



Dying to Entertain? The Victimization of Professional Wrestlers in the USA

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ABSTRACT

Professional wrestling in the USA, and elsewhere, is a profitable industry in which the commodification of professional wrestlers can be evidenced. Being neither a pure sport nor pure entertainment, professional wrestling occupies an ambiguous position, which arguably, at best, facilitates the mystification and neglect of the harm and victimization caused to professional wrestlers as part of their craft, or at worst, causes the victimization of professional wrestlers. In this article we discuss the victimization of professional wrestlers in the USA as a result of the demands of the industry. It is our contention that they constitute the "Victimological Other" and, focusing on the wrestling business in the USA, it documents their unnecessary victimization. We maintain that whilst professional wrestlers engage in performative violence, they pay a high price for such a performance and, as such, they are victims of their craft and of the industry in which it is located. The self-inflicted and occupational-related harm and victimization experienced by professional wrestlers as a result of the pressure of this industry is discussed and the issue of accountability is raised. We conclude that this area of victimization requires further academic investigation and discussion.

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"Unfortunately, the least way that wrestlers seem to be dying is due to old age.... Yet because it is wrestlers no one cares" (Cohen, 2010a, p. 1).

"It is self-consciously a business and stands for business interests" (Lagorio, 2005, p. 3).

"Some wrestlers bet among themselves on who will die next" (Mike Lano, a former wrestling manager and promoter cited in Swartz, 2004, p. 2).

In 2005, Sammonds, an author of an academic collection of essays dedicated to writing about wrestling commented, "Not too many have written about wrestling" (Lagorio, 2005, p. 2). Within academia this remains the case with Barthes (1957/1972), Jenkins (1997/2005) and Mazer (1998; 2005) being somewhat exceptions. Such writings are located within dramatic arts and cultural studies, not victimology. The field of victimology is concerned with the commission of victimization, harm, and subsequent redress. However, whilst some attention has been dedicated to *the harm* caused to the spectators of professional wrestling especially children (see Bernthal, 2003, for example), limited serious academic attention has been afforded to professional wrestlers and the harms and victimization that they experience. This is an attempt to begin to rectify this situation. The article will begin with a discussion of the organizational trajectory and status of the professional wrestling industry in the

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USA. It will discuss the complexities and controversies regarding fakery and reality within the wrestling profession. After establishing that professional wrestlers constitute the “Victimological Other” (Walklate, 2007), we document the multiple harms and layers of victimization that professional wrestlers subject themselves and are subjected to. This victimization is placed in the context of the industry in which they perform their craft.

The Professional Wrestling Industry in the USA

Wrestling is a “highly competitive industry,” and has been “problematized as the least legitimate of sports” (Mazer, 1998, p.11), as “in the context of sport it is fake” (Kreit, 1998, p. 1). Yet, despite this and its chequered past with regard to popularity, professional wrestling is a “multiple-million dollar, world-wide phenomenon” (Kreit, 1998, p. 1). Its current popularity is unquestionable; for example, on 1 April 2012, the *WWE WrestleMania XXVIII* was a *sold-out* event attended by 78,363¹ fans from 36 countries and all 50 states of the US (Weakland, 2012a, p. 1). Generating an income of US \$6.9 million, it was the highest grossing “entertainment” event in the history of the Miami Stadium in which it took place (Weakland, 2012a). Viewers from more than 105 countries could also witness the live event via pay-per-view TV and it was broadcast in 20 languages (Westland, 2012a; 2012b). 1.3 million purchases of the event via pay-per-view were made resulting in global gross sales “in excess of \$67 million” (Weakland, 2012b, p. 1).

