considerations involved in the use of ideographic <natural> and determined that not participating in the dichotomy of <natural>/unnatural most benefitted the flow I want to be a part of, and also machined the terminology toward a more just purpose. The blurriness that comes from the questions arising from my choice is the smooth space of liminality that still emanates from the potentially harmful existence of a striation of <natural>. When this blurriness is recognized, and the ambiguity of the terminology is “captured” not for striation, but questioning of the boundaries of the striation, important critical work is being done. From here we are free (in a limited sense) to reconsider how future striations might function towards more inclusive, less stigmatized deployments of ideographs.

There are nearly limitless arenas where <natural> has either already had influence, or that could benefit from the term’s responsible use. In the not-so-distant future, we will have to answer this question in relation to the food we eat, the people who are allowed to remain in this country, and a whole range of bodily performances that do not fit conventional performances of “normal.” The way we answer these questions about <natural> will determine much about who we, as a culture, have chosen to be. In a sense, the way we deal with <natural> is the way we

“machine” ourselves and will be influential in the way we write our own *esse*. We find ourselves now at a weighty location in the unfolding temporal <natural> flow. Our decisions matter, and our answers to questions like these matter. So, though it is far from definitive, my answer to whether my body is <natural> will remain this: What do you *mean* by <natural>, and what can it come to mean?

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