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“I DIDN’T WANT TO BE AN AVERAGE WOMAN”:

WOMEN’S BODYBUILDING AS EDGEWORK

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S. ABBY BAKER
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“I DIDN’T WANT TO BE AN AVERAGE WOMAN”:
WOMEN’S BODYBUILDING AS EDGEWORK

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BY

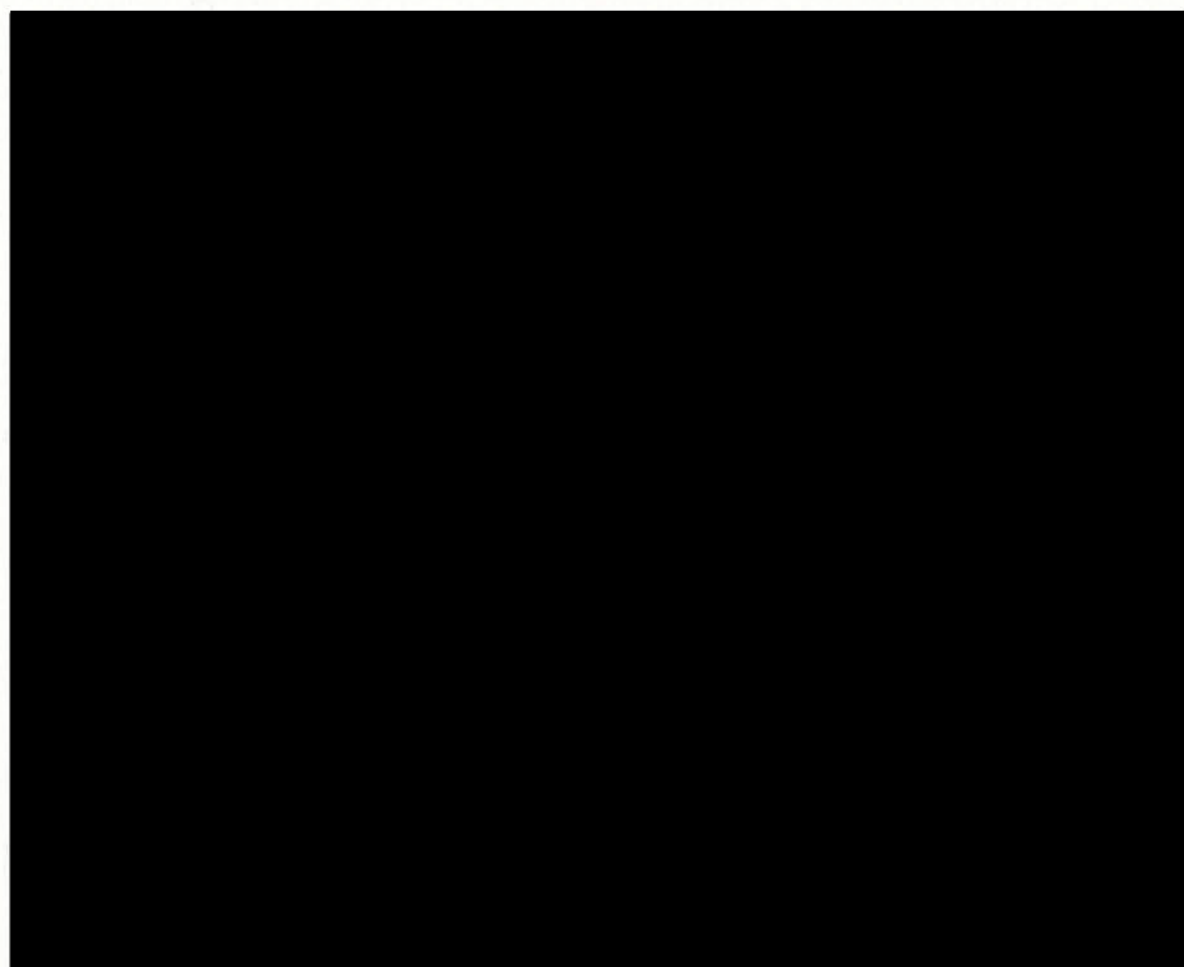


Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Abstract	vii
“I didn’t want to be an average woman”: Women’s Bodybuilding as Edgework	1
Appendix E. List of Women’s Bodybuilding Forums and Facebook Pages	50
References	54
Appendix	60
Figure 1	61
Figure 2	

List of Tables

Appendix A. Summary of Sample Characteristics

Appendix B. Summary of Edgework Variables

Appendix C. Study Sample Characteristics

Appendix D. Summary of Quantitative Survey Questions by Competitor Status

Appendix E. List of Women's Bodybuilding Forums and Facebook Pages

List of Figures

Figure 1. Theoretical Diagram

Figure 2. Recruitment Flyer Posted to Online Forums and Facebook Pages

Abstract

Bodybuilding as a sport emphasizes and reinforces hegemonic masculinity because the purpose of lifting weights is to achieve a persona of strength and discipline. As a result, women bodybuilders have been faced with the dilemma of how to be taken seriously as athletes without sacrificing their femininity (Bolin 2003). I examined this relatively uninvestigated sport in order to give a voice to women who participate. I distributed an online survey to women who identify as bodybuilders through bodybuilding forums and Facebook in order to gain further insight into the sport itself and the specific burdens that women encounter such as body image, social pressures, and stigma. I contend that women's bodybuilding can be construed as a type of edgework (Lyng 2005; 1990). I analyzed open-ended and closed-ended portions of the online survey looking for patterns associated with the edgework model to determine if women's bodybuilding functions as edgework.

“I didn’t want to be an average woman”:

Women’s Bodybuilding as Edgework

In Western cultures, it is generally accepted that being slim and toned is the ideal body shape for women, and muscularity is inappropriate for women (Grogan, 2004). With these cultural assumptions in mind, it is no wonder that women’s bodybuilding is under scrutiny and misunderstood. It is still generally accepted that women should not be as strong and muscular as men (Dworkin, 2003).

Women’s bodybuilding, in its inception in the 1970s, would have been classified as a beauty pageant by modern standards; women wore high heels and competed in order to achieve the thin, toned body type, the ideal based on hegemonic masculine standards in which women were not muscular. In the 1980s, women’s bodybuilding became a contest and competition in its own right rather than “just sideshows for male bodybuilding contests” (Bolin, 2003, p. 124). The term “bodybuilder” is conceptualized as a person who works out with weights in order to reshape the body, not just tone it (Weider&Weider, 1981). In other words, women who identify as bodybuilders lift weights and engage in cardiovascular exercise similar to women weightlifters or women fitness competitors; however, women bodybuilders differ in that their goal is to create an appearance of strength by developing a muscular, “ripped” body that is evaluated in competitions for tone and symmetry.

Bodybuilding and weightlifting are often conflated because the discussion centers on women lifting weights (Brace-Govan, 2004). Although weightlifting contestants also compete on stage, the purpose of competing is to demonstrate their

strength by lifting weights. Women bodybuilders also compete on a stage in front of an audience, but the purpose of the competition is to display one's body through a series of mandatory poses. While bodies are gazed upon in both weightlifting and bodybuilding competitions, the physical activity of lifting weights, not the appearance of the body, is the focus of the weightlifting competition and source of success. Women bodybuilders, by contrast, are judged solely on their appearance, a bodily appearance that is cultivated by lifting weights (Bolin, 2003).

Bolin (2003) discusses the history and emergence of women's bodybuilding in order to demonstrate how it is a postmodern phenomenon, blurring the lines of gender boundaries by juxtaposing masculinity with standards for female beauty. Within the subculture of competitive women's bodybuilding, power and strength are honored and idealized as positive traits, traits that most of society outside of the bodybuilding subculture regard as masculine in nature.

Bodybuilding as a sport in which women train to compete based on physical appearances of strength emphasizes and reinforces hegemonic masculinity because the purpose of lifting weights is to achieve a body and physique of strength and discipline, qualities typically associated with masculinity. As a result, women bodybuilders often are faced with the dilemma of how to be taken seriously as athletes without sacrificing their femininity (Bolin, 2003). Symmetry has come to denote femininity; therefore, the symmetrical woman must present this in addition to being "hard and ripped" by reducing her body fat and diet in order to show muscle separation and striations (Bolin, 2003, p. 116). A body is "symmetrical" if one's lower body is similar in proportion to one's upper body. For example, an "hourglass" body shape is deemed feminine

because the upper portion of the female's body is similar in proportion to the lower portion. Therefore, in order to be successful in the sport, women bodybuilders must delicately negotiate the "edge" of the boundaries between masculinity and femininity.

In this paper I show how women's bodybuilding functions as edgework.

Stemming from a cultural criminological framework, Stephen Lyng's concept of "edgework" is a means of explaining voluntary risk-taking in order to understand what motivates people to engage in high-risk behaviors (Lyng, 2005). According to Lyng, the motivation for engaging in high-risk behaviors is the "experience itself" and the "seductive" and "addictive" pleasure one experiences during the activity (Lyng, 2005, p. 18). Based on postmodernist interpretations of edgework, the motivation to engage in risky behaviors is that the experience offers an escape from a society of increasing economic exploitation, rationalization, and disenchantment and a means to freely rebel against the forces of society (Lyng, 2005, p. 30). Negotiating the "edge" between two mental or physical states, such as sanity versus insanity, is viewed as a means to regain control of one's behaviors and choices. In this paper I contend that women's bodybuilding functions as edgework. The activity of engaging in edgework supports the motivation to train and compete. I also contend that three components of edgework (activity, skill, and sensation) are evident in the training and dietary regimens employed by women bodybuilders.

Women's Bodybuilding: A Masculinity/Femininity Balancing Act

Much of the previous research on women and sport and leisure activities has not focused on bodybuilding as a subculture, but rather has focused on women's fitness or weightlifting or focused on men's bodybuilding (Brace-Govan, 2004; Atkinson, 2007;

Karazsia&Crowther, 2010). Studies centered on women's bodybuilding, have focused primarily on the unique juxtaposition and confrontation between masculinity and femininity that takes place in women's bodybuilding, as well as the experiences of these women, including the stigmas they must endure and how they manage their stigma(Bolin, 2003; Royce, 2003). Bolin (2003) found that women's bodybuilding did manage to subvert essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity, but that the women had to carefully negotiate and balance between masculinity and femininity. Much of the research on women's engagement in sports filters the results through the lens of symbolic interactionism; therefore, I am offering an alternative perspective and theoretical model by which female bodybuilding can be understood.