Up until the 1980s professional wrestlers had no national organization or no national television program. The World Wrestling Federation (WWF), formerly the World Wide Wrestling Foundation (WWWF), (until April 1979) co-existed alongside three other major promotions and the operational territory of the WWF was confined to New York. This, however, was dramatically altered as a result of the WWF changing hands in June 1982. Vince McMahon Jr. purchased the business from his father, Vince McMahon Sr., and within two years the business had been transformed almost beyond recognition. According to Kreit (1998, p. 8), the actions of McMahon Jr. “permanently changed professional wrestling.” At the outset, McMahon Jr. began an expansionist project; he broke the territorial boundaries of the profession by employing wrestlers and expanding television programming beyond their territorial parameters. In so doing, professional wrestlers became more firmly established as exhibitionist actors as opposed to athletes, at least in the public imagination. Lagorio’s comment describes

this, “... wrestlers went from fighting men in tights to bona fide televised personalities. Kids began eating Hulk Hogan vitamins” (Lagorio, 2005, p. 1).

By 1985, WWF’s popularity was soaring; the marketization and commodification of the profession had begun. Audiences and profits increased as young fans had to be accompanied to events by an adult/s and profits were further increased as young people purchased the associated memorabilia. Although there was resistance inside and outside the industry, by 1986 professional wrestling was refashioned into the genre of family entertainment.ⁱⁱ Its popularity wilted in the 1990s,ⁱⁱⁱ however, the rediscovery, repackaging, and remarketing of professional wrestling, in which the internet played a vital role, has meant that professional wrestling has almost ascertained the degree of popularity it enjoyed in 1987 when audiences were at their peak (Kreit, 1998). Indeed, as can be evidenced from the popularity of and the profits incurred as a result of the 28th *WrestleMania* event, professional wrestling continues to grow from strength to strength (Weakland 2012a; 2012b).

But It’s Not Real Is It?

Professional wrestling has been described as a “wrestled performance of Suffering” (Barthes, 1957/1972, p.15), and “... [a] morality play,” that “cannot be removed from sport entirely” (Kreit, 1998, p. 2). According to Mazer (1998, p. 18), “... [t]he professional wrestling performance combines breathtaking athleticism and prodigious showmanship.” Yes, violence is enacted, however, the result of violent performances is actual violence and real injuries (Blaustein, 1999; Mazer, 1998), and victimization. Behind the “larger-than life figures from a comic-book-like world” (Mazer, 1998, p.18), the “funky costumes” (p.19) and extravagant entrances, the contemporary professional wrestling industry comprises a mixture of performance and realism in which fans form an integral part of the game with plot lines including actual behind the scenes incidents (Kreit, 1998; Mazer, 1998 for more detail).

Professional wrestling comprises a historically rich, specific, and at times turbulent, but somewhat special relationship between the profession and its fans (Barthes, 1957/1972; Kreit, 1998; Mazer 1998). This multifaceted relationship and wrestling itself is, however, generally misunderstood. Kreit (1998) explains how fans are simplistically and unfoundedly *written-off* as dupes and wrestling is read unsophisticatedly as mere fakery. A good example of this can be found in Blake (1996, p.171), when he

describes the World Wrestling Federation as “the most anodyne form of sports entertainment,” and “a ritualized parody of the circus version of the sport,” in which, “large men pretend to hurt each other.” Blake (1996, p. 171) even compares professional wrestling to a “related entertainment,” namely, the *Gladiators* series. A more informed and accurate reading of professional wrestling recognizes that it is at one and the same time a staged, improvised, predetermined, and scripted (predominantly) hyper-masculine performance *and* an athletic, arduous, skilled and practiced “fixed sport” (Mazer, 1998, p.17). Fans “look to see the fake and to see through the fake to see the real...examining each punch for its impact and non-impact” (Mazer, 1998, p.6) in a “performance practice that is more complicated than it at first appears.” (p.7-8) Behind professional wrestling’s staged combat, real violence, harm, and repeat victimization permeates the ring and the industry.

