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Fighting with the senses: Exploring the
doing and undoing of gendered
embodiment in karate

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Abstract

Karate is a sensuous martial art-come-sporting practice. Through a combinations of tacit exchanges of kicks and punches, sweaty touches, sweaty smells, aggressive shouts, communal laughs and helping tweaks of the body karate practitioners come to develop their practice, know their body and one-another, and assert their status in the karate hall. As a combative bodily practice, karate replicates an imagined, and often real, source of men's power over, and distinction from, women. Yet in practice karate is an arena where women and men spar, sweat, and laugh together whereby, through inter-bodily, sensory, interactions, women can, and often do, out perform men. As such, karate presents a fruitful arena for exploring the sensory formation of gendered relations and embodiments of gender. Despite the integral role of the body and the senses to embodied participation in sport, and indeed in our gendered performances of self and distributions/assertions of power between women and men, exploration of the role of the senses in our sporting and gendered embodiment is largely absent from existing literature. This thesis argues that to understand gendered embodiment within karate requires reflection to these multidimensional, multisensory threads spun between sportsmen and women in embodied play.

Building a sensory ethnographic framework for conducting the research, data was gathered from 9 months of 'sensuous participation' at 3 karate clubs engaging in mixed-sex and a women-only classes, 6 photo-elicitation interviews and 11 semi-structured interviews with women and men from across the three clubs, and reflections from my own embodied history as a karate athlete. The findings suggest that in both mixed-sex and women-only classes karate practice could 'undo' conventional performances of gender, and in turn gendered embodiments, through asking its participants to engage in a range of sensory bodily motions that are conventionally seen as masculine – such as combative movements and aggression – and feminine – such as control, elegance, and artistic performance. These embodied ways of being held magnified gender subversive potential in mixed-sex karate practice whereby ideas of men's inherent superiority in sport could be challenged, and ideas of distinction between women and men could be challenged. Recognition of similarity as karate practitioners through shared physical engagements side-lined the importance of gender to practitioners embodiment. Together the findings of this thesis point towards the role of the minute, mundane, and thus often overlooked or unconscious elements of our bodily practice in 'naturalising', reproducing, or subverting gendered arrangements of power. In this way, this thesis contributes to sociological understandings of both embodiment and gender.

Declaration

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This thesis is my own work, unless otherwise indicated, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Adapted sections of Chapter 4 and 5 appear in Maclean (2015), and sections of Chapter 9 in Maclean (2016).

Further, Chapter 3 'Methodology: 'Slipping into the skin' of a karateka' has been influenced by ideas developed in my Masters dissertation which sought to develop a methodological approach for my PhD research.

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Karate terminology

Karate has its own set of technical terms used and understood by karate practitioners. Much of the language used to describe roles, actions, and objects used in karate practice are drawn from Japanese. Below is a list of key terms used in karate, by karate practitioners, and will be used throughout this thesis.

Term	Meaning
Karateka	A practitioner of karate, male or female
Sensei	A karate instructor
High/low grade	A karateka's 'grade' reflects their level of ability. A low grade is a karateka who is a beginner or intermediate. A high grade is a more experienced practitioner who will have practiced karate for a number of years.
Black belt	The black belt is a belt awarded to those who achieve a particularly advanced level of technical skill developed over many years. A black belt is as such a particularly experienced 'high grade'.
Dojo	The hall in which karate is practiced
Gi	The karate uniform
Focus pads	Circular padded mitts not much bigger than a hand, worn by a trainer and hit by a karateka to improve/maintain their accuracy.
Zenshin	A Japanese term meaning 'warrior spirit'
Kiai	A shout karateka make when demonstrating attacking moves.
Kata	A set collection of around 30-100 karate moves to be performed solo with a focus on technical perfection

1. Introduction: Stepping into (and out of) the dojo

The ideas, confusions, and queries informing this thesis were ignited when I started karate nineteen years ago, and have been slowly burning at the back of my mind as I: learnt to kick and punch with girls, boys, men and women; found fun in hitting focus pads as hard as I could; felt the thrill of being hit by another and realising my body could take it; idolised a woman who was too fast, too clever, and too skilled for the rest of the men and women; found that my closest friends were three of the men I trained with, and that I was theirs too; revelled in the joy of demonstrating aggressive dominance in competition and then found warmth in hugging and befriending my previous opponents; was frequently asked for technical advice by men twice my age and twice my size; and found myself differ in the way I held, used, and viewed my body in comparison to my non-karate women friends. As a child growing into an adult, my experiences in karate did not fit what I understood to be the conventional picture of how women and girls should be, and what their relationships with men should be. There are not many places where women and men participate in physical activity together; where women and men engage in combat together; where the sting of a man punching a woman in the face invokes a playful buzz of excitement and sense of respect; where women and men rub their sweaty skin against one another as they help each other overcome training drills; where women can be, and be recognised as, the most dominant, aggressive, fighters, leaving men queuing to spar with them and experience their expertise.

Indeed karate and its mixed sex practice pose multiple challenges to conventional ways of doing gender and of constructing a gendered hierarchy. However an illumination of the actually quite strange physical and emotional interactions of women and men in karate did not occur to me until I stepped out of the dojo and into the night club, aged eighteen, with my three best friends from karate– Mark, Davie, and Aaron. The shared excitement of going on our first ‘nights out’ together marked another depth to our friendship - that it extended out-with karate. The mutually respectful formation of our friendship in the dojo met with the rather different arrangement of women and men in pubs and night clubs that, particularly in the pubs

and clubs that those in their late teens and early twenties frequented, seemed to be centred on a hunt for a sexual partner. All of Mark, Davie, and Aaron's friends outside of karate were men, and as I frequently found myself as the only woman in a group of men, walking through other friend groupings that were predominantly women only or men only, it became apparent that our friendship was strange, and it was strange because I was a woman. Davie, Mark, and Aaron of course noticed I was the only woman, but it didn't change our closeness or the banter we had – to them, in this setting, I became 'one of the lads'. However the initial uncertainty their friends had as to whether they should chat me up, or continue to tell me which women in the club they would 'pump' further cemented my feelings that the friendship we had built through karate 'done' gender relations very differently. Within karate, an understanding of my role in our friendship group as a 'honorary male' that is often taken on by individual women in all male groups (Thomas, 2005) did not feel necessary nor applicable. The warmth, silliness, respect, trust, and absence of sexualisation I felt in my friendships with the men I trained with left me questioning: How is this mutually respectful relationship achieved in karate? What is it that underlies these relationships in karate and makes them so different to relationships I, and other men and women, have with people of the opposite sex in other areas of life?

From this moment of reflection sparked a desire to uncover how such mutually respectful relations between women and men were made in the dojo, and rather ambitiously, whether these lessons could contribute to a plan for developing anti-sexist men. As my reflections on the gendered dynamics within karate progressed (See Maclean, 2015) and I matured, it became apparent that the latter was unfortunately rather optimistic as the men in karate weren't free from sexist ideas themselves (nor were the women), and certainly didn't have a feminist consciousness around their gender progressive, and less progressive, interactions in karate. This suggested that the progressive relationships between women and men, and the challenges to conventional notions of gender found in karate, were not sourced in formalised ideas about gender. Rather, I hypothesise that they were preceded by acts of the body within karate that form and inform relationships between women and

men practitioners. Sociology has not found a way to understand the body as pre-socialised without being reductive, however this thesis seek to uncover the source of mutually respectful relationships between women and men in karate through an approach to understanding gender that takes the body seriously - that explores the mundane, minute, and pre-socialised bodily details of everyday karate practice that build our gendered embodiment, our lived experience of gender, and informs our relations with other women and men.

In the next section I will give a brief context of karate in Britain that will provide the reader both a deeper understanding of what karate practice entails, and the context within which my research has been conducted, before discussing the research problems for gender and explorations of gender emerging from this context. I will then set out the guiding aims and questions of this thesis, and conclude with an outline of what is to come.

1.1. A background to karate in Britain

The practice of karate in Britain is founded in a continually reimagined history of the sport that blends eastern mythology and the aftermath of World War II (Krug, 2001; Tan, 2004). Karate, as practiced in Britain and across the world today, originates from a (now Japanese) island called Okinawa, and was first popularised in Japan by Gichin Funakoshi in the early 1920's, and in the aftermath of World War II, was embraced by American soldiers based in Okinawa and Japan whom spread the teachings of karate across the world (Krug, 2001). In drawing on both a framework of (mythologised) eastern martial-art philosophy, and a framework of western sport, karate practice embraces characteristics conventionally understood as masculine and feminine in Western terms, steering away from a strictly masculinised sport paradigm.

In *The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate* (Funakoshi, 1938) Funakoshi emphasises the importance of respecting the skills of self and others, being humble to one's own weakness and knowing one's strengths, always striving with

determination to improve one's practice, and developing an attitude and demeanour which gentle, diligent, yet strong. Following from Funakoshi's teachings, the sweaty, body-to-body, kicks, punches, and strikes of karate, alongside its tacit tactics, agile yet minimal movements of defence, and soft manipulations of an opponent's body are all bound together with a philosophy of respect, honour, discipline, and *zenshin* (fighting spirit). The practical implications of this philosophy are strict rules of etiquette in the dojo - such as bowing on entering, calling the instructor 'Sensei', wearing and keeping clean the white suit - and a deeply hierarchical structure of its participants based on their skill and experience in karate. Drawn from this philosophy, less emphasis is placed on physical strength, dominance, and physical strength *as a source of dominance*, which are often used to legitimise ideas of sport as a 'male domain' (Burstyn, 1999). Rather, karate's framework blends this alongside placing importance on precision, elegant control, and crafting a personhood that is 'outwardly gentle, inwardly strong' (Funakoshi, 1938:71).

Whilst judo was banned in Japan for several years after World War II for being deemed to incite a philosophy of militarism, karate was interpreted by the Western Allies as a boxing-like practice, with a softer philosophy seen to promote ways of living a humble, graceful, moral life (Tan, 2004). Whilst more commonly in situations of war, the winning sides have used sports they call their own as a form of colonialism (Gems, 2006; Hughes, 2009; Mählmann, 1988), in contrast, karate was *embraced* by the west. The Western allies' acceptance of karate helped the martial art to accelerate across the Western world, however in this process karate was Orientalised (Said, 1985) and westernised, fusing western conceptions of Funakoshi's teachings and ideas of eastern philosophy, with competitive, rule-based, structures of sport (Krug, 2001). The westernisation of karate carries with it on-going debates by practitioners as to what is 'authentic' practice. Competition was introduced and increasingly became a key focus of karate training in Britain, and indeed Japan too, which infused ideas of success, 'team-spirit', 'professionalism', and competitiveness into the martial art-come-sport's practice.

Funakoshi's philosophy of traditional karate combined with western philosophies of sport frame the practice of karate in Britain, and much of the world, today: karateka are expected to strive to better themselves without excuse; to be dedicated; to overcome opponents in an expression of dominance, yet remain humble in doing so; to win; and to at all times be respectful to their position within the hierarchy of their setting. Through the combination of these frameworks, karate has been seen as a martial art/sport suitable for all bodies, leading to a naturalised arrangement of men and women to train together.

1.2. Problems for gender and embodiment

In this section I briefly set out the broader sporting and gendered context surrounding karate practice, and use this context to highlight the particular problems karate practice poses for the way gender norms and conventional gendered embodiments have been investigated and understood. Gender is not the only characteristic we embody – class and ethnicity can be too – however, because of the particular problems karate poses for doing gender noted below, gender is the focus of this thesis.

The body is central to both constructions of gender distinction and to sports practice, and as such, sporting practices hold particular potential to either challenge ideas of differences between women and men that legitimise a gender hierarchy, or perpetuate them (Connell, 2012). Gender is something that we actively 'do' in relation to those around us, the norms and expectations of our sex category within the settings we participate in, and the distinctly differently valued opportunities afforded to us based on our sexed body (West and Zimmerman, 1987). This relational doing creates differences that are in turn circularly used to present such differences between women and men as natural, and legitimise men's privilege. As something we can do, gender is also something we can 'undo', through inter/actions that minimise, remove, or refute differences between women and men (Deutsch, 2007). When we do gender we do it through our whole body - not only the appearance we construct, but also the more intricate sensory minutia that are often

overlooked, such as the tone of our voice, the smells we attach to ourselves, how we hold our body, and the ways we occupy and move through space. Overtime as these intricate sensory details of doing gender are repeatedly done they move from being something actively done, to something less consciously done and less consciously noticed - rather they become part of our embodied being and how we see our self. This is the process by which our embodiment becomes gendered. Thus the sensory intricacies that build the mundane, overlooked, practices of our everyday being are important, as it is within these practices that gender inequalities can be hidden, and presented as natural differences.

Sport is a particularly powerful arena for mediating and hiding ideologies and re/producing inequalities. Sport is often presented as an apolitical domain - one where success is deemed as meritocratic and naturally performed by the body, and untarnished by race, class, ethnicity, or gender discrimination (Clark and Clark, 1982; Hargreaves, 1994). Divisions within sport, and different bodily capacities of different groupings participating in sport, thus appear as natural outcomes, rather than social constructs with embedded power relations. Many sport sociologists point towards the distinction of women and men as a primary ideology mediated and legitimised through sporting practice (for examples see: Burstyn, 1999; Connell, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994; Messner, 1988). As one of the few remaining 'male domains' (Whitson, 1990), and a space where men can mimetically perform dominance (Elias and Dunning, 1986), Connell (1990) suggests sport is a key arena for reproducing ideas of men's hierarchical distinction from women, and embodiments of a hegemonic masculinity. The extent of such distinctions are magnified through the exclusion or segregation of women from men in sporting practice that enables myths of men's bodily differences from women, and universal physical superiority to women (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008). As such, the interactions of sporting bodies have been suggested to hold a prominence in mediating and legitimising ideas of men's natural, hierarchical, distinctions from women (Burstyn, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994; Messner, 1988).

In the aftermath of the London Olympics - heralded as a cornerstone in placing gender equality in sport on the agenda - increased attention has been paid by governments and organisations in Britain to the disproportion of women to men participating in sport, and the subordination of women's sporting practice to men's. Current approaches to addressing gender inequality in sport in Britain have predominantly involved segregating women/girls from men/boys, and an increasingly gendered marketing of sports practice (for examples see: Fit for Girls, 2012; Women in sport, 2015). Whilst such approaches might increase women and girls participation in sport, they also appear to simultaneously overlook, if not reproduce, ideas of men and women's bodies and potential as distinctly different. It is such notions of difference which mediate gendered power relations, legitimise a subordination of women's sport to men's, and underpin women and girls' lack of confidence in sport (Hills and Croston, 2012; McDonagh and Pappano, 2008).

Within this context, whereby sporting bodies hold particular potential to reinforce or challenge notions of difference between women and men, karate presents multiple problems for conventional gendered norms, understandings of women and men's bodily capacities, and expected relations between women and men: If women can be violent, aggressive, and express dominance, then what does this say about the innateness of such capacities to men and masculinity? If men must use their bodies in controlled, elegant, and semi-spiritual manners, then what does this say about the innateness of such characteristics to women and femininity? Is it okay for men hit women? Is it okay for women to hit other women and men? What does this say about conventional ideas of women and men's capacities for fighting, and ideas of men's innate capacity to fight? And furthermore, if women can, and often do, out perform their male training partners, then how can a gender order privileging men be justified?

Whilst some of these problems to conventional ideas and embodiments of gender, such as women embracing conventionally masculine uses of their body, can be found in single sex sports, the mixed-sex context of karate magnifies these problems alongside complicating gendered relations in action. Mixed-sex karate practice not

only challenges conventional ideas of gender differences and gendered embodiments, it does so through direct bodily interactions between women and men, where the implications of such differences, or lack of differences, are intertwined with a renegotiation of gendered power relations. In examining a sports context where women and men train together, and furthermore where women can receive respect and admiration by men and women for their sporting skills, deeply bodily attuned research into karate can provide valuable insights into how gendered power relations often justified by ideas of women and men's bodily differences are relationally negotiated, enacted, subverted, and embodied. This can illuminate weaknesses in how sociology has conceived of gendered embodiment that has often taken as read the link between male bodies, masculinity and power. Furthermore, this may help provide a more nuanced understanding of women's participation in sport for those seeking to tackle gender inequalities in sport, and point towards more nuanced approaches to readdressing the dualistic, hierarchical, gender ideology framing the practice of the field (for examples see Burstyn, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994; Messner, 1988).

1.3. Aims, questions, and thesis outline

The mixed-sex, elegant yet aggressive, sweaty, loud, exhausting, close body-to-body combative practice of karate provides a vibrant and rather unique setting through which to explore the construction of our gendered embodiment. Inspired by the intensity of both bodily processes within karate, and the unexpected normality of women training with men within the field, this thesis holds three main aims:

1. To problematise methodological and theoretical approaches to the body and embodiment that overlook our intercorporeal, sensory, base of experience.
2. To illuminate the minute, sensory, components of doing gender that inform and shape our gendered embodiment.
3. To throw light upon the comparative construction of gendered embodiments within mixed-sex and single sex karate settings.

My central contention is that attention to the intercorporeal role of the sensory experiences and interactions of our bodies can unravel the minute, everyday, taken-for-granted building blocks that construct our gendered embodiment that in turn normalise, naturalise, and legitimise gender inequalities. To address these aims, this thesis is framed by research questions that can be separated into two broad categories: Firstly, questions regarding the construction or dismantling of hierarchical gendered difference within karate practice:

1. How do women and men relationally and sensorally 'do' gender in karate?
2. Does the unisex structure of karate enable an un-doing of differences between women and men, and thus an 'undoing' of gender?
3. To what extent does mixed-sex karate practice reinforce or challenge a conventional gender order and ideas of hegemonic masculinity?

The questions above seek to explore the importance of gender in the dojo through examining how the maintenance or subversion of conventional ideas of difference are drawn on, performed, or undermined, through karate practice. The second group of questions interrogate the translation of such gender arrangements and bodily experiences of karate into more deeply ingrained embodied ways of being:

1. How does the sensory experience of karate practice inform practitioners' embodiment and the extent to which it is gendered?
 - 1b. What are the mundane, routinely practiced, bodily actions and interactions that underlie karate practice, and how do these relate to 'doing gender' and constructing gendered embodiments?
2. Do these embodiments, and the extent to which they subvert gender, vary between mixed sex and single sex settings?
3. How do women and men negotiate ideas of gender distinction, and themselves as gendered, in relation to their bodily experiences and interactions in karate?

Our gendered embodiment involves an ongoing negotiation of societal ideas about us based on our assumed sex category, our bodily experiences and opportunities, and

knowledge drawn from and of our body, that shape our bodily being in the world and our sense of self in the world. As such, unpicking gendered embodiment entails identifying the ways karateka 'do gender', and differences in women and men's bodily being within karate that are often less consciously done by practitioners themselves.

The next chapter will move through sociological approaches to gender and embodiment, and gendered embodiment in sport before setting out my theoretical approach to understanding and exploring gendered embodiment in karate. Chapter 2 will conclude by suggesting that exploration of the multi-sensuous threads spun between bodies in karate is central to understanding the lived experience of karate, and way in which their embodiment is gendered. Drawing on the theoretical and methodological insights from the literature review, Chapter 3 will present the sensory ethnographic methodological approach I adopted to address the research questions in a manner that respected the sensuous experiences and expressions of the body as central materials in the building of our embodiment. Together, the initial three chapters set out the rationale for a sensuous exploration of gendered embodiment in karate to generating knowledge that is both methodologically and epistemologically innovative and fruitful.

The first three findings chapters place the inter-bodily experiences within karate under the microscope to provide insight into the embodiments built within karate, and how such embodiments do or undo gender. Chapter 4 looks at the bodily movements required of karate practice - such as kicks, punches, facial aggression, shouts when performing a finishing technique, claiming and commanding space across the hall, and disciplined rituals such as bowing – and explores how the unisex requirement of these movements impacts the ways in which men and women use their bodies in karate, and the room for creating gender distinction. The notion of differences from which to build gendered embodiments is carried on in Chapter 5 whereby the visual symbols of karate are put under analysis for the creation, performance, or disruption, of gender differences. In Chapter 6 we get our teeth stuck

into the tacit exchanges of varying types of touch in karate, and the floating re-emergence and evaporation of notions of gender surrounding these moment of touch.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 draw on the sensory experiences illuminated as informing karateka's embodiment in the previous chapters, and zoom the focus towards the impact of such experiences upon specific sets of relationships, and karateka's sense of being an embodied, gendered, self. Indeed bodily interactions, knowledge from the senses, relationships, and sense of self are all intertwined as our embodiment. Separating them out for empirical discussion enables clearer analysis and explanation. I begin by exploring the impact of the sensuously embodied experience of karate upon karateka's understanding of themselves, and how gender is positioned within this sense of self in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 explores the commonality of families practicing karate together, and how the multi-sensory practices of doing karate and practices of doing family collide in the dojo to inform ways of doing, and embodying, gender. The final empirical chapter addresses a theme raised at the very start of this thesis: how the close friendship bonds forged between women and men in karate practice are made, and their impact upon our embodied relations between women and men as relations of power. To bridge a closer feel for the issues addressed in the empirical chapters, interludes have been placed between chapters to provide descriptive, data-driven, bite-size insights into themes emerging within the findings chapters.

I conclude in Chapter 10 by drawing together the key findings from across my empirical chapters to address the research questions posed above. I note theoretical and methodological contributions and implications of this piece of work before finishing with recommendations for karate, martial arts, and physical activity providers, drawn from the findings of this thesis, to reduce gender inequalities experienced and lived through their practitioners' bodies.

2. Theorising gendered embodiment

Sport and gender are both arenas where the body as a site of experience, agency, and action takes centre stage. It is through our bodies that we participate in both phenomena, whereby the experiences of such phenomena cannot be understood without understanding their corporeal base. Equally, the corporeal experience of karate practice, the doing of gender, or indeed any practice, does not happen in a social or cultural vacuum. Embodiment is a process that meshes together the subjective actions and experiences sensorially perceived through the body, with the social and cultural meanings assigned to and framing the body, which together form our being in the world. Unavoidably linked into our embodiment is the reading of our body as a gendered body – whether rightly or wrongly read. As such, gender – in the form of expectations, opportunities, meanings, and interpretations of bodies – holds a prominent position to influence our embodiment. As such, to understand karateka's experiences of their sport, and how gender is woven into or out of these experiences through karate practice, this thesis places the gendering of karateka's embodiment under the microscope.

This chapter will review current approaches to understanding gender and embodiment in order to interrogate the intertwining of the two. This chapter will begin by looking at conceptions of gender as a social and cultural framework for our embodied action, before exploring literature on the body and processes of embodiment. Particular attention will then be paid to the sensory intricacies often overlooked in understandings of gender and embodiment, and the implications of the senses for embodied practices of gender and sport. This will be followed by a brief review of the ways in which gendered embodiment has been understood in sporting contexts, before tying the key theories of this chapter together to present this thesis' approach to understanding gendered embodiment in karate.

2.1. Gender

The links between imputed sex differences of the body and distributions of power lie at the heart of theories of gender. The ways in which different theorists have conceptualised this link and its implications are broad, including conceptualisations of gender as: biologically influenced differences of sexual character (Wilson, 1975); inequalities between women and men structured by, and structuring, society (Kimmel, 2000; Lorber, 1994; Johnson, 2014); relationally constructed ideas of difference between women and men that create power inequalities (Connell, 2009); performed and performative (Butler, 1990; Goffman, 1959); internally structured order of different types of women and men (Connell, 2009; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005); and with varying conceptions of how rigid or fluid concepts of difference are. This thesis is situated amongst critiques of the lived effect gender has in the world, pointing towards our conscious and less/unconscious movements of our bodies as agentic interactors, whereby our bodily movements work as sources and indicators of power and identity. Bodily movements thus negotiate the extent to which gender is made a meaningful source of identity and power. The full breadth of approaches within and surpassing the frameworks mentioned above are indeed far too vast to fully outline within this thesis. This section will review approaches to gender particularly significant for understanding of gender as an embodied relation of power, and particularly useful for understanding the ways in which gender is embodied, and subverted, in karate practice.

2.1.1. Gender as biologically based?

As a body-centred performance, sport has been cited as a prime arena mediating ideas of biological, natural, differences between women and men that are in turn used to legitimise gender inequalities in wider society (Connell, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994). Gender is often deemed to be something emerging from hormones, brain functions, and physical/reproductive capacities, which create the ‘natural’ ‘sexual characters’ of women and men (Connell, 2009). The ‘sexual characters’ assumed of men and women – that of masculinity and femininity - mark them as different in

certain aspects of personality and physicality, and as such, suitable for differing tasks in society. What ‘natural differences’ are seen or imagined, and how these should affect everyday life, vary across different societies. What makes up those distinct unitary characters is often left unclear, up for speculation and inference from biology (Fine, 2005). Despite ambiguities of the exact differences that form the categories ‘man’ and ‘woman’, the distinction of the two enabled through interpretations of biology are suggested to be centrally important in people’s understanding of their social world:

‘Gender certainty is so important to us. Without it, we feel as if we have lost our social bearings in the world, and are threatened with a kind of ‘gender vertigo’ in which the dualistic conceptions that we believe are the foundations of our social reality turn out to be more fluid than we believed or hoped’ (Kimmel, 2000:103).

Notions of, or desires for, innate biological differences between women and men has fuelled a large field of sex-difference research (see: Buss, 1995; Darwin, 1896; Organisation for the study of sex differences, 2017; National Institutes of health, 2017; Wilson, 1975) that competitive sport particularly draws on, and mark as important (Heggie, 2010; Dworkin and Cookey, 2012). Yet ironically, the overwhelming results of the majority of sex-difference research is sex similarity (Connell, 2009; 2009; Fine, 2005). Despite this, understandings of gender as tied to and consistent *with* sex, and with great distinction between the sexes, remains widely held in everyday understandings.

The apparent contradiction between the findings of sex-difference research and popular ideas of gender as drawn from innate differences suggests “there is too much invested in the notion of sexual character for a simple factual refutation to destroy it” (Connell, 1987:170). Between popular science, the media, and family jokes, we hear how men and women are completely different to one another – use different parts of the brain, have different wants, different anatomies, different ways of speaking, listening, and communicating etc. These everyday mechanisms perpetuate ideas of biological difference between women and men, and make the differences between men and women both expected and desired. Such differences are not merely enjoyed

innocently and treated equally, they are centrally important in the organising of society:

‘Gender is not simply a system of classification by which biological males and biological females are sorted, separated, and socialised into equivalent sex roles. Gender also expresses the universal inequality between women and men. When we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power and inequality, not simply difference’ (Kimmel, 2000:1).

Assumed natural differences between men and women are utilised to legitimise gender inequality. They are used as markers to attach meanings to and assign differing social status to women and men (Lorber, 1994:17) tied in with moral conceptions of how men and women ‘should be’ that amplify the inequality legitimising power of differences that are assumed natural. The meanings and status attached to our body impact our embodied interaction, limiting, restricting, or encouraging certain behaviours. Gender inequality is thus the starting point of the cycle of its own reproduction: Gender inequality creates differences, that are mapped onto the body and presented as naturally occurring natures, that are then used to justify gender inequality (Kimmel, 2000:6). The link between sports practice and bodily capacity thus gives sport a particular potential for reproducing or challenging this cycle.

2.1.2. Gender as structured and structuring

‘We can only begin to understand gender if we understand how closely the social and the bodily processes mesh. We are born in blood and pain, *and* we are born in a social order.’ (Connell, 2009:68).

More than just ideas of natural difference applied to bodies, constructions of gender are also woven into institutions of society – such as education, family, politics, sport, and work places – shaping and being shaped by the myriad of on-going interactions between women and men. Gender is a principle of organisation socially constructed, perpetuated, and altered (Mackie, 1987; Riseman, 2004) with hierarchy, power, and inequality central to its organisation. As an organising principle, gender creates the distinguishable social categories of women and men, and uses these distinctions to

pattern arrangements of tasks, labour, access to power, and resources. It is suggested to pattern at the level of society (gender order), institutions (gender regimes) and individual interactions (gender relations), and is internally structured privileging some gender performances over others (Connell, 2009).

How gender is arranged varies between different societies, across different institutions, and within individual sets of gender relations. The relationship between the three levels of gender organisation is one of mutual, although not equal, influence: Gendered individuals shape gendered institutions through their interactions within the field (Bourdieu, 1990); Institutions reproduce inequalities that fuel ideas of gender difference; Ideas of gender difference are used to justify a gender hierarchy; Localised gender orders reinforce a societal gender hierarchy by placing value in the characteristics and traits associated with one gender more than the other, and structures institutions to reward this gender accordingly; The gender order thus taints the opportunities available for individual men and women within institutions with the aim to reproduce the existing gender order. Gender arrangements are thus socially reproduced by power structures that influence everyday practice. They often appear unchanging because of this, but are constantly changing in relation to changing practices, situations, and developments of human life (Connell, 2009:9). Indeed, 'structure is always emergent from practice and is constituted by it. Neither is conceivable without the other' (Connell, 1987:94). The contribution of this thesis is primarily in relation to understanding gendered power on a relational level, however in chapter 8 the level of gender regimes is also engaged with.