Critical and postmodern feminists generally conclude that female bodybuilding is at times subversive and empowering, but also colluding and reinforcing of the normative gender order (Boyle, 2005; Fisher, 1997; Grogan, 2004). For instance, Bolin (1992) and Ian (2001) argue that cultural and institutional gender controls function to nullify or reduce bodybuilding's subversive potential and recuperate transgressive bodily displays through constraint and reinscription. Many feminist scholars (Balsamo, 1994; Brace-Govan, 2004; Heywood, 1998) agree however, that bodybuilding can empower women in several ways. For example, women bodybuilders can perceive their development of large muscles as a "semi-rebellious act" against Western ideals of thinness (Wesely, 2001). The development of muscularity may increase women's self-esteem and confidence; they often feel more powerful, healthier, and sexier (Grogan, 2004). Bodybuilding gives some women a sense of control over their own bodies (Fisher, 1997). When their most important reference groups become other bodybuilders

and contest judges, many women bodybuilders shift their internal ideas of what the “ideal” body should look like to one with more muscularity. This leads to feelings of increased self-confidence and personal power (Grogan, 2004). Likewise, female weightlifters experience themselves as masterful and strong and refuse to apologize for their strength and appearance (Brace-Govan, 2004).

Finally, as Dworkin (2001) argues, women are constantly pushing up on the glass ceiling of female muscularity. Despite increased empowerment, the prominent theme of female bodybuilders’ experience is one of contradiction, often leading to attempts to “balance” popular notions of femininity and muscularity. Grogan, Evans, Wright, and Hunter (2004) studied the meanings of femininity and muscularity within the bodybuilding community and found that female bodybuilders do not feel the need to adopt the essentialist feminine identity within mainstream culture because their idea of the ideal body for a woman had changed to one of more muscularity. Instead of pursuing a mainstream cultural ideal, they pursued the body-type idolized within their specific subculture; however, this is not always the case.

Critical feminists, postmodernists, and sport sociologists describe how female bodybuilders balance contradictory demands of muscular development versus expectations of normative femininity. Women bodybuilders will often regulate their muscle size to avoid being labeled as “mannish”, “bulky” or “lesbian” (Bolin, 1992; Boyle, 2005; Grogan, 2004; Lowe, 1998); using body technologies such as breast enlargements, plastic surgeries, and feminizing hairstyles, outfits, and accessories to counteract “masculinizing” effects of steroid use or loss of breast tissue (Bolin, 1992; Lowe, 1998); and emphasizing heterosexual desirability by posing for erotic photo

spreads or performing choreographed heterosexy routines during competition (Boyle, 2005; Heywood, 1998). Sex, gender, and sexuality are often conflated in the context of female bodybuilding (Boyle, 2005; Shippert, 2007). Female masculinity, such as large musculature, equates with lesbianism while female femininity assumes heterosexuality (Halberstam, 1998). In fact, many laypeople often assume that women who are hypermuscular not only possess more “masculine” personality traits (Ryckman, Dill, Dyer, Sanborn, & Gold, 1992), but also that they have an “ambiguous sexual orientation” as compared to other women (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, Holmgren, & White, 2004).

Work-out and Dietary Regimens of Female Bodybuilders

As evidenced in the literature, women bodybuilders are forced to negotiate a fine line between masculinity and femininity. This “balancing act” between two extremes is apparent in their daily interactions and during competitions. Past research has also illuminated the strict work-out and diet regimens that bodybuilders endure, as well as the sense of discipline and control that these women must maintain in order to compete and be successful (Walberg-Rankin, 1993). Women bodybuilders are vulnerable to developing potentially harmful dietary and weight control practices in order to maintain a body that is both lean and muscular (Goldfield, 2009). Lamar-Hildebrand, Saldanha and Endres (1989) found severe dieting and weight cycling among female bodybuilders preparing for a contest. More recent research also found a high prevalence of strict dieting, weight cycling, body dissatisfaction, and preoccupation with food among 26 competitive female bodybuilders (Andersen, Brownwell, Morgan, & Bartlett, 1998).

Overall, research on women's bodybuilding indicates that women who train in this sport must follow disciplined and controlled diet and training regimens in order to be successful. Achieving a muscular and toned physique often results in a sense of confidence and empowerment, yet these feelings are not shared by spectators. Female bodybuilders are often stigmatized because their bodies are muscular, not thin. Muscularity is often conflated with masculinity, therefore women bodybuilders must negotiate a delicate boundary between masculinity and femininity.

Edgework

Lyng (1990) argues that edgework consists of behaviors where the actor seeks to go beyond the "edge" or test limits between two physical or two mental states as a means to fulfill unmet needs or desires. "Edgework" is a means of conceptualizing voluntary risk-taking in order to understand what motivates people to engage in high-risk behaviors (Lyng, 2005). The three central components to edgework are: activity, skill, and sensation. Edgework should not be confused with thrill-seeking because edgework requires the use of skills; thrill-seeking does not require the use of skills in order to engage in the activity. Edgework provides participants with a sense of control over their lives and environment through the use of skill sets (Lyng, 1990). Thus, successfully surviving the "edge" provides a sense of control because certain skills are used in order to negotiate these risky activities and behaviors. Feelings of euphoria are also associated with surviving the edge. Edgework allows the participant to experience sensations not common to their daily life.

Given that Lyng's edgework model stems from the cultural criminological literature, much of the research on edgework relates to engagement in criminal activity

as edgework (Ferrell, 1998; Halsey, 2003; Lyng, 2005; Lyng, 1993; Presdee, 2004) such as stealing (Shover, 1996), drug use (McGovern, 2011), financial crimes (Smith, 2005; Wexler, 2010), and resistance to intimate partner violence (Rajah, 2007). These studies have generally concluded that criminal activity can often be understood as edgework.

Edgework is a classifying concept used to describe and investigate social, psychological and structural characteristics of volunteer risk taking. Since the publication of Lyng's (1990) seminal article on edgework, critics (Chan & Rigakos, 2002; Donnelly, 2004; Laurendeau, 2008; Lois, 2005; Miller & Lyng, 1991; Walklate, 1997) have pointed to the limits of the edgework concept, which reflects "conceptual models rooted in the unique experience of white, middle class, adult males" (Lyng, 2005, p. 11).

Some recent work has examined women and edgework. For example, Gailey (2009) explored Pro-Ana sites, websites that are supportive of anorectic behavior, or in other words, "proanorexic" or "pro-eating disorder". She concluded that the Pro-Ana subculture functioned as edgework because the subscribers to the Pro-Ana websites regulated their eating patterns (skill) by starving themselves in order to gain a semblance of control of their "chaotic" lives (activity) (Gailey, 2009, p.98). The women who subscribed to these sites also indicated feeling euphoric (sensation) when they felt dizzy or weak because they knew that they were closer to their weight-loss goal (Gailey, 2009). Lois (2001) studied the impact of gender in the ways men and women manage intense emotions at different stages of the edgework experience in a volunteer rescue organization. She reported that both sexes participated in edgework;

however, her research noted the differences in emotive responses between men and women. When considering future edgework experiences, specifically the possibility of assisting in a rescue effort, men tended to approach the situation with confidence and assumed their “bodies would take over, and they would not have to think about it” (Lois, 2001, p. 149). Female rescuers, on the other hand, tended to display fear as they anticipated possibilities in which they could not perform rescue efforts because their emotions might interfere (Lois, 2001). Rajah (2007) also examined women’s participation in edgework, but her research focused on women who employed edgework as a form of resistance and survival skill in abusive relationships. She argues that women involved in abusive relationships learn skills to help them survive or avoid abuse, constantly negotiating the line between safety and danger while receiving the traditional risks and rewards that are associated with the edgework model (Rajah, 2007).

Articles on the subject of sports and edgework are even more limited. Some recent studies have explored women’s engagement in edgework within sports. Literature on edgework and sports consists of research on motorcycling (Murphy, 2011), ultimate fighting (Lyng, 2009), extreme sports (Allman, 2009; Brymer, 2010; Martha, 2010), and rock climbing (West, 2012). These studies only examined men. Laurendeau and Shahara (2008) investigated ways women skydivers and snowboarders manage the construction of their risk taking within a male sporting domain. The authors found that women mitigated gendered constraints on their activities in male space, by strategically drawing upon middle class and liberal notions of female empowerment (Laurendeau & Shahara, 2008). Such findings highlight the idea that risk taking activities are not just a means to experience gender but also serve to as a way to

produce gender and self-identity. I hope to add to the limited research on edgework and sports as well as women's engagement in edgework.

Women's Bodybuilding as Edgework

Women's bodybuilding can be conceived of as a high risk behavior because it involves both physically risky behaviors (i.e., extreme work-out regimens and strict dieting) and socially risky behaviors (i.e., stigmatized female embodiment of masculine, muscular physiques). Edgework can be employed as a means to understand this voluntary risk-taking behavior. According to Lyng (1990) there are three components to edgework: activity, skill, and sensation. These can be demonstrated through women's bodybuilding. First, engaging in the *activity* of bodybuilding involves pushing oneself to his or her physical limit. Bodybuilders must push themselves to a physical "edge" in order to achieve the ideal combination of muscularity, size, and low body-fat. Second, certain *skill sets* are essential in order to be competitive and successful in the bodybuilding community. Obtaining a physique that is muscular, symmetrical, and toned requires strict dietary practices and extensive, structured work-out regimens. Third, the difficult road towards achievement of this body-type elicits positive feelings (*sensation*) during and after the process is complete. Thus, women bodybuilders, based on previous research, could be interpreted as engaging in edgework. I will discuss these three components of edgework in women's bodybuilding further below (see Figure 1).

< Insert Figure 1 about here >

Activity

Control is a core aspect of these activities because in bodybuilding, one is attempting to control his or her body in order to achieve a certain shape; thus character traits that embody control, strength, or discipline are prized in bodybuilding subculture. By pushing their bodies to a physical “edge” through utilizing a structured diet and fitness schedule, women bodybuilders can better navigate the sport. The activity of lifting weights and exercising involves discipline and control in order to achieve a muscular physique and low body fat. Therefore, the training and preparation for a competition is what embodies the activity component of edgework as described by Lyng’s model.