We argue here that the unfair and uninformed trivialization or misreading of professional wrestling, professional wrestlers and their fans has resulted in the neglect of this area by victimologists. Inside and outside the ring, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and corporate victimization pervades the professional wrestling enterprise. The dark, dangerous and unpalatable underside that characterizes this industry, including profit before people and lack of redress and accountability have been overlooked (Swartz, 2004), by victimologists. This paper is an attempt to begin to rectify this situation.

The misreading of professional wrestling and the subsequent failure to recognize professional wrestlers as victims is in part due to the deliberately ambiguous TV format. Fights and storylines spill over and take place outside of the ring and so-called *back stage events* are captured on film and, thus, are staged. Also, at times, storylines mirror real life events making it difficult to distinguish the fictional from the factual. Therefore, when a professional wrestler is injured for real, the seriousness is obscured and undermined by the imaginary victims and imaginary victimization. For example, when *Mankind* was involved in a storyline in which he feigns having a mental illness, this arguably takes away from professional wrestlers who have real brain injury as a result of their engagement in professional wrestling.

Another factor also attributable to the denial of their victim status and victimhood is their engagement in their own victimization due to their desire to deliver more extreme performances and their voluntary engagement in edgework.^{iv} However, such extreme performances and engagement in edgework have to be contextualized within the political economy of the professional wrestling

industry as professional wrestlers engagement in edgework is an expectation of the industry and the audience that the industry serves. In addition, “life on the edge and few career opportunities,” together with “its testosterone-fueled danger,” wrestling predominantly attracts young men into the industry; and only a “handful of stars have more than a high school education” (Swartz, 2004, p. 3). Finally, professional wrestlers themselves contribute to the invisibilization of real injuries in that when events “go wrong,” and they are actually injured, inside or outside the ring, they persevere with the performance doing their best to mask the real injuries regardless of the severity.^v In the next section we argue that professional wrestlers constitute the “Victimological Other.”

The “Victimological Other”

It is not our intention to argue that professional wrestlers are injured, harmed, and victimized to a greater or lesser extent than other professional sports persons, although the former is indeed the case in some respects (Swartz, 2004). Sports journals such as *Sports Health: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (SAGE), document the array of injuries experienced by such persons. That said, it is a predominantly medical lens through which such harms are documented, rather than a victimological or criminological one. We wish to look at the self-inflicted and corporate related harms incurred by professional wrestlers through the victimological lens and, in so doing, we contend that professional wrestlers can be conceptualized as the “Victimological Other” (Walklate, 2007). The victimization of professional wrestlers and their status as victims is not in keeping with commonsense thinking and mainstream academic victimology or victim activism that largely envisages victimization in terms of an obvious perpetrator, victim, act of victimization, and a clear intent to harm. Ideologies about victimhood within and without the criminal justice system have been dominated by the notion of a blameless, risk-free, “deserving,” “innocent” victim of crime (Walklate, 2007). It has also been dominated by the idea that women are victim-prone whilst men are “risk-free” (Walklate, 2007, p. 52). For Walklate (2007, p. 53), the Victimological Other “falls outside the normative imagery of theory and practice.” Professional wrestlers are predominantly male, and within commonsense thinking, the harm they are subject to is merely an entertaining performance. As Swartz (2004: p. 1) states, the growing list of premature deaths among professional wrestlers receives “little notice beyond obituaries in small

newspapers and on wrestling web sites, typical of the fringe status of the \$500 million industry.” Also, within academic theory and practice, the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and corporate victimization of professional wrestlers does not feature. Therefore, in these respects, professional wrestlers constitute the Victimological Other.

Dying To Entertain? The Victimization of Professional Wrestlers

“A promoter once said to me, “If you die, kid, die in the ring. It’s good for business” (‘Piper’ cited in Swartz 2004, p. 3).