What appears to be a central gender arrangement across virtually every known society is a gender order of male dominance (Connell, 2009; Kimmel, 2000). Many feminists have noted the spatial division of men and women's lives, particularly to the public/private spheres, but also geographical locations, as a key mechanism in suppressing women (see: Aitchison, 1999; Jamieson 1998; Laurie et al., 2014). Spain (1993) provides a key insight into the explicit impact of the spatial division of women and men's lives upon gender inequality. Following a comparative

examination of gendered divisions of the home, education, and political participation across industrial and non-industrial societies across time, Spain argues that the spatial separation of men and women sustains a gender hierarchy by reducing women's access to socially valued knowledge and skills, and further suggests 'the more pronounced the degree of spatial gender segregation, the lower is women's status relative to men's' (Spain, 1993:137; emphasis mine). In doing so, Spain explicitly highlights an underlying assertion of much feminist work: that spatial segregation of work and leisure is a predicator of women's status in society. The spatial separation of women and men, and their access to differing activities, duties, and tasks, creates differences between women and men and enables the recreation of ideas of innate gender difference. This significance of sex segregation to maintaining men's privilege raises question to how a gender order framing women and men's opportunities and status is constructed in sex-integrated karate practice.

The further part in maintaining the conditions of a male dominant gender order is taking the differences made between women and men, and valuing men and what men do above women and what women do (England, 2010). As the current dominant group, men write the rules and definitions of what is 'superior' and 'inferior', for what is valued and what isn't (Johnson, 2014). The valuing of what men do is thus relatively simple for the dominant group to recreate: they must use their resources to present the current arrangements as natural, positive, and legitimate. This is partly done through promoting men's views, men's achievements, character traits associated with men, and assumed men's interests through media institutions; funding fields associated and dominated by men; paying men and male dominated areas of work more than women and 'women's work'; and in constructing a language framework that assumes 'he'/men as the norm and thus natural for certain tasks/group membership (Mackie, 1987). In valuing men and what men do, power and authority is made central to men, and not to women. In this way the structures of institutions encourage the reproduction of a male dominant gender order and making such favouring appear natural. However, many of mechanisms of valuing and privileging men Mackie mentions are undergoing increasing contestation (MacInnes, 2001) suggesting that these mechanisms are no longer as rigid or certain in

reproducing a gender order. Research on new forms of femininity suggest that within neoliberal societies women and girls are increasingly encouraged to embody characteristics and adopt positions previously preserved for men, framed by narratives of choice and empowerment that complicate the construction, and disruption, of gendered power relations (Gill and Sharff, 2011). This points towards the need for a more nuanced understanding of the reproduction of gendered power relations, of which the sensory approach of this thesis aims to contribute towards.

Both these elements of maintaining the gender order are tied into and rely upon the social embodiment of those within institutions. Our bodies are affected by social processes: the way our body grows and develops is influenced by numerous things – such as food distribution, work, sport, warfare, sexual customs - and all these are structured by gender (Connell, 2009: 54). In the separate social practices women and men engage in within institutions, bodies are socially transformed, and transformed differently. Our bodies bear the marks of gendered divisions of labour, gendered occupations, gendered emotional life, and gendered leisure life. They encourage us to mould our bodies into certain types of bodies – ones that develop large visible muscles, ones that can intricately pluck eyebrows and apply makeup, ones that command assertiveness, ones that emphasise their empathy for others, and ones that may experience shame, social exclusion, or physical violence for acting outwith the gendered expectations of the field. In this way gendered institutions structure the tasks/experiences of men and women that *produce* the gender differences they are assumed to reflect (England, 2010; Kimmel, 2000:96). Social gender arrangements of institutions are not natural patterns occurring from biological bodies, but rather shape our bodies, and are crucial for creating patterned gender differences between women and men used to legitimate a gender order.

As embodied beings, individuals are brought into the constitution (or contention) of gender orders and gender regimes as they absorb or respond to women and men's different experiences within the field, and expected differences within the field. Although institutions encourage gendered behaviours that fall in line with already existing gendered patterns of the field, and ultimately the reproduction of the gender

order, it is within the everyday practices of individuals in institutions where the shape of the gender regime is made. The practices of men and women are not *defined* by the structure of institutions, however are encouraged by them. Individuals may engage in practices that conform to, exaggerate, or resist the gender regime.

As socially embodied beings, our choice of either conforming to or resisting a gender regime is influenced by the institution itself in a number of ways. Firstly, institutions condition future actions by defining possibilities of actions for men and women. If an institution has a rigidly differentiated gender structure, the possibilities of resistance may be limited – access to practices deemed suitable for the opposite sex may be restricted by a recruiting structure, for example, or the exclusion of one gender. Secondly, as embodied beings our bodies already bear the gendered marks of the social institutions we have lived through. In turn we are positioned with certain skill sets, and exclusion from other skill sets reflective to the way each institution we are involved in treats women and men. Thus our ability to engage in practices deemed appropriate for the opposite sex may be restricted by differences institutions embed into our bodies. Thirdly, individuals may be punished for not conforming to the existing gender regime and its entailed expectations. Such punishment may include social exclusion, bullying, and in some cases physical abuse. Fourth, it is in the interests of certain groups to conform to gender regimes, this is predominantly the groups whom the regime privileges and rewards – men. Through these mechanisms in combination, institutions structural mechanisms involved in reproducing men's dominance make themselves invisible (Kimmel, 2000:18), and thus work to maintain the illusion of the gender inequalities we see in everyday life as emerging from natural differences.

It should be noted that whilst the power structure of gender places authority with men, this is instantly complicated by a second axis of gender as internally structured, creating a hierarchy whereby some groups of men are denied authority (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Indeed particular groups of men will be oppressed, and in general this is by other men (Kimmel, 2000: 93). The hierarchical power structure of gender is built complexly, intersecting gender with multiple other stratified

characteristics of an individual. Many men are placed far out of reach of power positions based on stratifications such as class, race and sexuality. In certain parts of their everyday lives there may be women who hold more power and status than them. However such disruptions to conventional gender arrangements often exist within a broader societal framework that privileges men. In the interactions of men and women of the same social status, even these men who feel powerless maintain structured privilege over their fellow women:

‘Males are situated in the highest stratum of every social institution – the family, the occupation system, the political and legal system, the religious system, the economic system. Though some women are more powerful than some men, women are consistently located in a strata below men of their own social group’ (Mackie, 1987:11).

Following Mackie’s assertion, we may imagine that within karate practice, whereby women and men engage in the same activity together, that women’s ability to achieve may be still be laced with elements of subordination to men.

As a socially constructed and constituted organising principle ‘male dominance is universal but not inevitable’ (Mackie, 1987:28). Although institutions encourage gendered behaviours that conform to the current gender order, individuals within institutions can and do have power to engage in practices that resist the gender regime. Gender regimes of organisations are part of the wider framework of the gender order of society, and although they often correspond to the broader gender order, sometimes they vary from it (Connell, 2009: 70). Through the collective practices of individuals within an institution, people can reconfigure the gendered arrangements of the institution. Such changes can be seen by the movement of women into the job market, and the related changes in the family such as attitudes towards men’s roles as fathers. These changes to each institution’s gender regime have not translated automatically into gender equality - when change occurs in one sector of society it often takes time to seep into other sectors (Connell, 2009:74). Such challenges, rather, breakdown some gendered inequalities and alter the previous organisation of gender the inequalities entailed. The disruption to the organisation of gender thus opens an opportunity to create more equal relationships

between women and men within a given field. As such, current gender regimes, and the gendered hierarchies they support, are susceptible to change induced by the gender relations and practices constructed by individuals within the field.

2.1.3. Gender as a relational 'doing'

Whilst understanding gender as a structure in our everyday lives and as structured in our everyday lives is useful in piecing together the broader frameworks our interactions are embedded within, it is within individuals' collective interactions themselves that institutions, and their gender regimes, are made (Connell, 2009:74). Without recurring patterns of interactions between women and men, a gender regime of an institution would not exist. It is through patterned everyday interactions between women and men that the structures of gender are solidified, remoulded, or evaporated. Without an understanding of gender as a process individuals relationally create, the picture of gender is incomplete.

Rather than a structured, ascribed, role deterministically adopted, or a 'natural essence' unavoidably performed, gender is something consciously and actively done to recreate men and women as distinctive – unequal - categories. Doing gender involves 'managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category' (West and Zimmerman, 1987:127). When we do gender we draw on the normative conceptions of women and men, and the differences between the two, expressed through the people and institutions we come in contact with. These normative conceptions are embedded power inequalities that make such differences meaningful. Drawing on the gendered patterns of a given context, when we do gender we act in accordance with those patterns with the aim of producing a performance deemed appropriate for our sex category.

Each performance of gender is built in relation to the actor's own embodied history, the audience, the context within which the interactions take place, and – at its core – distinction from the gender expectations of the opposite sex category (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 135). Performers customise their performance to suit the

gendered norms and expectations of the field they enter, and manage their performance in relation to the responses of others. Through an array of mannerisms enacted, manipulations of appearance, and activities engaged in, whereby we perform, and in turn construct, differences between women and men, our 'being' a woman or a man is enacted. Not all interactions have an obvious gendered patterning, however any interaction *can* aid the production of gender and doing gender by manipulating power difference between women and men into the interaction. Achieving acceptance as a woman or a man, as such, is not as easy (or exclusive) as having a specific set of genitals, but is a social accomplishment set in defining and performing difference. The accomplishment of gender is so embedded within frameworks of society it is often invisible as an accomplishment, and assumed as natural. As something deemed 'natural' to one's sex category and to one's identity, 'doing' gender is thus laden with moral expectations and overtones.

Learning how to do gender appropriately is thus learning about *how gender relations work*, and how to navigate them – how to produce gender performances that are accepted, and distance oneself from stigmatised or undesired gender identities (Connell, 2009:100). There are multiple accepted ways of being a woman, or being a man, in any given context. What is central to these performances is not so much their unities within each sex category – as there is indeed much variance in what men do, and in what women do - but that they compose themselves in distinction from, and in relation to, the other:

'Femininity and masculinity are not essences: they are ways of living certain relationships... There need not be any psychological traits which all femininities have in common and which distinguish them from all masculinities, or vice versa... What unites femininities of a given social milieu is the double context in which they are formed: on the one hand in relation to the image and experience of a female body, on the other to the social definitions of a woman's place and the cultural oppositions of masculinity and femininity.'" (Connell, 1987:179).

Certain versions of masculinity and femininity are suggested to be held up as models we should aim to reflect. The gender performances positioned as the most praised ways of being a woman or a man as suggested by Connell and adopted by many

gender theorists is ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘exaggerated femininity’ (Connell, 1987; 2009). The former entails a culturally supported masculinity centred on power and authority whereby a ‘hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women’ (Connell, 1987:183). Exaggerated femininity reflects a compliance with inequalities and accommodating the desires and interests of men.

Yet what characteristics are entailed in the performance of hegemonic masculinity, exaggerated femininity, or the gendered positions between, appear not fixed or static, but rather, are created within context specific interactions, and ‘done’. At different times and within different contexts what composes ‘masculinity’ and what composes ‘femininity’ alters (Kimmel, 2000; Paechter, 2003). Whilst this alteration happens, men and women in the field will often perform many of the exact same traits. Assigning traits as masculine or feminine, as such, often does not reflect differences in what men and women do, rather it generates the perception of difference:

‘In the social construction of gender, it does not matter what men and women actually do; it does not even matter if they do exactly the same thing. The social institution of gender only insists that what they do is *perceived* as different’ (Lorber, 1994:26).

The categories of masculinity and femininity themselves refer only to a set of stereotypes or ideas to make sense of the different positions of men and women in society (MacInnes, 2001). All traits are human traits with potential to be expressed by all humans (Kimmel, 2000:265). Masculinity and femininity, and hegemonic masculinity and exaggerated femininity, are, as such, empty categories which characteristics are fluidly assigned to in order to explain and maintain the different positions women and men hold in a given context. In this way, masculinity and femininity can be seen as categories continually being remade reflective to the different social positions of women and men.

As such, a diversity of accepted ways of doing gender lie amongst, and assumedly are included within, these polarised hegemonic forms. Connell suggests the diversity

in embodiments of masculinity are done in reference to ideas of what is hegemonic and what is effeminate, whilst other forms of femininity are strategies of active resistance to exaggerated femininity, non-compliance, or commonly a complex combination of both compliance and resistance. Hegemonic masculinity and exaggerated femininity are thus two theoretical constructs to be explored in how women and men negotiate gender in karate: do karateka 'do' gender and build gendered embodiments in relations to notions of a hegemonic masculinity and exaggerated femininity?

The extent to which masculinity and femininity – as unequal difference from the other - is done within interactions in a given field varies. The concept of undoing gender recognises the salience ideas of difference sometimes are, and can be made: 'Gender, although always lurking in the background, varies in salience across different situations...some conditions it may be so irrelevant that it is not even accessed' (Deutsch, 2007:116). Deutsch (2007) and Risman (2009) use the term 'undoing gender' to refer to types of interactions that resist or reduce gender difference. Within certain settings, men and women may do many of the same tasks, perform similar traits, expect to be treated similarly, and receive the same status and rewards for such tasks. In such arenas the importance of being a man or a woman may entail little differentiation, and thus resist broader societal definitions of gender that mark women and men as unequal. In other settings, such as the hospitality sector, there may remain strongly expected performances of gender difference that entail specific expectations of how men and women should 'do' their gender. Here, individuals may challenge current patterns of gender that create inequalities by, for example, refusing to wear high heels to work. The way in which others individually and organisationally respond to the refusal to wear high heels determines the extent to which the interaction alters the normative patterns of gender and ideas of masculinity and femininity within the organisation, or the extent to which the action is sanctioned and the previous arrangements of gender maintained. Through this framework, gender emerges as a resource people can draw more or less upon, that is also problematic.

‘Doing gender’ does not entail performing a specific set of characteristics applicable to any field at any times. Rather, doing gender entails performing those context specific differences that are sourced in, and reproduce, gender inequality/power relations within the field. As something individuals have agency in doing, it can also be ‘undone’ through interactions that embrace similarity and favour more egalitarian relationships (Deutsch, 2007).

2.1.4. Gender summary

There are many differences between women and men in the dojo – indeed there are few people in the dojo whose sex category could not be assumed. However not all of these differences are directly produced by karate, and not all of these differences hold equal weight in understanding the lie of power relations between women and men karateka. Researching and analysing gender is not about searching for differences, it’s about exploring power relations, whether they are surprising moves towards equality, recreations of male dominance, or a mix of both. In exploring gender within the context of karate I draw analysis from a perspective that views gender as not only something that we do/create in interaction, but also something we do within societies and institutions that are structured by gender and gender our embodied being.

As the foundation for the gendered construction, or maintenance, of an arena, I take the performed and embodied differences women and men karateka do, that construct a power hierarchy, and entailed inequalities, within their everyday interactions in the dojo, as the starting point for understanding gender relations in karate. I view gender as a relationship primarily constructed in the interactions between women and men, however understand it as also made between men and between women when such interactions draw on notions of what being a woman or a man *is/is not*. As something we actively do, gender is also something we can resist, and these resistances are particularly important in understanding ways in which gendered power relations can begin to be dismantled. As such I also illuminate when and how gender becomes salient, or irrelevant, within embodied interactions in karate. I explore how

karateka's embodiment is gendered through interrogating karate's institutional gendered patterns and the extent to which they enable, aid, challenge, or cause contradiction with, the overall gender order of society in setting up gendered norms and expectations within the dojo, and karateka's embodied interactions in relation to the norms of both the dojo and broader society. To do so, I take an approach to gender that draws on the notions of gender as something relational done and structured, as discussed within this section, and as an embodied relation of power hidden within the intricate and mundane details building our embodiment. As such, the next section will outline sociological approaches and understandings of embodiment.

2.2. The body and embodiment

The body can be framed in very different ways by biology, medicine, evolutionary psychology and other disciplines which make the body their work. As lived and experienced, bodies take on multiple meanings and uses in our everyday lives: They are our sources of smelling, hearing, seeing, touching and tasting the world around us; sources of communicating and interacting; the tools for expressing and concealing our emotions; a frame to hang clothing, perfumes, jewellery, tattoos, piercings, hairstyles, tone of voice, and mannerisms that express who we are and how we see ourselves; they provide markers of both uniqueness and race, class, gender, and other grouped identities; they give and feel the warmth of connection to other bodies through hugs, hand shakes, and comforting touches of reassurance; they assert our power positions through what we wear, how we speak to others, and the way in which we enforce our touch upon other's bodies, and accept touches from others; they are our sources of feelings of excited anticipation as we take on personal challenges; they are inspected and compared to idealised forms; they sculpt muscles and bodily techniques that provide the physical base for fulfilling our intentions in the world; and the source of unstoppable laughter that wriggles from the stomach, streams through our eyes, and stretches a smile of happiness across our faces. In karate, our bodies take on many of these uses alongside less commonly experienced uses and meanings of our body that centre on using the body as a tool for more or

less successful performance of karate's combative practice, refining and controlling violence, and as a tool for negotiating training relations. Outside of our own everyday uses and experiences of our bodies, our bodies' boundaries, expected actions, and meanings are drawn by medical, media, and legal frameworks that influence how we *should* use our bodies, and how our bodies are treated in everyday life (Oakley, 2007). The body, and our experiences of our bodies, thus comprises a myriad of frameworks and experiences. The volume of experiences, meanings, and frameworks that build our bodily being make gendered karate bodies both a rich and complex area of exploration.

2.2.1 The body in sociology

Many authors have argued that for a long time the body was absent in sociological research (for examples see Shilling, 2012; Wacquant, 2004; Waskul and Vanni, 2006). The root of social science's disregard of the body has been attributed to the remnants of Cartesian dualism – of the separation between mind and body - that continue to seep into understanding and structuring of social enquiry. Such theorising not only distinguished the body and mind as separate entities, it also positioned the two as hierarchically ordered, whereby the mind became the divine, rational, seat of thought, morals, and self, and the processes of the body became viewed as basic. Rationalist ideologies that emerged in the 17th century further cemented dualistic ideas of mind and body into people's everyday understandings. Here, the decline in the authority of the church lead people to question for themselves their bodily sensations and emotions through the power of reason, alongside a broader desire to seek and identify objective knowledge through reason (Burkitt, 1999:19). This sat alongside a civilising process whereby the body and emotions faced increasing social regulations (Elias and Dunning, 1986:17) turning bodies from feeling, knowing entities, into symbols that signify the (moral) self. These two social processes of the time created a division between embodied knowledge of the world situated in space and time, and the thought process to understand it.

At the origins of sociology establishing itself as a distinct field Cartesian dualism, and consequent dualisms such as nature/nurture, fuelled a reluctance to give attention to elements of social relations that could lead to biology and thus blur sociological analysis into fields of psychology or biology (Shilling, 2012:23). Classic sociology's focus on large scale social changes – such as the industrial revolution, the emergence of capitalism, secularization etc. – created a focus on society as a functioning system, and side-lined the individual bodies that produce and live within that system (Shilling, 2012:26). Cartesian dualism set the grounds for the isolation of the body from understandings of social processes, whereby the body could be treated as a pre-social phenomenon that did not warrant the attention of the discipline.

Many sociological theories that do position the body as a site of analysis have been implicitly framed by ideas of the mind as hierarchically distinct from the obeying body. Through such understanding, the body has been turned into an object – of work, of sport, of reproduction – framed by medical discourse that asserts the definitions of the body, its component pieces, its possibilities, and its boundaries (Creagan, 2006:13). Whilst not explicitly focusing on bodies, Marx's concern with the material conditions and exploitation of the working class centres on the turning of working class bodies into machinery of the capitalist system. Until class consciousness is reached, the body, as such, is treated as a tool isolated from individuals own rational desires, and subjected to those of the powerful. Sociologists following a Marxist approach have explored the treatment of human bodies as means to rationalised objectives in terms of the abuses of workers hours and conditions of their bodily labour by employers (Burrawoy, 1979; Leonard and Allen, 1976; Ramsey, 1977); in the fashion industry and sex work, where the body is purposefully isolated from the personality, opinions, desires and needs of the individual it is part of, and framed towards the needs of the consumer (Agathangelou, 2004; Erbe, 1984; Wilkinson, 2003; Wolf, 1991); and the objective treatment of elite athletes who undergo ever more intense training regimes and competitive schedules with ever more staff on hand to deal with individual pieces of the body – the strength coach, physiotherapist, dietician, podiatrist, psychologist, sport scientist – to produce optimum physical outputs, which in the long run cause physical and emotional

damage to the athlete themselves (Connor, 2009). Indeed in the practices of sport, where the body is often deemed the vehicle for success, the objectification and control of bodies has been deemed central (Brackenridge, 2001; Connor, 2009; Messner, 1990; Shogan, 1999)

One of the most prominent sociological texts exploring the body as an object and site of control is Foucault's 1977 *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*.

Foucault's work is particularly relevant for understanding the manipulating bodies to move in particular ways, and the role of violence in such disciplining - something continually done in karate and sport more broadly. Drawing on societal shifts in the forms and mechanisms of state punishment from the 18th century onwards, Foucault argues that, despite a movement away from brutal forms of public torture and physically painful punishment and towards more coercive forms control and hidden punishment, the body is and remains a site through which power relations are made and exerted:

'The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment in the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use...The body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body' (Foucault, 1977: 25).

Whilst indeed focusing on the state's role in moulding the bodies of its citizens through differing policing and judicial practices, institutions such as the army, the workplace and schools are also cited as arenas where bodies are disciplined to move and behave in certain ways, and in doing so, mould 'subjected' 'docile' bodies into ones that act within the interests of the institutions. This power is exercised rather than possessed, manifesting from the position of those who are dominated, and the resources of the dominant. Through resources of the dominant such as surveillance technologies and rationalist bureaucratic procedures such as distribution of people within spaces and timetabling of activities, the body's activities and practices are coercively moulded to the wants and desires of the dominant rather than necessarily those of the person whom the body is a part of. As such, Foucault sets out a theory of

state control and power whereby the material uses and control of the body are central to maintaining power relations and state control.

Similarly to Foucault, in *The Civilising Process* Elias also places explicit attention to the body and historical patterns of disciplining the body. Elias's focus lies not in the state's overt disciplining of bodies to assert control, but rather in the role of bodily etiquette in reflecting and transmitting the ethos of a 'civilised' society, that in turn presents the state as morally superior to previous societies. Elias suggests that etiquette manuals, and changes in the bodily guidance of these manuals over time, point towards a stricter control of impulses and emotions in public and private life grounded in notions of the natural body as shameful. The etiquette rules of acting in public mark individuals as more than just bodies who can conduct tasks, but as people with varying levels of refinement, morality, and civility:

'Bodily carriage, gestures, dress, facial expressions – this 'outward' behaviour with which the treatise concerns itself is the expression of the inner, the whole person' (Elias, 1994:49).

It is here that a central difference in Elias's and Foucault's framework of the disciplining of bodies emerges: Elias presents the disciplining of bodies as not only involving the control of the material utility of the body, but as a process that draws on the body as a symbol of the self, and the collection of bodies as a symbol of society. Similar to Bourdieu's notion of habitus and physical capital (Bourdieu, 1990), Elias suggests that bodily actions are embedded with values that both mark distinction from others, and mark impressions of the self. Those who do not conform to the state's bodily framework of civility are not, in general, specifically surveyed, disciplined, and/or punished by the state, but rather put their own reputation at risk of being seen as uncivilised, to lack virtue, and to be shameful. As such, Elias presents the body as a hallmark of one's embodied civility and value at the mercy of the state's dominant definition of what is civil and thus moral.

Whilst varying in the mechanisms used to assert the state's influence over our bodily mannerisms and movements, in exploring the micro moulding of bodies in relation to

macro power structures, both Foucault and Elias suggest that power is worked and hidden within the detail of our bodily being, alongside providing frameworks for understanding the ‘violent’ bodily negotiations, both of which can contribute towards understanding gendered embodiment within karate. Both Foucault and Elias however present rather unidirectional accounts of power and the body – that the power of institutions is something *done to* bodies. Perhaps given that both draw on historical accounts and records of social processes it is perhaps to be expected that the centrality of their arguments lies in the power of institutions to shape bodily behaviours. Nonetheless, the agency of people to resist the etiquette standards or the disciplining of their bodies within institutions, and how the coercive exertions of power are experienced on the body and negotiated by individuals, is left from analysis.

Feminist theories of the body problematised sociological understandings of the body that treat the mind and body as hierarchically distinct and isolated entities, explicitly pointing towards the hierarchical division of mind and body as the foundations of dualistic thinking that in turn is extended to, and frames, hierarchical distinctions made between men and women (Stanley and Wise, 1993). In challenging the validity of dualistic thinking, feminist theorists challenge notions of the mind as rational and the body as irrational, the mind as agentic and the body as subjected, and ultimately the mind as important, the body as not. They suggest a dualistic framework of thinking about the body is both unrepresentative of the entwined relationship of the mind and body, and is an ideological mechanism to maintain dualistic conceptions of women and men that legitimise men’s power. As such feminist theories of the body called for an explicit focus on the materiality of the body and the centrality of its lived experience to our embodied being.

In practice, however, much feminist theory of the body has fallen short of illuminating the lived experiences of the body, and instead has theorised women’s bodies in terms of passive objectification, focusing on the categories of understanding imposed on women’s bodies, and historical discourses of the body that construct, discipline, and restrain women’s bodies (See for example: Butler, 1990;

1993; Bordo, 1993; Gatens, 1996; Segal, 1994; Ussher, 1997). Whilst indeed illuminating the centrality of the body to women's oppression, such theories of the body also mirror an objectified analysis of the body that they seek to critique. As such, the carnal, lived, agentic experience of the body often remains absent in feminist theories of the body despite intentions to grasp the unison of body and mind in our everyday actions and in our sense of who we are. It is to the body as not merely something we have – an object categorised, and used as a tool by ourselves or others - but as who we are - embedded with feeling, subjectivity and interactive agency - that I will next turn to.

2.2.2. Embodiment: The inter-corporeal and subjective body

‘What we call ‘mind’ only exists because we have bodies that give us the potential to be active and animate within the world, exploring, touching, seeing, hearing, wondering, explaining; and we can only become persons and selves because we are located bodily at a particular place in space and time, in relation to other people and things around us.’ (Burkitt, 1999:12).

Whilst much sociological work has looked at the body as determined by, and given meaning through, social processes such as disciplining regimes (Foucault, 1977), discourse (Butler, 1990), and cultural inscriptions (Bordo, 1993; Segal, 1994), phenomenologists and social interactionists turned the focus from the body as an *object of* social processes, to the body as an *agent in* the construction of social processes – as embodied. The work of Merleau-Ponty (1962) has been particularly significant in shining light upon the corporeal base of our consciousness and thoughts that in turn inform our actions and sense of self. Merleau-Ponty suggests the body is our tool through which we are in the world, and our medium for experiencing the world and expressing ourselves to the world. Our perceptions of the world involve a relationship between what we experience from our bodies alongside our interpretations of the sensations. Thus, it is through bodily experiences that our perceptions are given meaning that inform thought and reasoning to produce our actions in the world, and sense of being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Being and knowing are thus entwined: It is through being sensorially, emotionally and

subjectively positioned in the world that we come to understand and ‘know’ the world.

In illuminating the subjective experiences of the body as forming thoughts and knowledge, phenomenologists and social interactionists have attempted to disrupt the dualism of mind and body implicit or explicit in many theories of the body, in favour of recognising our body and mind working as an embodied whole. Our thoughts and intentions are not held isolated in our minds, but embodied in our facial expressions, bodily strains or releases, and physical actions. As we go through our day drawing on bodily, sensory, data to form our conversations and movements, the interaction cuts across a distrust of the body, or a secondary status often afforded to it in sociology. Thus, to understand embodiment, we must look to the experiences of the body informing thought, action, and sense of being in the world.

Equally, in being in the world, our embodied, fleshy relationship with the world is reversible in that we both touch and can be touched, perceive and be perceived. Our perceptions of the world are not made from isolated bodies, but rather from our embodied position within relationships between ourselves, others, and the environment in which we are emplaced within. As such, our embodiment is not only grounded in corporeal experience, it is *intercorporeally* experienced and given meaning, whereby karatekas interbodily exchanges of training techniques, movement, smells, and conversations can be seen to inform one-another’s embodiment.

Social interactionists such as Erving Goffman draw upon the detailed, interpersonally framed, uses of our bodies as illuminated by phenomenologists, and further suggest our bodies are central to and subject to the social processes of constructing social relations, social orders, and a sense of self. Goffman (1959) argues passage through public spaces requires careful deployment of bodily techniques in relation to social rules and rituals, whereby the body acts as a site to portray an image of ourselves. In the absence of complete disclosure of personality, status, thoughts and feelings, we must rely on the body’s gestures, hints, symbols,

and expressions to present an image of our self, and deduce the reality of the person before us (Goffman, 1959). In this process, social expectations shape our bodily movements. Our presentation of self is altered to fit the audiences we perform before and characters we interact with, where the body is harnessed to present appropriate meanings, with conforming to societal expectations as the easiest way to be accepted. The carnal, meaningful relations between embodied people thus carve their intersubjectivity/intercorporeality whereby our active body is framed for, responded to, and produced in relation to the bodily signals, expressions, and imagined expectations of others.

How others respond to our bodily actions also shapes how we see ourselves. Through bodily performance the embodied self is expressed and impressed onto others, establishing an on going, mutually moulding, relationship with others that intercorporeally informs our sense of who we are. As our embodied performances of self, and our belief in our own performances as a reflection of who we are, are affirmed by the reception of those around us (Goffman, 1959), they are often directed to the gendered, raced, and classed expectations we imagine our audiences to hold. Our ascribed characteristics such as gender thus shape the opportunities and avenues through which we develop a sense of self as women and men to fall in line with imagined or real gendered expectations of their audiences. Our sense of self, and gender's prominence to our sense of self, is thus part of our embodiment and an outcome of our embodiment formed in relation to our interactions in the world, societal and institutional norms and expectations, and the reception of others to our performances whom may legitimise or stigmatise deviations from such norms.