Skill

According to Lyng (1990), in order to push oneself to the “edge”, certain skill sets are needed in order to maintain control of the situation. The development and use of a skill set is the most crucial aspect of the experience and the ability to maintain control of a situation that verges on chaos is of the utmost importance (Lyng, 1990). Discovering the perfect limit is found through the exercise of particular skills. One has to be highly skillful to succeed; this is why edgework should not be confused with thrill-seeking because thrill-seeking behaviors do not require the use of skills. Constructing a training regimen devoted to building muscle mass and lowering body fat is highly common for bodybuilders. Bodybuilding is a sport that requires muscularity concurrent with very low body fat (Walberg-Rankin, 1993). Therefore, developing a skillset is vital because this is what allows these women to obtain the desired physique and proportion. Bodybuilding cannot exist without a skill set because working-out and

training is not a spontaneous or haphazard experience for these women. In order to develop a muscular and toned physique, women bodybuilders must begin their training by building up muscle mass while also integrating cardiovascular exercise into their training. If they build up muscle but do not engage in the correct dietary practices, then body fat masks their muscular development. If they engage in too much cardiovascular activity or do not follow strict dietary regimens, then they risk losing muscle mass. Thus, skill is inherently tied to women's bodybuilding, supporting Lyng's (1990) edgework model.

Sensation

Edgework activities allow the participant to engage in acts that are atypical and deviate from daily regimens. Thus, edgeworkers describe their feelings after they successfully “survive the edge” as cathartic, erotic, exhilarating, or addictive (Gailey, 2009). The pleasure sensations from these experiences motivate edgeworkers to continue to willingly engage in high-risk behaviors. If, according to Lyng, one chooses to engage in edgework in order to fulfill unmet needs or gain a semblance of control over his or her life and well-being (Lyng, 2005), this might also be true for women bodybuilders. Thus, the sensation that women bodybuilders experience through participating in bodybuilding activities can be conceptualized within Lyng's (1990, 2005) edgework model.

Current Study

This study expands on the discussion of women's bodybuilding by offering an alternative lens for understanding not only the motivation to train, but also the skills

involved in the training process, and the social “risk” of stigma that these women face inside and outside the gym. Drawing on data from an online survey targeted at female bodybuilders, I explore the ways in which these women navigate the sport and the social “risks.” I focus on how women’s bodybuilding reflects the three components of Lyng’s (1990) edgework model through quantitative and qualitative analysis of survey questions. In the results section, I explore the processes by which female bodybuilders construct and maintain the sense that they can exercise control as they negotiate their particular “edge”. Next, I describe the strategies and skills employed by women within the bodybuilding community. Finally, I discuss the sensations they feel during training or following a work-out, sensations that serve as the motivation to continue training and competing. I conclude by considering the implications of these findings for understanding the edgework experience.

Methods

Recruitment

I recruited participants for my online survey by posting a recruitment flyer (see Figure 2) on active and popular women’s bodybuilding forums and Facebook pages (see Appendix C for more details about these forums). The verbiage for the recruitment posting is detailed below. In order to be consistent, the same verbiage for the recruitment flyer was used regardless of whether it was posted on a bodybuilding forum or Facebook page associated with women’s bodybuilding.

“Women Bodybuilders: I need your help! Are you a woman who has or is training as a bodybuilder? My name is Abby Baker and am I conducting research for my master’s thesis at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. If you would like to participate in my online survey please paste the link below into your browser. Thank you for your help!”

<Insert Figure 2 about here>

There were three parameters for those who participated in the online survey. Participants had to be between the ages of 18 to 64, identify as a woman, and identify as a bodybuilder. Any participants who met this requirement were eligible to take the online survey. Previous experience competing in bodybuilding competitions prior to this survey was not a requirement in order to participate.

Sample

Of the 57 surveys that were started, 40 respondents completed the survey. Eleven cases were dropped due to incomplete data on some questions. Therefore, I retained a final sample size of 29 women bodybuilders for this project. I assigned pseudonyms to all respondents in order to maintain both confidentiality and anonymity regarding their responses. A detailed summary of sample characteristics is reported in Appendix A. Of the 29 women bodybuilders, eleven indicated that they had trained for a bodybuilding competition within the last year. “Have you trained for a bodybuilding competition within the last year?” was utilized as a screening question to separate current competitors from other women involved in the sport. Nine out of the 11 women

who indicated that they had trained for a competition within the last year also indicated that they were currently training for a competition within the next six months. Only one woman indicated that she was training for a competition within the next month.

Eighteen of the 29 respondents indicated that they had not trained for a bodybuilding competition within the last year. Throughout this paper, I will refer to women who have trained for a bodybuilding competition within the last year as “current competitors”, and I will refer to women who have not trained for a competition within the last year as “non-current competitors”.

Overall, respondent ages ranged from 20 to 57 years old (mean = 36). For competitors, ages ranged from 23 to 47 years old (mean = 33), and ages for non-competitors ranged from 20 to 57 years old (mean = 38). Twenty-six of the total respondents were white (86%), two were exclusively Black or African American (7%), one indicated a race/ethnicity of White/Hispanic or Latino (3.5%), and one indicated a race/ethnicity of White/Black or African American (3.5%). Nine out of the 29 women were currently married (31%), three were divorced (10%), two were separated (7%), eleven had never been married (38%) and four were cohabitating (14%). Regarding educational attainment, the sample was rather diverse. Eleven women had completed their Bachelor's degree (38%), six had completed some college but had not obtained a degree (21%), three women had an Associate's degree (10%), three women had a Master's degree (10%), two had a professional degree (7%), two had a doctorate degree (7%), one woman completed vocational school (3.5%), and one woman had obtained her GED (3.5%). Twenty-seven out of the 29 women indicated that they identified as heterosexual/straight (93%) while two women indicated that they identified as bisexual

(7%). Nineteen out the 29 women were currently in an intimate relationship during the time of this survey (66%), while ten women were not in an intimate relationship currently (34%). A summary of sample characteristics is reported in Appendix A.

<Insert Table About Here>

Online Survey Component

The data from this project are derived from an online survey. The online survey consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions aimed at measuring and discovering whether women's bodybuilding functions as edgework. As a result, most of the questions were tailored to encompass the three components of edgework: activity, skill, sensation. Below I summarize the components of the online survey that were utilized in the current study.

Demographic Characteristics and Bodybuilding Experiences

I began the survey with non-threatening questions regarding age, race/ethnicity, educational background, and marital status. I asked respondents to tell me why they decided to train to become a bodybuilder and moved onto questions regarding whether or not they were currently training for a competition. If respondents indicated that they had trained for a competition within the last year, they were also asked if they were currently training for a competition within the next six months and within the next month. If respondents indicated that they had not trained for a competition within the last year, they skipped over these questions. All respondents were presented with the same questions regardless of whether or not the respondent had trained for a competition within the last year. The only difference between the questions for "current

competitors” and “non-current competitors” was that the word “competition” was substituted with “training” or “working out” for questions pertaining to respondents who had not trained for a competition within the last year.

Edgework

Lyng’s edgework model is composed of three components: activity, skill, and sensation. Therefore, I chose to include questions that pertain to the basic tenets of Lyng’s edgework model. The questions pertaining to edgework in my survey instrument consist of statements in which responses range from strongly agree to strongly disagree with five response categories. Higher scores on these questions indicate higher agreement with the given statement and indicate that bodybuilding functions as a type of edgework for the participant. Questions pertaining to the edgework model are included in Appendix B. A summary of responses to all quantitative survey questions is reported in Appendix D.

Activity. To measure the "activity" component of edgework, respondents were asked to respond to statements about how important training, weight-lifting and dieting were to their success as a bodybuilder. The closed-ended questions included: “I feel like I am in control over my life when I am training and working-out,” “I feel like I am healthier when I am training and working-out,” and “I like my body better when I am training and working-out a lot”.

Skill. Women who choose to compete in bodybuilding competitions or make a disciplined effort to alter their body through weightlifting have to follow strict training and dieting regimens in order to achieve their goals of altering their bodies. The closed-ended questions to measure the "skill" component of edgework included: “I follow a

strict diet when I am in training,” “I follow a strict diet even when I am not training or working-out a lot,” “I follow a rigid work-out regimen when I am training or going to the gym,” “Even when I am not training I follow a regimented training schedule when going to the gym,” “Being disciplined is necessary in order to succeed in bodybuilding,” “I have to follow a strict dietary regimen in order to be successful in bodybuilding,” and “In order to succeed in bodybuilding I have to follow a regimented work-out schedule”.

Sensation. To measure the "sensation" component of edgework, respondents were asked to respond to statements about whether they felt “euphoric” following a work-out, and if that feeling encouraged them to continue to work-out and train. The closed-ended questions included: “After I finish a work-out I feel euphoric and exhilarated,” “I want to keep training because I want to have a feeling of euphoria after a working out,” “I prefer to have a more muscular body,” and “I admire women who are more muscular than me”.

Methods of Analysis

Quantitative

For the quantitative component of this study, I examined closed-ended questions according to the three components of the edgework model: activity, skill, and sensation. Because of the small number of respondents ($N = 29$) I was limited in the ways I could utilize the quantitative data, thus I analyzed responses by examining mean values. Specifically, I wanted to determine if participants "strongly agreed" with the statements designed to measure the three components of edgework. Because participants responded to each statement on a scale from 1 to 5, if the statement yielded a mean response value

of '4' or higher, then I determined this to be a reflection of a strong fit to the edgework model. I conducted t-tests to determine if there significant differences in the mean responses for current competitors and non-current competitors. None of the t-tests were significant, so the mean responses for all participants for the closed-ended questions pertaining to the edgework model are reported in the quantitative analysis.

Qualitative

For the qualitative analyses, I employed thematic coding for the responses to three open-ended questions ("Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?"; "Describe your typical work-out regimen during a given week. Please be as specific as possible"; and "How do you feel after a work-out or training session?"). Following principles of qualitative research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006), I first studied the responses searching for patterns of members' edgework experiences according to Lyng's (1990) model. As patterns emerged, I restructured my focus to draw out further conceptual distinctions. Following the principles outlined by Charmaz (2006), I made analytic notes or "memos" about the codes and any other ideas about the data that occur to me. According to Charmaz (2006), memo-writing is used to specify categories and their properties as well as define relationships between categories and identify gaps. So, when questions arose or gaps in the categories appeared, I sought the data to answer those questions and fill in the gaps. Through writing memos, I constructed analytic notes to explicate categories. The content categories that emerged included mention of skills, control, discipline, accomplishment, competitive drive, extensive planning, and sensations or emotional reactions. Therefore, whenever any of the above concepts were mentioned I coded the text according to the edgework model.

Mention of control, discipline, and a desire to compete were coded as ‘activity’.

Mention of skill and planning were coded as ‘skill’. Mentions of sensations or emotional reactions were coded as ‘sensation’.