The outcome of professional wrestling fights are scripted, however, plans can go array, “accidents do happen and injuries occur” (Cohen, 2010a, p. 1), plus “conflict erupts with the violence spilling over from display into actuality” (Mazer, 1998, p. 22). In addition, there are the harms caused by punishing work schedules, heightened audience expectations of wrestlers’ performances, and a desire on the part of wrestlers to meet these expectations (Blaustein, 1999). Wrestlers themselves have noted that the professional wrestling industry is one “...in which rampant steroid use and prescription drugs have often been viewed as part of the job” (Chris Nowinski, former wrestler cited in Applebome, 2010, p. 2). Swartz (2004, p. 2), speaking about “the use of steroids and other drugs” comments that “it has been ingrained in the culture for decades.” The accumulative result is the largely unchallenged use of steroids including human-growth hormone^{vi} (Swartz, 2004) and the largely ignored and uncontrolled alcohol and substance abuse amongst wrestlers (Cohen, 2010a; Swartz, 2004), together with marital and familial breakdown and debilitating mental and physical injuries (Blaustein, 1999), premature death (Swartz, 2004; Cohen, 2010a; 2010b), high death rates, suicide, and homicide (Applebome, 2010; Michak, 2010). Excessive steroid use can result in an enlarged heart and physicians have reported evidence of this and they have also reported on the “use of painkillers, cocaine and other drugs,” including recreational drugs (Swartz, 2004, p. 2).

Although some of these instances of self-inflicted and occupational related forms of victimization exist amongst other amateur and professional sports, it is amongst professional wrestlers where problems such as illegal steroid use seems to be the “most pervasive and deadly” (Swartz, 2004, p. 1). Also, according to “medical officials,” young wrestlers die from heart attack and other coronary problems such as enlarged hearts “at an extraordinary high rate for people that

young” (Swartz, 2004, p. 1). Further, Keith Pinckard, a medical examiner who has taken an interest in the fatalities of wrestlers, asserts that the death rate of wrestlers is approximately “seven times higher than the general U.S. population,” and their chances of dying from heart disease is 12 times higher than other Americans aged between 25 to 44 (Swartz, 2004, p. 2). Finally, professional football is also a profession “that’s exceptionally hard on the body,” but according to research undertaken by *USA Today*, “wrestlers are about 20 times more likely to die before 45 than are pro football players” (Swartz, 2004, p. 2).

USA Today interviewed 15 professional wrestlers who stated that they took “pain pills so they could perform four to five nights a week despite injuries” (Swartz, 2004, p. 1-2). Professional wrestler, *Rowdy Roddy Piper*, discussed what is known in the profession as the “‘silent scream’ of pain, drugs and loneliness” (Swartz, 2004, p. 2). *Scott Raven Levy* also admitted that he used steroids and took “more than 200 pain pills daily,” commenting that “it’s part of the job” as part of the profession is to “be a big guy” and “to perform in pain.” He continued by stating, “[if] you choose to do neither, pick another profession” (Swartz, 2004, p. 2). Cohen (2010a, p.1), states that wrestlers “are on the road 300 days a year and unlike other athletes, they do not have an off season,” that “takes a huge toll,” on professional wrestlers bodies. Professional wrestler, *Jake ‘the Snake’ Roberts*, describes the harms caused by such a schedule, including being away from his family, marital and familial breakdown, alcohol and substance abuse in the form of increased dependence on, and abuse of, crack-cocaine, sleeping pills, and pain killers (Blaustein, 1999). In the documentary *Terry Funk*, another professional wrestler, is diagnosed with degenerative arthritis, knee injuries, and back injuries that will result in him experiencing chronic pain for the rest of his life (Blaustein, 1999). Mick Foley, also known as *Cactus Jack* and *Mankind*, tells of his own recognition of his deterioration of speech.