Whilst as embodied beings we have agency to interact with people and contexts we are positioned within to perceive and *present* a portrayal of ourselves, we are also embedded within 'historically developing ensembles of social relations through which we appropriate stocks of skills and competencies' (Burkitt, 1999: 72). Bourdieu argues that the way we use our bodies, and opportunities or encouragements afforded to us, are shaped by historical power structures inscribing classed, raced, and gendered bodies with deeply embedded distinct bodily ways of

being formed through shared history, lived conditions, and exposure to the same bodily dispositions (Bourdieu, 1980). The power structures we are emplaced within combine with our personal history to form our habitus – our embodied dispositions that shape how we see the world and enact within it (Bourdieu, 1980:53). Our bodily dispositions that form our habitus are made through the institutions we participate in - such as family and school - and inform what we see as normal ways of using our bodies. Our habitus thus influences our bodily capacities in ways that are so embedded they are often performed without conscious reflection. This in turn impacts upon the presentations of self/ social positions we can easily enact and those we choose to enact. A cultural stock of behaviours, skills, and techniques are thus both drawn on and embedded within our bodily expressions of meaning, through which the embodied agent is often entwined within the re/production of culture and power structures they are born into (Bendelow and Williams, 2002:53). As such, for Bourdieu, our embodiment is more rigid than a passing presentation of self or situational ‘doing’ of gender, and indeed is inevitably present within the presentations of self and doings of gender we engage in.

Whilst power structures may encourage specific bodily dispositions, as reflective beings we may also adopt uses of the body that build on top of, or actively displace, ways of using our body that are created through treatment of our bodies as raced, gendered, and classed beings. Furthermore, participation in multiple arenas holding differing power dynamics that include or exclude uses of our bodies, enable us to build embodiments that may vary from those societally expected of our bodies based on our ascribed characteristics. In this sense ‘The body is seen as both the medium and outcome of social ‘body techniques’, and society is both the medium and outcome of the sum of these techniques’ (Bendelow and Williams, 2002:62). Our bodily uses are as such flexible to the shifting contexts around our embodied being, and can work to shift the practices within the contexts we are embodied within. This thesis seeks to explore if karate can be a context that works towards an undoing of gender, as an embodied relation of power, from karateka’s embodiments.

Our embodiment is thus grounded in perceptions *from* our body, and perceptions *of* our body, and from this intercorporeal base is layered (Cregan, 2006) with: the multiple selves we produce in differing situation; expressions of ourself expressed onto external surfaces such as writing and images; our opinions and desires; how others represent us; how others respond to us; the institutions we occupy and opportunities we are offered; and the power relations we find our bodies emplaced within. It is a process combining the body as a social symbol, experiential and agentic actor, and socially responsive to the actions of others in the on-going construction of our identity and re/production of inequalities.

2.2.3. Intimate relations and gendered embodiment

Our intimate relations are suggested to be key in informing our embodiment and embodied sense of self (Budgeon, 2006; Evans and Davies, 2010; Gatens, 1998; Giddens, 1992; Jamieson, 1998). Our intimate relations are where we share many of our daily interactions and negotiate performances of self that, through the quantity of repetitive performances, become a ‘firm’ self whereby embodied dispositions ‘appear to emanate intrinsically from the performer’ (Goffman, 1959:252). The family is suggested to be a primary institution informing and moulding our understanding of our roles and capacities, as it is within a family that we experience our first interactions, and many of our daily interactions. The family is also noted to be a heavily gendered institution (Jamieson, 1998; Morgan, 1996; Irwin, 1999; Parsons and Bales, 1955) whereby practices of family life - that involve a distribution of power/authority, duty, care, and other elements of intimacy done through embodied action (Jamieson, 1998) - are entwined and embedded with the ways of doing gender. The most prominent story of family life in Britain is that of the nuclear family (see Parsons and Bales, 1955) that is premised upon a gendered division of power whereby being a father is done through asserting control over the family and investment in ones public life; being a mother is done through intensive emotional and practical care for children and husband; and children are expected to follow their respectively gendered parents lead with more power and independence granted to sons. Whilst the idea of ‘the traditional family’ is acknowledged as a myth

in terms of a universally and timelessly lived family life (Nicholson, 1997) the idea remains a point of reference from which people map their ideas of what it is to 'be' a mother, daughter, son, father, gran, uncle, etc., and thus 'do' family life (Jamieson, 1998). Whilst as a 'done' set of relationships, conventional ways of doing family life can be remoulded through practices that undo or subvert gender roles, this reference often ingrains family life with deeply gendered expectations, opportunities and inequalities that shape individuals embodied being. As such, we may image that karate practice will come into negotiation with pre-existing gendered embodiments formed through relations karateka have with their family, that will in turn, shape the embodiments made and performed in the dojo.

Familial intimacy is, ofcourse, not the only type of intimacy we experience in our everyday lives. The prominent relations karateka have within the dojo are as training partners, and for many, as friends. In comparison to family or couple relationships, friendships are argued to be freer in form, less bound by social norms and expectations, and with greater emphasis on mutual negotiation of terms and interactions of the relationship (Allan, 2005; Budgeon, 2006). They are deemed to be characterized by fun, trust, mutual respect, and reciprocal 'work' or 'giving' to the relationship (Budgeon, 2006). As a relationship privileging mutual negotiation over hierarchically structured (and gendered) expectations, friendships theoretically offer space where gendered scripts of interaction can be renegotiated (Jamieson, 1997), and in doing so, build embodiments that reduce gendered distributions of power.

Friendships between women and men particularly hold potential to challenge notions of hierarchical difference between women and men through challenging conventional (hierarchical) ways of doing gender in woman-man relationships. Thus, as a mixed-sex practice, karate presents particular potential to enable mixed sex friendships that challenge gender power relations within women and men's embodied relations. Yet despite friendship's more negotiable form, current literature points towards the tendency to befriend people similar to ourselves, with a strongly sex-segregated pattern that predominates most friendships (Belot, 2009; Davies, 2011; Jamieson, 1997). This in turn makes mixed-sex friendships developed through

karate, as described in the introduction to this thesis, all the more interesting and powerful as sites to re-arrange women and men's embodied relations, and in turn, their embodied, gendered, sense of self.

The literature on intimacy discussed here, and on embodiment in the previous section, alludes to bodily expressions as sites where our embodiments become subject to social power relations, and are gendered. It is to the role of the intricate and often overlooked sensory experiences and expulsions of our bodies in forming our embodiment that I next look.

2.3. The sensuous body: experiencing life as lived

In the west there is a colloquial sense of the senses as 'the five senses' - sight, sound, touch taste and smell – through which we experience the world. A western framing of the senses (as drawn on by Pink, 2009; 2011) is, however, scientifically incorrect and experientially incomplete (Geurtz, 2003). The sensations of our body have also been suggested to include the rhythm of our movement (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2009), the ways in which we feel heat through our body (Allen-Collinson and Owton, 2014), the feel of the weight of our body (Raven and Hansen, 2013), and pain within our body (Laurendeau, 2014; Spencer, 2013). They are the tools through which we both come to know the world around us, and are recognised by the world around us (Merleau- Ponty, 1962; Pink, 2009). These elements of sensory information gained through the body, experienced as a person, link the self to the world in rich, detailed, textured, in-depth ways. These sensorial experiences of the body inform our understandings of the social world around us, and are drawn on to negotiate our inter/actions within that world (Pink, 2009).

Each sense provides differing, complementary, knowledge that informs the relationship between the world and our body (Pink, 2011a). The senses never work in isolation, rather, our embodiment is emplaced within a wider ecology interrelated with the materials, people, culture, historic context and a multiplicity of sensory phenomena, experienced simultaneously (Pink, 2011b). When running through the

city, for example, it is the heat of the sun on our skin, the feel of feet furious tapping on the concrete floor, the slightly damp feeling of sweat spreading across our t-shirt, the intermitting smells of car fumes, chips shops, bakeries, and nature, and the rhythmic sounds of our breathe, amongst many other sensations from various parts of our body, that come together at once to form our experience. A single sense alone could not fully express nor make sense of the experience of running, nor an account of running that writes-out the environment the sensory experiences are emplaced within. As sensational foreground, or ambient backdrop of experience, our sensory experiences are utilised in harmony to understand, and apply meaning to, the world we are emplaced within. As such, sensory experiences of our body are negotiated, interpreted, understood and given meaning through multisensory reciprocal inter-relations with people and environment (Englesrud, 2005).

As part of the wider ecology our experiences are embedded within, social and cultural expectations infuse sensory interactions by rendering them as markers of distinctions for gender, race, and class (Rhys-Taylor, 2010:222). Societal and cultural expectations inform our sensory logics. For example, when we choose to put on deodorant to cover up smells of sweat from the body, this is done through a consciousness of being in an interactive world with societal expectations and interpretations of sweat as unhygienic and unkempt, and of particular expectations of how women and men should smell, where others will alter their interactions partly in relation to the smell we exude. As such, sensory experiences, and the bodies experiencing/producing them, must be understood within constellations of emplaced interactions in motion, continually being remade and given new meanings as the social environments and social/cultural influences around us move (O'Neil and Hubbard, 2010).

2.3.1. Gendering the senses

Women and men's bodies not only experience the senses, but are also embedded with sensory expectations as markers of gender identity. By virtue of having a body, our embodied being is subject to external assumptions of which sex category we fall

under based on the sensory signals we give, and specific expectations of what movements, actions, appearances, interests, roles, and mannerisms we *should* have as a sexed body in a given setting (Connell, 2009; Goffman, 1959; Lorber, 1994). These form an intricate set of expectations of what it is to *be* a man or a woman that require intensive reflective bodily management that broach not only our physical appearance, but how we use or do not use our voice, how we smell, and how we move our bodies through the spaces we occupy. The ways in which these sensory infusions reflect societal expectations of differences between women and men build up the minute details of ‘doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Our gendered embodiment is thus formed through the mundane everyday sensory experiences and practices we engage in that shape men and women’s bodies, and their bodily capacities, differently (Connell, 2009).

Prior to the enlightenment period of the 18th century, sensory stereotypes were deeply inscribed into understandings of men and women’s bodies, assigning different sensory characteristics and uses of the senses to women and men (Classen, 1998). This dualistic sensory framework of pre-modernity continues to influence understandings of women and men’s bodies despite scientific reevaluation of the senses as gender neutral (Classen, 1998). Men’s bodies have been associated with the ‘higher’ ‘rational’ senses of sight and hearing - deeming men fit for intellectual purposes - whilst women’s bodies have been associated with the ‘lower’ senses of smell, touch and taste - translating women’s bodies as sexual, nurturing, and dependent (Classen, 1998). Entailed in this is a hierarchical, dualistic, and biological narrative of the relationship between the senses and the sexes that frames sensory expectations and representations of men and women today (Classen, 1998). In reflecting on the historical interpretations of the senses, it appears there is more to the formation of gendered sensory subjectivities and social forms than biology, rather:

‘Although the senses are shaped by personal history they are also collectively patterned by cultural ideology and practice... sensation is not just a matter of physiological response and personal experience but is the most fundamental domain of cultural expression and is the medium through which all the values

and practices of society are enacted' (Sparkes, 2009:26).

Treatment of the senses as biological functions in both everyday and academic understandings, rather than socially and culturally infused processes, has led to an overlooking of how the senses are part of 'doing gender' and building a gendered embodiment. Overlooking the social and cultural frameworks influencing our sensory expulsions enables such sensory differences between women and men to be understood as 'natural' differences and in turn utilised to legitimise gender inequalities.

In treating sensory actions as biological functions, our sensory experiences are also treated as if they are uniformly experienced. However women and men do not experience all sensory interactions in a uniform way: we are not given the same opportunities to practice/develop sensory skills; we are not held to the same interpretations for the same sensory interactions we engage in; and we are expected to express differing utilisations of the senses as markers of our gender identity. As such women and men's different opportunities and encouragements to use their senses create gender-distinct sensory experiences and performances.

The historical, dualistic, association of the senses to men and women's bodies has framed and legitimised the segregation of women and men's working and leisure lives, and unequal value distributed to each (Classen, 1998). The association between women and touch is particularly prevalent when looking at what constitutes 'women's work' – caring, housework, craft work, family care, the tacit work on their aesthetic appearance, and in the darker side of the labour market, sex work (Classen, 2005d). The tactile work deemed 'natural', suitable, or more easily done by women is also prominently low valued and low paid. The association of women's bodies with a 'natural' sensory propensity for a caring touch thus creates expectation of women to perform such tasks, whether in paid labour or as part of their second shift, that tie women to lowly valued tasks and maintain space to construct and legitimise women's subordinating difference from men. Alongside assumptions of women's nurturing touch, women's bodies are also often imagined and treated as fragile to the touch of others (McCaughey, 1997). An idea of women's caring touch, and

vulnerability to the touch of others thus marks women's participation in combat sport as problematic.

Whilst touch has been central to women's work, men's touch has been central to their sociality. The types of touch embraced are flushed with a level of distance from emotionality – be it boys' play involving prodding and wrestling whilst excluding holding hands, to men's contact with other men as dominantly brief handshakes, pats on the back, or high fives. Sport has been central to many men's bonding, and does so through touch and physical engagement that provides mimetic games of dominance (Eric and Dunning, 1986; Gregor, 2005). Here men's bodies are given opportunities to engage with touch in a very different way to that of 'women's work' and women's assumed fragility. Men's social touch through sport entails giving pain, a hardening to feeling pain, and contestations for dominance (Laurendeau, 2014) that in turn reinforce ideas of men's power. As such, the opportunities for women and men to use touch, and their imagined capacities for touch, have created two distinctly gendered narratives of touch and how touch should be delivered: firmly as a way for men to share bonding and assert dominance; soft and caringly as a way for women to accommodate others. The gendered opportunities and narratives of touch explored thus work to maintain notions of men's natural propensity for dominance, and women's natural propensity for supporting others, rather than pursuing the exploration of their own capacities. Such distinctions of touch enabled by the segregation of women and men are drawn into question within mixed sex karate practice, with potential to dismantle underlying assumptions of differences between women and men.

The association of men with sight has historically been used to position men's work as 'intellectual' work that in turn endowed men with economic and social power, and distanced women from such power (Classen, 1998). It also combined with ideas of men's sexual drive to justify the objectification of women by men as a natural outcome of male biology, framed by the term 'the male gaze'. This holds embodied consequences not only for the opportunities afforded to men, but also to women's opportunities and lived experience. Young (2005) argues the objectification of

women, as objects for the male gaze, is at the heart of 'feminine' embodiment and women and men's different orientation towards use of space. Expectations of feminine embodiment hold women and girls tightly to rules of bodily behaviour that treat their bodies as visual objects *within* space, rather than as agents who can utilise their bodily capacities in space (Young, 2005). In turn, women are taught to confine their bodily movements; contour their body and its movements to the desires of others; take up little space by keeping limbs closely together rather than spread; and consequently, approach physical tasks with timidity and uncertainty of their *active* capacities (Martin, 1998; Young, 2005). Notions of the male gaze, and the consequent objectifying pressures on women, thus shapes women's relationship with their body to underestimate their own agency, and in turn, limit the possibilities of women made capable by being in the world (Young, 2005). In contrast, as the objectifier and not the objectified, men's bodies and their movements are experienced as mechanisms to act in the world: to express themselves in the world, to test and explore the world, and that ultimately provide sources of power in the world (Connell, 1995; Satina and Hultgren, 2001).

When women and men do sensorally act in the world in similar ways, their actions are often interpreted as presenting differences. A prominent difference in perceptions of ways in which women and men sensorally engage in the world pointed to in feminist works are perceptions of women and men's vocal assertions. This is important in relation to karate, as in karate women and men are expected to engage in the same bodily performances as one another, whereby use of voice is a prominent part of karate practice. Women are perceived to speak more than men, however speak substantially less than men in board meetings, parliament, and in film and television (Tannen, 1990), are more likely to be interrupted (by both women and men) than men are (Hancock and Rubin, 2014), and when women do speak, are likely to be viewed negatively for doing so (Brescoll, 2011). Indeed there are many jokes framed around the idea that men 'can't get a word in' when women are speaking, that further reflect and recreate a perception that women speak more than men, and that the value of women's speech is subordinate to men's. The gender of

the speaker thus affects perceptions of their vocal assertions, and in turn the encouragement/ discouragement they receive engage in making vocal assertions.

As a tool of communication (Tidoni, 2015), the discouragement for women to make themselves heard, particularly at the expense of men's vocal time, restricts women's communication with the world, and the value of her participation within it. Further, when women and men do speak, they do so in gender distinct ways: Men and boys often speak with a deeper voice that is associated with authority and power (Tidoni, 2015), whilst women and girls are encouraged to develop soft, 'nice', quiet voices (Martin 1998) that reflects the quietness expected of their participation. When women speak with a firm authority outwith the expectations of feminine uses of their voice, they are often denoted as 'bossy' or 'moody', and in parallel, when men speak with higher pitched, softer, voices, they can become subject ridicule for their femininity, and questioned over their sexuality (Pascoe, 2007). As such, there is a gendered framework within which we use and exude sound from our bodies that encourages women and men's vocal assertions to be both qualitatively and quantitatively different, all the while valuing men's vocal assertions and subordinating women's.

Although less sociologically explored than the distinct visual expectations of women and men, the differing opportunities of women and men to develop tacit skills, and the gendered perceptions of speech, sensory experiences such as smell, taste, and feelings of heat are embedded with markers of gender distinction and are key everyday sensory expulsions that contribute to our doing, or undoing, of gender. Women and men's bodies are odourised with different smells to cover human smells with masculine and feminine masks (Riach and Warren, 2015); are held to different standards for exuding smells such as sweat and farts; and are expected to consume different foods, have different tastes, and reach different idealised body shapes (Sobal, 2005).

As such, our gendered embodiment is built through the accumulation of minute ways in which we 'do' gender through our movements and sensory motions enabled and

enacted within specific spaces and opportunities, that repeatedly done over time become embodied ways of using our bodies. Gendered embodiment of the senses thus makes differences in women and men's uses of their bodies in space appear natural, and in turn reinforce and legitimate the unequal opportunities and positions of women and men in the world. As active agents in the construction of the relationships we are emplaced within, we may also build embodiments that challenge notions of spatial, sensory, differences between women and men, and thus 'undo' gender (Deutsch, 2007). As such, the sensory components of karateka's embodied interactions are important for illuminating the doing, or undoing, of gender.

Although not citing her work as a piece of sensory scholarship, Martin's (1998) study of the disciplining of girls' and boys' bodies in preschool is a significant example of detailed attention to the intricate sensory and gendered conditioning of our bodies. Martin (1998) observed and recorded the interactions between teachers and children, and children and children, taking particular note of interactions that entailed bodily commands, encouragements, or restrictions on the children's behaviour. From this, she illuminates the differing sensory expectations and opportunities offered to boys and girls, and suggests such disciplining constructs two groupings of bodies who move similarly – boys and girls. Martin describes the sensory experience of girls in preschool as framed by: the importance teachers and parents placed on their appearance; restriction of their physical movements by the clothes they were dressed in; disproportionate scrutiny from teachers to perform formal, rather than relaxed, behaviours; and bodily instructions by teachers to have a softer, quieter, voice. In contrast, boys' bodily disciplining in preschool was far more lenient to boys' relaxed behaviours that allowed them to spray their movements more freely and spaciouly; allowed 'risky' movements such climbing, moving quickly, or trying new physical tasks by themselves; were allowed to be noisier in their play; and were only told to be quiet as a group, rather than individually. Boy's behaviour had to be 'more disruptive, extensive, and informal' than girls' behaviour to be given instructions by the teacher to rearrange their bodily behaviours, allowing boys more freedom to explore the uses of their body, and express themselves through their sensory capacities.

In focusing on the way three to five year olds' bodies are conditioned to move, speak, and look differently, Martin exposes the vast quantity of work involved in constructing gendered ways of being. Girls and boys do not naturally sensorially engage with the world differently, nor did they want to engage with the world differently, rather, they were met with very different reactions to their actions. The treatment of their bodies by others, alongside the opportunities they are afforded to use their bodies, informs the meanings and value they derive from their bodies (Satina and Hultgran, 2001). In disciplining girls' and boys' bodies differently, girls were offered a gendered embodiment that treated their bodies as fragile, obedient to the wants of others, and objectified (Martin, 1998; Satina and Hultgren, 2001), whilst boys were offered a gendered embodiment which experienced their sensory capacities as mechanisms to express themselves, explore the world, and assert power/control. Martin further suggests the intricate way in which boys and girls are differently encouraged or discouraged to move their bodies and infuse the world with sensory expressions and engagements set the foundations for children's understanding of their bodies' uses, capabilities, limits, and thus gendered embodiments.

Martin's work thus points to encouragements and discouragements of intricate sensory uses of our body as key to understanding gender and its embodied implications, and the importance of early conditioning of our bodies in particular in constructing gendered ways of being. In turn, Martin's work suggests that to understand women and men's embodiment in karate, and its broader implications for gender, an approach attuned to the intercorporeal interactions influencing women and men's bodily uses is needed.

2.3.2. Sporting embodiment

Sociological interrogations of sport have arguably made greater strides towards sensuous understanding of embodiment than interrogations of gender have. Sport is an arena of magnified physical sensations: it webs together intentions, bodily

movement, awareness of environment, a sense of timing, balancing of weight, tingling tacit sensations, intercorporeal communications, and a feel of other people's presence informed through the sense, to participate successfully (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2007). Indeed, it is through the senses that practitioners come to know their sport, and develop skills to engage in an interactive, emplaced relationship with their body, the field and those in the field (Spencer, 2013). Through this multi-way interaction, players learn to become bodily attuned to the sensory signals of others' bodies and environment (Sparkes, 2009) where they learn to anticipate the movements of their opponents and team mates through the sensory signals let off, and through their own sounds, smells, touches, and movements, mark their own position and dominance in sporting spaces.

The literature on sensuous sporting embodiment has pointed beyond the 'classic five' senses of western culture as ways in which we both *experience* the senses, and infuse the world to be *sensed by others*, and as such provide mechanisms through which to understand the intercorporeal nature of karate interactions. Internal bodily sensations such as sense of weight, balance, pain, and heat have been highlight as key components of sporting experience and embodiment. In exploring dancers sense experiences Raven and Hansen (2013) argue that dancers' sense of weight amongst their differing limbs in movement was a fundamental way of communicating their unique intentions and enabled the expression of different moods. In absence of being able to see their own performance, dancers' sense of weight worked as an embodied gage of their visual form, and thus their communication to the audience.

Whilst dancer's sense of weight enabled a reflection on their outward projections of an embodied self, Allen-Collinson and Owton (2014) point towards our sense of heat in our bodies as enabling *inward* reflections to our embodiment. In exploring women runners and boxers' experiences of heat during training, Allen-Collinson and Owton suggest that women's experiences of heat in the body informs them of their bodies' energy, readiness, or struggle to perform. Experiences of heat thus turn the looking glass inward to reflect upon the capacity of our body, and in turn, of ourselves. Similarly, experiences of pain and injury within the body were experienced as

markers of bodily capacity, or rather, incapacity (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2005; Laurendeau, 2014; Spencer, 2013). Long-term pain in the form of an injury posed particular problems for athletes' embodied sense of self. In preventing or hindering athletes' sporting performances, injuries generated a disconnect between athletes' sense of self as an exceptionally skilled body, and injured bodily capacities that coated their embodiment with fear, anxiety, a sense of inadequacy, frustration and distain with their body (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2005; Laurendeau, 2014). These insights suggest that the western five senses alone cannot fully address the sensory experiences informing karateka's gendered embodiment.

One of the pioneering texts to place the sporting body under an intercorporeal, sensory, analytic light is Loic Wacquant's *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Drawn from a three year ethnographic emersion into the 'Woodlawn Boys' Club' Chicago boxing gym, in *Body & Soul* Wacquant seeks to illuminate the lived experience of male prize fighter boxers – those who commit themselves to the boxing trade and reach the skill level that enables them to compete for money – and the daily life of the boxing gym they practice their trade within. This focus is drawn in reaction to notions of boxing held in society, and indeed academia, that are situated in the mediated, sensational and sensationalist, 'big card' boxing events that present, at best, a limited account of being a boxer, and more so, a highly objectified, glorified, isolated, and brutalized valorisation of its athletes:

'To have any chance of escaping from the preconstructed object of collective mythology, a sociology of boxing has to renounce the facile recourse to the *prefabricated exoticism* of the public and publicised side of the institution... It must instead grasp boxing through its least known and least spectacular side: the drab and obsessive routine of the gym workout, of the endless and thankless preparation, inseparably physical and moral, that preludes the all-too-brief appearances in the lime-light, the minute and mundane rites of daily life in the gym that produce and reproduce the belief feeding this very peculiar, corporeal, material, and symbolic economy that is the pugilist world' (Wacquant, 2004:6).

Central to illuminating the daily routines and actions that comprise a prizefighter's 'backstage' (Goffman, 1959) life inside the boxing gym, are the routines, regimes,

sensuous experiences, and embodied knowledge of the body. Wacquant suggests it is within the experiences of the body, not its mediated images, that we can begin to unpick the ‘sensual logic’ that makes such an apparently violent practice ‘make sense’ to its practitioners and meaningful to its practitioners. Indeed, as a practice centred on the body with heightened physical risks and requirements, a sociological analysis of the embodied experience of boxing was fundamental to taking seriously the desires, understandings, and experiences of prizefighters. Wacquant’s body-centred focus in his analysis of boxing does, however, overlook a lot of the background work by others that is needed to allow boxers to be dedicated to their practice.

Through tacit exchanges with training partners, repetitive training regimes, painful mistakes, and increasingly burning aches of exhausted muscles, Wacquant suggests boxers develop, over time, a bodily schema – a set of bodily dispositions and responses drawn from knowledge both from and of the body (Bourdieu, 1990; Wacquant, 2004). These bodily dispositions are intertwined with the development of a mental attitude expected within the club that entails dedication, commitment, respect for the coach and training partners, and a willingness to take a hit. Wacquant emphasizes that both bodily and mental conditioning come together in practice – each fuelling the development of the other - to constitute a ‘(re)socialisation of physiology’ that builds a boxer’s bodily knowledge and embodiment:

‘To become a boxer is to appropriate through progressive impregnation a set of corporeal mechanisms and mental schemata so intimately imbricated that they erase the distinction between the physical and the spiritual, between what pertains to athletic abilities and what belongs to moral capacities and will’ (Wacquant, 2004:17).

Within sparring, Wacquant argues bodily knowledge is further developed through the body *prior* to conscious reflection. Within the fast paced dangers of sparring that can put at risk not just a boxer’s physical condition, but also their social capital and sense of esteem, judgments must be made responsively, flexibly, and immediately without time to consciously consider our best move. He suggests it is the body that is the ‘spontaneous strategist’ that ‘knows, understands, judges, and reacts all at once’

(Wacquant, 2004:97) drawing upon the dispositions developed in training. Here Wacquant alludes to the sensory ways in which boxers, through their bodies, evaluate and respond to interactions by drawing on their embodied knowledge prior to conscious reflection.

The actions of a pugilist in training and in the ring can thus appear as if naturally emerging from the body. Yet these actions, postures, and reactions are the products of the laboriously learnt, practiced, and enacted cultural codes of the boxing gym. Through such extensive training under the codes of the boxing gym, the bodily motions and attitudes of skilled boxers can appear so effortless and smooth that they are often taken as innate capacities:

‘What fighters take for a natural capacity (‘you gotta have it in you’) is in effect this peculiar nature resulting from the protracted process of incalculation of the pugilist habitus, a process that often begins in early childhood...The expression ‘a natural’, which comes up frequently in the vernacular of boxing gyms, denotes this *cultivated nature* whose social genesis has become literally invisible to those who perceive it through the mental categories that are its product’ (Wacquant, 2004:99).

Wacquant’s in-depth attention to the bodily processes constructing the embodied experience of boxing raises a number of contributions to sociological understandings of the body and embodiment, and the sociology of sport, that are important to this thesis: it illuminates the central, and yet often overlooked, ways in which sporting bodily motions and ethos’ can become normalised and embedded within our embodiment; draws attention to our bodies as sources and stores of cultural knowledge; challenges hierarchical dualistic ideas of the body and mind by positing boxers’ ability to act with their bodies and upon their sensations *prior to* conscious reflection, rather than in *response to* our conscious thoughts; and ultimately, points towards the flexibility of our bodies to absorb, through mundane, repetitive, daily practices, bodily dispositions that are products of, and reproduce, a given culture.

In illuminating the carnal, lived, and subtle cultural production of bodies as boxing bodies that often slides beneath our radar of conscious reflection, Wacquant’s

analysis of boxing points towards our most mundane and overlooked bodily dispositions as places to uncover deeply hidden pieces of cultural production that build our embodiment. Much like the 'big card' boxing fights that give an ideologically laden surface image of boxing, gender too has its mediated and publicised images that form and reflect gender norms and ideas. Also like boxing, gender too is lived by and through bodies in manners far more mundane, uncertain, and varied than the idealised forms of masculinity and femininity we find mediated in western society. Thus the value of Wacquant's work for this thesis is not only derived from the insight it provides into the intercorporeality of fighters embodiment, but also its deeper implications for understanding the discrepancy between idealised images or expectations, and the carnal process of gendered embodiment.