Quantitative Results

I analyzed the mean values of the responses to the quantitative questions based on my theoretical model for women’s bodybuilding as edgework (activity, skill, and sensation). Because participants responded to each statement on a scale from 1 to 5, if the statement yielded a mean response value of ‘4’ or higher, then I determined this to be a reflection of a strong fit to the edgework model. Results are reported in Appendix B.

<Insert Table About Here>

Activity

The ‘activity’ component corresponds to experiences of strength and control, the act of competing in bodybuilding competitions, the act of working-out and training in order to reshape and control one’s body. Three questions from the online survey were coded as ‘activity’ according to the edgework model. All of the questions yielded a mean value of 4.0 or higher for participants, indicating a strong fit for the edgework model in women’s bodybuilding. The questions coded for ‘activity’ are reported below.

“I feel in control over my life when I am training (for a competition),” yielded a mean value of 4.10 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. “I feel like I am healthier when I am in training,” yielded a mean value 4.59, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to

the edgework model. All participants either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. “I like my body better when I am training (for a competition),” yielded a mean value of 4.55 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model.

Skill

The ‘skill’ component of the edgework model corresponds to regimented dietary guidelines, a disciplined work-out or training schedule, and the skills associated with obtaining the “ideal” muscular physique in order to be successful in the sport of bodybuilding. Skills are a necessary for edgeworkers because it allows them to maintain control of situations in which they negotiate the “edge”. The questions coded for ‘skill’ are reported below.

“I follow a strict diet when I am training (for a competition),” yielded a mean value of 4.53, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. “I follow a strict diet even when I am not training (for a competition),” yielded a mean value of 3.59 for all participants. This indicates that most participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. It seems that following a strict diet is necessary in order to train for bodybuilding competitions and in order to achieve a muscular physique, but it may not be necessary outside of training. “I follow a rigid work-out regimen when I am training (for a competition),” yielded a mean value of 4.21 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. “Even when I am not training (for a competition) I follow a regimented training schedule when I go to the gym,” yielded a mean value of 4.03 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework

model. “Being disciplined is necessary in order to succeed in bodybuilding,” yielded a mean value of 4.83. This indicates agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. “I have to follow a strict dietary regimen in order to be successful in bodybuilding,” yielded a mean value of 4.31 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. “In order to succeed in bodybuilding I have to follow a regimented work-out schedule,” yielded a mean value of 4.48 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. Overall, respondents agreed that regimented dietary guidelines and strict training schedules are necessary skills in order to be successful in the sport of bodybuilding.

Sensation

The ‘sensation’ component of the edgework model corresponds to feelings of euphoria or catharsis after a work-out or training session and positive feelings associated with managing an appearance that is deemed both masculine and feminine due to high muscularity. In the edgework model, sensation serves as the motivation to continue to engage in risky behaviors and negotiate the “edge”. In women’s bodybuilding, I argue that sensation serves as the motivation to continue training, working-out, and competing. The questions coded as ‘sensation’ are reported below.

“After I finish a work-out, I feel euphoric and exhilarated,” yielded a mean value of 4.28 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. “I want to keep training because I want to have a feeling of euphoria after working out,” yielded a mean value of 3.17 for all participants. This indicates that most participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. So,

while these women agree that they experience feelings of euphoria following a work-out, their motivation to compete is possibly more complex than simply pursuing euphoric or cathartic sensations. “I prefer to have a more muscular body,” yielded a mean value of 4.55 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. “I admire women who are more muscular than me,” yielded a mean value of 4.24 for all participants, indicating agreement with the statement and a strong fit to the edgework model. Most participants prefer a more muscular body and admire women who are more muscular. This indicates that positive feelings are associated with achieving a muscular physique, a body that is often deemed both masculine and feminine, serves as motivation to continue training and competing. Overall, in the first part of the quantitative analyses, only two questions yielded moderate agreement while the others yielded strong agreement, demonstrating support for the edgework model in women's bodybuilding. Based on the results of the quantitative analysis, it seems that women's bodybuilding does function as edgework for those who train and compete in the sport. The open-ended questions coded for each component in the edgework model further reinforce this conclusion.

Qualitative Results

In order to gain further insight into whether women's bodybuilding is edgework, I analyzed three open-ended questions from the online survey and coded responses according to three components of edgework: activity, skill, and sensation. The three questions were: “Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?”; “Describe your typical work-out regimen during a given week”; and “How do you feel after a

work-out or training session?” The results are presented by the edgework themes:

activity, skill, and sensation. The thematic categories are not mutually exclusive; there are various instances where the women mention control and skills in the same sentence or paragraph.

Activity

The ‘activity’ component of the edgework model involves experiences of control and discipline as one negotiates the “edge”. Therefore, questions pertaining to training and working-out speak to the need for control and discipline in order to be successful. Overall, women bodybuilders who took this survey indicated that they chose to engage in training/working out activities for four reasons: (1) the desire for control, (2) competition, (3) challenging essentialist perceptions regarding women, and (4) accomplishment. These are discussed below.

The desire to seek and achieve control was also a common theme. Ten (34%) respondents stated that they initially decided to train in bodybuilding or kept training because they enjoyed the feeling of control and discipline. Often, the responses reflected unhappiness with one’s body and a desire to take control. For example, Gloria describes her feelings about her body both before and after bodybuilding training:

“Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?”

A: Initially, because I was unhappy with my body and wasn't secure. Now, I continue, because I enjoy the control it gives me over how I look and feel.” – Gloria, 31, non-current competitor

As indicated by the above quotation, the women bodybuilders are not only seeking control, but feel that it is through training that they can achieve control. Like Gloria, some of the women indicated that they began training in order to gain control over their bodies and appearance. Even though weight loss often served as the impetus to begin training, it is worth noting that these women chose to train to become bodybuilders in order to lose weight or get in-shape. They did not simply choose to begin walking or running more or enlist the help of a personal trainer. Rather, they chose to train to compete in a specific sport that requires competitors to train at a level uncommon to the average person you might encounter in a gym.

Competition was also an important part of body building for these women. Seven women (24%) described their decision to train in bodybuilding stemmed from a love of competition or inner competitive desire. It was not only a desire to lose weight and gain control that pushed these women to train, but there was also a latent competitive desire among many of the responses. For example, Morgan discusses why she began training and mentions above all that she decided to train to become a bodybuilder because she considers herself to be a competitive person.

“Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?”

A: 1. I'm a competitive person who needed an outlet to stay in shape. / 2. I enjoy challenging myself physically. / 3. I enjoy having muscle...I think I look and feel better with it, and consequently, it helps my confidence.” – Morgan, 40, non-current competitor

As indicated in the quote above, the impetus for training to become a bodybuilder stemmed not only from a desire to lose weight and control one's physical appearance, but many of these women also indicated that they chose to train because they enjoyed the feeling of competition. Therefore, it seems that within the population of women training and working-out in order to lose weight, women who choose to train to become bodybuilders occupy a unique subset of the population and self-select into the sport because of a desire to compete.

Respondents also mentioned the desire to challenge essentialist perceptions regarding women. For example, both Natasha and Jackie mention that they decided to train within the sport of bodybuilding specifically because they wanted to achieve something that many women do not in order to challenge the idea that women cannot compete in the same arena as men because they are "weaker".

"Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?"

A: Lifting weights is the most challenging sport for any woman. It not only tests your physical strength, but it challenges all of the myths about women being 'the weaker sex'."

– Natasha, 56, non-current competitor

"Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?"

A: I had a love for the gym and weight training and an inner drive to achieve something that not many other people, especially women, had achieved. I wanted to

win. To be the best at my sport. It is a sport of loners, not a team activity. I do not like team activities."

– Jackie, 55, non-current competitor

– Gloria, 31, non-current competitor

Jackie's response echoes many of the themes above. Her response reflects a desire to challenge misconceptions about women's abilities to work-out and train as well as a competitive desire that pushed her into the sport of bodybuilding specifically. "I wanted to win. To be the best at my sport" reflects the competitive desire found in many of the women's responses, thus supporting the claim that many of these women must self-select into the sport of bodybuilding out of a desire to control their appearance and a competitive desire.

Successfully negotiating the "edge" by pushing one's body to a physical limit often resulted in feelings of accomplishment. Overall, 17 (59%) respondents indicated that they felt accomplished following a work-out. Madison and Gloria mention that they feel accomplished after a training session because they know they have pushed their bodies to a physical limit.

"Q: How do you feel after a work-out or training session?"

A: I'm usually tired, but I feel a sense of accomplishment. I like pushing myself to be better every day in every arena, and that includes working out."

– Madison, 38, non-current competitor

“Q: How do you feel after a work-out or training session?”

A: Accomplished. I enjoy physically working hard and, with a desk job, training is one of the few ways to accomplish that.”

– Gloria, 31, non-current competitor

Nearly all of the respondents (N = 28, 97%) indicated that they lift weights as part of their training regimen. The determination and motivation to bring order and control to one's body is a driving force in their immersion in the subculture of women's bodybuilding. Training provides these women with an outlet, something to do to challenge themselves physically as well as challenge notions about what women are capable of physically. An inner competitive desire pushes these women to train within the sport of bodybuilding. In order to be a successful competitor, one has to have the desire to compete and win; this was evidenced in many of the responses. One feature that is paramount to maintaining control, or regaining control if it is lost, is to have the necessary skills to achieve said goals.

Skill

Discovering the perfect limit and successfully negotiating the “edge” is found through the exercise of particular skills. The ‘skill’ component of the edgework model involves maintaining control of the situation. In order to maintain control over one's body and develop a muscular physique, certain skills are needed in order to successfully train and compete in bodybuilding. Within women's bodybuilding, a disciplined work-out or training schedule is a skill set that often includes weight training and cardiovascular activity in order to achieve the “ideal” muscular body. Women bodybuilders indicated that a typical work-out regimen during a given week involves

four activities: (1) weight training, (2) cardiovascular activity, (3) a set schedule for the week, as well as (4) the need to train different muscles on different days in order to achieve a muscular and toned physique necessary for competitions. These are discussed below.

Nearly all of the respondents (N = 28, 97%) indicated that they lift weights as part of their weekly work-out regimen. More specifically, ten (91%) current competitors and 18 (100%) non-current competitors mentioned weight lifting in their response. Weight lifting was often mentioned in conjunction with cardiovascular activity as part of an extensive training regimen. Catherine describes her typical work-out regimen during a given week in detail, chronicling the type of exercise (weightlifting or cardiovascular exercise) as well as the muscle groups she trains and the number of reps.

“Q: Describe your typical work-out regimen during a given week.”