Cohen (2010a, p.1) asserts “...[t]he death rate among wrestlers is alarmingly high.” For Cohen (2010a; 2010b), a key concern is the disproportionate number of wrestlers who have died since 1985 before reaching the age of 65. *Chris Von Eric* died at age 21 (suicide), *Andrew ‘Test’ Martin* died at age 33 (accidental overdose), *Owen Hart* died at age 34 (fatal accident at the *Over the Edge ’99 Pay Per View* event), *Eddie Guerrrero* died at age 38 (coronary heart disease), *Davey Boy Smith* (also known as ‘British Bulldog’) died at age 39 (heart attack), *Rick Rude* died at age 40 (heart attack), *Miss Elizabeth* died at age 42 (accidental overdose) and, perhaps the most disturbing, *Chris Benoit* died at age 40

(suicide—he killed his wife Nancy, his son, and himself at his family home). Whilst “former or current professional wrestlers continue to die in disproportionate numbers, ... few had made news”, indeed “[m]ost have died in relative obscurity” (Applebome, 2010, p. 1).

Michael Benoit (Chris Benoit’s father) attributes his son’s dreadful actions to “repeated head injuries received in the ring,” and he highlights how, to date, the only two wrestlers who have had brain tissue tested after their deaths (Chris Benoit and Andrew ‘Test’ Martin) were found to have “extensive brain damage” (Michak, 2010, p.2). He also asserts that “...[t]his extreme behavior in a wrestling ring would never have been allowed under the rules of wrestling and boxing commissions” (Michak, 2010, p. 2). He contends that “...[t]he use of painkillers is almost an occupational hazard in wrestling due to extreme scripted matches, the work schedule, and the fact that there is no off season” (Michak, 2010, p. 2). Given that most, if not all, professional wrestlers take repeated blows to the head, it is debatable to what extent the Chris Benoit tragedy can be attributed to this, however, growing concerns are being voiced about the harmful (and we would argue, victimizing) effects that the occupational culture and subsequent lifestyle a career in wrestling cultivates. We share such concerns and are concerned by the seemingly glossing-over of such matters by owners of this industry (Corteen & Corteen, forthcoming).

The professional wrestlers (plus two family members) highlighted above are a minority amongst an ever-increasing list that includes over 100 famous wrestlers who have arguably died a pre-mature death (Cohen, 2010). There are also the secondary and tertiary victims—those who are left behind: families and the wrestling community, including fans. The self-inflicted and industry related harms are so bad that the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) introduced a “Wellness Programme” (Swartz, 2004; Cohen, 2010a), and it has offered free drug-rehabilitation to former WWE performers (Cohen, 2010b). In 2006, it introduced a “Talent and Wellness Programme” (see WWE, 2009 for details). According to Robert Zimmerman, company spokesperson for WWE, it has also instituted “a comprehensive drug, cardio and head-trauma testing programme to ensure the safety of its performers” (cited in Swart, 2004 p. 2).^{vii}

There is also the issue of professional wrestlers being victims as a result of their celebrity status. We will not enter into detailed discussion of this type of victimization here, but, for example, *Andre the Giant*, who was physically “abnormal” due to a medical condition called acromegaly or gigantism (WWF, 1999), was exploited as a result of his extreme height

and weight.^{viii} His oversized body, which was part of his medical condition, was used as a “special feature,” to draw in the crowds. Also, as the celebrity status of professional wrestlers grew, they were expected to subject their bodies to more and more extremes with regard to their physical appearance and their physical performance as can be seen, for instance, in the professional wrestlers *Hulk Hogan* and *Mick Foley*. Indeed *Hulk Hogan*, *Piper* and *the Rock* have appeared in movies and become TV celebrities.^{ix}