Whilst there is an emerging resource of sensuous scholarship of sport, detailed analysis of the ways in which the sensory experiences and interactions of sport inform our embodiment as a *gendered being* is vastly absent from this literature (See Allen-Collinson and Owton, 2014 and Laurenda, 2014 as exceptions to this statement). Approaches to understanding gendered embodiment in sport will be discussed in the following section where, similarly, very little of the literature interrogates the sensory intercorporeal base of such embodiments.

2.4. Gendered embodiment in sport

I use the term sport throughout this thesis to refer to organised physical leisure activities that engage our bodies and may or may not involve competition. The sociology of sport literature has long acknowledged sport as a male domain (for examples see: Burstyn, 1999; Dunning, 1986; Hanson and Kraus, 1999; Messner, 1992; Sabo and Runfola, 1980; Whitson, 1990). The mechanisms through which sport sociologists have highlighted the gendering of sport as a male domain point towards: the exclusion and marginalisation of women (Hargreaves, 1994; Theberge, 1993; Young, 1979); the side-lining of women within sports structures and of women's sports (Burstyn, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994; Grindstaff and West, 2006; McDonagh and Pappano, 2008); the fostering and expression of sexist attitudes

towards women (Anderson, 2008; Curry, 1991; Harry, 2001; Schacht, 1996); and shaping (and shaped by) all three, the positioning of sport as a symbol of masculine identity (Bryson, 1987; Connell, 1990; Dunning, 1986; Messner, 1990; Whitson, 1990).

Due to the centrality of the body to both the practice of sport and ideas of gender, the cultural association between sport and masculinity, and the cultural prominence afforded to sport in western society (Horne, Tomlinson and Whannel, 1999), sport is an important site to explore the production and maintenance of gendered embodiment - of two types of bodies who move and enact with the world differently. This chapter will review literature on gendered embodiment in sport, pointing towards the propensity for such research to be concentrated on single-sex sports participation, and suggesting that often omitted or left implicit from these accounts of gendered embodiment is the web of multisensory interactions forming such embodiments. I will begin this review by exploring a central gendered problem of sport, and a problem particularly pertinent within mixed-sex karate practice: the 'violent' tacit engagement of bodies.

2.4.1. Sports violence and masculine embodiment

At the heart of constructing sport as a male domain is the positioning of sport as an arena to perform mimetic physical violence (Dunning, 1999), and of such violence as central to, and a reflection of, masculine identity and men's superiority to women (Connell, 1990; Messner, 1990). Dunning suggests the rendering of violence as taboo in everyday life as a product of the civilizing process cut into a source of power predominantly monopolized by men, and a key source of their power over women. As society became less violent, and women gained greater access into public life, modern sport became central to men's societal life through its functions of providing excitement within an increasingly passive everyday (Elias and Dunning, 1986), and as a means to mimetically maintain the association between men, violence, and the power associated with violence (Dunning, 1986;1999). As such, sport provides an arena for reproducing men's power (Messner, 1990).

The apparent violence of sport, however, brings both excitement and moral uncertainty regarding the damage it causes to participants. Sports such as American football, boxing, rugby and combat sports face on going challenges to their structure and practice due to concerns over the physical damage participants tacitly inflict upon one another as part of the sports practice. Indeed, sports play is enshrined with what appears to be ritual and interpersonal violences. Yet the meaning of violence, when used by both publics and academics to discuss sport, and how it might be experienced by sports people, is often left implicit and assumed (for examples see Gill, 2007; Pappas et al., 2004; Pringle, 2009).

Attending to this problem, Matthews and Channon (2017) suggest that for sports actions to qualify as violence rather than mimetic, they should meet two criteria: violence as intended force against another, and violence as violation. Athletes often look towards sports rules as providing the boundaries for what is forceful but instrumental, and forceful acts that are violations (Garcia and Malcolm, 2010; Messner, 1990; Wacquant, 2004). The rules combine with athletes own tacitly negotiated agreements of violence level, whereby what may appear to a spectator as violent acts, are not experienced by participants as violation:

‘What has every chance of looking like a spree of gratuitous and unchecked brutality in the eyes of a neophyte is in fact a regular and finely codified tapestry of exchanges that, though they are violent, are nonetheless constantly controlled, and whose weaving together supposes a practical and continual collaboration between the two opponents in the construction and maintenance of a dynamic conflictual equilibrium’ (Wacquant, 2004:85).

Garcia and Malcolm (2010) suggest there are higher and lower parameters of enjoyment reflective to the levels of mimetic violence unfolding, where breaking the upper limit crosses trust levels and causes injury, and breaking the lower removes excitement. Actions that sit ambiguously as instrumental sporting uses of physical aggression – such as a late tackle and hard hits - stretch the use of player’s consent alongside adding excitement. As such, violence in sport is a complicated embodied

negotiation of interpersonal and ritual violences that can fall between being mimetic and being experienced as a violation. Prestige is held in walking this fine line.

As a space legitimising and praising performances of mimetic violence, sport provides an arena where the virtues of dominance and power at the source of gender difference (Kimmel, 2000) can be symbolically presented by men through bodily displays of strength, the taking and overcoming of pain, and displaying and exerting physical aggression (Bourdieu, 1988; Messner, 1990). Men's participation in sport conditions their bodies in ways that enables physical dominance and power to appear as 'natural' capacities. The naturalization of aggression to men and their bodies underpins a rhetoric expressed by athletes, publics, and academics alike, that the 'violence' of contact sports funnels an 'innate' energy that prevent men, particularly working class and black men, from engaging in criminal violence (Wacquant, 2004). The exclusion or subordination of women in sport thus enables the association between violence, dominance, power, and masculinity to appear as a legitimate reflection of men and women's different natures, and in turn, their different power positions in the world (Hargreaves, 1994). Thus, sport is an important arena for reproducing men's hierarchical distinction from women.

Men's participation in sport is suggested to be framed around desire to dominate and win at all costs, whereby 'sporting prowess becomes a test of masculinity' (Wellard, 2001) and men's bodies 'become weapons' (Messner, 1990). Differing sports are afforded different levels of association with masculinity reflective to ever-changing cultural frameworks, whereby sports involving heavy interpersonal contact are commonly seen as particularly masculine. In such sports, in order to win and show one's superiority over an opponent men learn to use their bodies in ways that exude physical force upon opponents; receive and disregard physical harm; take risks; and command space/ defend territory (Kidd, 2013; Messner, 1992; Schacht, 1996). The physical demands of passing the test of masculinity can do short and long-term damage to men's bodies – even in noncontact sports. In such moments, men's bodies are made fragile, and masculine identity brought into contention, through the very mechanism that promises masculine prestige (Laurendeua, 2014). In turn men often

hide feelings of pain and anxieties related to pain by replacing these displays with 'appropriate' masculine responses such as continuing to play or complimenting the opponents attack on their body, in order to maintain a presentation of sporting capability, and of masculinity (Laurendeau, 2014; Spencer, 2012).

The value denoted to physically dominating uses of men's bodies is suggested to be produced and maintained through opposition to conceptions of femininity as weak and fragile, involving: players competing against other teams and amongst themselves for who could take and give the hardest hits (Schacht, 1996); vocal and/or physical displays of sexism towards women (Anderson, 2008; Curry, 1991; Schacht, 1996); over-developing muscles to exaggerate bodily difference to women (Klein, 1993); and fostering an aggressive, selfish, competitive attitude (Kidd, 2013; Klein, 1993). Distinction from women was thus made central to many men's sporting embodiment. The construction of such sporting embodiments in opposition to ideas of femininity further points towards the fragility of sourcing, producing and maintaining a 'masculine' identity.

Whilst the majority of literature on men's sport points towards sport as providing an arena to build and display a masculine embodiment (and often an almost stereotypically coherent one), men's embodiments in sport are more coloured than the literature affords. This has been cited in the decline of homophobic ideas or actions from men in sports teams, and the subsequent increased safety to express homosexuality in sport (Adams, 2011; Anderson, 2011); in unveiling the fragilities and limitations of men's physical capacities (Laurendeau, 2014; Wellard, 2001); the close tactile, social, and emotional bonds of friendship built between sports men grounded in unity rather than hierarchical domination (Adams, 2011; Horne and Fleming, 2000); and the ability of sports practice to challenge and diversify men's collection of uses of their body (Gard, 2008; Maclean, 2015). Thus the practice of sport does not simply recreate a masculine embodiment, but rather, is an arena overburdened by hegemonic ideas of men and masculinity, engaged with by men in ways that reproduce or reject such notions to varying degrees.

2.4.2. Sporting embodiment and women's empowerment

Precisely because of sport's legacy as a male domain and disassociation with femininity, women's increasing participation in sport is suggested to present particular challenges to conventional feminine embodiment and women's uses of their bodies. In engaging in sports such as football, rugby, weightlifting, hockey, combat sports, and American football, women are encouraged to spread their bodies across space to attack and defend effectively (Howe, 2001; Theberge, 1997), to utilise aggression to hit, slam, and tackle opponents (Berg, Migliaccio and Anzini-Varesio, 2014; Kotarba and Held, 2006), to display play-aggressive emotions (Thing, 2001), to build muscles and exude strength (Shilling and Bunsell, 2014), and ultimately develop a relationship with their body that recognises their physical capacities (Blinde et al., 1994; Blinde et al., 2001). As more women engage in sporting activities previously deemed unfit for women, the improvements of women's bodies in physical activity are quickly homing in on men's successes:

‘Women's records in the measurable sports like track and field and swimming are now being broken significantly faster than men's records in the same events and has concluded that lack of opportunity – not biology – is the primary reason why female performances have always lagged behind those of males’ (Kidd, 2013: 558).

Through sport women can develop bodily skills and capacities that have been created as symbols of masculinity (Dworkin and Messner, 2002) that have been practiced and embodied by men since the origins of modern sport. In doing so, women's sports participation poses a number of questions for the nature of gender: if women can embody assumed ‘masculine’ qualities such as strength, aggressiveness and dominance, then what is male about these qualities? If sport is fundamental to masculine identity and distinction from women, yet the qualities of sport have proven to be not exclusive to men, then what makes masculinity and where/how is it created? And if women can develop sporting embodiments and perform phenomenal athletic feats, why is it that sport is still soaked in arrangements and assumptions that provide social, economic, and cultural privilege to men?

One way in which sport has maintained the reproduction of ideas of hierarchical difference between women and men has been through sex-segregating sports, and gendering sports practices as 'for women' or 'for men' (Hargreaves, 1994; McDonagh and Pappano, 2008). Sports practiced predominantly by women tend to be disassociated with violence - such as dance, gymnastics, yoga, and fitness-centred practices such as cardiovascular work or fitness classes at the gym. The framing of such sports as for weight loss, for judgment of the beauty of one's practice, or for supporting a male team, fit in line with conventional ideas of femininity as subordinate to men and their desires, and work towards the construction of a conventionally feminine embodiment (Dworkin, 2003; Grindstaff and West, 2006; Hargreaves, 1994). Sports marked as 'women's' thus provide a physical capital that is at once both a source of physical power and of subordination. The cultural construction of 'men's' and 'women's' sports condition women and men's bodies differently, and in turn perpetuate and legitimise ideas of women and men's 'natural' differences and the hierarchical valuing of men's sport as 'real sport'.

When women do participate in 'men's' sports, they predominantly do so in women-only practice, and are afforded distinctly less value and prestige than the men's game (Burstyn, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994). The space between women's and men's practice allows assumptions of men's natural fit to sport to go unchallenged (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008). Whilst women perform the same motions with their bodies as men would in the same sport, women players also have to contend with ideals of femininity expected of and applied to their bodies, that come into conflict with the ideals of men's sport and thus question their suitability to participate. One way in which women dealt with the contradictory expectations of sporting practice and femininity was to exaggerate characteristics deemed masculine such as being assertive, hitting hard, or playing through pain in order to gain respect as credible athletes or coaches (Berg, Migliaccio and Anzini-Varesio, 2014; Theberge, 1993). In exaggerating masculine qualities in play, women embodied a sporting structure that reinforced validation of masculine virtues of dominance, and in doing so, maintained a notion of 'femininity' as subordinate in sporting contexts.

The structure of sport as a game of dominance, alongside embedded notions of sport as best performed by men, leads many women and girls to feel a natural inferiority and anxiety in the practice of sport. In looking at girls' experiences of physical education Garret (2004) and Hills (2007) argue girl's assumptions that they were physical inferior to boys lead to restricted and unconfident uses of their body, or techniques of resistance whereby girls would refuse to participate. In doing so, rather than developing dynamic uses of their body that build a positive sense of embodiment, girls in physical education often reaffirm a static embodiment as described by Young (2005). In explicitly looking at girls-only physical education classes, Hills further makes explicit that the paralyzing of girls in physical education is not a product of mixed sex practice, but is innate to the structure of sport as a game of dominance. The focus of sport's practice on dominating another creates the conditions constructing hierarchies that value some people's bodily abilities, and subordinate other's. Whilst girls created a hierarchy amongst themselves in school sport, this hierarchy remained in construction to ideas of ultimate inferiority to boys.

The exclusion, marginalisation, and/or segregation of women from men in sporting arenas highlight key spatial structures that enable ideas of differences between men and women's bodies to be fostered (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008), and develop different ways in which women and men come to use and experience their bodies (Young, 2005). Sexist attitudes towards women and the construction of sport as a source of masculine prestige impact the landscape of sport by working to maintain the segregation of women and men in sport by discouraging women's participation in sports deemed masculine, and subordinate women's sporting practice. Although women's sports do provide a safe space that in turn enables women to publicly challenge restrictions of conventional feminine embodiment (Lewis et al., 2015), the sex-segregated structure of women's sports practice leaves room for the myths of men's hierarchical bodily differences to women to be maintained and reproduced (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008). As our embodiments are constructed in relation to the people and settings within which we are emplaced (Pink, 2011b), research pointing to women's empowerment within sex-segregated sport leaves unclear how

women's embodiments developed in women's only sport practice translate into embodied relations with men. Is this empowerment limited?

2.4.3. Sex-integrated sport and mixed sex combat sports and martial arts

A key hypothesis explored in sex-integrated sports research is whether or not sex-integrated sports practice challenges ideas of difference between women and men, and in turn, reduces inequalities between women and men. Whilst the research suggests that sex-integrated sports can challenge assumptions about the differences between women and men and their embodied relationships (Anderson, 2008; Maclean, 2016), the overall picture painted is that sex-integrated sports practice falls short of the gender egalitarian potential presented by women and men sharing physical activity together (Channon et al., 2016). The majority of this literature focuses on the maintenance of discursive ideas of gendered difference, however I would suggest underlying and central to the short-falling is men's domination of the shared sporting space and negotiations of appropriate sports-violence between women and men that draw on, and reproduces, ideas of hierarchical difference between women and men. These spatial and contact-based differences within sex-integrated sports practice entailed: men taking the most prestigious playing positions and hogging play (Grahn and Torell, 2016; Henry and Comeaux, 1999; Lake, 2016); men avoiding heavy contact play with women (Henry and Comaux, 1999); men disproportionately occupying authoritative roles such as coaches and officials (Henry and Comeaux, 1999; Therberge, 1993; Wachs, 2002); disproportionate sanctioning for men's physical interactions with women (Wachs, 2002); and women moving to the peripheries or subordinated aspects of the sports practice (Comley, 2016; Hills and Croston, 2011; Lake, 2016), Such differences recreated gender distinct patterns of play and access to power within the games.

The spatial and physical intimacy of sex-integrated martial arts and combat sports (from now on referred to as MACS) presents particular challenges to gendered interactions of women and men, whereby dilemmas of sports violence are magnified. The tendency for MACS to have sex-integrated practice creates four central gender-

based problems for practitioners: what women's combative competences mean for the association between men, masculinity, and fighting ability (Channon, 2013; Channon and Matthews, 2015; Guerandel and Mennesson, 2007; Maclean, 2015; Noel, 2009); negotiating appropriate touch between women and men in relation to heteronormative, sexualising, assumptions surrounding women and men's interactions (Channon and Jennings, 2013; Guerandel and Mennesson, 2007); whether it is okay for men to hit women (Channon and Jennings, 2013; Guerandel and Mennesson, 2007); and how women can be 'feminine' whilst performing combative acts that are societally deemed masculine (McNaughton, 2012; Mennesson, 2000; Velija et al., 2012). These problems are drawn centrally from MACS' fighting practices, and present challenges to conventional ideas of gender distinction, and constructions of gendered embodiments.

Within the context of a civilising society, MACS have been cited as practices where men can explicitly mirror the violence of fighting – a particular exercise of power expected of men and imagined to be innate to men (Bourdieu, 2001; Hatty, 2000) - in a controlled and regulated setting, and thus retain virtues of physical domination as a mark of their masculinity in a manner deemed legitimate, (broadly) socially praised, and distant from 'real' violence (Garcia and Malcolm, 2010; Sugden, 1996; Wacquant, 2004; Woodward, 2006). However, women's increasing participation in MACS draws the societal links between men, fighting, and domination into question, and thus the masculinity-validating qualities of MACS. A central argument made by many MACS scholars exploring gender is that the commonality of women's participation disrupts men's monopoly of fighting skills, and as such, the power, prestige, and grounds for gender distinction drawn from and attached to fighting ability (Channon and Jennings, 2013; Channon and Matthews, 2015; MacLean, 2015; McNaughton, 2012; Mennesson, 2000; Noel, 2009; Velija et al., 2012).

Within sex-integrated MACS, the extent to which women's combative competencies subvert gendered embodiments of practitioners is an outcome of practitioners relational negotiation of the impact of women's fighting capacities upon men's hierarchical distinction. On the one hand, research on MACS has suggested that the

sex-integrated structure magnifies challenges to conventional gendered embodiments and notions of gender difference by: enabling women and girls to be recognised as more skilled practitioners than their male counterparts, and thus disrupt ideas of men's inevitable and innate physical superiority (Guerandel and Mennesson, 2007; MacLean, 2015); building women's confidence to, and realisation that they can, defend themselves *against men* outwith MACS settings (McCaughey, 1997; Noel, 2009); and, as reducing men's perceptions of difference to women (Channon, 2013). On the other hand, literature has suggested practitioners drew on conventional notions of gender as ways of actively resisting, or more passively limiting, the extent to which sex-integrated combative practice could disrupt dualistic sets of bodily practices, and ideas of women and men, that construct gendered embodiments. Such practices include: men avoiding training with women (McNaughton, 2012; Mennesson, 2007); training partners restraining from hitting women, limiting women's development of combative practices, and generating notions of women's inferior ability to be hit (Channon and Jennings, 2013; Guerandel and Mennesson, 2007); men ridiculing or socially isolating women whose ability appeared superior to men's (Mennesson, 2000); and women over emphasising conventional heterosexist performances of femininity through makeup, hair styles, clothing, and referring to the sport as a way to sculpt a 'sexy body' (Guerandel and Mennesson, 2007; Velija et al., 2012).

There is, however, much variety in the demographic structure, conduct, and practices that frame the experience of differing MACS, and thus the collections of gendered conundrums presented in practice. The extent to which the learning of mimetic fighting movements within differing MACS entails close bodily contact between practitioners, control of technique, spirituality, fast paced aggressive play, slower movements, solo practice, competitive play, a strive for technical accuracy, bodily harm to both self and others, and mixed participation of women and men varies greatly across differing MACS (for brief discussions of the differing categorisations of MACS see: Channon and Matthews, 2015; Vertonghen et al., 2014). The research on gender within MACS has tended to focus the impact of more physically aggressive aspects of MACS and/or sparring-based MACS - such as boxing, mixed

martial arts, kickboxing, and judo - on women's embodiment, often with the omission of how men's embodiment is impacted. Addressing some of this omitted picture, Channon (2013) suggests that some male martial artists chose to learn a martial art rather than western combat or contact sports precisely to distance themselves from sporting masculinities that were perceived to valorise violent, dominating and confrontational embodiments. In attesting to the power of martial arts to create 'good men' Morgan (2016) suggests that martial arts practice can build embodied competencies such as elegant control, calm composure, and appreciation of cooperation through the tacit lessons and philosophical underpinnings that structure martial arts practice. Both authors thus suggest MACS can develop men's gendered embodiment in opposition to 'negative masculine values' such as dominance and violence.

Whilst such competencies noted above are likely learnt by women practitioners too, and equally, physically aggressive competencies by men (see Maclean, 2015), the majority of the literature on MACS currently overlooks the conditioning of women and men's bodies to more gender-expected competencies. This academic omission, alongside the significant dip in attention given to the gendered implications of men's participation, reinforces both a dualistic positioning of men as the norm and women as 'other' (De Beauvoir, 1957), and ideas of women and men as having distinct natural competencies that thus do not warrant exploration.

Embodied participation in MACS is, as such, not simply a case of women 'manning up' to embrace bodily motions and attitudes conventionally associated with men, and disrupting a gendered hierarchy from this position. Rather, it is a process that conditions women *and men's* bodies in ways that may both challenge and reaffirm conventional gendered ideas. To more fully reach the potential that research on sex-integrated MACS can contribute to understandings of gendered embodiment, research must explore the problems presented by women's participation in fighting by paying closer attention to the full-bodied, sensory, relational, interactions between women and men in practice.

2.5. Conclusion: Approaching gendered embodiment in karate

Sport and gender are both arenas where the body takes centre stage, yet despite this, the physical sensory experiences that shape corporeal experience, interpretations, and understandings in these two fields have received relatively little academic attention (for examples see: Allen-Collinson, 2009; Classen, 1998; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2007; Sparkes, 2009; Sparkes, 2017; Wacquant, 2004). The experience of karate is a dynamically sensuous one. In the fast moving, mentally straining, physically demanding, emotionally draining, hot, sweaty, booming arena of karate, an awareness of the senses is crucial to understanding interactions and experiences within the arena. Through our bodies we are emplaced whereby our bodily senses are integral to our embodied experience (Pink, 2009). Through our senses we: see the world in front of us full of opportunities and risks, and are seen by others in the world; we taste the salty blood of a bleeding lip, or the dryness of our thirst; we hear the thoughts, opinions and movements of others, and our own vocal expressions and movements are heard; we feel the warmth and support of another's body touching our shoulder, the disappointment of being tapped by an opponent's punch, and can give the same comfort or discomfort back; and we smell the pungent aromas of sweaty bodies, comforting familiar scents of the places we practice in, and give off our own bodily scents that fuel positive or negative emotions and memories for ourselves and others.

Drawing on the literature reviewed in this chapter there are a number of gendered patterns and performances we may expect to find within karate practice shaping karateka's embodiment:

1. As a combative practice, we may expect karate to be an arena to recreate masculine embodiments through the enactment of mimetic violence, and subsequent association between men's bodies, violence, and power (Dunning, 1999; Eric and Dunning, 1986; Wacquant, 2004).
2. As suggested by a lot of the literature on masculinity and sport, we may expect karate, as a combat sport in particular, to be a particularly prominent

arena for recreating notions of hegemonic masculinity and women's subordinate status (Connell, 1990; 2009).

3. In contrast, the literature on women's participation in sport and in combat sports, suggests women's participation in karate may provide women with bodily skill sets that narrow the gap of embodied differences between women and men (Dworkin and Messner, 2002), and challenge notions of conventional feminine embodiment (Channon and Matthews, 2015; Kotarba and Held, 2006; McNaughton, 2012; Noel, 2009).
4. Drawing on the literature on the spatial divisions of women and men, and some of the sex-integrated sport literature, we may expect mixed sex karate practice to enable more challenges to gender-based power inequalities than single-sex practice (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008; Spain, 1993).
5. Specifically looking at Iris Young's (2005) contention that women and men's bodies are conditioned to move differently, encouraging women to treat their body's as objects that in turn minimise their use of their bodies to take up space and meet their intentions, we may expect women karateka to be restricted by beauty ideals, restrict the movements of their body, and consequentially to not be as good karateka as men.
6. We may expect that ideas of civility that render taboo interbodily touch and bodily smells may make the close bodily practice of karate problematic (Elias, 1994), and particularly problematic for women (Classen, 2005a).
7. Drawing on ideas of Foucault (1977) and Martin (1994), we may expect karate as an institution to discipline and mould women and men's embodiment through subtle mechanisms of formal and inform rewards and punishments of their bodies, with differing distribution of these to women and men moulding gendered embodiments.
8. And, in line with Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990), we may expect karateka come with deep pre-existing gendered embodiments formed within other arenas that may limit the extent to which their gendered embodiment can be remoulded through karate practice.

Reflection to the ways such theories may understand gendered embodiment in karate both loosely guide this thesis, and enable gaps within sociological understandings of gendered embodiment to emerge through this thesis' approach to understanding gendered embodiment in karate. This thesis' approach to understanding gendered embodiment in karate views gender as an embodied relation of power. Our embodied, sensory, being is subject to an intricate set of expectations of what it is to *be* a man or a woman (Connell, 2009), that require intensive reflective bodily management that broach not only our physical appearance, but how we use or do not use our voice, how we smell, and how we visibly and tacitly move our bodies through the spaces we occupy (Pink, 2009). The ways in which we sensorially interact in manners that construct differences between women and men build up the intricate details of 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The sensory signals we exude and information we absorb thus piece together the mundane everyday practices that shape men and women's bodies and their bodily capacities differently. Overtime as these intricate sensory details of doing gender are repeatedly done they move from being something actively done, to something less consciously done and less consciously noticed – as embedded within our embodied ways of being. Thus the sensory intricacies that build the mundane, overlooked, practices of our everyday being are important as it is within these practices that gender inequalities can be hidden, and presented as natural differences. To understand embodiment within karate, we must thus understand its sensory base, and its relation to 'doing' or 'undoing' (Deutsch, 2007) gender.

In this thesis I seek to combine the sensorially attuned approaches of both Wacquant in his detailed exploration of the conditioning of our body and sense of embodiment through sporting practice, and Martin in her analysis of the subtle gendered conditioning of our bodies, to broach a nuanced understanding of the gendered or de-gendered conditioning of karateka's bodies and sense of embodiment in karate practice. I will continue in the next chapter to argue that a methodology attuned to the sensory interactions between karateka's bodies is central to grasp the intercoperability of their gendered embodiment.

3. Methodology: 'Slipping into the skin' of a karateka

In the humid atmosphere of the dojo, surrounded by a blended wave of shouting and feet hitting the ground that circles the room, where exhausted karateka take deeper breathes whilst thumping focus pads, grappling and sliding off of one another's sweaty bodies as they try to engage in a throw, where hair sticks to one's face and heat from the body escapes through the funnels of the gi's sleeves and trouser legs, as women demonstrate with an air of authority the detailed bodily corrections needed to improve another's technique, and as men hit women with a look of explosive aggression yet an agile touch, it became apparent that any methods employed to understand gendered embodied experience of karate must be attuned to capture and open up the dynamically sensuous experience of karate practice. In reflection to the discussions of gender and embodiment carried out in Chapter two, such methods also had to be 1. Attuned to the relational ways in which gender, as embodied and performed hierarchical distinction, is 'done' between women and men; and 2. Reflect the intercorporeal, emplaced, construction of our embodiment. As such, my research design was informed by a number of ontological, epistemological and theoretical foundations, many of which stem from feminist standpoint research (Stanley and Wise, 1993):

- The embodied experience of karate is dynamic, sensuous, physically, emotionally, and mentally engaging, intercorporeal, and social. Epistemologically the senses are part of the social formation of gender, and thus to understand gendered embodiment in karate these elements must be embraced and reflected upon.
- Ontologically, being and knowing are entwined: It is through our sensuous bodily being in the world that we come to understand, know, and communicate with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1969).
- Theoretically, exploring and illuminating the under-researched and under-valued lived experiences of women is vital to understanding the oppression of women (Stanley and Wise, 1993), however understanding the gendered

experiences and ideas of men, and the relational maintenance of such oppression, are also important in addressing women's oppression.

- Epistemologically research is an interactive process conducted between the researcher, 'the researched', and academia whereby each party is implicated in the construction of knowledge (Stanley and Wise, 1993).
- Epistemologically researchers do not have a privileged position that enables them to isolate their being and knowing. They take into the field their subjectivities, histories, desires, and embodied ways of being that influence the research process (Hammersley, 2000).
- Theoretically, 'researcher' and 'the researched' share an emotional and physical humanity which should be reflexively embraced above all other research demands, to promote an ethic of respect (Stanley and Wise, 1993).

The ontological, epistemological and theoretical foundations set out above desire a methodology that takes the body and its sensuous relationship with our knowledge of others and ourselves, and the reproduction or subversion of gender seriously; that subsequently recognises the researcher too has a body that senses, is sensed, and thus unavoidably contributes to the social landscape we seek to explore; and in turn recognises the utility of the researcher's embodiment as a tool for empathetic insight into the embodied lives of others, and in doing so, uncovering the lived and 'done' pieces of everyday life that sustain ideologies, or create change.

This chapter will continue by giving an explanation of, and rationale for using, a sensory ethnographic design before outlining the structure of my research. In reflection to the sensorially emplaced position of myself as a researcher highlighted by the sensory ethnography literature, I will then outline my positionality within the research process alongside highlighting issues of research relations that together frame my access to the field, the data collected, and inevitably my findings. Data collection will then be discussed followed by discussing analysis and representation of 'lived' data.

3.1. Sensory ethnographic research design

‘Rather than a method for the collection of data, ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on the ethnographers’ own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers’ experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced.’ (Pink, 2007:22).