A: During competition prep, I either lift weights twice a day, lift once and do under half an hour of cardio, or lift twice and do under half an hour of cardio. I split my lifting routine by muscle group. On Mondays, I work lower and mid back in the morning and quads and calves in the evening. On Tuesdays, I work chest in the morning and abs in the evening. On Wednesdays I do cardio in the morning and shoulders in the evenings. Thursdays are cardio in the morning and glutes and hamstrings in the evenings. Fridays are biceps and triceps in the morning and abs in the evening. On Saturdays I do cardio in the morning, then quads and calves in the evening. Sundays I do only my cardio. I tend to do low- to moderate-intensity lifting sessions to avoid

overtraining. Typically I will pick five or six lifts and do three sets of between 8-12 reps on upper body work and 15-20 reps on lower body work. I try to work each muscle group specifically once a week save for my weak points, aka my abs and quads. I don't like to do more than half an hour of cardio because I don't want to fall into the group of competitors who do hours of cardio each day and have a difficult time readjusting to a normal regimen post-competition because of it."

– Catherine, 23, current competitor

The extreme detail embedded in Catherine's response indicates that there is a specific skill set involved in training as a bodybuilder. Going to the gym is not a random or haphazard experience. These women go to the gym with a plan in mind of how they going to train as well as how long they need to train in order to create a body that is muscular and toned.

Women often mentioned cardiovascular activity in conjunction with weight training. Seven women (24%) mentioned that they did HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) cardio in order to stay in shape and push their bodies physically. Overall, 20 (69%) respondents (nine or 82% of current competitors and eleven or 61% of non-current competitors) indicated that their training regimen included cardiovascular activity. While it seems that cardiovascular training is an important part of one's weekly training regimen, weight lifting is definitely prioritized probably because the goal is to achieve a muscular physique. Cardiovascular activity is necessary in order to emphasize muscle definition and tone one's body, but one has to build muscle mass first before one can tone their body. Perhaps this accounts for the fact that current competitors mention

cardio more often than non-current competitors. Current competitors have probably already built up their muscle mass because they are close to a competition, and, therefore are focusing on toning and sculpting their body.

Regardless of whether one was prepping for a competition or reflecting on having trained for a competition in the past, most women mentioned having a set schedule for weight training and cardio. Adhering to a strict training schedule indicates that women bodybuilders definitely cultivate a specific skill set in order to be successful. Working out at the gym is not a haphazard experience; rather it is carefully planned and regimented. Of the 29 total respondents, 26 (90%) women described their weekly training regimen by breaking down their week, often by each day of the week, and described the specific exercises. For example, Amy describes her typical work-out regimen in a given week by including specific details regarding what she does at the gym.

“Q: Describe your typical work-out regimen during a given week.”

A: I start each workout with 5-6 sets of a heavy compound exercise (squat, bench, push press, clean, snatch or front squat). Then I do a circuit of metabolic conditioning (kind of like crossfit). Then I do 3-5 sets of isolated work (like shoulder press or leg raises).”

– Amy, 26, current competitor

Like Amy, Kristen also describes her weekly work-out regimen in terms of a regimented schedule. Kristen describes her training regimen in more detail by breaking up her weekly schedule by the days of the week.

“Q: Describe your typical work-out regimen during a given week.”

A: Monday - Deadlift and accessory work, 20-30 minutes HIIT cardio, mobility work /

Tuesday - Bench and accessory work, 20-30 minutes HIIT cardio, mobility work /

Wednesday - 40-60 minutes moderate cardio, additional work / Thursday - Squats and

accessory work, mobility work / Friday - Overhead Press and accessory work, 20-30

minutes HIIT cardio, mobility work / Saturday - 40-60 minutes moderate cardio”

– Kristen, 37, non-current competitor

As indicated by Kristen’s quote, training to become a bodybuilder involves a certain skill set, namely creating and carrying out a regimented work-out schedule.

Other women, like Kristen, describe their weekly training regimen in such detail that each day of the week is accounted for. It is also clear that training in bodybuilding requires dedication to working-out to the extent that one is exercising and/or lifting weights every day of the week. The detail provided in these responses reflects the idea that women who compete in bodybuilding develop specific skill sets regarding how to train and work-out.

Some respondents indicated which muscle groups they had to train on specific days during the week. Of the 29 total respondents, 23 (79%) respondents indicated that they trained different muscle groups on different days in order to achieve muscle mass as well as a symmetrical build. Women bodybuilders are judged during a competition based on their appearance. Part of the judging includes looking for bodies that are sculpted, toned, and symmetrical. As a result, women bodybuilders have to develop a

skill set that includes having a set schedule for training as well as a set schedule for which muscle groups to exercise on a given day in order to build muscle mass and not become too exhausted. For example, Ashley and Morgan mention that they have to limit cardiovascular activity and adjust the type of exercise that they do prior to a bodybuilding contest.

“Q: Describe your typical work-out regimen during a given week.

A: I focus on specific areas during each session. At the moment I am trying to build more muscle mass so I am limiting cardio. I start each workout with 5 mins of light cardio to warm up. The different muscle group I work: / / - legs (quads, calves, hamstrings, glutes) / - back and biceps / - chest and triceps / - shoulders and abs”

– Ashley, 47, current competitor

“Q: Describe your typical work-out regimen during a given week.

A: I do 30-40 minutes of cardio 4-5 times per week in the offseason. If I'm getting ready for a show, I do cardio every day. The amount during prep time varies. / I usually train my back one day, my chest and lateral deltoids one day, legs one day, biceps, triceps, and calves one day, shoulders and calves one day. I train my abs twice per week in the off season and three times per week when getting ready for a show.”

– Morgan, 40, non-current competitor

As Lyng (1990) notes, edgeworkers spend more time preparing than actually doing, they use methodical or ritualistic manners but must also have the mental and

physical ability to employ the behavior. The women's narratives indicate that planning how they will achieve the "ideal" muscular physique is vital. The planning process for training involves setting a set schedule in which one has to exercise different muscle groups on different days through weightlifting as well as cardiovascular exercise in order to eliminate body fat. The quotes echo how important planning is and how regimented one's training schedule has to be in order to compete successfully in bodybuilding.

Sensation

The 'sensation' component of the edgework model involves feelings of euphoria or catharsis following a work-out or training session, and positive feelings associated with maintaining a muscular physique, a body that is deemed both masculine and feminine. Positive feelings associated with working out, competing, and achieving the "ideal" body serve as motivation to continue training and competing. Overall, respondents indicated feeling (1) euphoric, (2) addicted, (3) motivated/energized, and (4) confident after training sessions or working-out at the gym. For example, Jackie describes how she feels after a good run or successful work-out. Her narrative reflects that the feeling after working-out is often euphoric and addicting.

"Q: How do you feel after a work-out or training session?"

A: I feel a decided sense of accomplishment and, especially after running I feel a sense of well-being that I would almost call euphoria. Runner's high, I suppose. A really good, hard weight-lifting session with a motivating partner can definitely produce the

same effect. I believe the brain needs the stimulation from physical activity to thrive.

Nothing in the world--no drug--takes the place of hard exercise."

– Jackie, 55, non-current competitor

Jackie's quote reflects a feeling common to many of the other women bodybuilders: "Nothing in the world – no drug – takes the place of hard exercise" indicates that working-out can be addicting for female bodybuilders and it is this feeling that motivates them to continue training. For example, Catherine describes that she initially began bodybuilding in order to help her clients who were also interested in competing. However, once she began to see her body evolve through the course of training, the transformation process itself became addicting.

"Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?

A: I originally wanted to learn how to pose because I'm a personal trainer and wanted to be able to help any potential clients with an interest in competing. As I began to research the sport, however, I fell in love with it and have become even more involved over the course of my own competition prep. I was never in very good shape for the majority of my life so seeing my body evolve in such a way became addicting in the best of ways. The mental benefits were even more appealing."

– Catherine, 23, current competitor

Furthermore, even though some respondents mentioned feeling tired or exhausted after a work-out, 21 (72%) respondents mentioned feeling better overall after

a work-out or training session. Some respondents mentioned feeling exhausted, but happier after a work-out and glad that they took the time to go to the gym. It is this feeling in conjunction with the sense of accomplishment following a good work-out that motivates these women to continue training. For example, Ashley and Lilly indicate feeling energized and rejuvenated after a work-out, a comment mentioned often in many of the responses.

“Q: How do you feel after a work-out or training session?”

A: I feel energized and glad that I took the time to work out especially if I was tired before I started.”

– Ashley, 47, current competitor

“Q: How do you feel after a work-out or training session?”

A: I feel healthier and have more energy”

– Lilly, 55, non-current competitor

The sensation of feeling energized and healthier serves as motivation to continue training and working-out. The sensation component of the edgework model is essential because the feelings associated with negotiating the “edge” are emotional responses that are euphoric and addicting to the point that edgeworkers want to capture that feeling again by taking it to the “edge”. For example, Kristen and Courtney describe feelings of empowerment after a work-out, a feeling that motivates them to keep training.

“Q: How do you feel after a work-out or training session?”

A: Usually I feel great mentally and physically. Sometimes I feel like I can conquer the world.”

– Kristen, 37, non-current competitor

A: Because I love it. I love the weights and I love the confidence I have gained.”

““Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?”

A: I was encouraged to start lifting weights, and then felt very empowered by it. I liked the way my body responded.”

– Courtney, 34, current competitor

Most respondents indicated feelings similar to Kristen. Even if they did not perform to the extent that they anticipated, the majority of women described feeling better overall and motivated to continue bodybuilding. In fact, only five (17%) respondents indicated that their feeling following a work-out was contingent upon performance during a training session. Therefore, it seems that most women are motivated to train because of the cathartic feeling following a work-out. Feeling energized after a work-out indicates a positive sensation following training, which is consistent with the sensation component of the edgework model. Most women indicated that they felt better, happier, accomplished and proud after a good work-out.

Training seems to serve as both a form of release and means to challenge oneself physically and mentally. In fact, twelve (41%) respondents indicated that they decided to train in bodybuilding because they felt more confident and powerful as a result of training and working-out with the goal of competing. For example, Paige discusses

how the feeling of confidence that she gained by working-out serve as motivation to continue training.

“Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?”

A: Because I love it. I love the weights and I love the confidence I have gained.”