Professional wrestlers engage in the physical and emotional performance of pre-determined victories and pre-determined failures. In so doing, the pursuit of celebrity status and entertainment, together with the pursuit of profit in this commodified industry, results in the expectation of professional wrestlers to push the boundaries of health and safety and to take more extreme risks. Performances have become more demanding and risky as can be seen in use of instruments such as chairs, wrestling outside the ring on a concrete floor, and cage battles. But the blurring of the real and surreal inside and outside the ring with regard to relationships, allies, feuds, and self-inflicted, interpersonal and occupational-related injuries is what makes professional wrestling what it is. It is this ambiguity that makes it entertaining and a multi-million dollar industry. Dave Melzer (cited in Applebome, 2010, p. 2), editor of *Wrestling Observer Newsletter* and who has been writing about professional wrestling since 1971, commenting on the premature deaths of wrestlers stated, “if it happened in baseball, well it couldn’t; people would have stopped it long ago.” He continued, “It’s like people think wrestling is fake, they have this weird mental pass, like they’re (wrestlers) somehow not real people” (Applebome, 2010, p. 2). It is the smokescreen of ambiguity that contributes to obscuring of the real victimization of professional wrestlers. Added to this is that the “deaths of professional wrestlers, not just in the WWE, have received sporadic attention” in the media (Applebome, 2010, p. 2).

Despite efforts to improve the industry it remains “a largely unregulated business” (Swartz, 2004, p. 1). Michael Benoit believes that deregulation of the industry on the part of the McMahons has resulted in a business that “now operates with no oversight”; he maintains that “...[h]istory will show that the early death rate of wrestlers started shortly after the regulation was stopped” (Michak, 2010, p. 2). Whilst the extent to which such tragedies and travesties can be attributed to the commodification of the professional industry and to WWE Company specifically is debatable, it would be wrong to ignore such deaths, harms, and victimization—and,

significantly, the disproportionate rate at which they are occurring in this occupation. It would also be wrong to neglect the occupational culture in which these are occurring together with the subsequent harmful lifestyles such a culture produces for many wrestlers. Referring to his list of the premature deaths of over 100 famous professional wrestlers, Cohen (2010b, p. 1) states "... [v]ery few of the deaths on the list can be blamed 100% on the wrestling business and very few have 0% blame." We agree further investigation is needed, preferably before other premature (and possibly preventable) deaths occur.

Accountability

"No one is standing up. Either they don't know what is going on or they're terrified of being blacklisted" (Meltzer cited in Swartz, 2004 p.6).^x

Historically professional wrestling has always enjoyed its independence (Kreit, 1998). Professional wrestling exploits and parodies both sport and theatre, yet it is not and cannot be "accepted as a legitimate sport," and it is not recognized as "legitimate theatre" (Mazer, 1998, p. 21). In part, its independence and ambiguity regarding its occupational status has meant an almost indifferent or somewhat hesitant response to such victimization and harm within the industry. The relative lack of accountability and responsibility on the part of the professional wrestling business is also enabled by the independent *contractor status* of wrestlers together with "contracts" that contain "death clauses" that release the professional wrestling industry from liability in the event of a wrestler's death or injury in the ring (Michak, 2010). Other protections enjoyed by the WWE company include, "the right to terminate wrestlers who couldn't perform from between six and eight consecutive weeks due to injuries sustained in the ring," and a wrestler's inability to claim against the company for compensation or "benefits for injury, death, or loss of wages" (Michak, 2010, p.3).

Michael Benoit, on seeing his son's WWE contract after the death of his son Chris, stated "I was shocked that any corporation could knowingly put its workers at such risk and accept no responsibility" (Michak, 2010, p. 1). Although the WWE maintains that it has "never exercised that option" (Michak, 2010, p. 1), we echo Michael Benoit's comments in that we find this state of affairs *shocking* and *unacceptable*. In view of the "toll of death and shattered bodies," we, too, do not understand how the industry can seemingly act with impunity and how

there is, "virtually no public outcry for massive reform" (Michael Benoit cited in Michak, 2010, p. 2). To say intervention is paramount is to state the obvious, but we would like to acknowledge this victimization and bring the harm and potential injustices to the academic arena.