Whilst there are multiple different types of ethnographic design that differ in their interpretations of which specific collection of methods ethnography should contain, or focus should be – virtual ethnography, auto-ethnography, visual ethnography, activist ethnography, sensory ethnography, condensed ethnography - they are tied together under the banner of ‘ethnography’ as a methodological approach by an orientation to research that is grounded in gathering detailed and vast empirical evidence, usually entailing an immersion into people’s daily life, to develop a theory (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Whether starting from a hypotheses or an open exploration of a given social phenomena, ethnography points towards the non-linearity, dynamism, and complexity of life as lived, and suggests that knowledge of people’s lives must accordingly be collected in a manner that accumulates this complexity (Agar, 2004). To gather data that reflects lived experience ethnographers draw on a combination of data collection methods that may include formal or informal interviews, collecting news clippings or relevant documents, taking photographs, and the methodology’s central method, a form of participant observation. Through the detailed depictions and understandings of life made possible through such rich data collection, ethnographies have a particular power to bridge the world of those studied in a manner interesting, understandable, and compelling to many audiences (Becker et al., 2004).

The centrality of participant observation to ethnographic research positions the researcher’s body as a privileged site of knowing and *knowing from* (Conquergood, 1991). As such, issues of researchers’ ability to be objectively absent in the construction of knowledge, and the desire/ability for researchers to be distant to the field have been central topics to many ethnographic methodologies. Utilising the researcher’s embodiment as a tool for collecting data illuminates the potential of our

embodiment as a tool for experiencing and reflecting upon, gathering rich data of life as lived. Ethnographers, alongside feminist researchers, have prominently argued for researchers to acknowledge our embodied impact upon our research, not just in contexts where we use our body explicitly as a tool for collecting experiential data, but in every part of the research process as an inevitable part of being human (England, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Jackson, 1988; Stanley and Wise, 1993). Yet whilst ethnographic research furthered the development of academic reflexivity and awareness to our inevitable position within our research, the researchers embodied experiences themselves often remained obscurely absent in research findings. Indeed what is seen and what is said often dominate ethnographic findings (Conquergood, 1991).

Sensory ethnographic research designs seek to take the explorative and richly data embedded life-as-lived focus of ethnography, and apply a deeper attention to the body of both the researcher and others. Sensory ethnographies start with the premise that our lived lives are embellished with sensory experiences – sights give us clues to how other people feel, smells that make our stomachs rumble, flowing sensations of movement, touches that comfort, infer reassurance, or give pain, tastes that ignite our sense of home or adventure, and sounds that sooth and excite us - and our bodies are our sensory tools for both knowing and being known within the world (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2007; Merleau-Ponty, 1969; Pink, 2009). Sensory ethnographies seek to illuminate ‘how this multi-sensoriality is integral to both the lives of people who participate in our research *and* to how we ethnographers practice our craft’ (Pink, 2009:1).

In a sensory ethnographic research design participant observation is replaced with sensuous participation that enables the researcher to immerse their body in the experiences of others, with explicit attention being paid to the way in which the sensory experiences of the body inform the relations of the field. Bodily experiences provide an empathetic understanding of the lived lives of those being studied, and does so in sensory motion *with* the community the researcher is emplaced with. In

reflecting upon our embodiment and experiences within the world as emplaced and intercorporeally constructed:

‘What multisensory ethnographic methods provide above all else... is an embodied understanding of the traffic between the researchers own body, and the sensoria and social forms constituting the field. An increased sensory attention within ethnographic practice enables the researcher to map the development of sensibilities, to record the complex sensory landscape of the research field and to map corporeal responses onto it’ (Rhys-Taylor, 2010:231).

As a methodology that can intricately examine the makings of our taken-for-granted ways of using and experiencing our bodies, sensory ethnographic research designs have potential to illuminate the ways in which power relations, including gendered power relations, are done through our bodily interactions.

A sensory ethnographic research design was thus developed in reflection to addressing my research questions and to fit in line with my methodological ontological and epistemological foundations. This took the form of a six-month ethnographic immersion into the three karate clubs whom I have given pseudonyms - Lothian Wado-kai, Juniper karate club, and Bushido – where I collected sensorially attuned participant observation data, photo elicitation interview data, and data from informal conversations within training.

3.2. Positionality and research relations

‘Whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings complete with the usual human assembly of feelings, failings, and moods. And all of these things influence how we feel and understand what is going on. Our consciousness is always the medium through which research occurs: there is no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher.’ Stanley and Wise, 1993:156.

Acknowledging our embodiment entails acknowledging ourselves as entwined in the research process, both affecting and being affected by the situations, data, and research interactions that unfold. As I enter the dojos I bring with me my history, my

embedded interests and beliefs, my research interests and sociological perspective, my varying level of insider/outsider position to the karate clubs, my gender, my status as a black belt, my embodied dispositions, and my relations as a friend, karate student, and training partner to those within the dojos. In reflection to the intercorporeally emplaced position of the embodied researcher within the social and sensory fabric of the research, it is appropriate to highlight the embodied history, commitments, statuses, and power positions I brought as a person to the research process, before discussing the data collection and analysis.

3.2.1 Insider and outsider statuses

In all three clubs I had a blend of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ statuses that many researchers have been shown to impact relations in the field and the types of data gathered (for a short list of examples see: Acker, 2000; Kanuha, 2000; Merton, 1972; Weiner-Levy and Queder, 2012; Woodward, 2008). ‘Insider’ positions - distinguished by sharing a group membership with those being researched - have been suggested to ease issues of access to the field, understanding of terminology, aid experiential understanding and contextualisation, facilitate building trust with those the researchers are studying, and provide ‘acquaintance with’ knowledge (Acker, 2000; Rose, 2001; Merton, 1972). ‘Outsider’ positions – distinguished by not being a member of the groups or communities being studied – are suggested to have benefits that sit in contrast to the benefits of being an insider. As such, ‘outsider’ positions draw their strength from the distance the researcher has from the field to apply perspective to interactions within the field, and be better positioned to identify the predispositions of the field that ‘insiders’ may find difficult to see (Merton, 1972; Woodward, 2008).

As a researcher we are never completely ‘insiders’ nor completely ‘outsiders’. We will share a collection of statuses with those we research, and equally, will hold statuses that make us in some way outside the groups we study – our position as a researcher conducting the research being at least one of these. Whilst a dichotomous idea that we as researchers are *either* insiders or outsiders overlooks the complexity

of our positionality with those we study, drawing on ideas of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ statuses as flexible and negotiated statuses can provide a grounding to reflect upon our positionality in relation to those we research, and how this relational positionality shapes the data we receive:

The insider/outsider dichotomy and that between objectivity and subjectivity on which some of these dilemmas are predicated are based on far too crude a polarization. The research process can never be totally ‘inside’ or completely ‘outside’, but involves an interrogation of situatedness and how ‘being inside’ or ‘outside’ relates to lived bodies and their practices and experiences’ (Woodward, 2008:547).

As such, I will continue to explore the varying ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ statuses embedded within my positionality within the clubs I participated in and researched, and how such statuses impacted upon my data collection and the knowledge I produce.

In all three clubs I held an insider status as a karateka. Both Lothian Wado-kai and Juniper karate club were clubs I had been a member of for twenty and ten years respectively, and as such my position as an insider had been well established over decades of training that equipped me both with the bodily dispositions to participate, and already established relationships with the karateka who trained at the clubs. Through years of sweating side-by-side many of the karateka at Lothian Wado-kai and Juniper karate club I was acquainted with their personalities and them with mine, I had heard bits and pieces of their life stories and they knew parts of mine, and with some, we had already had informal conversations about issues related to women and men’s mixed participation in karate.

Whilst this familiarity and mutual trust established through training together did make consented access to the field and recruitment for interviews a simple and quick process, asking the people I knew well at my karate clubs if I could research them filled me with an anxiety produced *because of* my intimate insider status (Taylor, 2011). Coming out of the academic closet to ask permission to interview and observe the people I trained with brought into light the academic side of my self that those I

trained with may not have been aware of, and which previously had not come into the negotiations of our relationship. As such, my 'insider' karateka identity, and my well-established relations with those I trained with, was momentarily up for renegotiation in light of my new position as a karateka *and* researcher (Kanuha, 2000). However the response by my club mates to my academic-coming-out was met with a casual shrug, a smile, and understated responses such as 'yeah, sounds cool'. My position as a researcher remained known but appeared to be overlooked as club interactions resumed in the manner they always had. The transition felt seamless, perhaps aided by or reflecting the degree of trust my training partners had in me as a person. As such, my position as a karateka and training partner enabled me to collect observational and embodied experiential data that appeared to be untainted by the presence of myself as a researcher.

My access to Bushido had been gained through a friend I had met at university who co-ran the club, and who was keen as a fellow karateka and a woman, to help facilitate my research on women and men's experiences of karate. Despite knowing one of the instructors, I was unknown to the rest of the club. Whilst an outsider coming into the club, my status as a karateka made instantly visible by my gi, my status as an accomplished karateka made visible by my black belt, and my seal of approval from one of the club's senseis, very specifically framed my 'outsider' position. As karate is a deeply hierarchical sport, my status as a black belt not only marked my skill level and an assumed number of years of experience in the sport to reach such a level, but also marked an expected level of respect to be given to me. This status is usually tentatively granted to black belts entering a new club whereby it is authenticated by the black belt performing competently to the skill level the club expects of a black belt. The warmth those at Bushido showed me through smiling, chatting at water breaks, offering me help with certain movements during practice, and offering to partner me for sparing or partnered work, suggested an accelerated acceptance of me within their club, granted because of my pre-existing skills as a karateka, and acquaintance with the Sensei. During training I felt that I was treated as if I had trained there for years, with my outsider status as a researcher overlooked and overshadowed by my outsider status as an experienced karateka from outwith

their club that drew positive intrigue. As such, at Bushido I held a complex expert-outsider-insider status, whereby my skill, karateka identity, and approval from the sensei, facilitated research relations.

Having the skillset to take part in classes instantly aided the process of building good relations with the karateka at Bushido. Due to my competency and prestige as a black belt, I could train with anyone in the class as I had enough skill to engage in most tasks, and enough skill that subsequently meant a lot of people would like to train with me. I was aware that some beginners may find my status as a black belt daunting, and as such I made particular efforts to talk to lower grades at water breaks during class or before class about non-karate related topics -such as their plans for the weekend - in order to build up a familiarity that could ease some of the anxieties lower grades held about interacting with black belts. This aided building relations with karateka across different levels of ability, and in turn, gaining insights into their experiences of karate.

Alongside the ease of access to the field, ability to engage in action in the clubs, and quick development of a good relationship with other karateka, my insider karateka status - at all three clubs - enabled karateka to feel comfortable discussing elements of their practice that may appear deviant or taboo to those outside the sport – such as the enjoyment of hitting and being hit, enjoying sweaty bodily contact with others, or purposefully hitting another hard as an act of revenge – under the assumption that I would ‘get it’. Sometimes these were phenomena I could relate to, other times they were not.

Whilst this sense of familiarity drawn from our shared karateka status enabled karateka to open up to me, I was also conscious of the common ‘insider’ researcher problem of participants assuming the researcher already knows the ins-and-outs of the field, and thus limit their discussion of how, why, and what is important to them in their practices (Delyser, 2001). In reflection to my particular status as an *experienced* insider I was further conscious of karateka’s expectations of my expertise limiting what they told me either because they assumed I already knew, or

because they were worried they would say something I would disagree with. At Bushido I utilised my 'outsider' position as a member of another karate club to 'play dumb' to the practices of their club when informally talking with karateka or during interviews, in order to facilitate deeper discussion and explanation of their karate practices and experiences. This further provided a way to minimise embodied power relations between myself and lower grade karateka in particular, providing the lower grade karateka a platform to feel knowledgeable, and able to share their knowledge with me.

3.2.2. Being a woman researcher

My experiences in the field that formed and informed the data collected were framed not only by my blend of insider and outsider positions, but also by my position as a woman. Being a woman cannot be separated from my fieldwork experiences (Stanley and Wise, 1993). Women researchers in mixed-sex or predominantly male settings have been noted to experience a number of gender-specific issues surrounding their data collection: facing objectification from research participants (Gill and Maclean, 2002; Gurney, 1985; Lumsden, 2009); having their ability/integrity as a researcher questioned by participants (Easterdat et al., 1977; Pini, 2005); and being assigned to traditional, subordinate, female roles such as a 'cheerleader' or helper for men's activities (Gurney, 1985). Many of the consequences of being a woman upon data collection are drawn from research where the researcher is seen as an outsider not only because of their gender but as a non-member of the group they study. This element of their positionality is often overlooked when analysing the effect of being a woman upon data collection. Women outsider researchers entering the field must negotiate their relations upon entry whereby they face a negotiation of societal and setting-specific expectations of gender relations. As an outsider, the researcher has less influence in constructing this relationship (McKeganey and Bloor, 1991). The tendency for women outsider researchers to experience objectification and disregard could perhaps be understood in relation to the societal gendered norms and distributions of power that are often the starting point of such negotiations.

My experiences as a woman researcher came from a different starting point for negotiating gendered relations in the field. I entered the field not only as an ‘insider’, but as someone with status in the field. Within Lothian Wado-kai and Juniper karate club, my negotiated relations with men and women at the club had been long established, and were grounded in a mutual respect as training partners. Although I was new to Bushido and thus had to begin the negotiation of gendered relations upon entering the field, being a black belt generated a level of respect from the club that appeared to deter objectification and trivialization of myself as a woman. As such, as a member of the karate community, and a person with status within community, codes of conduct for interactions with black belts appeared to at least buffer overt sexist treatment of myself during fieldwork.

As a woman researcher I had both a set of gendered expectations of me to be negotiated with participants as outlined above, and a *standpoint* position (see: Collins, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1990) that enabled insight and understanding on how gender effects women’s embodiment in karate in particular. Being a woman granted me a form of insider status in relation to other women karateka which in turn made it possible for me to attend a women-only class, train with women who were more reserved about training with men, and gather data from my own experiences to reflect upon women’s gendered embodiment. As such, in being a woman I was more easily able to gather data on women’s experiences of embodiment within karate, than men’s.

Whilst my experiences of karate practice were of course negotiated in relation to being a woman, and thus shaped by being a woman, the extent to which they were likely to align more closely with the experiences of other women, rather than men who do karate, is complicated by the collection of my other statuses within the karate world that structure my experience of the sport. Indeed, some of my experiences during fieldwork will have been more reflective of experiences other black belts have, and thus perhaps closer to the experiences of black belt men, than women new to the sport. Just as white middle class women’s experiences do not represent the

experiences of all women (Collins, 1990), my experiences during fieldwork do not represent the experiences of all women karateka, and are complicated by the multiple other positionalities I have. Thus, whilst being a woman provided access to specific data that male researchers would not have had access to, this data was contextualised in reflection to the impact of my collection of statuses in order to better understand the complexity of the role of gender within karateka's embodiment.

3.2.3. Diluting power within research relations

‘All research involves, as its basis, an interaction, a relationship, between researcher and researched...Being alive involves us in having emotions and involvement; and in doing research we cannot leave behind what it is to be a person alive in the world.’
Stanley and Wise, 1993:161.

The issues of positionality discussed so far have alluded to many issues of research relations, as I have suggested our positionality as researchers, and the ways in which this impacts research and is made meaningful in relational negotiation with those that we research. I was an insider, an outsider, a black belt, someone with experience and skill-based status in karate, a researcher, and a woman all together, however these statuses did not all hold the same importance, nor effect interactions in the same way, at the same time, within the dojos. Rather, through interactions within the three clubs and during interviews, different elements of my positionality took on varying weight within the relations between myself and the karateka I researched, and collaboratively constructed our research relations (Emerson and Pollner, 2003; Moje, 2000; Stanley and Wise, 1993). Embedded within these relational negotiations were negotiations of power that are important to reflect upon in order to contextualise the data collected and knowledge produced through this thesis.

Power in researcher-researched relationships heavily favour the researchers whom can set the agenda for knowledge production, and frame knowledge production. I have chosen methods that attempt to minimise this power imbalance. Alongside this, my research interactions were framed by a heightened ethical responsibility to karate communities as an insider and friend (Tilman-Healy, 2006). These communities

were not data sources I could dip in and out of with little implication for myself. Rather, they were communities of people I knew, I cared about, that cared about me, and that I was likely to have on-going relations with after the research finished. As such, it was particularly important for me to ensure that my depictions of other's stories and actions were as accurate an account as possible, that my research interest was made transparent, that karateka's anonymity was maintained at a level that suited them, that interview participants were aware they could participate or not on their own terms, and that during interviews what was meaningful to participants in relation to their embodied experiences of karate were able to surface.

These actions did not un-write the power imbalances between myself and the karateka involved in my research as indeed it was me, rather than my participants, who ultimately chose what methods to use, when, with whom, and how to frame the data received. Equally, differing power relations embedded in our gendered, racial, and karate grade statuses that interweave with our researcher-researched statuses cannot easily be dislodged. Rather, the aim was to work towards minimising the impact of the power imbalances by producing respectful relations bound by shared empathy and a shared humanity.

The following discussion of my data collection, analysis, and production of this thesis, will continually draw on and situate the issues of positionality and research relations discussed here to contextualise the situations from which my findings emerged.

3.3. Data collection: Entering the Dojos

The multi-sited approach was adopted for a number of reasons. Firstly, as I already trained at the Lothian Wado-kai and Juniper karate clubs, for practical reasons such as access to participation, trust, and my own available time to attend karate classes and conduct interviews, it made good sense to embrace my participation at these clubs for reflection of my embodied experiences, and observations of their intricate sensory backdrop and gendered interactions. Choosing a third club that I had not

previously attended – Bushido - provided a setting to draw into light underlying assumptions, bodily dispositions, and gendered negotiations unconsciously embodied by myself from my deep ‘insider’ position at Lothian Wadokai and Juniper karate club.

Secondly, from my own experience of training at multiple karate clubs, there can be strong variances between the structures of practice, levels of formality/informality, demographic make-up, and the distribution of time spent on kata or kumite – sparring- that in turn form different embodied experiences of karate. The approach of the sensei is central in shaping the tone for which karate is practiced in their club. For example, some clubs have strict and rigid enforcement of rules regarding respect given to the sensei and higher grades whereby actions such as entering the hall, performing techniques, and taking a drink of water are only done so when authorised by the Sensei. In some clubs the Sensei is always referred to as ‘Sensei’, is bowed to when s/he walks past, and after giving instructions, is responded to by karateka with ‘ouss’ to signal the attention and respect given to the sensei’s instructions. In other clubs, Sensei’s may be referred to from their students by their first name, the Sensei may participate *with* other karateka in training drills, karateka may speak openly with Sensei’s, and have banter with one another. Indeed, each club has its own ecosystem of social rules, norms and expectations. As such, within differing clubs there may be different experiences that form karateka’s embodiment and the extent to which their embodiment is gendered. In researching multiple karate clubs the difference and similarities between clubs can be illuminated, and as such variances in the developments of gendered embodiments in karate identified. In turn data gathered can be used to advise practices that ‘undo’ gender as a structure of inequality. Furthermore, it is common for karate practitioners to train at more than one club, and as such, my research approach mirrors the practice of many karateka.

Thirdly, Bushido in particular held an important distinction from the clubs I already trained at, and indeed the majority of clubs in Britain: It held mixed-sex *and women-only* karate classes. Women-only sports practice has been advocated by schools, sport centres and commercial gyms alike as a key way to encourage women and girls

to practice sport (see *Fit for girls*, 2011; and *Women in Sport*, 2015). Whilst in other martial arts and combat sports women-only classes or female versions of the combat sport such as boxercise are relatively common ways in which the martial arts/combat sports actively seek to engage women (Channon and Matthews, 2015), such classes are rare in British karate. The most common experiences of karate in Britain are emplaced within a mixed-sex environment. The findings of my previous study (Maclean, 2015) suggest that the sex-integrated structure of karate is central to enabling disruptions of gender within the field. As a karate club offering both women-only and mixed sex classes with largely the same content, Bushido enabled me to test an underlying assumption of my previous work: that mixed sex practice enables disruptions to gender relations and gendered embodiments that single sex classes do not. Bushido's combination of women-only and mixed sex classes opened up comparative explorations of karate's impact on women's embodiment, and the extent to which this reproduced or challenged conventional power relations that subordinate women and what women do within mixed sex and women-only settings.

The three clubs had varying demographic make-up. Juniper karate club was the club I first began practicing karate at, and the smallest of the clubs. It held karate classes for adults twice per week, with around 15 people aged between 15 and 50 years old participating at each class, and a further ten or so members who would train irregularly. Of its membership, 8 were women – 6 of whom trained regularly - with around 12-15 men, 9 of whom trained regularly. Classes thus averaged around 40% women 60% men. The majority of participants were around 30 years old, often with children who participated in the kid's class, and had only two non-white members (this roughly reflects the ethnic demographics of Scotland, see: Scottish Government, 2011). At Juniper karate club the men were disproportionately tall, and the karate hall rather small, making training feel rather cosy. The karate club had a relaxed atmosphere where the personalities of the members came through in laughs at juice breaks, chats before and after training, and banter thrown back and forth when comical mistakes were made. Each member knew each other relatively well, and as one of the clubs longest standing members, knew me relatively well.

Lothian Wado-kai was a much bigger club with multiple different classes to suit its members preferences: Beginners classes, fitness classes, kata classes, grading classes, kumite classes, and multiple children's classes. The kumite classes had around 30-40 participants aged between 10 and 40, whilst the fitness class held also held around the same number but with a slightly older age range of 15 – 40, but predominantly made up of adults. These classes had far more variance week to week in who attended, and who stopped and started karate over the spell of the research, and as such it was difficult to track exact numbers of who trained in the club. Classes here averaged 40% women 60% men, but on rare occasions had more women than men participating in their kumite or fitness classes. Classes were almost exclusively white, and had younger average ages than Juniper karate club – around 18 years old in the kumite classes, and 25 years old in the fitness class.

Bushido also had multiple classes held across different sites. The adults' class held around 30 people aged 12-50, but predominantly over 16 years old, with on average around 12 of these members being women. The women-only class was predominantly populated with mums of children who participated in Bushido's children's classes, and as such most members of this class were 30-40 years old. There was around 15 women who attended, some of whom had always trained in the mixed sex class but wanted extra training, some who had started in the women-only class and preceded to participate in both the women's only and mixed sex classes, and some who only participated in the women's only. Those who only participated in the women's only were beginners. Whilst the two Scottish clubs I trained with only had a handful of non-white members between them, the Bushido's classes held more racial diversity in their classes, with around 5 members per class being from BME groups, including the women's class sensei, Katie. Within the six month period of ethnographic immersion I participated at karate classes on average five times per week conducting 'observant participations' (Wacquant, 2004): once a week at Juniper karate club, once a week at Bushido's mixed sex karate class and once a week at their women-only class, and two times per week at Lothian Wado-kai's competition-focused classes.

The embodied experience of being a karateka often entails more than just participation at karate classes. For some it will entail attending competition, participating in training camps, raising funds for the club through activities such as sponsored runs or bake sales, socialising with club mates at official club social events such as Christmas parties, dinners, or drinks, and unofficial club socialising with friends made through training together. As such I also attended competitions with Lothian Wado-kai, Scottish national squad trainings, and karate-social events with all three clubs respectively. Observations and experiences gained here enable insight into broader elements of karate embodiment that are draped across, and built through, engagement within multiple sites that constitute karate experience (Hannerz, 2003). A combination of semi-structured and photo-elicitation interviews with karate practitioners from across the three clubs were conducted over a further four months, before transcribing interviews and thematically preparing photos and field notes for analysis.

It should be noted that, as my data is drawn from people whom currently practice karate, and as such presumably enjoy karate, the embodiments represented may appear on the optimistic side regarding karate's mixed-sex, gender eclectic, and thus gender subversive potential. Further research looking at those who leave karate may illuminate further gendered tensions of karate practice that can not surface from this research.

3.3.1 Sensuous participation: a gendered bodily apprenticeship

‘The social agent is a suffering animal, a being of flesh and blood, nerves and viscera, inhabited by passions and endowed with embodied knowledge and skills...Bring the body of the sociologist back into play and treat her intelligent organism not as an obstacle to understanding, as the intellectualism drilled into our folk conception of intellectual practice would have it, but as the vector of knowledge of the social world’ Wacquant, 2011:88.

In order to illuminate the sensory subtleties tied into our everyday embodiments and ‘doing’ of gender relations, my participatory fieldwork within the karate clubs took the form of a ‘sensuous participation’ (Pink, 2009). This entailed tweaking the

conventional ethnographic method of participant observation to place less importance upon looking *at* others as a way to gather interpretive understanding of their lived lives, and instead turning the focus to participating *with* others, utilising the sensational experiences of my body as for understanding lived, embodied, experiences. This is not to suggest I stopped visually observing others during sweaty training drills, line-ups, thirsty juice breaks, or feisty social events and instead solely focused inward to my own embodied experiences. Indeed this would be contrary to my ontological position viewing our sensuous being in the world as intercorporeally formed in relation to people, setting, and context our experiences are moulded within (Pink, 2011b). Rather, the dominance of the researcher's observation of others found in much ethnographic practice, is subdued by purposefully placing equal reflective attention to the other sensory ways in which we observe and engage with the field – through smell, sound, taste, touch, and other motion induced sensations – as well as reflecting upon the sensuous experiences of our body, and the social dynamics framing and interacting with our own sensory expulsions. A principal reason for doing so is that we experience with our whole bodies in interactive action, and utilise knowledge gained through the sensuous experience of the whole body to inform our on action, build interpretations, and make judgements. The privilege often given to sight enables sight to be positioned as a-cultural and a-social, masking its cultural framing. Sensuous participation both reminds us that sight is too a cultural, embodied sense, and enables a fuller understanding of our embodiment.

As such, to illuminate a fuller understanding of the sensuous foundations of our gendered embodiment within karate I attempted to pay particular attention to the multisensory experiences of my body during training, and reflect upon them when writing my field notes on the train or bus home. The initial list of senses started with the 'western five' of sight sound, taste, touch, and smell, and then extended to include sensations of movement and heat in reflection to prominent sensations of my own body that impacted by training, and the input from interviews and informal conversations with other karateaka. Trying to recall and interrogate all my sensory experiences and interactions within an hour and a half class was overwhelming and certainly confusing – particularly when I was consciously trying to recall which

sensory experiences were subtly important. This method did provide a feel for the sensescapes of karate, and the types of interactions occurring within, but little sensory detail.

After two months I began focusing on a specific sense to enable a more detailed insight into their intricate weaving into karateka's embodiment. Each sense was given a minimum of four training sessions to be specifically reflected upon – one at each club including one at the women's only and the mixed sex class at Bushido. After the initial four classes, I would move onto another sense and return to those that I felt warranted deeper investigation after all senses I had identified had been covered. Prominent sensuous experiences that arose from senses not under specific investigation that day were also noted, however the field notes were dominated by one sense, allowing the obvious and less obvious roles that senses play in our gendered embodiment to surface. Transitioning to a sense specific focus made me better attuned to noticing those sensations from and of my body, and enabled the overlooked elements of interaction – such as the tonal changes in instructors' voices when addressing differing groups, and the tactile annoyance of my long hair sticking to my sweaty neck – to be observed and noted in my field notes. Whether I returned to a sense or not was determined by the extent to which further illuminations from the sense appeared after its designated training week. This accumulated a detailed body of sense-specific ways in which gendered embodiment is felt, built, and responded to within karate.

A key problem suggested of doing 'insider' research is that the researcher may be embedded with the habits, dispositions, and ways of thinking of the field that make critical reflection difficult. Engagement in sensuous participation created a way to make the familiar strange (Allen-Collinson, 2009). It enabled me to be present in the karate classes and part of the karate classes as usual, but with a specific focus that drew into question the minute motions of my body – why do I show such aggression in my face when Kiai-ing? How does that make me feel? How does it affect the rest of my bodily motions? How do others react? This detailed conscious reflection of my own embodied dispositions proved to generate rich data that, due to its abstract

nature, was much harder to tease out of interviews or conversations with other karateka. As such the sensuous participation within Lothian Wado-kai and Juniper karate club was a key source of information on the underlying feelings and ideas built into karate's bodily dispositions, and how these in turn formed an embodiment. In doing so, despite already having developed and embedded the dispositions of the field, I was able to emulate the knowledge collection of a 'bodily apprenticeship' as advocated by Wacquant whereby:

'The practical acquisition of those dispositions by the analyst serves as technical vehicle for better penetrating their social production and assembly...The apprenticeship of the sociologist is a methodological mirror of the apprenticeship undergone by the empirical subjects of study; the former is mined to dig deeper into the latter and unearth its inner logic and subterranean properties.' (Wacquant, 2011:82).

At Bushido my sensuous participation closer emulated a bodily apprenticeship. Whilst the karate techniques such as differing types of kicks and punches were the same techniques I would practice at any karate club, the structure of practice and social rules of the club were different to those I had become accustomed to. As such, despite being an established karateka, at Bushido I had to find my place in the line-up at the start of the class, learn when and how to interact with a Sensei, negotiate the correct level of friendliness and seriousness when engaging in partnered training drills, and meet the slightly different bodily expressions expected throughout class framed by the clubs determined and focused philosophy. Here my body engaged in karate but under a different light, and in doing so, further enabled my ingrained bodily motions to be questioned, and the new forms of engagement enquired under a sensuous light.