– Paige, 22, non-current competitor

Paige’s quote echoes a feeling common to many women bodybuilders. Seeing one’s body transform through training and exercise elicits feelings of confidence and empowerment. The excitement of seeing the fruits of one’s labor begins to become the primary motivator to continue training; and this is especially true the closer one is to a competition. In fact, 21 (72%) respondents indicated that they decided to pursue bodybuilding because they desired to look more muscular and admired the look of other female bodybuilders. The majority of respondents indicated that obtaining a muscular physique served as motivation to train to become a bodybuilder; and watching one’s body evolve through training and working-out becomes addicting and confidence-boosting. For example, Gabby and Erin indicate that seeing their bodies change through training serve as motivation to continue training.

“Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?”

A: I love the feeling I get when I’m strong and look shredded and sculpted!”

– Gabby, 23, non-current competitor

“Q: Why did you decide to train to become a bodybuilder?”

A: I was fat, sick, and tired and looking for a way out. I knew I was at an age (33)

where bone density and muscle mass began to decline. I considered it a sobering health scare when bloodwork revealed that I had VERY high cholesterol and pre-diabetic symptoms. I bargained with my doctor to give me a few months of diet and exercise to turn it around before I was sentenced to a lifetime of medication. Part of the plan was lifting weights. I discovered that I loved the process, the benefits, and the positive effect it had on my mental state. – Erin, 39, non-current competitor

One of the key elements of edgework, according to Lyng (1990), is the emotions and sensations encountered by edgeworkers. As indicated by the above quotes, pushing oneself to the edge is mandatory to achieve the ultimate success of obtaining a muscular physique. Even when the women are not prepping for a competition, the sensation of seeing muscle definition is invigorating and provides further motivation to restrict exercise, diet, and lift weights. The women report a sense of accomplishment and pride when they are successfully achieving increasing muscle mass and achieving muscle definition through diet and exercise. As I mentioned previously, these themes are not mutually exclusive because all of the elements necessary to negotiate the edge are related to one another, in a feedback loop of sensation, skill, and experience.

Summary of Results

The results from the current study show that women's bodybuilding reflects a type of edgework. The motivation to challenge oneself physically and mentally reflects

a desire for control and discipline; this is a driving force in immersion in the subculture of women's bodybuilding. The quantitative analysis revealed that the majority of female bodybuilders feel in control when they are training. Not only do they feel healthier, but they prefer the look of their body when they are training more than when they are not. The qualitative analysis further reinforced these themes. Most women indicated that they chose to begin training in bodybuilding because they wanted to take control of their body. In a similar vein, women also mentioned that they wanted to take control of the perception of women as the "weaker sex" and challenge this notion by engaging in bodywork that is often deemed masculine. Being a bodybuilder is something that only a select few can or will achieve. Similar to Lyng's (1990) study of skydivers, these women bodybuilders sought to be able to take oneself to the edge and survive, a skill that not everyone possesses. Some of the women mentioned that they chose to compete because few women train in bodybuilding.

One feature that is paramount to maintaining control of one's body is to have the necessary skills to achieve said goals. As Lyng (1990) notes, edgeworkers spend more time preparing than actually doing; they behave methodologically and ritualistically but must also have the mental and physical ability to employ the behavior. The women's narratives indicate that planning how they will achieve the "ideal" muscular physique through dietary and exercise regimens is vital. In the quantitative analysis, the majority of women indicated that they had to follow a strict dietary regimen and strict training schedule in order to be successful in bodybuilding. Even when they are not training for a competition, most women continue to follow a regimented work-out schedule when going to the gym. Furthermore, most of the women agreed that being disciplined is

necessary in order to succeed in bodybuilding. These sentiments were echoed in the qualitative analysis as well. Although most of the women did not mention “discipline” in their responses regarding their training regimen, the detail that they provided regarding their work-out schedule reflects the need for discipline in order to be successful. Most women mentioned weightlifting and cardiovascular activity as part of the skill set for a bodybuilder. The existence of a specified skill set for bodybuilding was further illuminated by the fact that these women described the specific exercises that they had to perform on a given day during the week along with the number of reps. Many women mentioned that it is necessary to exercise different muscle groups on different days in order to achieve a symmetrical and toned physique. Overall, it is clear that there is a specific skill set that women bodybuilders must cultivate in order to compete because most of the women bodybuilders described their work-out regimen in extreme detail, detail that remained consistent across most respondents.

Themes of euphoria, happiness, and catharsis are some of the sensations and highs these women experienced while working-out and training. The experience becomes addicting, as it did for Ferrell’s (1998) graffiti painters and Lyng’s (1990) skydivers. In the quantitative analysis most women indicated that they felt euphoric following a work-out or training session. This was further supported in the qualitative analysis. Most of the respondents described feeling exhilarated and energized following a work-out. One of the key elements of edgework, according to Lyng (1990), involves the emotions and sensations encountered by edgeworkers. Smith’s (2005) research on financial traders further supports this by arguing that while edgeworkers report their feelings, it perhaps is not their feelings that are valued most highly; rather, the value lies

in the ability to maintain mastery over those feelings because it contributes to one's sense of control. In the qualitative analysis many of the women in the current study reported a sense of accomplishment after successful training sessions as well as a sense of empowerment and pride in transforming their bodies through extensive training and exercise. Feeling like they could "conquer the world" motivated these women to continue training.

Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to focus on women's bodybuilding in the context of Lyng's (1990, 2005) edgework model. The results show that Lyng's (2005, 1990) concept of edgework is an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding women's bodybuilding. The online survey that I analyzed indicates that these women participate in the central features of edgework, namely pushing oneself to the edge, testing the limits of both their bodies and minds, exercising particular skills that require "innate talent" and mental toughness, and feelings of euphoria or catharsis that serve as motivation to engage in edgework.

Much of the previous research on women and sport and leisure activities has not focused on bodybuilding as a subculture, but rather has examined women's fitness or weightlifting or men's bodybuilding (Brace-Govan, 2004; Atkinson, 2007; Karazsia&Crowther, 2010). Studies that have investigated women's bodybuilding focus primarily on the unique juxtaposition and confrontation between masculinity and femininity that takes place in women's bodybuilding, as well as the experiences of these women, including the stigmas they must endure and how they manage their

stigma(Bolin, 2003; Royce, 2003). However, much of the research on women's engagement in sports filters the results through the lens of symbolic interactionism. By analyzing women's bodybuilding through the lens of edgework I have offered an alternative perspective and theoretical model in which female bodybuilding can be understood.

Many feminist scholars (Balsamo, 1994; Brace-Govan, 2004; Heywood, 1998) agree that bodybuilding can empower women in several ways. For example, women bodybuilders can perceive their development of large muscles as a "semi-rebellious act" against Western ideals of thinness (Wesely, 2001). This was also true for the women who participated in the current study. The development of muscularity may increase women's self-esteem and confidence; they often feel more powerful, healthier, and sexier (Grogan,2004). Bodybuilding gives some women a sense of control over their own bodies (Fisher, 1997). Women in the current study also reported feelings of empowerment and confidence. My study builds on previous literature by offering a theoretical model that encompasses how and why women participate in bodybuilding. Separate studies have supported my findings, but my study is unique because it offers a model, specifically an edgework model, for understanding multiple components involved in women's bodybuilding such as motivation to compete, training strategies, and experiences of risk and stigma.

Literature on edgework, similar to literature on bodybuilding, tends to examine men's activities rather than women's. Therefore, this research provides an important contribution to the literature on edgework because scholarship in this area has focused almost exclusively on men as edgeworkers. Lois (2001) studied both men and women

rescue workers and reported that both sexes participated in edgework; however, her research noted the differences in emotive responses between men and women. Her data indicated that men tended to feel confident and excited on missions whereas women were wary and scared on critical missions. However, she did not focus exclusively on women nor did she draw parallels between the men and women. Rajah (2007) also examined women's participation in edgework, but her research focused on women who employed edgework as a form of resistance and survival skill because they were in abusive relationships.

While both Rajah's and Lois' research offer important contributions to the edgework literature, neither study focuses on experiences of stigma. Gailey's (2009) research emphasizes the stigma that subscribers to the Pro-Ana sites experience, namely the stigma of being deemed too thin or mentally ill because they embrace restricted eating patterns associated with anorexia in order to achieve thinness. Gailey(2009) also emphasizes how these women have become active participants in deciding how they will resist rather than succumbing to passive gender stereotypes where they are told how they should act, why they feel the way they do, and how they should look. As Lyng (1990) mentions, there is a dialectic at work here: the women are engaging in a form of resistance while at the same time participating in disordered eating and maintaining thinness reinforces gender stereotypes and the beauty myth. My research offers a glimpse into the lives of women who are also engaging in a form of resistance by participating in a sport that has largely been a sport dominated by men. Instead of reinforcing gender stereotypes, such as women being a "weaker sex", women

bodybuilders resist this label actively by cultivating bodies that are deemed muscular and masculine.

My research offers a way of understanding women's bodybuilding as a type of edgework in which these women are forced to continually negotiate the boundary between masculinity and femininity and expands upon previous research by framing the "risk" associated with edgework as the risk of stigma rather than physical risks.

Edgework as a mechanism to understand "risk taking" has traditionally been utilized to examine behaviors that can be easily classified as "high risk" (i.e., skydiving and snowboarding, Laurendeau & Shahara, 2008; ultimate fighting, Lyng, 2009), but there may reason to conceive of "risk taking" behaviors through the lens of stigma. For example, Gailey's (2009) research with women who supported a pro-anorexic lifestyle demonstrated that combating stigma was a key component to their edgework. For these women, supporting anorexia and anorectic behaviors was stigmatized. Thus, their involvement in anorexic behaviors was of high risk to their physical bodies and their support of anorexia in general was of high risk to them socially. In this way, a "high risk" behavior may be both a physically risky behavior and a socially risky behavior. Using edgework to explain such physically and socially risky behaviors in this context may be especially important to understanding women's bodybuilding as edgework. Furthermore, Laurendeau (2008) has offered a theoretical approach to consider the multiple ways in which masculinities and femininities are enacted during edgework, and how these enactments of self and identity are influenced by the interrelated structures of gender, risk, and stigma. This approach offers a means for understanding gender and edgework by framing edgework as a process of seeking identity and camaraderie within

particular communities. It also highlights how edgeworkers' practices and narratives are shaped and constrained by understandings of both risk and gender in operation in particular settings, as well as at broader levels, and how these practices and narratives then reinforce, challenge, and/or reshape broader understandings. Edgeworkers "do not engage in voluntary risk activities in response to social conditions, but as part of the process of (re)constructing, shoring up, and/or challenging these conditions" (Laurendeau, 2008, p.306). Thus, Laurendeau (2008) and Gailey's (2009) research addresses how women who engage in edgework must also combat social stigma, and I hope to add to the literature on women and edgework by addressing the social risks and stigma that women bodybuilders experience.