This Is Not "The End"

According to major promoters the professional wrestling industry has "moved on from its "Wild, Wild West days of the late 1980s," and seemingly "... [y]oung wrestlers take better care of themselves" (Swartz, 2004, p. 5). Yet, professional wrestlers continue to die and be harmed at an unprecedented rate. Professional wrestlers desire to entertain and fans desire to be entertained, but wrestlers should not be expected to subject themselves and others to unacceptable temporary or permanent harms. Scant academic attention has been paid to the intrapersonal, interpersonal and corporate victimization of professional wrestlers and the secondary and tertiary victimization derived from this (Corteen & Corteen, forthcoming). Thus, while this discussion ends here, it is hoped that this is just *the beginning* as the victimological imagination has been alerted to a neglected area of victimization and harm—"the scary epidemic" of "wrestlers dying young" (Cohen, 2010b, p. 1), and the other harms that have been highlighted. This is an area in which the industry itself appears to have acted in an almost shameless manner to what is a shameful state of affairs. The nature and extent of this phenomenon, together with the apparent lack of redress and the political economy of this business, warrants further academic exploration and discussion.

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ⁱ That said according to the Sun Life Stadium website the biggest sitting capacity for football/soccer is 75, 540 (Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada (US) n.d.). The figure quoted by Weakland (2012a) has been disputed by Martin (2012, p. 2), who states "WWE did not set a record, and Sun Life was not sold out." The valid attendance figure is at least 13,000 fewer than that provided by the WWE. Seemingly, this is not the first time that the WWE has not told the truth about WrestleMania attendance figures. However, WWE is still popular as financial results for the company demonstrate (WWE, 2012).

ⁱⁱ To avoid gaming fees the term "Sports Entertainment," was coined by Vince McMahon (Sammond, 2005).

ⁱⁱⁱ Although its popularity did not wane in our house with regard to Ajay and as friend and colleague Dr Paul Taylor pointed out it did not wilt in his household either and he still has the sticker book to prove it!

^{iv} Lyng (1990) describes *edgework* as the voluntary engagement in activities that threaten death or injury. Engagement in such activities is highly skilled and controlled rather than impulsive and uncontrolled. The concept of edgework and its relevance and application to professional wrestling requires further examination (Corteen & Corteen, work in progress).

^v For example Mike Lozanski seriously damaged his lung during a match, but he continued working for small promotions for 18 months after the injury and he "died in his sleep," on the 18 December 2003, aged 35 (Oliver, 2012 p. 1). Chris Lozanski, Mike's brother stated, "Mike felt he had to keep working. I left the business because I want to see my 11-month-old son grow up" (Swartz, 2004, p. 4).

^{vi} Human-growth hormones are a muscle-building compound which is "even more powerful and dangerous than steroids" (Swartz 2004, p.2).

^{vii} Writing in 2004, Swartz (2004, p. 5) rightly comments, "such reforms only help those wrestling for the top two organisations, leaving hundreds of wrestlers largely working under the same conditions as years ago." He also states that with regard to regulation little has altered as wrestlers attempt to unionize has been unsuccessful and wrestlers have no player association. This remains to be the case.

^{viii} 'Andre the Giant' is thought to be the first WWF 'super star.' Arguably the experiences of 'Andre the Giant' epitomises many of the multi-layered forms of victimisation that we are highlighting (Corteen & Corteen, work in progress), this can be discerned in the documentary *Andre the Giant: Larger than Life* (WWE, 1999).

^{ix} 'Andre the Giant' also starred in a movie wherein he plays the part of giant. He also starred in TV shows such as *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

^x According to Swartz (2004, p. 6) the wrestling journalist Melzer is "echoing the sentiment of others." Swartz (2004, p. 6) continues saying "Piper" who is standing up believes that he has lost thousands of dollars in potential earning because of speaking out about "rampant steroid and drug use" and that this is what got him "fired from the WWE." He notes that this allegation has been denied by the WWE who say that "the two were unable to negotiate a contract" (Swartz, 2004 p. 6).