



## Dedication

## **Abstract**

## Acknowledgement















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**Myth:** Women will “bulk up” if they lift heavy weights.

**Norms:** Women verbally express fear of visible muscle gain, or negative commentary from others if they appear too strong or muscular.

**Behaviors:** Survey respondents worded this in terms of client actions and described their actions of teaching clients to overcome the myth/norm with mixed results. Therefore, the behaviour here is that women avoid weight training facilities, equipment, and/or classes and talk about why they avoid them, leading the educators to take this approach.

















**Myth:** Group exercise and/or dance fitness classes are only for women.

**Norms:** Men going to classes is seen as “gay” or “unmanly”, men simply are not interested in classes.

**Behaviours:** They do not participate in classes even when explicitly invited, they de-value the exercises done in class, when they do try it they do not enjoy it or find it more challenging than expected and feel embarrassed when they are not as good at it as the women.











**Myth: Everyone is watching me work out.**

**Norms: Feeling intimidated by weight training equipment or space, fear of mirrors, fear of being judged.**

**Behaviors: questioning women using modifications, looking down on women's workout formats, women choose classes where men cannot see them, or avoid areas where men are performing intimidating behaviors, women are aware of intimidating men who are watching them do a heavy workout too.**

















**Myth: Women believing they are naturally weak, unskilled, or uncoordinated, that women should be thin and men should be muscular, men are better instructors**

**Norms: Women feel clumsy or weak, accepting weakness to worsen with age, women cannot do pushups, women are naturally better teachers but men will make more money, gym equipment is designed with taller male bodies in mind.**

**Behaviors: Men help too much when spotting women, managers select trainers for certain teaching assignments based on their sex, trainers have to work on clients knowledge and confidence to convince them to try exercises they “can’t” do; gym management giving preference to male instructors**







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**Myths: The results achieved by celebrities/fitness influencers/marketers is achieved by the workouts they are promoting, their appearance is natural.**

**Norms: none reported**

**Behaviours: repeating phrases and ideas used by celebrities and influencers, requesting the same workouts they use.**













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**Myth: n/a – this category appears across several myths already described above.**

**Norms: women are not expected to know how to do men's exercises like use heavy weights, do pushups, or climb trees, men and women workout separately, specifically because these things are not appropriate or "ladylike"**

**Behaviours: women will not do unladylike things, leaving class because of sweating.**



































































## Survey of NSFA instructors and trainers on gender-specific fitness myths (GSFMs)

This survey is for the collection of data for the Master of Arts in Women & Gender Studies thesis for Terri M. Roberts at Mount St. Vincent University.

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM: The Pink Dumbbell Problem (The PDP)**

#### 1. Introduction to the Researchers

The Researcher for this project is Terri M. Roberts, of the Department of Graduate Women & Gender Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Before agreeing to participate in this research project, please take the time to read and understand the following information. This document explains the aim of this research project, its procedure and the advantages, risks and inconveniences it may pose to you. If you have any questions, please email the researcher at [terri.roberts@msvu.ca](mailto:terri.roberts@msvu.ca)

#### 2. Nature of the Study

This study seeks to learn about Gender-Specific Fitness Myths (GSFMs) you have experienced and what teaching strategies you have used to correct these myths. Definition: GSFMs gender-specific beliefs about fitness activities which are scientifically dis-proven **and** which limit exercise opportunities or outcomes for people based on their gender.

Q my xj ,w ox pq8n ,mqz ,xy uqp, F t q,nqxqr, t m, y qz,onz , q r y ,oq m z,q q ouq , ot ,m, push-ups or pull-ups, that women should not lift beyond a small, limited amount of weight (3lbs to 5lbs), y qz, n z p, y qz, p u r r q , w , t q, q, r, y o x q, q t m q8 t m, y qz, m q z , r x q u n x q z s t , r , s n 8 t m, t q q, are certain quantities of muscular hypertrophy that are appropriate for men or women, that men ought to workout to bulk up vs women ought to workout to slim down.

The aim of this project is to create a foundation for best practices in handling these situations. It is hoped that best practices will be identified for future use in fitness instructor certification training and that an understanding of GSFMs will be used by fitness facility owners/managers in the operation of their facilities and programs. This study will also fill a gap in the current body of work on gender and body image, in which exercise for its own sake is not well studied.

#### 3. Nature of Participation in This Study

Your participation in this research consists of an online survey. The time required to complete the survey will be approximately 30 to 40 minutes, depending on the length of your answers.

If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research Office, at 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

#### 9. Our Thanks

The researcher and her advisory team extend our sincere thanks for your participation, without which this study would not be possible.

#### 10. Signatures

By selecting the checkbox on the survey screen I freely consent to participate in the research form and I understand the goal, nature, advantages, risks and inconveniences involved with this research project. Where applicable, I am satisfied with the explanations, details and answers to my questions that the researcher has provided about this project.

Welcome! You have been invited to participate in this survey because you're a fully certified member of the NSFA. These questions are all about your experiences as an *exercise educator* and how clients discuss their beliefs about gender and exercise, or Gender-Specific Fitness Myths (GSFMs) as they are called in this study. Please read the GSFM definition below before you proceed to the questions.

**Definition:** GSFMs are gender-specific beliefs about fitness activities which are scientifically dis-proven and which limit exercise opportunities or outcomes for people based on their gender.

**Examples** such as push-ups or pull-ups, that women should not lift beyond a small, limited amount of weight (3lbs to 5lbs), are certain quantities of muscular hypertrophy that are appropriate for men or women, that men ought to workout to bulk up vs women ought to workout to slim down.

There are 18 questions in this survey.





[button] Submit your survey.

[end screen] Thank you for completing this survey.









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