Strengths and Limitations

My research was primarily exploratory so I chose to analyze a survey with both open-ended and closed-ended questions in order to more fully explore the sport of women's bodybuilding and women's engagement in edgework. Utilizing both open-ended and closed-ended questions from my survey allowed me to observe overall trends in my sample and interpret those responses by analyzing closed-ended questions. Responses to the open-ended questions confirmed the fit of the edgework model to women's bodybuilding and offered further insight into how and why these women participate in this sport. My research is unique because I utilized a survey with both open-ended and closed-ended questions to study edgework and because the focus of my research on edgework pertained to women only.

While the survey component did offer the ability for in-depth interpretation as well as the ability to analyze overall trends, there were three major limitations to this

study. First, given that I did not participate in the preparation for a bodybuilding competition or conduct in-person interviews with women bodybuilders, the results of my survey are not as in-depth or descriptive as compared to results from ethnographies or in-person interviews. Second, due to the fact that I decided to employ the use of an online survey, my research design suffers from the limitations imposed by online surveys. For example, there is the potential for measurement error if respondents were not truthful, misunderstood certain questions, or were unable to recall past events accurately. Unlike interviews, surveys do not afford the opportunity for participants to ask for clarification if they do not understand the question. In addition, of the 57 surveys that were started, only 29 surveys were completed. This suggests that there was some survey fatigue. Third, because my sample resulted in a small number of respondents ($N = 29$) who had relatively homogenous characteristics (86% White), results are not generalizable to the wider more diverse population of women bodybuilders.

Future research

There are many areas for future study that could add to the results of the current study. For example, future research could incorporate comparisons between women's bodybuilding and men's bodybuilding to further illuminate the inequality in gendered roles and gender relations. In addition, further investigations of women's participation in edgework are needed in order to augment the literature given that most edgework literature focuses primarily on men's activities and behaviors. Insight into why women engage in edgework might elucidate general limitations or possibly unidentified restrictions in society that are imposed on women, and thus encourage them to engage

in “risky” behaviors, such as extreme diets and excessive exercise, to in order to gain a sense of control.

Finally, there are many ways that I could expand on the current project. Having established that women’s bodybuilding function as edgework, I could explore more specifically the social “risks” that female bodybuilders experience and how they navigate those “risks” inside and outside the gym. Also, a single administration of an online survey does not provide an adequate understanding of the context within which behaviors may be interpreted over time. For this kind of understanding, the best approach is field work; therefore, I could expand this current project by observing bodybuilding competitions and interviewing women who are actively competing in the sport. Also, there are questions that I included in the survey that were not analyzed for the purpose of this study; therefore, I could expand this current project by analyzing these questions. I contend that female bodybuilders must carefully negotiate the boundary between masculinity and femininity, so in future studies I could examine this boundary further by delving into whether female bodybuilders define masculinity and femininity in an essentialist way or if they shift their definitions. For example, I could utilize my survey data to examine how female bodybuilders define the “ideal” body as well as how they define femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, I could expand the this project by surveying or interviewing male and female competitors in order to elucidate whether the edgework model is applicable to male competitors as well as female competitors.

Conclusion

The sport of women's bodybuilding can be understood through Lyng's (1990, 2005) edgework model because activity, skill, and sensation are necessary components in order to be successful as a female bodybuilder. The results of the quantitative and qualitative portions of the online survey indicate that women bodybuilders have to utilize a regimented and disciplined skill set in order to be successful in the sport. The feelings of catharsis and euphoria serve as motivation to continue training, along with the feeling of accomplishment and pride in seeing one's body change before one's eyes. The sensation following a work-out or training session motivates these women to train and compete as bodybuilders in order to challenge themselves physically and mentally as well as challenge essentialist notions of what a women's body should look like.

Critics of women's bodybuilding have asked whether bodybuilding is a sport or merely a beauty contest (Freedman, 1986); but men's bodybuilding is not criticized in this way. Consequently, women bodybuilders have to combat scrutiny of their bodies and the stigma of having a muscular "masculine" physique in order to be taken seriously in the competitive arena by their male counterparts, friends and family members, and casual observers. The socially and physically risky behavior of women's bodybuilding, I contend, can be understood as edgework because the three components of edgework are manifested in women's bodybuilding, a sport in which women must negotiate the "edge" between masculinity and femininity.

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Appendix A

Summary of Sample Characteristics (N = 29)			
	N	%	
<i>Race/Ethnicity:</i>			
White	25	86	
Black or African American	2	7	
White/Hispanic or Latino	1	3.5	
White/Black or African American	1	3.5	
<i>Marital Status:</i>			
Currently married	9	31	
Divorced	3	10	
Separated	2	7	
Never married	11	38	
Cohabiting	4	14	
<i>Highest level of school completed:</i>			
Obtained GED	1	3.5	
Some college, but no degree obtained	6	21	
Associate degree	3	10	
Vocational Tech school	1	3.5	
Bachelor's degree	11	38	
Master's degree	3	10	
Professional degree	2	7	
Doctorate degree	2	7	
<i>Trained for a competition within the last year:</i>			
Yes	11	38	
No	18	62	
<i>Sexual orientation:</i>			
Heterosexual or straight	27	93	
Bisexual	2	7	
<i>Currently in an intimate relationship:</i>			
Yes	19	66	
No	10	34	
<i>Average age:</i>			
	36		
<i>Work-out Regimen</i>			
	Range	Mean	Std Dev
On average, how often do you go to the gym in a typical week?	3-7	5.67	2.11
On average, how many hours do you spend at the gym on a given day?	1-3	1.52	0.40

Summary of Edgework Variables (n = 29)

Activity	Range	Mean	SD
I feel in control over my life when I am training and working out	1-5	4.10	0.94
I feel like I am healthier when I am in training and working out	1-5	4.59	0.50
I like my body better when I am training and working out a lot	1-5	4.55	0.69
<i>Skill</i>			
I follow a strict diet when I am training	1-5	4.53	0.63
I follow a strict diet even when I am not training or working out a lot	1-5	3.59	1.02
I follow a rigid work-out regimen when I am training or going to the gym	1-5	4.21	0.90
Even when I am not training, I follow a regimented training schedule when I go to a gym	1-5	4.03	1.09
Being disciplined is necessary in order to succeed in bodybuilding	1-5	4.83	0.38
I have to follow a strict dietary regimen in order to be successful in bodybuilding	1-5	4.31	0.89
In order to succeed in bodybuilding I have to follow a regimented work-out schedule	1-5	4.48	0.69
<i>Sensation</i>			
After I finish a work-out, I feel euphoric and exhilarated	1-5	4.28	0.84
I want to keep training because I want to have a feeling of euphoria after working out.	1-5	3.17	1.20
I prefer to have a more muscular body	1-5	4.55	0.57
I admire women who are more muscular than me	1-5	4.24	0.87

Notes:

5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree
Mean values of '4' or greater are bolded to indicate strong agreement with statements

Study Population Characteristics (N = 29)

Pseudonym	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Marital Status	Highest Level of Education	Sexual Orientation	Currently in a relationship
Current Competitors						
Alex	40	White	Currently married	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Amy	26	White	Never married	Master's degree	Heterosexual or straight	No
Ashley	47	White	Currently married	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Bella	25	White/Black	Never married	Bachelor's degree	Bisexual	Yes
Betsy	38	White	Separated	Vocational Tech school	Heterosexual or straight	No
Brittany	35	White	Separated	Obtained GED	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Catherine	23	White	Currently married	Some college, but no degree obtained	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Chelsey	24	White	Never married	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Courtney	34	White	Currently married	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Daisy	46	Black	Currently married	Bachelor's degree	Bisexual	Yes
Diane	23	White	Never married	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Non-Current Competitors						
Elizabeth	36	White	Currently married	Professional degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Erin	39	White	Never married	Master's degree	Heterosexual or straight	No
Gabby	23	White	Never married	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	No
Gloria	31	White/Hispanic	Never married	Doctorate degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Hannah	31	White	Cohabiting	Doctorate degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Heidi	20	White	Currently married	Some college, but no degree obtained	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Jackie	55	White	Currently married	Some college, but no degree obtained	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Julie	57	White	Divorced	Associate degree	Heterosexual or straight	No
Kacey	36	White	Never married	Some college, but no degree obtained	Heterosexual or straight	No
Knisten	37	White	Cohabiting	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Laura	26	White	Never married	Master's degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Lilly	55	White	Divorced	Some college, but no degree obtained	Heterosexual or straight	No
Madison	38	White	Currently married	Associate degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Morgan	40	Black	Never married	Professional degree	Heterosexual or straight	No
Natasha	56	White	Divorced	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	No
Noelle	50	White	Cohabiting	Associate degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes
Paige	22	White	Never married	Some college, but no degree obtained	Heterosexual or straight	No
Piper	24	White	Cohabiting	Bachelor's degree	Heterosexual or straight	Yes

Summary of Quantitative Survey Questions by Competitor Status

	Range	Total Sample (n = 29)		Current Competitors (n = 11)		Non-Current competitors (n = 18)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Dietary and Exercise Habits</i>							
I choose foods that are low in fat because I am trying to lose / weight	0-1	0.34	0.48	0.45	0.52	0.28	0.46
I am now watching what I eat in order to lose weight	0-1	0.62	0.49	0.55	0.52	0.67	0.49
I follow a strict diet when I am training for a competition	1-5	4.53	0.63	4.64	0.50	4.44	0.70
I follow a strict diet even when I am not training (for a competition)	1-5	3.59	1.02	3.36	1.21	3.72	0.89
After I finish a work-out, I feel euphoric and exhilarated	1-5	4.28	0.84	4.18	0.75	4.33	0.91
I follow a rigid work-out regimen when I am training (for a competition)	1-5	4.21	0.90	4.55	0.52	4.0	1.03
I want to keep training because I want to have a feeling of euphoria after working out.	1-5	3.17	1.20	2.82	1.17	3.39	1.20
Even when I am not training (for a competition), I follow a regimented training schedule when I go to a gym	1-5	4.03	1.09	4.09	0.83	4.0	1.24
I feel in control over my life when I am training (for a competition)	1-5	4.10	0.94	4.0	1.0	4.17	0.92
I feel like I am healthier when I am in training and working out	1-5	4.59	0.50	4.55	0.52	4.61	0.50
I like my body better when I am training for a competition	1-5	4.55	0.69	4.27	0.79	4.72	0.57
Being disciplined is necessary in order to succeed in bodybuilding	1-5	4.83	0.38	4.82	0.40	4.83	0.38
I have to follow a strict dietary regimen in order to be successful in bodybuilding	1-5	4.31	0.89	4.55	0.52	4.17	1.04
In order to succeed in bodybuilding I have to follow a regimented work-out schedule	1-5	4.48	0.69	4.73	0.47	4.33	0.77
I tend to compare my body to other women when I see them in the gym	1-5	3.55	1.38	3.18	1.33	3.78	1.40
I tend to compare my body to the women in beauty magazines (e.g. <i>Lucky</i> , <i>Elle</i> , <i>Vogue</i> , <i>inStyle</i>)	1-5	2.34	1.42	1.73	1.01	2.72	1.53
I prefer to have a more muscular body	1-5	4.55	0.57	4.64	0.50	4.5	0.62
I prefer to have a thinner body	1-5	2.45	1.21	2.0	0.89	2.72	1.32
I admire women who are more muscular than me	1-5	4.24	0.87	4.45	0.69	4.11	0.96
I admire women who are thinner than me	1-5	2.28	1.07	1.73	0.90	2.61	1.04