In removing sight from its seat of sensory and investigative privilege, and instead placing it equal alongside other sensory pieces of experience, sensuous participation reframed research relations from looking *at* to experiencing *with* (Pink, 2009). Indeed how things look from the observer outside, and how they are felt inside (both the body and within a social group) differ (Thurnell-Read, 2001). Our ability to imagine the bodily experiences of others comes from an understanding of the other

as both *different and like* ourselves, where reflection to our own bodily experience is thus crucial (Finlay, 2005). As we engage in the bodily activities of others and with others we are able to draw connections to the bodies of those whose footsteps we follow, opening up pathways to richer understandings of others. However, our own bodily subjectivities can never be exactly matched to those others are experiencing. As such we must remain critical to the production of our own bodily subjectivities and open to the possibilities of others varied experiences of the same phenomena.

My shared participation of sweaty exchanges of punches and kicks, exhausting sprints, intricate tweaks of the body to improve technique, laughs whilst on water breaks, and mutual learning of new motions enabled an understanding of karateka's embodiment to be built both in reflection my embodied experiences within the shared experience, and reflection to the responses of my training partner. Shared sensuous engagement develops a mutually moulding person-to-person relationship whereby both I and the karateka I train with develop an empathetic understanding of the other's embodied experience. In this, conventional relations between researcher as the observer, and researched as the observed, are replaced by an acknowledgement of our mutual construction of the field and mutual humanity.

3.3.2. Photo-elicitation interviews

Whilst my own sensuous participation generated vibrantly textured empathetic experience of the sensory acts specific to my age, karate grade, and gender, that piece together my own embodiment in karate, and though observing, smelling, and hearing I was given an insight into others, it was important to talk with karateka in order to gain a fuller picture of *their* embodied experiences of karate and the extent to which ideas of gender framed their understanding of their experiences. As the topic of our embodiment and embodied experience is indeed very personal, an approach was required that allowed participants to feel comfortable and open to discuss their experiences. One-to-one photo-elicitation interviews whereby participants bring photographs to the interview to discuss was chosen as the format, enabling insight into other's embodied and gendered experiences for a number of

reasons:

1. Participants are given the power to guide the conversation through their photographs to raise what is meaningful to them (Meo, 2010; Wang, 1999).
2. They enable more comfortable and collaborative research relations (Packard, 2008; Pink, 2007; 2009).
3. The visuals collected provide a rich source of data that express multiple layers occurring at once (Banks, 2001; Harper, 1998; Phoenix, 2010; Pink, 2009).

The prominence of photographs in our everyday lives, and our familiarity with sharing photographs as insights into memories with friends and family or to share a depiction of who we are on social media, makes photographs an accessible and well-used tool of communication (Meo, 2010). As such discussing photographs within an interview can make the rather unnatural, formal, feel of an interview (Fontana and Prokos, 2007) feel more comfortable, normal, and open. Further, photographs can enable a communicative voice for people and communities who either cannot express themselves fully vocally, are anxious communicating vocally, or are not listened to (Wang, 1999). The 'voice' that participants are given in photo-based research can debunk conventional power relations held between researchers and research participants by providing the participants the opportunity to choose the content of their photographs, and thus the research discussions. Participant produced images can thus take the researcher somewhere they cannot access – the everyday life, experiences, and feelings of the participant (Pink, 2007).

Due to their subjectively soaked nature, photographs can also provide great insights into the ways in which people see reality, and the minute subjectivities of their impressions (Phoenix, 2010). Amongst the multiple layers of actions occurring in the physical world at any one time, what people see, choose to see, or choose to record as an image can be extremely insightful. Photographs can hold subtleties which words cannot portray: the emotions created in a moment, and the minute detailed aspects of interaction often overlooked. This can enhance and deepen an

understanding of a topic, conveying arguments and the multiple meanings of physical life in a manner more vivid than words alone can provide.

In choosing who to interview I aimed to get a spread of interviews from each club in order to identify club-specific gendered patterns or embodiments. I also aimed to get a spread of karateka at different levels of ability. Beginners were particularly well positioned to discuss sensory changes their bodies went through during training as this was often consciously reflected on by themselves in practice as they tried to train their body to perform correctly. More advanced karateka on the other hand had gone through their 'bodily apprenticeship' (Wacquant, 2004) and thus many of the movements and interactions within karate had become unconscious embodied ways of being. Equally however, as many advanced grades continually sought to improve, or taught others, some advanced grades could provide detailed sensorially reflexive information on certain uses of the body within training, such as the importance of shouting to aid the commitment behind an attack. As skill level often correlates to time spent within the sport, interviewing karateka with a variety of different skill levels enabled me to compare and track the impact of time upon embodied experience, and the extent to which the embodiment was gendered.

Finally, I aimed for an equal mix of women and men from each club with the exception of Bushido. The majority of research exploring gender only explores women in relation to gender (Kimmell, 2002), to the extent that 'gender studies' or 'gender issues' as a term in everyday use is often used to refer to women's lives. Whilst the exploration of women's lives is absolutely fundamental to understanding gender inequality, and the consequences and experiences of gender inequality (Stanley and Wise, 1993), to abstain from analysis of men as gendered too limits our understanding of the maintenance of gender differences and inequalities, and enables a continued presentation of men and dominance as normal and natural. As such, I sought to explore men's embodiment within karate, how gendered distinction from women were created/maintained/performed through the sensory uses and understandings of the body, and the extent to which karate practice challenged conventional ideas of difference and understandings of their bodies. At Bushido I

focused on interviewing women in order to explore the variance of women's gendered embodiment within the same sport, yet under different sets of gender relations: mixed sex classes and single sex classes (See appendix 1 for a table of the interviewees).

A month prior to conducting the interviews I gave those who agreed to be interviewed an information leaflet regarding their participation, confidentiality, and guidance for the photo-elicitation element of the interview. Whilst my intention for the photographs was to get a glimpse of what is important to them in their everyday karate experiences, asking people the value laden question of what is meaningful to them often leaves people feeling blank or vulnerable to judgment. As such, in the leaflet I suggested they 'photograph "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of karate' as a way to induce the variety of experiences they may have had in the sport, but maintain their authority to determine what deserves to be photographed.

Whilst the photo-elicitation interviews were my preferred interview method, in practice the majority of participants (11 of the 17 interviewees) did not bring photographs to the interviews. This was for a number of reasons, primarily centred around forgetting to take the photographs, not finding time to do so, or that they did not already have any and did not know what I would want to see. A semi-structured interview schedule had been prepared for such an eventuality that had three broad areas of discussion to be covered: Questions relating to when and why they started karate; questions related to bodily and sensory experiences and changes during training; and questions related to training with members of the opposite sex (or not). Questions relating to initial participation in karate were used first as comfortable 'warm up' style questions to ease any nerves participants had around being interviewed. From this inroad I let participants begin to lead the conversation to discuss moments or experiences important to them, and from these moments engage questions around bodily experience, or gendered experience. As my research aimed to illuminate the overlooked pieces of sensory data that build karateka's embodied experience it was important that our discussions had an element of structure to

enable me to tease out the implicit role of the senses and experience of the (gendered) body within karateka's narratives.

The interviews took place in cafes dotted near the sports halls we trained at, or near participant's work places in order to make the interviews easily accessible for those volunteering to participate, and equally to soften the sterile tone the word 'interview' induces. As I had trained with the karateka I interviewed for at least four months prior to interviewing them, and with some for many years, the interviews felt like meeting for a coffee with a friend to chat, but of course with an air of intention, confidentiality, and ethical precautions. Just like the subtleties of gendered embodiment, conversations are constructed in a two way bodily relationship between people, whereby my own body language and movements shape how comfortable another feels in discussing their experiences, or whether they should continue the details of their story or cut it short (Englesrud, 2005). As such, I aimed to keep an open and comforting tone by smiling, laughing along with stories where appropriate, and nodding, or showing my support facially, as karateka told their stories, to calmly show my interest and concentration to encourage participants to feel comfortable to discuss their experiences, thoughts, concerns, or arising confusions. As a product of a combination of being a fellow karate practitioner, and a comforting and engaged listener, deep, and at times quite personal, data came through both the semi-structured and photo elicitation interviews. As such, participants were reminded of their anonymity, and the data – particularly the photographs - were treated with sensitive reflection to participants desires to remain, or not, anonymous.

For those who had brought photographs, photo-elicitation interviews similarly began by assessing how comfortable or anxious the participant looked, and for those who were slightly anxious, starting with initial 'warm up' questions before asking to look at their photographs. For those more confident (and often excited to show their photographs) the interview began by asking them to start with whichever photo they would like to start with. The three areas of discussion covered in the semi-structured interview schedule were also covered in the photo-elicitation interviews by drawing on elements of the photographs, or stories being told about the photographs, to move

conversation towards issues of sensuous embodiment and gender. The use of photographs aided this as the photographs provided visual references to draw on – such as enquiring about other bodily experiences happening in the moment captured – and imaginatively step into:

‘Using a camera provides ethnographers with the possibility of creating (audio) visual research materials that invoke not only the verbal or visual knowledge that might be produced through interviews or observations. Rather, it implies that such research materials might provide a route into the more complex multisensoriality of the experiences, activities and events we might be investigating.’ (Pink, 2009:101).

The photographs appeared to be produced in a number of ways: taken by the participants themselves at home of objects or people important to their karate experience; taken by the participant at training or a competition of karate practices; orchestrated photographs to display what they wanted to discuss; and photographs taken of themselves by others. They provided insight into the personal meanings evoked from the image, how the participant related the image and its meanings to their sense of self, and the narratives entailed around the context of the photo. What made karate meaningful to karateka themselves could surface organically through the photographs they chose to share, reducing a common issue of structured (and semi-structured interviews) in questioning what is *assumed* to be meaningful. The meanings participants gave to their experiences were thus given respect as the central focus of the interview, to be determined and controlled by the participant, bridging more equal and respectful ‘researcher-researched’ relations in the process (Packard, 2008).

Despite the potential for visual methods as a tool to enable participants control and voice in the research process, reception and interaction with the photographs was mixed. The process particularly appealed to two of the participants who were enthusiastic to share their photographs and accompanying stories and meanings they wished to convey through the images. This enabled long and rich conversations,

alongside detailed illustrations alluding to meaningful embodied experiences. For a further two participants who were slightly more reserved or anxious to begin with, turning the conversation to the photographs appeared to help them come out of their shell, that in turn eased the rest of the interview. For the last two participants, the photographs were given to me as if completing a school assignment, and appeared to be seen as an aside to discussion rather than a part of the discussion. When asked about their photographs, they provided little engagement. Here I returned to the semi-structured interview schedule. Indeed, as a method and as a form of communication, visuals worked for some people and less so for others.

Equally, the meanings encapsulated within the photographs participants took were not necessarily instantly readable (Banks, 2001). Initially I had imagined the photographs collected through the research could contribute to a collaborative sensory infused exhibition that could provide greater understanding of gendered embodiment in karate. Yet, in taking photographs for the interview, certain elements of the embodied experience of karate were made visible and thus important, and other elements of karate practice less important. As such, the images brought to the interviews could not convey a complete experience, did not necessarily have an obvious meaning without discussion, nor necessarily an artistic beauty that would allow them, in the absence of conversation, to express the meanings that surfaced through the interviews. I found their key strength lay in providing props for participant's stories that gave the participant confidence, authority, and enthusiasm to express what was meaningful to them about karate practice and their embodied experiences in the sport.

During both more conventional interviews and photo-elicitation interviews, my visibility as a researcher and as a woman came more prominently to the forefront than in my sensuous participations, particularly when asking questions related to gender. It has been noted that the gender of an interviewer can generate different responses based on expectations of what interviewees think the interviewer might want to hear (Padfield and Procter, 1996), and generate responses that attempt to maintain gendered relations between women and men (Pini, 2005). During the

interviews I experienced one prominent gender distinction: I both felt more comfortable asking women questions about how they felt gender was or was not important to karate practice than men, and women spoke in much more depth, and more comfortably about such issues than men. This perhaps reflected an embodied discomfort with both bringing the conventional power arrangements between women and men into light through the interview, and turning the conventional power arrangement on its head by virtue of being a woman raising such issues with men. Despite my discomfort I did interrogate the role of gender in men's embodied experiences of karate, predominantly by broaching the topic through linking it into the stories my male interviewees told, rather than raising the topic directly. Many of my male respondents broached topics such as 'is it okay to hit a woman in karate?' with a diplomatic caution, that was crosschecked by their interactions in the field.

3.4. From fighting to writing: analysing and representing sensuous experience

My research has been conducted and translated into a thesis with reflection on the 'crisis of representation' (Marcus and Fischer, 1999:9) whereby positivist desires for 'objective', disembodied, and universalist representations have been challenged in favour of recognising and aiming to address the complexities of representing life as lived. Translating the vibrancy of embodiments within karate into sociological text entails struggles between conventional analytic and representational requirements of academia (McRobbie, 1982), and a commitment to reflecting the depth of sensations that accumulate to build an embodied experience. As an embodied researcher, I sit at the hyphen between the lived experience of karate life, and the process of analysing and transforming experiences into sociological accounts. It was in my hands and on my conscience how I chose to tease out and frame the sensuous experiences and vibrant stories gathered during data collection, and how I drew this lived data into arguments about gender, embodiment, and the role of the senses in our gendered embodiment and relations. What I present is not and cannot be a universal truth of a specific karate embodiment that is felt and done systematically by all karateka across the world. Rather, I provide insights into context bound experiences of multiple karateka, whereby the choice of depictions and meanings presented sit amongst a

broader collection of sensuous experience. As a researcher, it is my duty to provide a picture that both sits as honestly as possible with the insights available, and identify patterns of experience that are relevant for karate, sport, and sociological understandings of gender and embodiment more broadly.

3.4.1. Analysis

The data collection processes gathered a mass of rich detailed accounts of embodied experiences of karate life. Whilst the interviews provided insights to participants embodied experience narrated, framed, and given meanings by the participants themselves that covered with more or less ease the sensations of the body, my own sensuous participation field notes provided a sensory centred reflection to my own embodied experiences that could provide an empathic template to better understand the full-bodied impact of participants' stories. This amounted to 190 pages of interview transcripts, 55 pages of sensuous participation notes, and 28 photographs. Analysing the multi-sensory embodied experiences of karate to unravel the clues that constitute a gendering of our embodiment in a manner that does justice to the fully embodied meanings and feelings attached to karateka's embodied experiences required a framework of analysis that was reflexive to the motions of the whole body, and recognised the whole body as part of the construction and presentation of a gendered embodiment.

Just as the aim of my interviews was to enable phenomena I may not have anticipated to emerge by encouraging participants to steer the conversation to frame the meanings they apply to their embodied experiences, in my analysis I also sought a framework that both drew out the differing roles of the senses in constructing a gendered or less gendered embodiment, but was not limited by my own pre-set assumptions of what was important. As such, for each interview I marked down the three central elements the individual karateka discussed most and presented as most important to their experience of being a karateka. This provided a broad overview of what was emerging as meaningful and important to participants, as well a mechanism for dealing with such a vast amount of data. Not surprisingly, a detailed

self-analysis of sensory sensations such as the development of asserting one's self vocally did not emerge as most prominent to participants. However that's not to say that such sensations did not provide important and meaningful parts of their embodied experience, but rather points towards both the subtlety with which the senses work that make them difficult to reflect upon, and the lack of language to discuss our sensations (Allen-Collinson, 2009). As such I also conducted 'embodied interpretation' (Todres and Galvin, 2008) whereby researchers 'go back and forth between our embodied sense of the meanings conveyed in the structure and our search for words and themes that can evocatively communicate these meanings' (Todres and Galvin, 2008: 576). From this process, emerging key themes common across multiple karateka's interviews – such as friendship, family, and a sense of improving as a person – were combined with the sensory categories that presented most frequently as impacting upon the meanings karateka and I applied to our embodied experiences – sound, smell, tacit engagement, movement, use/sense of space, and sight – to provide a thematic framework. The interview transcripts, photographs, and my field notes were then coded into these themes in Nvivo to provide a skeleton of the embodied experience from which to analyse the construction of gender and gendered relations within.

As thus far the senses have been suggested to inform and express our being and knowing through myriads of *interconnections*, it may appear odd that I have broken the senses down into individual categories for analysis. This segregation was done for a number of reasons: 1. Whilst the sensory ethnography literature emphasises the interconnected ways in which the senses work, they provide little guidance on how to interrogate the senses in combination; 2. The role of the senses is overlooked in our everyday lives, and as such how they inform our embodied actions and sense of self goes without reflection (Sparkes, 2009). As a person, with the best intentions, I too am victim to this, and thus breaking the senses down into individual senses enabled an initial way of managing and bringing into light the senses role in our embodiment; 3. When participants did talk of sensory experiences, rarely did they do so in ways that illuminated the other senses that may have coherently been evoked and contribute to the experience. A detailed understanding of the senses individually

provided a base from which I could begin to explore how the senses mesh together and work in combination to inform and perform our embodiment and gendered relations.

3.4.2. Representation

As indicated above, representing the body-to-body sweaty, smelly, fast-paced, exhausting, exciting, and painful embodied experience of karate practice through this thesis brings only a contextually framed flavour of the experience. Through the act of representing embodied experiences, the sensuous, dynamic, experiences *of our bodies in context* lose their experiential subjectivity, and inevitably must be framed by an author as an embodied reflection. It is argued that attempting to translate the embodied interactional aspects of life highlights the limits of academia's textual bias that mutes many aspects which piece together an understanding of life as lived (Conquergood, 1991). Furthermore, disembodied ways of writing about and representing the body are suggested to ironically reinforce the dualism of mind and body that many body theorists often seek to challenge (Sparkes, 2009). Whilst many embodied elements of life may indeed be muted in academic writing, and in writing that omits details of bodily experience as an embodied experience, it is not to say that creative uses of writing cannot evoke an empathetic understanding of sensory embodiment. Writing as a mode can be used as a tool to enable other modes of experience to be described and evoked in their absence (Dicks et al., 2006) and thus reflect the multidimensional, multisensory, experience of embodiment. As such, this thesis, and particularly my findings chapters, is written with thick detailed descriptions of sensory experiences (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2009) that flow through the body in karate practice. In doing so I hope to maintain a sense of embodiment that the reader can empathetically step into throughout.

In order to maintain a bodily feel throughout my findings chapters, sensuous and bodily evoking data from interviews and conversations with those I trained with, and my own embodied experiences, take a prominent role in the chapters. Descriptive vignettes at the beginning of many of the findings chapters seek to create a sense of

the atmosphere karateka are embodied within, whilst my own field notes interspersed throughout the chapters seek to provide detailed embodied accounts of the sensory experiences of my body in interactive practice, and how such experiences from/of my body are shaped by, collide with, or overcome conventional gendered embodiments and relations. Alongside these writing techniques, I place descriptive interludes between my findings chapters that utilise rich interview and fieldwork data to illuminate significant elements of karate practice that frame and are explored in more analytic depth throughout the previous or following findings chapters.

Alongside written representations I have also interspersed the findings chapters with photographs from participant's photo-elicitation interviews. Photographs provide a representation of embodied experience that can provide vast specific detail for the viewer to draw on and imaginatively place their self within to evoke the multisensory dynamics of the setting and build a deeper multisensory knowing (Pink, 2009). As images authored by the participants and chosen to be taken and shown for this research project, the photos provide rich insight into their embodied experiences within karate and an indication of how meaningful the experience is to them, allowing the reader not only ways in which to step into karate embodiment, but also to get to know the participants in their humanity.

Whilst words can be illustrative yet vague in terms of providing the tools to empathetically imagine exactly how the body would move and feel, photographs are suggested to be specific but lacking a context outwith their image (Pink, 2011a). The combination of photographs and thickly sensuous written descriptions, however, can fill in the gaps of the other, inducing a fuller, vibrant, empathic understanding of the embodied experiences depicted. As such, my findings chapters will continue this thesis with sensuously descriptive writing and images that seek to aid the readers understanding of embodied experiences of karate, and in turn, how gender is woven in and out of embodiments made in karate practice. First, I shall turn to an interlude that sets the sensory scene of karate.

Interlude: The sense-scape of a karate class

The sense-scape of a karate class creates part of the embodied experience of karate, where the body, mind, and environment come together through sensuous engagement to inform embodied experiences (Pink, 2011b). During the interviews I asked participants if they could describe the different sensory experiences they go through during a karate class. The quotes below are a collection of their responses that give an insight into the sensory environment surrounding the bodily movements, interactions, and relationships developed within karate practice, which will be explored in more detail throughout the up-coming chapters.

The karate hall has the smell of the mats, and once you smell those it's like 'right, its serious business, this is karate time'. It kick-starts your mind to get you ready even before you start. Also the touch of the mats as well. Always before I compete I'll go on a have a feel for the area, because I mean you can get slippy mats that are brand new, and that's just terrifying - that's my worst nightmare. It just makes it so hard to move and hold positions properly. Or I think just getting a good feel for it regardless of if it's a slippy area or good mat, you know what you are dealing with before you start. Katie, Bushido.

You canny beat the smell of a good dojo...They are smelly places. I remember when I first went back and I put my old leg pads on and I threw a kick at someone and they went 'those pads are rank! You need to give them a wash' and I thought actually they are probably right they've not been washed in a long time, so it's like okay, no problem! I don't think a dojo would be the same if it smelt clinical. It wouldn't be the same if you didn't smell sweat, and hand pads... It wouldn't have the same atmosphere without it. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

All those familiar sounds of the Sensei shouting instructions, people kiai-ing, the crisp noise that a well ironed karate suit makes when you move fast, and pads being hit - its familiar. And I think it makes you feel comfortable performing, it's all those familiar senses that need to come into play. Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

I see people in the class exhausted with sweat pouring off them, and you can hear the deep breathing, and I'm thinking - can we go again?! I start to wonder if I'm being egotistical, but it's just different people... Then you see the next person in the line thumping the pads so fast you'd think someone was firing a machine gun. David, Juniper karate club.

You can feel stuff coming when you fight. You do have to use all your senses, and you need to be sharp with them to move right and react right. And from a sort of 2nd sight you need to try and guess what's coming next: watching people's relative movements and sort of work out where they are going. Some people when they attack it just comes from nowhere, its smooth, whereas others, the shoulders tighten up first or the head goes down a bit or they tuck themselves in a bit or just all these ways that they tense up. So that's the point where you need to react right away. So you do have to use everything. You need to be completely switched on. Keith, Juniper karate club.

4. Embodying the ‘art of the sport’: Blurring and blending gendered bodily dispositions

Katie stands amongst other black belts, dotted across the dojo in their own isolated spot. Each in their own time barks the name of the kata they are about to perform loud and sharp with faces stern, and piercing eyes focused forward as if staring down an imaginary opponent. The overlap of the announcements boom across the dojo. Maintaining an aggressive facial expression and un-fazed focus forwards, Katie delicately and smoothly circles her foot forwards, stretching slowly into a strong stance, whilst floating her open hands – one moving upwards, the other moving downwards – in sync with the slow and smooth movement of her feet. Eyes not moving, she follows the same intricate movement with her other foot, softly leading her hips and hands. Suddenly, bam! A burst of movement to the left sharply changes the pace. Legs and hands now dart in precise strong bursts, with half a second’s pause in between to allow the onlooker to view the perfection of her technique. Crisp snapping noises come from the sharp movement of her suit merging with the swift exhalation of her breathe between moves. As if unaware of those practicing their own kata around her, she glides and shoots across the hall. From a graceful flowing block that slowly takes her onto a single leg, she fires forward into a long, strong, body punch – ‘kiai!’ She shouts with a face full of aggression – mouth wide open to let out the shout, eyebrows sternly tensed with eyes beneath firmly focused. From there, she slowly steps her feet together and bows her head signifying the end of the kata.

Like an etiquette class, karate practice involves learning and perfecting ways of holding one’s body, ways of moving one’s body, exuding appropriate facial expressions, asserting the correct tone and volume in one’s voice, and managing space appropriately. Karate practice requires its practitioners develop a specific set of bodily dispositions – ways of using the body conditioned by the ideologically laden structures of a setting (Bourdieu, 1980: 54). Our embodied dispositions play a key part in our routine performance of a gendered self and in shaping our conception of how we are a gendered self usually through recreating notions of gender distinction.

Societal ideas of combat sport, and women and men's capacities for it, would frame the bodily dispositions of karate as something more readily expected of men. Yet, as mentioned in previous chapters, karate is a setting which is structured around uniform practice not differentiated by sex. Here, the movements of karate blend a mixture of motions conventionally deemed masculine – such as aggression, strength, and displays of mimetic violence – and motions conventionally deemed feminine – grace, agility, and flexibility. As such, karate practice opens up possibilities to embody a blend of dispositions that challenge conventional gendered performances and embodiments. This chapter explores the hypothesis that bodily dispositions of karate practice builds embodiments that undo gender by reducing bodily difference between women and men, and in doing so, reducing power inequalities embodied between women and men.

This chapter begins by discussing the blend of conventionally deemed masculine and conventionally deemed feminine bodily dispositions developed and encouraged through karate practice, and the manner in which such dispositions are embodied by women and men karateka as they sought to perform karate 'right'. Following from this, I discuss gendered differences in how karateka used karate's unisex bodily dispositions across space, replicating more conventional patterns of gendered embodiment. Finally, this chapter assesses women karateka's embodiments made in single-sex karate classes, allowing comparison with those made in mixed-sex classes to interrogate the significance of sex composition to embodiments made, and the extent to which they recreate/disrupt gendered distributions of power.

4.1. Learning the uniform bodily dispositions of karate

I came to understand the defining features of karate practice as a set of bodily expressions expected to be uniformly performed by its practitioners – holding a correct fighting stance; positioning the guard in the right place; kicking; punching; blocking; throwing; bowing; kiai-ing to express aggression behind one's techniques; slipping from side to side; elegant and subtle defensive movements; soft, undetectable transitioning from one movement to the next; drawing an opponents

momentum to render them unthreatening; strong confident posture; and facial aggression. Through the successful performance these bodily movements karateka are awarded coloured belts, or grades, that are a symbol of their level of ability. The repetitive performance of such bodily movements and expressions over time ingrains these ways of moving the body deep into our conception of our body and how we use it such that the movements become readily available and performed without conscious reflection – they become bodily dispositions.

Such movements of the sport are not explicitly governed by gender – there are no separate techniques for women and men, no separate formal rules in the dojo for women and men, and no distinction in the requirements for women and men to achieve new belts, or to have won a fight in the club. The uniformity of karate practice marks karate as quite distinct in comparison to other mixed-sex sport practices. The unisex structure of karate is thus embedded with expectations of women and men's bodies to perform the exact same movements, expressions, and bodily exertions as one another, to the same high standard that karate asks its practitioners to strive for. Within this structure women and men were given the opportunity to develop and embody the same bodily dispositions as one another. However, ideas and uses of bodies in the dojo are not isolated from ideas and uses of men and women's bodies in other arenas of life. Pre-existing ideas of combat sport, and pre-existing ideas of women and men's bodily capacities work alongside interactions in the dojo that give women and men different starting points for embodying karate dispositions. As such, a lot of work had to be done to arrive at a point of equal expectations of women and men. Women and men's successful performance and embodiment of karate's uniform, non-gendered, dispositions is an achievement of which I am interested in exploring: if and how this non-gendered achievement is done, and where and when gender does re-emerge within karate practice. I argue that karate practice asks both women and men for an embodiment of uniform karate dispositions, and in doing so, encourages an undoing of difference, and thus an undoing of gender.

4.1.1. Conventionally ‘masculine’ bodily dispositions

More than just learning the same bodily movements as one another, it appeared karate practice also required its women and men karateka to learn movements that are often understood as, and utilised as, markers of gender distinction. Utilising the body to develop and exert combative blows has long stood as a symbol of masculinity, and as such, a key to masculine embodiment. Such motions are not inherently male, nor are they motions that women have not engaged in historically or presently, but are uses of the body that in western society have been framed as masculine, and are commonly understood as masculine. In the karate hall, women and men engage their bodies in these combative motions, developing the techniques, awareness, and timing to be able to hold one’s own in a fight. Such hitting techniques are essential to karate practice, and the primary way in which newcomers imagined using their body in a karate hall:

When I first started I thought it was just going to be: learn this kick, learn this punch. I thought it would be quite fun to try, and really different to other ways of keeping fit I’d tried. What you don’t realise is how much else you do in a class, or even how much goes into actually getting the punch right.
Kirsty, Bushido.

Fighting is what you think of when you think of karate, so that was part of the appeal – learning how to fight. Not in a savage way, but just to see if I could... Scott, Lothian Wado-kai.

For men in particular, learning how to fight was cited as a key interest in learning karate. For Scott, and others, this was about testing himself against an ideal of how men ‘should’ be able to use their bodies. Yet the presence of women in karate halls, and women’s development of combative uses of their bodies drew into question the exclusivity of fighting to men’s bodies, and in doing so, also posed the question: what is masculine about fighting? On the face of it, women’s combative uses of their bodies de-gendered combative bodily movements within karate settings as embodiments expected, and capable, of all. To this question, karateka often referred to ideas of biology as a way of tying men more tightly to embodying combative ability:

I think it is just due to physical attributes how like guys are naturally a lot stronger and faster, so they are more capable of a lot more things in karate than girls. Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

Every now and then you just need to hit some pads and release that testosterone. It's like a medicine for all the pent up emotions, and competitiveness or whatever's going on with you at that time. David, Juniper karate club.

As such, the gender neutralising potential of women embodying such conventionally masculine traits was limited by assumptions about men's bodies that retained a link between fighting ability and masculine embodiment.