Appendix D (continued)

Summary of Quantitative Survey Questions by Competitor Status (cont.)							
When I see women who are more muscular than I am, I think they must be more disciplined	1-5	2.55	1.12	2.09	0.70	2.83	1.25
When I see women who are thinner than I am, I think that they must have more self-control than I do	1-5	2.24	1.27	1.73	0.65	2.56	1.46
I feel like men stare at me when I work out at the gym	1-5	3.55	1.06	4.0	0.77	3.28	1.13
I feel like other women stare at me when I work out at the gym	1-5	3.52	1.02	3.91	0.94	3.28	1.02
<i>Relationship with friends, family, and partner</i>							
I worry that my partner does not like my muscular body	1-5	0.93	0.84	1.0	0.63	0.89	0.96
My partner and I are less intimate now that I am working out more	1-5	1.07	1.13	1.09	1.04	1.06	1.21
Changing my body by working out more has negatively affected my relationship with my partner	1-5	1.03	1.05	1.27	1.19	0.89	0.96
Changing my body by working out more has affected my relationship with my close family members	1-5	2.76	1.35	3.0	1.41	2.61	1.33
Changing my body by working out more has affected my relationship with my friends	1-5	2.93	1.36	3.45	1.44	2.61	1.24
Since working out more I feel less feminine	1-5	1.66	0.94	1.36	0.50	1.83	1.10
I worry about being perceived as too masculine because I work out more	1-5	2.0	1.36	2.0	1.41	2.0	1.37
Have you experienced negative reactions about your size, muscular build, or work out routines from friends, family, or your partner?	0-1	0.48	0.51	0.73	0.47	0.33	0.49
Have you experienced negative reactions at the gym based on your size, muscular build, or work-out regimen?	0-1	0.31	0.47	0.36	0.50	0.28	0.46

Appendix E

Figure 1. Theoretical Diagram

List of Women's Bodybuilding Forums and Facebook Pages

<i>Forum Title</i>	<i>Active</i>	<i>Log-in required?</i>	<i>Gained Access</i>	<i>Posted Flyer</i>
Sioux Country	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bodybuilding.com	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elite Fitness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bodybuilding Dungeon	Yes	Yes	No	No
Get Big	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
World Class Bodybuilding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Muscular Development	Yes	Yes	No	No
Muscle Talk	Somewhat	Yes	No	No
Superior Muscle	Somewhat	Yes	Yes	Yes
Saradas	Somewhat	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Facebook Page Title</i>	<i>Active</i>	<i>Open/Closed Group</i>	<i>Posted Flyer</i>	
Women's Pro Bodybuilding Association	Yes	Open	Yes	
Siouxcountry.com	Yes	Open	Yes	
Women's Bodybuilding Support Network	Yes	Closed	Yes	
Women's Bodybuilding Nation	Yes	Open	Yes	
Women Bodybuilding Motivation	Yes	Open	Yes	
Women's Bodybuilding	Yes	Open	Yes	

Figure 1. Theoretical Diagram

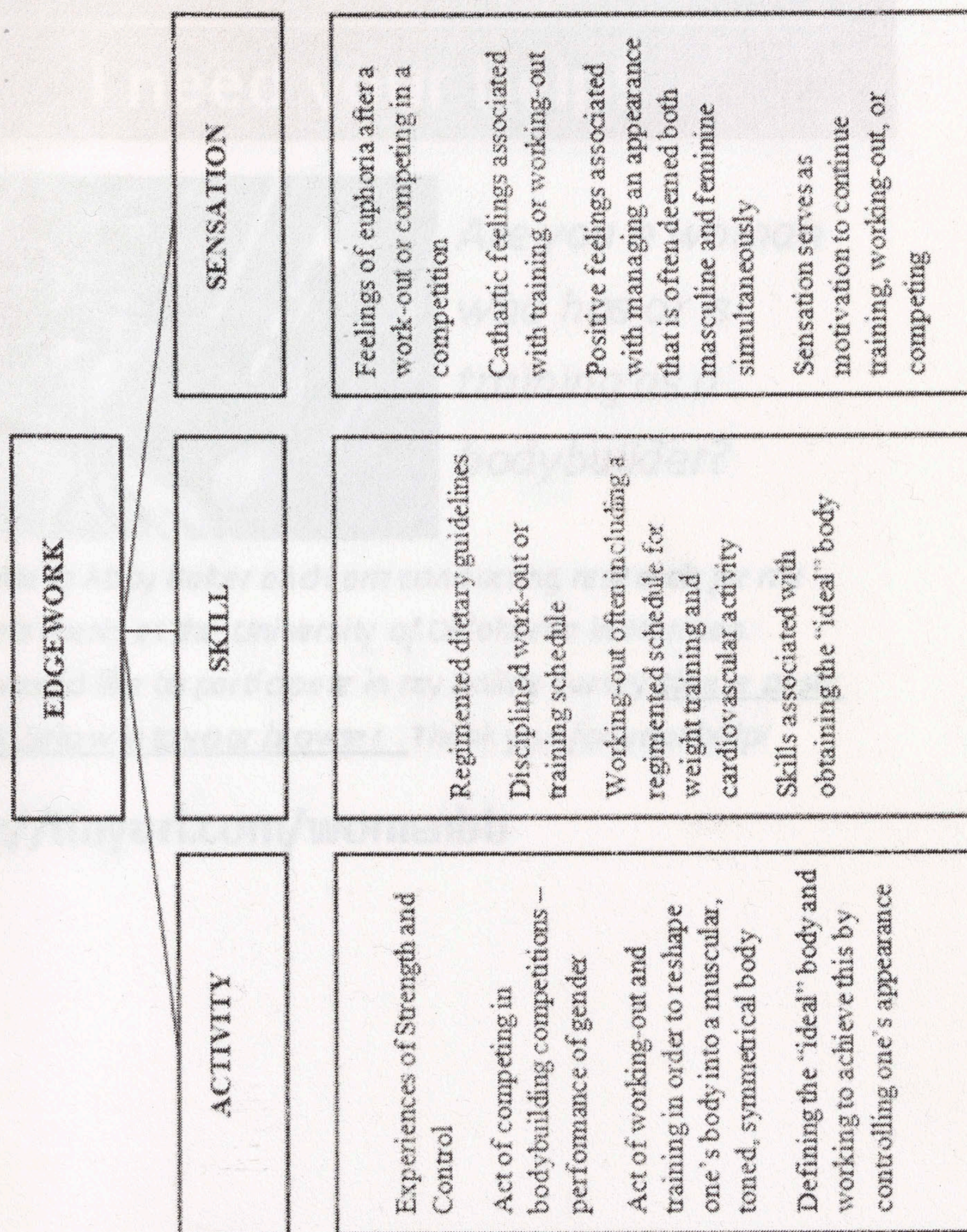
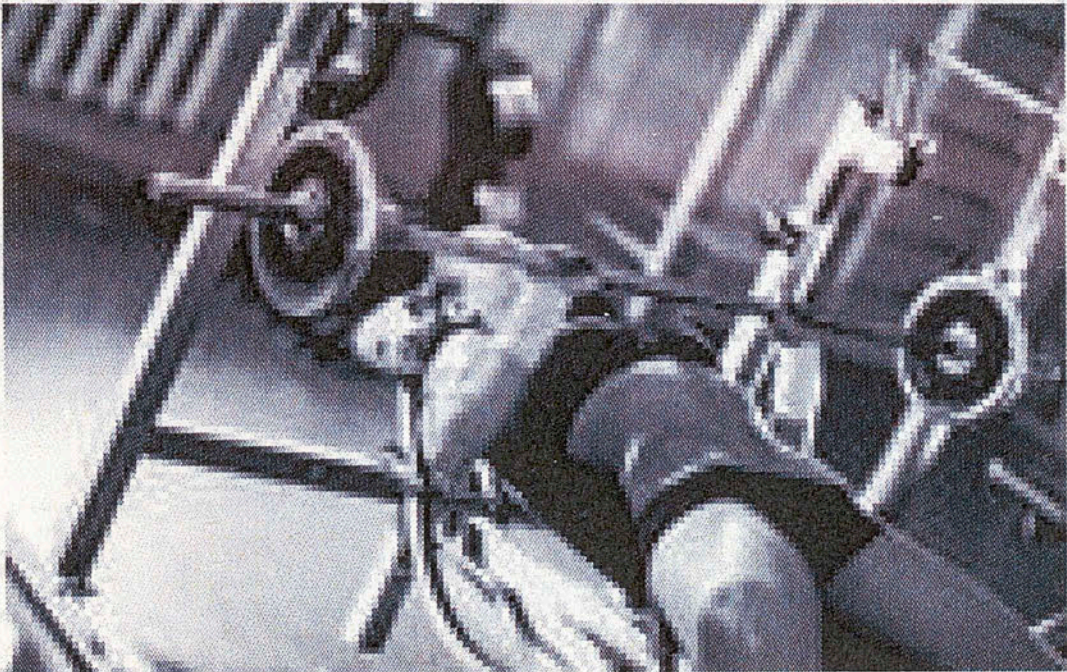


Figure 2. Recruitment Flyer Posted to Online Forums and Facebook Pages

Women Bodybuilders

I need your help!



Are you a woman who has or is training as a bodybuilder?

My name is Abby Baker and I am conducting research for my master's thesis at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. If you would like to participate in my online survey please paste the link below in to your browser. Thank you for your help!

<http://tinyurl.com/womenbb>

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