Alongside the throwing of punches, kicks, and strikes, were particular expectations of karateka's facial expressions, and how they held themselves:

We were about to start our kata when Sensei Katie stopped us: 'no no no, go to the back and do that again! How do we do kata? Do we just mope up and whisper 'Heinan shodan' (the name of the kata)? No. Shoulders back, confident, and look like you mean it!' Then Katie demonstrated standing strong, with eyes fixed forward and tension held across her face, and an assertive shout 'Heinan shodan!' drawing her face further more aggressive, almost as if she was shouting to prepare to fight in the street. 'It's just like Kumite, if you start slumped over and shy is your opponent gonna' be scared? Are they gonna' believe you want to be there? No. Same with kata - start strong with a strong upright back, shoulders back'. I tried to mimic the posture Katie had shown, drawing my face more serious and intent, standing tall, ready to show how dangerous I am. The small changes in how I held myself made me *feel* stronger, sharper, and more confident. It was a set of mannerisms that made the rest of my physical movements feel more powerful, effective, and right.

Aggression felt and displayed throughout the whole body sparked an energy that aided the completion of karate techniques. Not only did it make karateka look assured and focused when static, it facilitated, and was part of, throwing techniques and moving from one position to another. It was both an expression displaying the intent expected of karateka, and an intent that enabled the body to move correctly.



Image 1: A Karateka performing kata at a competition with aggression in her face as she performs a strike.

Low-grade women notably struggled to embed an aggressive face and confidently strong demeanour in their karate practice, particularly those who had started the sport as adults:

I still struggle with doing karate faces, I struggle to look serious. Every time I do, I just end up laughing. I just feel I look silly. Claire, Bushido.

Gendered expectations of men meant that overall men were more likely to have frequently expressed aggression elsewhere in their life, in turn building up a bodily knowing of, and comfort with, expressing aggression. Whilst karate required women to display aggression, the gendered demands of society often place moral pressure on women to display a caring and submissive bodily mannerism. Here, the aggressive, assertive, expression of women's bodies asked for in the dojo came into conflict with

the emotional dispositions and expectations of women's presentation of a gendered self. As women developed through the karate ranks, the difficulty in embodying aggression within the movements and expressions of their bodies was overtaken by an aspiration to perform karate well. Through repetitive practice of performing aggression in their face, and determination in their bodily movements, such movements developed into bodily dispositions for many women karateka within the dojo. These women were better able separate their 'karate persona' from expectations of women held outwith the dojo:

When I go out on the mat, it's almost like I go out on video game mode because I don't think about being, like, aggressive or intimidating. Like I know I'm throwing everything hard and fast, and I'll scream a kiai, but I don't think 'try to be intimidating or aggressive', because I'm not, it's just doing what I'm meant to do. Then when you have breaks during the class, its back to a load laughs – its very light hearted really. It's like a sort of out-of-body experience sometimes (practicing karate), when I'm really focused. Steph, Juniper karate club.

As a separate persona, it did not mean that these women did not embody caring, nurturing, and possibly passive uses of their bodies at other times that fit more neatly in line with ideas of femininity and feminine embodiment. Rather, that they contextualised hitting movements and aggressive mannerisms in karate as something that is *required* within a specific context, with specific rules, that built up part of who they are, but is not completely who they are. Similar sentiments were expressed by many of the men interviewed, who equally separated themselves from *being* an aggressive person, but rather being someone who performs combat techniques within the *context of karate*. In contextualising these aggressive, combative, bodily expressions as something central to being a karateka, combative and aggressive bodily movements were transformed from a symbol of a violent and dominating masculine embodiment, to a mimetic bodily expression expected of, and embodied by, both men and women within the dojo.

Expressions of aggression through physical strikes deployed by the body, or as emotionally expressed through karateka's face, sat in contrast to conventional expectations of women, and the fragile, passive, and attentive/pleasing gendered

embodiments society expects of women. The experience of developing bodily skill sets deemed unsuitable, or unattainable, for women was a particularly enjoyed element of karate practice for many women:

Everyone's shocked when they hear I do karate. Nobody ever expects me to be good at something like that – they couldn't imagine me fighting! I think they think – 'she's a mum! Mum's don't do karate?!' I quite like that about it, it makes people realise you can't judge a book by its cover. Claire, Bushido.

Martial arts sort of appealed to me because I was a tomboy I think. I always wanted to climb trees and basically do anything that was meant to be a boy's only thing. I think I thought 'why should boys get all the fun stuff? If I'm not meant to be able to do it, I want to do it!' And after all these years I was right, I can do 'boys' things, and I can do them well. Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

In learning and performing the aggressive and combative motions of karate, women gained access to a set of bodily dispositions conventionally reserved for men. Such engagement with off-limits uses of their bodies was enjoyed for the capacity it provided to shock others, as Claire suggests above, and as Kimberley suggests, to define for themselves appropriate uses of their bodies, and explore their bodies' potential. In playing with the motions, movements, and expressions of karate practice, women karateka challenged conventional passive uses of women's bodies, and developed skill sets that could begin to reframe understandings of their bodies as also strong, active, and capable. Karate women now had a second problem: in adhering to the conventions of karate, they then needed to return to some kind of embodied femininity outside the dojo. Through performing these activities repetitively over time, women's altered bodily dispositions developed in the dojo were felt to permeate women's embodiment both inside the dojo and outside the dojo:

Freya got picked on by a boy in her class, and since she started karate she started sticking up for herself and unfortunately now he's picking on someone else. But because he saw Hannah wasn't an easy target, she just carries herself different, she doesn't shy away from everything, so he moved on. James, Juniper karate club.

If anything was to kick off on a night out, my friends would think 'oh no trouble', whereas I wouldn't feel worried in that atmosphere anymore, I'd

want to stay if I thought something was going to kick off because I know I do know how to hold my own if anything happens. Steph, Juniper karate club.

4.1.2. Conventionally 'feminine' bodily dispositions

The bodily movements of karate, centred on learning combative techniques, involved more than isolated arms throwing punches, or legs stretching into a kick. They involved a coordination of the body as a whole moving into technical positions, agile shifts of body weight from one leg to the other, the use of sound and rhythm to help the coordination of the body, subtle twists to change the trajectory of technique, and spatial awareness of the distance between self and imagined or real opponents. The make-up of all the delicate and intricate bodily movements behind a punch or a kick lead many karateka to call their practice an 'art'. As beginners and lower grades embarked on learning the bodily movements of karate, they often broke karate techniques down into isolated limb movements:

When I started just learning a basic punch and I was like 'oh my god, how much do you need to think about! Knees, hips, arms! Oh my god!' And it's just like wow... You think you've done a punch, then you get told 'now what about your hips' or 'your legs are in the wrong place' – its hard! From watching the kids I thought it didn't look that hard, but then doing it yourself you realise there's so much to think about. Claire, Bushido.

I watch the feet when I'm stuck on a move. I watch the feet and try to get my feet right first, and then sort the arms later. Kirsty, Bushido.

The focus for many beginners was on the combative technique they were trying to throw – the punch, kick, or strike. In doing so, they focused their strength and exertion into the fist or leg they deemed to be asserting the strike to their imagined opponent. This compartmentalised approach to performing karate techniques was visible in the way lower grades performed the same techniques in comparison to higher grades:

Ant, he's a bit clobbered. He can't move very quickly, he slumps around and just tries to throw things hard. So when you go to hit him he is there, and he'll move right into you. Craig, Bushido.

Katie and Craig, they are just brilliant. We are so lucky to have them as coaches. Everything they do just looks perfect and effortless. It's like watching ballet. They move so gracefully but you know if they were to hit you it would do some damage. Sandra, Bushido.

Whilst lower grades' movements often appeared rigid, static, or scruffy as their body parts worked in disconnection, high grades movements flowed smoothly and sharply as the body worked in coordination. Partly the ease with which higher grades could perform techniques was due to the depth of time spent practicing and embodying the movements of karate. A further part was high grades' embrace of the artistic side of the sport – the side that emphasised grace in movement, elegance in technique, control, and subtle and soft manipulations of the body, the side that embraced uses of the body conventionally deemed feminine. For some men new to karate, this side of the combat sport was unexpected and disregarded in favour of focusing on hitting things hard, or fitness. Some of these men left the sport quite quickly rather than develop the more feminine elements, suggesting an inability to manage their masculinity within such a context. Others found ways to re-evaluate and manage them. This entailed compartmentalising karate into sections they liked and disliked, or reframing bodily movements that could be interpreted as feminine, as masculine:

When people think of karate they don't really think of kata. It's fine, but it's not for me. I'm here cause I enjoy sparring and things like that. Scott Lothian Wado-kai.

I think people don't realise the practical uses of kata, like what each move is doing, how that is disarming or eliminating your opponent. Like Jion is a really powerful kata I think, it's all moves that you can really put your strength into. James, Juniper karate club.

Such interpretations of their own practice enabled men to perform and embody the artistic movements of karate in a way that they felt maintained their masculinity. For many men and women, the artistic elements of karate made perfect sense, and were embraced as something to value about the sport:

To be able to lift the knee and wrap a kick so effortlessly around a target with the control to just dink a touch with the toe, and then bring it back down -

magic. Particularly at my size, it feels great to be able to do that. Keith, Juniper karate club.

The way we dance around an opponent, set up a technique, execute it to technical precision, and swiftly move away again. It's an art, that's why it's a martial *art*. Karate used to be about hitting people as hard as you could, there was no skill in it – it was physical and it was hard, but there wasn't much skill. Whereas now – wow. The sport's moved on and it's for the better. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

Spatial awareness and rhythm with movement, much like a dancer, was drawn upon to glide through the patterns of kata, or execute the correct timing and movement of advances forward:

'Listen', *ta ta!* Sensei Katie's feet pat the floor quick and light let purposefully. The noise mimics the rhythm of how the attack should move, of how my feet should move, and thus how my body would follow. The noise helps me work out how my body should feeling and how its parts should coordinate to get the right technique. For me, the sound description helped maybe more than seeing her perform the technique. My body can associate with the noise. It helps me know how it should *feel* which helps me know how to move. Field notes, Bushido.

The dancing and the karate... looking back the similarities between the two of them are uncanny. Rhythm, speed, posture - all the things you need to be a good karate player. Dancing gave me all I needed - the rhythm, the balance, the speed and accuracy. All karate added in was the technique and power, or the looseness of fighting competition style, but everything else - the similarities between karate and dancing are great. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

Unlike the refrain shown from many men and boys to activities such as dance, the elegant, controlled, rhythmic motions of karate were enjoyed as part of a variety of ways of using one's body in the dojo, supported by the masculine safety net that these movements could be utilised for combative purposes. Whilst men overall held the upper hand in embodying aggression, some women held an advantage over men in embodying the graceful, flowing, dispositions of karate due to expectations of women's uses of their bodies, and their likelihood of having engaged in activities such as dance or gymnastics. The mixture of conventionally feminine and masculine uses of the body thus offered a gendered foot-in for both sexes to either feel bodily

familiar with the motions of the sport, or find ways to accept the practice within the realms of being gender appropriate.

4.1.3. Getting it right

To perform karate well, karateka had to work at both the conventional masculine and conventionally feminine movements of the sport in sync. To throw a karate punch accurately, karateka had to hold a correct stance with the front knee bent, back leg straight; keep the back straight upright; twist the hips rotating the back foot to enable a full twist; push the arm forward as the hips turn; sharply exhale as the body moves to aid speed; and complete the final positioning of the first with attention to technical detail and full bodily control. As expressed earlier, throwing a technique heavily focused on strength lead to ‘clobbered’ and clumsy technique, whilst throwing elegant techniques with little strength or aggression embedded would do little to an imagined opponent, and may entail a row from the Sensei. Those who embodied the masculine and feminine movements together as karate’s bodily dispositions were best placed to perform the sport well.

Within the myriad of elements the body engages in whilst performing karate techniques, and the pace with which karateka were expected to move from one motion to the next, a focus on getting their karate movements right left little time to reflect on gendered presentations of self:

It’s usually a bit light sparring to begin with: so the body starts to loosen off a bit, the heart rate increases a little bit. Then you usually do some stretches with a partner or against the wall - and then you feel all the bits of body expanding beyond the points they’d normally expand and you think ‘oh god I’m going to die’. But just to that point, and then you move onto doing something a little bit more aerobic - like punching and kicking backwards and forwards. And then you’re trying to concentrate on moving hips legs arms, everything, in the right way...and it can be a bit of an information overload! And then quickly you’re onto something else like pad work, and the pace increases again, and everyone’s sweaty and knackered and you just get on with it. I think that constant changing its quite a good balance, you push your body right to that limit, then you move onto something else. Kirsty, Bushido.

Here, a focus on karate movements, vastly overshadowed concerns around gendered performances. In seeking to develop new ways of using their body to perform karate techniques, attention was brought to the body in a way that heightened bodily awareness. Heightened attention to the sounds, aches, and ‘feel’ of movement played a key part in signalling when the karate movement was right:

My favourite noise is when you catch someone with a perfect head kick, and it makes that perfect snapping noise. It sounds perfect and it’s like a sign the technique was perfect. It’s like confirming to your body it’s done well. Steph, Juniper karate club.

A good technique just feels right when it connects. When I throw a good, or lousy, technique, you can certainly feel it. When doing pad work, the sound on the pad confirms the feeling: a dull thud of a scrappy kick, or a nice sharp noise. You also get it from the sound of your suit sometimes when you throw a good technique. James, Juniper karate club.

Here, feelings from the body such as the ease or struggle for breath, tenseness in muscles, discomfort in the body, the sound of the gi rustle as techniques fired, the noise of a foot connecting with an opponent’s body, and looseness in limbs were all listened to and reflected on in order to gauge and improve practice. This heightened attention to their body expanded karateka’s knowledge of their body and its capabilities. In doing so, learning and developing the movements of karate not only remoulded the way karateka used their bodies, but also reframed their understanding of their body’s capacities, often in ways which challenged conventional gendered assumptions about their body:

I look at this photo and think, for a bigger guy, that’s a decent kick. Some heavier people can be a bit slow or clumsy looking with technique, but I look at that and think, actually, that’s pretty good – Ken, it looks graceful not clumpy. People don’t expect it from someone of my build.

As the karateka above reflects on his body, he redefines it from ‘big and clumsy’ to graceful. This reframed understanding of the body, tied into the practice of the body, builds one’s sense of embodiment. As such, through the embodied learning of karate movements, karateka, like the one above, remoulded their sense of embodiment in

ways that reflect on and embrace their bodily capabilities to move in manners conventionally deemed more appropriate for the opposite sex as well as their own.



Image 2: The photo discussed above. Practicing the correct positioning of a head kick.

For karateka who embraced and performed the masculine and feminine movements of karate over a number of years, the movements of karate became dispositions unconsciously thrown, expressed, and embodied. The unconscious embodiment of karate's masculine and feminine uses of the body enabled karateka to flow effortlessly and impressively through the dynamic, agile, and aggressive movements of karate:

When you think about how many things go into throwing a kick - you don't know, you can only think of the last 5%. The 95% that goes on before it you're unaware of: your body sets itself up, your eyes are focused... These are things your unaware of, and the only gratitude you get is when it's thrown and you hear that tap (on the opponent's body) - then you know it was good. But the effort that goes on behind that technique subconsciously to make you throw it... You're not aware of everything before that full stop because that's the only bit you can catch up on. You don't realise what your body and your feet are doing. You don't realise your body is relaxed and agile and ready to move. You don't know that when that person moves into distance, or gives the right signals, you're going to pounce on them. But you know that you're

trained to do it. It's dedication, it is artistry. But you're not aware of it. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

As karate movements developed into karate dispositions, previous uncertainties and bodily unfamiliarity with uses of the body that fitted conventional notions of what it is to be a man or a woman evaporated. Gendered movements were no longer something consciously performed, but unconsciously done. Karateka's embrace and embodiment of conventionally masculine and conventionally feminine movements into their embodied ways of being in the dojo, challenged the importance of these elements as *gendered* ways of using one's body.

4.2. Making and marking space

The bodily dispositions developed through karate practice are developed in a shared space – the karate class – and thus were developed in relation to negotiation of this space with those who occupied it. Here, women and men would mingle amongst one another whilst performing kata, with their trajectories of movement overlapping; stand side by side in a line and perform the same movements to the shout of the Sensei; perform solo in front of the rest of the karate class; train in pairs dotted around the dojo for partnered fitness drills or technical work; weave in and out across the hall during sparring; take water breaks; and share stories of their weekends.

How we use our bodies in space, and the opportunities, encouragement, or discouragement we receive to use our bodies in space, informs the meanings we give to our bodies and ourselves. The use of movement of one's body within an arena sits as a symbol of one's sense of self-worth within an arena, one's power in an arena, and one's sense of entitlement to an arena. I found that the structure of karate theoretically gave women and men equal opportunities to use their bodies, and to use them in ways which command space, based on their graded level of ability.

However, as discussed in chapter 2, women and men are societally encouraged to use their bodies to take up space quite differently, whereby women are often discouraged to take up space, and men are encouraged to. As such, in utilising karate movements

in the dojo, and indeed in developing karate dispositions in the first place, women and men start on an unequal footing.

The variance in men and women's confidence to use and assert their bodies through the space of the dojo was most notable amongst those who started the sport as adults. There was a tendency for women who started as adults to position themselves towards the lower grades when standing lined up from lowest grade to highest grade, or to avoid partnering with higher grades, despite recognising the benefits of training with high grades:

When I was a low grade I used to want to train with people that were higher grades and black belts because I used to think: you always want to be pushed, and you want to be with people who are like that. But part of me now feels a bit guilty if I am fighting someone who is better than me. I think 'they're not getting anything out of it.' Sandra, Bushido.

Training with higher grades and positioning themselves beside higher grades was an act of occupying a privileged space. In avoiding doing so, and rather positioning themselves beside lower grades, women avoiding situating themselves in a position of power and prestige that recognised their karate abilities. By aligning themselves spatially with lower grades, these women embodied a subordinate understanding of their bodies and themselves. Many women also found ways to minimise the space they used by moving out the way for others, moving into smaller spaces for their own practice so others had room, and for some, hiding out-with the gaze and space requirements of others:

I like being at the end next to the lower belts, hiding in the corner. I mean the other week I was in rows, and I was right at the back behind the pillar and I loved it! I felt I was in me own little space doing me own little thing and I loved it. Rebecca, Bushido.

In contrast, men who started the sport as adults did not appear to attempt to hide themselves, frequently position themselves as the bottom of their graded group, nor frequently give up their training space for others, and as such diminish their own

worth. For some men who started karate in adulthood, the problem was the opposite – they used up too much space:

James and Peter having quite an intense sparring match, so intense they took up almost the whole room. They moved from one side to the other, bumping and barging past others – including black belts - almost not noticing, as they seemed so fixed on their sparring. After moving straight through Stuart and Steph's sparring, Stuart, a black belt, confronted them 'Ay, watch what your doing lads.' Field note, Juniper karate club.

Indeed many men who started karate as adults were more forthcoming than their female counterparts to move throughout the hall for their own practice and seek to spar or train with higher grades, sometimes, as in the field note above, crossing lines of hierarchical respect when doing so. Although their movements were sometimes drawn in by more senior graded men or by the Sensei, women, even black belt women, rarely criticised men who crossed into their training space. Such men's bodily movements marked a comfort with taking up space in the karate hall, and in some instances, an air of entitlement to such space. Their use of space not only asserted a worthiness and alignment with power positions often above their rank; it also marked an entitlement to women's space. This reoccurring gendered pattern of uses of space in the dojo affected both the experience and subsequent meanings women and men attached to their own bodies, leading the former to an accommodating and self-subordinating embodiment, and the latter to an embodiment freely moving and deserving of expression in space.

However, amongst the adults who had started karate as children, uses of their bodies across space in the karate hall were more greatly similar than different. Both women and men would confidently take their place in the hall, with women commonly positioning themselves at the highest point of the graded line above men of the same grade within two of the clubs I trained with. These women and men would cover the hall as they sparred weaving amongst the other karateka, at times nudging others out the way to maintain their space, take to the floor to demonstrate movements and kata to the rest of the class, extend their bodies limbs with confident assertion, and swiftly move across others' trajectories to perform their katas well. The marked focus and

confidence of these women in comparison to women who started karate in adulthood points towards karate practice undoing bodily restrictive elements of feminine embodiment, and in doing so, levelling out the gendered disparity in women and men's recognition of their body as active, capable, and worthy.

Those who started karate as adults and those adults who started when they were children share the same dojo, and as such, both sets of gendered or de-gendered uses of space meet in the dojo, and come to negotiate the space. Here we see some men moving across the hall with confidence and awareness of others; some men clobbering across the hall oblivious to the spatial needs of others; some women commanding space focused on their practice; other women making minimal movements across shrinking terrain as if working to make their active bodies as invisible as possible; men undressing in the hall whilst holding conversations; and women trying to avoid looking down whilst following the conversation before shuffling off to the toilets to change. The overall pattern points towards men's comfort with their bodies and use of their bodies within the dojo, whilst women tread precariously along lines of hiding their sexualised body, limiting its active occupation of space, whilst fulfilling the physical, expressive, requirements of karate practice.

4.2.1. Sensory infusions of shared space

Karateka's use of space was not confined to the physical areas of the dojo that karateka stand in and move their bodies through to practice their art. The command of their voice, and exuding smell were also ways in which karateka marked space, and asserted their power position within the dojo. The physical exertions of the body moving through space make sport an arena where sweat, and the smell of sweat, is an inevitable component of the sporting body. The merging smells of others' sweat was something karateka had to become accustomed to when training, and the smell of their own sweat was something they had to come to terms with:

The karate hall is a pretty smelly place. You get used to it to the point you don't even notice it. I think if you do sport you expect to smell a bit! If you didn't, you'd be worried you hadn't been doing it (training) right! Steph, Juniper karate club.

Sweaty smells created and present during each class week after week were seen as synonymous with training well, and thus the smell of sweat was transformed from a symbol of unhygienic disgust to a symbol of hard work. Through the dispelling of sweaty smells inevitably from all karateka, the smells were seen as a normal part of training, and a normal part of being a karateka. It was also felt to be something that bound those doing karate together:

I think most people would come into the hall and think 'that smell is disgusting, how can anyone train in here'. But we all do because we are used to it. It's part of what *we* do. We can all get on with it and have a laugh with it cause we are all sort of comfortable with each other – to the extent of me telling you about my pre-competition toilet problems! Sean, Lothian Wado-kai.

This transformation in the meaning of the smell of sweat enabled karateka to justify their own exertions of sweaty smell across the dojo, whilst frequent immersion in the shared scents aided its normalisation. Not all smells were treated equally in the dojo. It was informally expected, and almost unanimously adhered to, that all karateka wore a freshly washed suit to training. Fresh sweat marked onto the gi and spread as karateka moved through the hall was generally accepted, however stronger smelling stale sweat evoked feelings of discomfort, to the extent that, in extreme cases, karateka would avoid training with particularly notorious karateka who crossed the smell line.

A particularly problematic area where the stench of sweat stuck was on karateka's hand pads and feet protectors. Whilst karate suits could be washed after training, and thus be limited of smell, hand and feet protectors appeared resilient smell retainers:

As the sweat of my tiring exhausted body surfaced on my skin, the sweat rubbed between my hands skin and the plastic of the mitts, staining them with smell. I had tried putting them in the washing machine, and they did come out smelling of roses, or lavender, or whatever the detergent was. But a few days

later the distinctive smell of karate hand pads came back. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

I've tried to wash the smell out so many times, but nothing works! Now I just think, oh well, what's the point! Everyone else is the same anyway, and I hardly ever hit to the face, so they might not even notice. Claire, Bushido.



Image 3: Old, trusted, hand protectors

As karateka punched and kicked their way across the hall, a trail of smell followed from their pads. As feet and hand pads were essential for sparring, smelling of sweat in karate was thus inevitable. As such, to do karate training, to be a karateka, one had to accept an olfactory condition that they will mark their place across the hall with the smells of physical exertion, and that they will need to get used to others' smells of exertion.

Smell is embedded with gendered and moral expectations, where sweat in particular is marked a scent particularly undesirable for women. Rather than avoiding the exertion of karate classes to avoid exuding sweaty bodily smells, some women managed the scent demands of femininity alongside the physical exertion of karate practice by wearing perfume or deodorant on a freshly washed gi. Instead of lingering a socially undesirable smell of sweat as they moved across the hall, these women infused their movements with feminine fragrances deemed much more

appropriate for women, and much more accommodating to those they share the space with. Through such actions these women's' presence within the karate hall was marked, and marked in gender distinct way. For other women, the renegotiation of sweaty smells as hard work undermined the common gendered and moral frameworks around smell, transforming it into an accepted, and expected element of being a karateka:

I came out of Paul's class absolutely soaked - the sweat was literally dripping off me - my face was beetroot, I was stinkin' (of sweat), but that's what you want. You want to come out like that, it shows that you've really worked and you've had a great class. Steph, Juniper karate club.

Through this transformation, women karateka were able to justify their imprint in the smellscape of karate classes based on notions of working hard and being a good karateka. In marking their space and movement through the karate hall through the scents of either bodily sweat, perfume, or both, women karateka assert their bodily being in the dojo, and in doing so, mark their bodies as active bodies worthy of being there, and being recognised.

Shouting is another fundamental way in which karateka occupy space within the dojo. Whether it is the Sensei shouting instructions to the class, karateka shouting to add emphasis and aggression to their techniques, or karateka cheering for class mates during fitness drills or mock competitions, use of voice is frequent and centrally important to karate practice. The prominent type of shouting engaged in by karateka in the dojo is the kiai – a shout placed on the exertion of a technique deemed to finish one's opponent. The kiai is a short and sharp shout teamed with facial aggression that contribute to the set of bodily dispositions expected of karateka. This style of using their voice not only further embodies an ethos of control and aggression through karateka's bodies, it also worked to assert belief in their combative techniques, and their power position within the dojo:

I say to some of the lower grade who maybe aren't as confident yet, I tell them it's important to kiai. To prove the point I'll, in the middle partnered training, give out a big kiai and say to them did anyone flinch? And the answer is no because its what we do. It's not just standing in the class

shouting, it's a release, part of the technique. Nobody blinks, so what are you scared of? They just need to realise that no one cares, it just shows you've done the move and you know what your doing. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

I think if you have someone beside you who is loud and powerful, and you're quiet, I think you feel more like you're in the background. So I tried to make it a bit louder. Even though I'm not the greatest person at karate I think if I am good at kiai-ing at least that's something! Kirsty, Bushido.

Assertive, loud uses of voice that commanded the hall and boomed one's determination in combat posed particular problems for women karateka - much more prominently than women's discomforts utilising physical space through movement in the dojo. When lined up, performing kata, or sparring, some women would remain completely quiet vocally, whilst others gave quiet kiais with wavering and uncertain voices. Explanations from the sensei were often given to try and convince quiet women of the essential use of their voice to performing karate properly. Two of the clubs I trained at used specific training drills or interventions to tackle women's reluctance to kiai such as getting all the women to perform moves with loud kiais whilst the men were allowed a rest, only allowing the women to join the men one by one as they kiai'd appropriately, or asking the women to perform the same movements again and again, sometimes in front of the whole class, until they kiai'd loud and assertively. These drills asked women to step out of their comfort zone and embody an aggressive confidence when throwing their karate techniques.

Most women over time became more comfortable kiai-ing in the dojo, with black belt women appearing unfazed as they kiai'd aggressively and freely whenever they wished to emphasise a technique. When women did kiai, they done so with a notably higher pitch than men, to the extent where some women's kiais mimicked a scream. In doing so, women found a way to manage both presenting femininity, whilst engaging in an aggressive use of their voice and face more commonly associated with men, but crucial to karate practice. For many women, kiai-ing was seen as an important part of embracing fighting spirit, and was experienced as an empowering expression of their karateka identity:

I love kiai-ing. You feel a buzz, a strength, right through your body. It makes you feel strong, like you've channelled all this energy through into your punch. In that second you just feel completely like a karate athlete from head to toe. Steph, Juniper karate club.

Through developing the skills and comfort over time to vocally assert themselves and their intentions within the karate hall, karate practice encouraged women to undo passive embodiments, and develop an active and assertive embodiment. This remoulded embodiment was associated with benefits that transcended the dojo:

I was proud of me self at work yesterday because there was an incident at work with my manager and I didn't like the way he spoke to me and I dealt with it - I actually dealt with it and told him. I felt dead proud of me self for that because I probably wouldn't of done that before (I started karate). You know, you have to assert yourself in karate, even if it's just announcing the name of a kata, and I hate doing it! But I thought possibly the confidence from doing it in karate is maybe... you know... challenging these other things in me life. Rebecca, Bushido.

The use of voice to assert aggression and dominance in karate practice was a disposition more quickly embodied by men, and again, was often pitched very low in a way that marked a gendered distinction from women:

I have got no problem with Kiai-ing. If I'm going to do something I'm going to let everyone hear about it. I've won more points by missing and kiai-ing than not. Even when I've know its missed in competition id still give it the big kiai and look as if I believed I'd scored, and then referees think - I didn't see it but it must of been in! Stuart, Juniper karate

It was notable that the men's kiais went on louder and in stranger manner - as if too long: the punch is sharp and the kiai also should be sharp. From some of the men the kiai sounded more like a warrior shouting along their long run-up into battle. The men's kiais caused younger girls to giggle. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

Through kiai-ing, men - and women who did kiai - made a claim that marked dominance in an arena. In Stuart's case, his kiai was successful in convincing others of his dominance over his opponents, despite the physical reality being different. For the men in my field notes, the reception of their claim was quite different. Although the girls' laughter may partly be in relation to insecurities they may have held

themselves around kiai-ing, in this instance, the laughter was also at the overly aggressive display of dominance by the men in the class. The men's display of dominance evidently did not convince the girls, who asserted confidence in their own judgements and positions as karateka by laughing.

Whilst karateka were expected to kiai with a fighting spirit that marked their presence and attempted to claim their position in the dojo, senseis too used their voices' volume and tone to set out their authority. Despite the sensei's I came across coming from differing clubs and cities, there were similarities across the manner in which they exerted their voice: Calm and smooth when giving instruction; loud and faster paced when they wanted their student to increase the pace and intensity of their practice; and assertive and sure when instructing karateka to change or adapt movements of the body to reach the correct technical standard. Katie at Bushido noticeably used a more serious and strong tone in her voice than the male Sensei's I trained under. Perhaps the variance in command of her voice reflected an intention to disassociate herself from notions of femininity that commonly surround and devalue women coaches.

Already holding an ultimate position of power, what senseis said to karateka and how they said it held particular power to shape karateka's sense of worth to express and explore their bodies abilities within the space of the dojo:

He noticed that I couldn't do the combination and singled me out. I understand that he is there to help and correct but he wasn't. He made me do the move on my own but didn't come and stand next to me, he spoke in a loud voice so that the rest of the class and the spectators could clearly hear that I couldn't do it. I felt as if he was laughing at me (he even smirked at one point) and making it his business to intimidate me. It was the manner in which he spoke to me that upset me. I was trying my best but got flustered as he was singling me out. He spoke in a loud voice, 'that's not sliding, that's stepping!' I felt if he had come over to me and had a quiet word and shown me what to do I would have understood more and reacted better to him. This went for a few minutes and then I could feel myself getting angry. I glowered and at him and I think he got the impression that I wasn't at all happy. I did fill up and felt like crying. He made me feel totally incompetent and very 'small'. Rebecca, Bushido.

Whilst this use of voice to embarrass and belittle a student was by no means routine of karate senseis, the deeply hierarchical structures of power within karate enabled this vocal assertion of power and disempowerment to occur. The vastly disproportionate quantity of men to women occupying roles as senseis meant that this type of treatment was notably committed by men, and in this incident, worked to backtrack women's confidence in their body as an active body, and their worth in occupying space in the karate hall.

4.3. Separate classes, separate dispositions?

When observing the karate classes a pattern emerged that the women who were uncomfortable expressing aggression in their face, who shrunk their bodies into small spaces to train rather than flow fully extended karate movements across the dojo, who moved out the way when men broached their space, and whispered rather than roared a kiai predominantly came from the women-only class. The women observed at other karate clubs, and women from the same club who started and mainly trained in the mixed sex class, were much less likely to maintain a prolonged discomfort with the expressive and aggressive embodied requirements of karate practice. Whilst it was quite common for women beginners, and indeed men who were beginners, to be uneasy with kiai-ing, holding their body in a way that exudes strength and confidence, and commanding space with their bodies in the dojo, these women and men almost learned to embody the karate dispositions during their low grade training. For the women in the women's only class, refrain and discomfort around kiai-ing, sacrificing their training space for others, and trying to hide away in class were maintained into their higher grades.

One reason for the distinct variance in women from the women only class's embodiments of karate's bodily dispositions compared to other women and men's may be that the women who started in the women's only class were often women who appeared to, or self-reported as, starting with 'low confidence'. What they appeared to mean by this term was a situated lack of belief in their bodily abilities that impacted their ability to be demonstrative, and gave them a low sense of worth.

Choosing to learn a combat sport like karate entailed understanding and accepting that they would need to use their body in a variety of solo and partnered ways. As such, those who entered mainstream mixed sex karate classes had done so with a pre-existing willingness to perform with and to others that perhaps excluded many with very low esteem. Those who began in the women's only class cited the women's only class as a comforting stepping stone into karate, a movement they otherwise would not have made:

Because it was just women it seemed less threatening. A little bit quieter than some of the other classes too. So I think the thought of it just being women was nice, it made it easier. It seemed less threatening... Like you didn't feel so silly, or that there were lots of experienced people to look down on you. I like the mixed class too now, and if we are sparring and I have to fight against men I have no problem with that, but, I don't think I would of started karate if there was only the mixed sex class. Claire, Bushido.

The sensei of the women's only class, Katie, was aware of the women in her class' lack of belief in themselves, and used active strategies within the women-only karate class to transform the women's relationships with their bodies to build strong and confident women:

I think from my experience of not always being given the opportunity to do the same as the boys - like at my first club I wasn't allowed to compete but boys were - maybe that's why I am hard on the women. I've heard horror stories from the other women about this woman coach: 'she was so tough on us!' Then I felt she was a bit harsh, but now I understand because I think that's what I've turned into. Its pushing in a nice way because you want them to be the best, not in a mean way. And they need that extra push because a lot of them don't realise how good they can be... I might for example get them to take the warm up, or get a brown belt to teach a couple of yellow belts something so that they can build that confidence to shout instruction in front of others. Because at the start of the warm up they need to learn to project their voice, and so hopefully that develops into a habit. And when they go to competition, or go for a grading, they do it naturally because it's a trained habit. Katie, Bushido.

As Katie asked her women's class students to perform kata in front of the rest of the class, teach some of the lower grades moves, take the warm up, or repeat a kiai until they had performed it with volume and aggressive spirit, Katie placed her students in

a position where they would repeatedly have to demonstrate and assert their voice, command their own body, and use the space of the hall all for themselves. In doing so, the women's only class developed the tools to break free from a passive embodiment through active, public, assertive action. Although these tasks were often fraught with anxiety in anticipation of using their body in front of others, these bodily performances also engaged the women in a reflection of their karate abilities and knowledge:

I still hate it when Katie gets us to stand in front of the class and take the warm up – I get so nervous! I always think 'oh my god, I won't know what to do, I'll look like an idiot'. When everyone's looking at you, what you're doing, it's quite scary. But once its over I have such an adrenaline rush because, actually, it always goes fine, and I feel good cause actually I have been able to show others something to do. Kirsty, Bushido.

Through repetitive action, and particularly action in front of others, women in the women only class were able to reflect on their own ability and knowledge, and in doing so, come to acknowledge their bodily abilities - that often far exceed their own expectations of themselves. The recognition of their bodily ability further cushioned their embodiment of karate's dispositions with self-belief, which enabled the movements and dispositions of karate to be reengaged with. In actively targeting and disrupting passive uses of women's bodies, the women's only class worked to engage its students in developing dispositions less commonly associated with women's embodiment – being active and assertive - that would enable them to engage in karate practice with confidence and ideally take this confidence into the mixed sex class. Improvements in women's belief in themselves to embody and express karate's dispositions could be seen at the class over time:

Rebecca surprised me at training today. When I first trained with her last year she always looked a bit timid. She usually held a nervous smile during sparring and mainly tried to stay away from me. She barely threw techniques at me in sparring and wouldn't kiai. I hadn't been at the club in about six months, but I was back down to visit everyone and ended up pairing up with Rebecca. I smiled to try and make her feel more comfortable. As we began to spar she was so much livelier – she would put the pressure on me at times by actively coming forward to try and score a point, and held such a focused and intent look. As she threw a punch to my body she gave out a little kiai, more

spoken than shouted, but it was a marked difference to when I first met her. Field notes, Bushido.

Three Muslim women came along to the women's only class – Hanaa, Iman, and Ruquyah. They wore a veil head to toe when they enter the class, and during their first class asked that the curtains were shut to so no men could see in. After a week or so they accepted the curtains being open so others walking by could see the class and potentially join the club. A little bit further down the line they participated in a class with men in it too in preparation for their first grading as they were told their gradings would be mixed sex. In their grading they stayed at the opposite side of the hall to the men but none-the-less done a grading in front and with men. That was a massive step for them and could be a massive step for their confidence in their life outside of karate too. Now they have started attending the mixed sex class regularly. John highlighted 'it's the little baby steps to inclusion.' Field notes, Bushido.

The examples above demonstrate the positive, and sometimes quite dramatic, effect the women's only class could have for the ways in which women used and held their bodies. Through the women's only class women like Rebecca, Iman, Hanaa, and Ruquyah were able to access the bodily training of karate. Whilst the Muslim women were initially uncomfortable occupying the same space to practice with men, through following the sports unisex structure that entails mixed sex gradings, they were convinced to do the grading in a mixed sex setting in order to further their own karate skills. Now their position is markedly different from when they started as they train in same classes as men, regularly sharing space and performing the karate capabilities of their bodies in front of men. This marks a vast change in these women's embodied interactions, grounded in a negotiation of what their bodies mean, and how women and men should interact. The process has led to Iman, Hanaa, and Ruquyah overwriting notions of their bodies as passive and immobile in front of men, and becoming active karate bodies that can and do display their skill and agency in front of men.

In the case of Iman, Hanaa, and Ruquyah, the single sex nature of the women's only class was important – crucial – for their initial participation in the sport. For these women, on religious grounds, men's presence in the same hall was initially a barrier to their participation in karate. For many of the other women who joined the women's only class, it appeared to be low confidence and the desire for an imagined

more welcoming class, rather than strictly the absence of men, that lead them to begin karate through the women's only class. Whilst the absence of men may have made the women's only class comfortable enough to enter, once these women had established themselves in the sport, it did not necessarily mean that they performed karate's expressive dispositions more fully in the women's only class:

I think things like sparring, some women would prefer to know they were only sparring against other women. But I think for things like Kiai-ing (shouting), the people that don't do it in the mixed sex class don't do it the women only either. Sandra, Bushido.

Women's refrain to kiai within both the mixed sex and women's only class suggests that it was not strictly an anxiety about performing in front of men that prevented them from embracing spatially commanding and expressive uses of their body. The creation of a separate class for women appeared to unintentionally create space for ideas of gender difference to be used to justify selectively embodying or altering the unisex dispositions of karate:

And, *whispering* I think you feel more like a woman when you go to the mixed sex (rather than the women's only class) - which is weird. You never feel as though you are comparing yourself to a bloke. You always feel you are a woman in yourself. I never think I'm an equal to them I always feel - I am a woman and I am taking this sport seriously. Kirsty, Bushido.

As such, despite the best intentions of the women's only class to develop strong, confident, and competent women karateka, some women used the class to hold onto ideas of gender difference and justify performances of gender distinction.

4.4. Chapter summary and discussion

Our sense of embodiment is informed by a multitude of sensory experiences of the body, how others respond to our bodily performances, gendered, raced, and classed societal frameworks of how we *should* use and experience our bodies, and how we interpret the space between our bodily experiences and others' interpretations/expectations. Gendered embodiments are facilitated by a structuring of society that

separates women and men's active lives, and values what men do above what women do (Connell, 2009; Kimmell, 2000). Within this framework, karate's unisex practice and the range of bodily dispositions provided a space to remould women and men's embodiment.

As karateka engaged their whole body in performing the movements and expressions of karate practice, women and men developed a broad set of ways of using and expressing their bodies in the dojo. Many movements and mannerisms of karate practice challenged conventional ways in which women and men are encouraged and expected to differently and distinctly use their bodies. Men were discouraged from using their bodies in overly aggressive and powerful ways (Morgan, 2016), whilst women were discouraged from being passive (Young, 2005), and rather, were taught to move effectively by utilising a blend of careful, calm, and aggressive movements. Importantly, they were asked to use their bodies in the exact same ways as one another. This stands in contrast to many sports whereby women and men's bodies are conditioned differently, enabling the reproduction of men's hierarchical distinction from women (Burstyn, 1999; Connell, 2012; McDonagh and Pappano, 2008). The uniform mixed sex practice thus minimised, although did not eradicate, gendered differences in ways of using the body that in turn complicated the grounds for gender distinction, and the categorisation of karate's motions as masculine or feminine.

Newly learnt ways of using and holding the body developed in the dojo combined with karateka's already existing bodily dispositions developed over a life time of experiences and expectations as men or women within the different settings they engage in. Most sports favour an embodiment that reflects the ways in which men are encouraged to use their bodies – to take risks, to command space, to seek to dominate – and thus give men and women an unequal starting points to participation (Burstyn, 1999). In karate, the privilege given to men's embodiment was softened by the sports embrace of characteristics conventionally seen as feminine. The gender-eclectic selection of movements and expressions to perform meant both women and men were asked to develop uses bodily uses not often asked of their gender, and to perform motions that more neatly aligned to ways of doing gender appropriately,

enabling both to feel bodily familiar, and comfortable with, the sports practice. Examination of the intricate sensory expressions entailed in performing karate's movements, such as tone of voice, use of space, and facial expression, illuminated the minute and deeply embedded underpinnings of our gendered embodiment that are not easily diluted. These infused the unisex bodily movements of the karate with gendered markings. Length of time within karate was key in the extent karate's bodily dispositions became ingrained into karateka's bodily ways of being, and displaced elements of gendered embodiment. This further suggests that whilst gender unisex practice of women and men may bridge their embodiments closer, they do not lead to gender neutral outcomes.

Given the association of fighting as an innate capacity, and tool of domination, for men (Bourdieu, 2001; Messner, 1990) women karatekas embodiment of karate's bodily dispositions entailed even greater gender subversive potential. Performing the movements of karate enabled women to develop a consciousness of their capacity for valued actions commonly disassociated with women as they felt, seen, and heard their limbs perform. The development of combative and assertive uses of their body, alongside the realisation of their bodily potential – particularly in comparison to men - formed dispositions that could actively protect women from abuse (McCaughey, 1997; Noel, 2009). This enabled women to develop an embodiment and embodied sense of self that held a sporting capital (Mennesson, 2000) that reduced embodied power differences between women and men. The propensity for many women to do so successfully, with enthusiasm and relative ease, suggests Young's (2005) framing of feminine embodiment as passive, fragile, objectified, and thus cut off from their intentions, did not frame the lived experiences and embodiments of most karate women.

Elements of Young's framing of feminine embodiment did appear to influence women in the women-only class's embodied experiences of karate. The women-only class gave women whom commonly had little belief in their bodily abilities or sense of worth a route into karate. Through techniques directed at challenging passive embodiments, the women's only class enabled women to extend their uses of, and

reassess assumptions about, their bodies. As a space for women only, ideas of women's inaptitude to engage in the bodily motions of combat in comparison to men infused both the reasons for women entering the women's only class, and their interpretation of its existence. Assumed gender difference was used by participants to legitimise embodying karate's dispositions selectively, in turn stunting their development as karateka in comparison to women in the mixed-sex class, and limiting their realisation of their body's potential. The comparison of women in the mixed-sex or women-only classes in this chapter thus adds an illumination of the subtle, and non-linear, embodied consequences of segregation to the literature on the costs and merits of sex-segregation.

Through a framework of uniform practice, karate encouraged women and men to develop the same ways of holding, asserting, moving, and expressing their bodies that in turn challenged conventional notions of being a woman, or being a man, and embodied differences between the two. The bodily conditioning in karate encouraged a gendered embodiment that broadened women and men's uses of their bodies and simultaneously reduced the grounds for hierarchical gender distinction. Whilst this remoulding did not eradicate all difference between women and men that might suggest an undoing of gender, the unisex practice did develop more similar embodiments that steered away from restrictive and exclusive ideas of masculinity and femininity, and thus disrupted inequalities inscribed in our bodily ways of being. The next chapter will explore the impact of visual symbols within karate practice on the ways in which karateka understand the bodily dispositions developed through the sport in relation to notions of gender distinction and the construction of a gendered hierarchy.

Interlude: The ‘ideal’ karate body

At the top level of most sports there is a body shape that the majority of their athletes fall neatly into – one that is both a product of their sporting practice, and one that enables them to perform their sport most effectively: Basketball players are tall, with long limbs to glide across the court and drop the ball into the net; rugby players have broad shoulders and a thick coating of muscle across all areas of their body to provide the might and weight needed to tackle and scrum effectively; sumo wrestlers are rounded in layer upon layer of fat and muscle that make them heavy to throw; female gymnasts are short, bendy, slim, and young performing elegant and agile movements, whilst male gymnasts have rippling muscles that are built and shown off as they hold their bodies weight one arm at a time; sprinters have muscular, dynamic moving, bodies, and long distance runners slender frames light enough to be carried mile after mile. These body types are more or less available to women and men based both on biology – i.e. men’s overall propensity to be taller and ability to build upper body muscle – and social encouragement or discouragement based on notions of how women and men *should* look. For the majority of sports, the ‘ideal’ body type presented often ties in with idealised images of masculinity as strong, tall, and powerful, and come into conflict with idealised notions of women’s bodies. Subsequently, the idealised body of many sports reinforce ideas of the men’s game as entailing the greatest skill potential, and the women’s game as lesser version of the men’s. So what does an ideal karate body look like, and how does this frame the hierarchy of bodies within karate practice?

To be a good karate practitioner requires a broad set of physical skills. A good karateka needs to have good timing and sense of distance for throwing attacks with the correct level of contact to one’s training partner, and evading an attack whilst maintaining a good distance for throwing a return attack; rhythm and loose movement for sparring; flexibility to perform head kicks; strength to sink a body punch or body kick into a pad; sharp movements filled with strength and control that

enable the pristine appearance of a kata; long legs and arms can be beneficial for fighting as they create a longer reach, whilst shorter limbs are often beneficial for kata as the explosive power of techniques can be executed faster; a strength across their body that enables them to throw fast techniques with controlled precision; and an attitude determined to improve, and unfazed by the prospect of hitting and being hit. With the variety of tasks involved in karate practice, there is not one body type which prevails as an 'ideal' body type for the sport: some practitioners may be short with a disadvantage in distance for fighting, but dynamically powerful with their movement that makes up for their height; some may be flexible and thus great kickers, but lack the bodily coordination and strength to execute punches well; and some may have great technique, but a fear of getting hurt that holds them back in partnered work or sparring.

Indeed there are many elements of karate training that might be better suited to differing body types. To be good at karate as a whole entails blending a mixture of strength, flexibility, agility, control, a strive for technical precision, powerful movements, soft and subtle movements, and the mental strength to take and receive a hit. The outcome of this broad blend of skillsets is that there is not an 'ideal' body type that best encompasses the requirements of karate. Instead, there are many body types that can and do piece together excellence in certain areas of the sports practice, building a collection of areas of karate in which they excel, and others they are competent or weak in. As such, many body types can find a way to excel in karate practice, and indeed they can be both male and female.

5. Beautifully Violent: the de/gendering of visual symbols in the practice of karate

Finely textured blue and red mats line the community hall, arranged to create three areas of blue squares outlined by the red mats. Dotted across the mats are men, women, and children in white suits wearing various coloured belts, stretching their bodies into contorted twists, and expanding shapes, with some facial expressions more at ease than others. The sensei bows upon entering the room: 'Line up!' he shouts. Two neat lines of people facing the sensei are made: heels together, standing upright, hands by their sides, with serious looking facial expressions. Vertically, the line dips, gradually rises, and steeply falls across the heads of the karateka, and their body shapes, too, vary: tall, short, long legged, more rounded, more muscular, young, and old. Keeping the line neat is their uniformed standing position, and a gradual blending of belt colours along the line from white at the back to black belts at the front. The sensei stands at the front facing the two lines where he can be seen, and he can see all. The class is ready to begin.

The vignette above describes the types of scenes found upon entering a karate club. As you enter the dojo for the first time, before experiencing the physical, tacit, and exhausting practice of karate on the body, you are met with an array of visual codes and symbols. As alluded to in the previous chapter, although a combat sport, karate is also a martial *art* and as such is embedded with a philosophy that entails its practice visually displays respect, discipline, and flowing, elegant yet violent uses of the body. As a martial art, karate performance requires: technical accuracy calling upon fluid, elegant, movements of the body to execute efficient defence and precise, powerful, attacks; disciplined obedience to the sensei; and frequent displays of respect, particularly towards more skilled karateka, who may be women. Through the visual displays expected within karate's practice as an art, unexpected challenges to conventional ideas of gender, and gendered embodiment, are made.

This chapter will discuss some of the visual symbols entailed in the practice of karate, and the role these symbols play in setting the stage for performances and embodiments of gender. The unisex practice of the sport and its strictly visible hierarchy of ability will first be discussed. Here I add to the suggestion of the previous chapter that the unisex practice of karate structures the sport's practice in a manner that de-genders embodied relations within the sport. Here, the ability of many women to visibly *out perform men* in karate training poses serious questions to ideas of gender difference, and the legitimacy of a gender hierarchy. Following this, the position of women experts as symbols of inspiration to other women in the sport will be discussed, alongside the impact such female role models have on karate men and their understanding of gender relations. Finally, the re-emergence of notions of difference through ways of interpreting men and women's performances of karate is drawn on to highlight the resilience of conventional ways of seeing and interpreting men and women's bodies that seek to inscribe gender *on to* our bodies, and thus into our negotiations of our embodiment, whether we like it or not.

5.1. The hierarchy of ability

In observing the interactions within the dojo, it appeared that embedded within the philosophy of karate was a respect for karateka's position within the hierarchy of ability. Ability was visibly marked by coloured belts karateka wore, which reinforced the correct interactions, respect, and hierarchical positioning between karateka. The belt each karateka wore acted as a symbol to the standard of ability they were able to perform. Here, women and men were expected to perform the exact same tasks in order to achieve their belts, where women can, and often do, prove themselves to be better than their male training partners. The share of coloured belts across the dojo provided an instantly visible rejection of the notion prevalent in sport that all men will be better than all women.



Image 4: Karate class lined up with black belts (most experienced) at the front

More than just a symbol of ability, a karateka's belt also appeared to sit as a marker of status – a respected position based on both ability and experience that commands specific interactions, primarily, recognition and respect from lower graded karateka. Thus, the ability of karateka were not only visible through their coloured belts, it also denoted hierarchical interactions between karateka, that too, were made clear to see:

As the Sensei takes his place at the front of the hall and shouts 'line-up' the karateka jog hastily into a line with white belts - the lowest grade - at one side gradually moving grade by grade upwards along the line, and through a rainbow of colour, to the most senior graded and experienced karateka at the other end – black belts. A newcomer who has arrived for his first lesson stands beside David, a green belt, who he had been chatting to before class. David whispers to him 'oh no, you can't stand here mate. You're at that end' pointing towards the white belts. The newcomer, looking self conscious and uncertain, looks around to others for guidance, probably worried he might do something else wrong. Kimberley, a black belt, takes him to the end of the line below the other white belts 'here pal, this is where the beginners stand'. Field notes, Wado-kai Karate.

As an outsider, the newcomer was unacquainted with the social rules and hierarchy guiding where they stand when lining up. His mistake was quickly picked up, and he was shown his place by senior grades, and at the same time, was shown the prominence of a hierarchy of ability, and the importance of respect to that hierarchy. Through the belt system, the overt ranking of karateka was made visibly clear to everyone in the room. Exactly where each karateka sat within the club's hierarchy of ability, and thus what level of status they were afforded, was presented at a glance. The entwining of respect with karateka's graded level of ability entails that not only

can women be seen and recognised as more competent karateka than some men, they are also *respected* as better karateka too:

There's lots of women better than me in the club. It surprised me when I first started karate how many women done it, and how many (women) black belts there were, just because you wouldn't think it would be the sort of thing women would want to do. But there's plenty women better than me in here, and once I got over the initial surprise, you kinda forget they are women – they are black belts, or brown belts, or good fighters, you know? People to try to be more like. David, Juniper karate club.

Me and Sarah started about the same time and now she's that one step ahead of me, and I'm really happy for her, but I do wish I was ready for blue belt too. We'd came through all the belts together till now, but her kicks are a lot better than mine, and she picked up the new kata quicker than me, so I think that's why she got to grade and I never. We still pair up (to train together), and she's helping me with the new kata too, so I hope I can grade for blue belt soon. Gareth, Wado-kai Karate.

Here women are recognized as both higher grades by the men interviewed, and as people deserving of their achievements, to learn from, and to 'be more like' in the quest to improve their own skills. Women's visible superior karate capacities to men posed challenges to men's embodiment of gender as grounded in an assumed superiority over women. Here, the visibility of graded women's ability entailed men's embodiment was built with recognition and respect to women's ability to excel in karate beyond their own talents.

The symbol of ability a karateka's belt denotes appeared to not only signifying to others the ability of the karateka, but also worked to reinforce some karateka's, at times waning, belief in their own skills:

When I was a lower grade I was always comfortable with the belt I had – I always felt I had deserved it and was good enough to wear it... Now I'm a black belt I just think... the expectations are up, you know? And sometimes I think 'am I really good enough?' I just sometimes feel - why am I doing this? I'm really not that good cause I've been caught twice now (with punches during sparring). But then I do look back to my black belt photo and think, actually, I did work really hard for this, and the examiners don't give black belts easily. Sandra, Bushido.



Image 5: Discussed above.

Recognition of self-improvement was found not only in reflection of belts, but also in the motions of the body:

You can see how much better you are now to how you used to be. So it helps you feel like you are improving. When I first started kicking a round kick you could see the difficulty and awkwardness of trying to do it. And I'm nowhere near perfect now but because I'm stretching more, and more supple now, I can see a massive difference in how I kick and punch. James, Juniper karate club.

Every class I go to I'm seeing improvement... even if it's a tweak on technique, learning a new kata, scoring a point in a fight - anything at all. Anything I can take away and get better with. That's my main reason for training, because I want to get better. I want to be good. Steph, Juniper karate club.

The act of improving, and being able to see these improvements whether via achieving a belt or seeing the body moving better, appeared to be particularly important for women, who more commonly talked of doubting their own ability. The reassurance sought through their belt appeared to be a phenomenon predominantly mentioned by women, and in particular, women who had attended the women's only classes. Taking a moment to look at their belt, and reflecting on what it entailed to

achieve such an accolade, patched together a fragile belief in their own ability, which, in some instances, prevented these women from leaving the sport:

Nearly every week I'm threatening to quit – I just think what am I playing at? I really struggle learning katas...I must look so silly. But then again, I never thought I'd ever achieve my orange belt, and I did. I look at my belt and I think, well actually, I might not be the best but I have improved, and that's a nice feeling. So maybe I'm not all *that* bad. Rebecca, Bushido.

As such, the belt system of karate imposed visual symbols of ability upon the bodies of karateka - whether they fully believe themselves to be worthy or not – that made clear the hierarchy of status in the club, and exactly where each karateka was positioned within the hierarchy, with women often being positioned above men. The belt system of karate thus structured the sport in a way that was inherently non-gendered. It was a structure that did not reserve success and achievement for men, it did not ask women and men to perform different tasks, nor did it suggest men were 'the norm' and women, and their karate performances, were different to the norm. As women and men were scattered along the line-up of white belts to black belts, ideas of men's hierarchical, often-deemed biological, dominance in sport were directly challenged. The belt structure of karate made clear that all men were *not* better than all women, and that some women were indeed *a lot better* than some men. Through the unisex practice and structure of karate, recognition was given to the spectrum of ability that men and women were interspersed along, posing serious challenges to notions of hegemonic masculinity, and the legitimacy of a gender hierarchy. In turn, such challenges destabilised the power inequalities between women and men, and as such, destabilised gendered embodiment.

5.2. Women as visible experts and role models

Although karate is now a sport that many women and girls take part in, a generation ago karate in Britain looked a lot more like a 'male domain':

I mean when we were training there were very little women training. There was the wife of coaches and that was about it. But these women were all on your national team or there about mostly. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

When I first started going away to competitions there was always a full team of junior men. And when I first went, I remember only one junior girl going. Sometimes there wasn't one. Now whether that was because there was nobody good enough to be selected, maybe, but I also wonder that... if the lads weren't good enough... would they not take any of the lads? I'd say they probably would of still taken the lads. Now it's completely different. I mean is it 50/50? Possibly not, but I don't think its excessive. Its went from one or sometimes no women or girls to nearly 50/50. Craig, Bushido.

Coaches, referees, governing body directors, competitors, and general club practitioners were all predominantly men, with clubs generally having a sprinkling of women – and sometimes none. From the outside looking in, one might have thought karate was a sport for men. The distinct absence of women will more than likely have put off many women from taking up the sport, or even entering the dojo in the first place. Indeed, the visual absence of women in karate's past painted a picture of karate as a sport for men, and not for women.

However as far as I have been able to research, karate has never been a 'men only' sport, and it is perhaps karate's initial lack of women that enabled mixed-sex practice to emerge as the norm, and flourish:

I went into the adults class from age 12 until I was 18, and there was only me and one other female. I think because there was only 2 women, we were treated the same as the guys, because there wasn't enough women to separate us out or anything anyway. So people like Paul, Connor, and Derrick took it that...well, if you're in an adult class, and you're happy to train with us, we aren't gonna treat you any differently. Steph, Juniper karate club.

With only a handful of women at most in a karate class, the numbers were too few to start up a 'women's class' or to separate the women from the men for training drills. As such, practicality lead men and women to be taught together and practice together, opening up avenues to recognise similarity in ability of the sexes, and oppose traditional ideas of gender difference. Rather than segregating the initial influx of women karate practitioners from men, women practised alongside men

albeit for reasons of practicality. In doing so, distinctions often attached to women to segregate and subordinate women from men in sporting practice were (at least temporarily) made invisible or irrelevant.



Image 6: A photo of myself demonstrating a defensive head kick after avoiding a punch from my sensei, captured by one of my male interviewees and used to discuss ‘role models’.

The karate women of the previous generation, who trained, fought, and persevered as a vastly visible minority alongside men were mentioned by many of the more senior women I interviewed - those who had done the sport for ten years or more – as having a particularly strong influence on themselves and their karate paths:

When I started I wanted to be just like Kirsty, she was a woman at our club who got to fight for Scotland. I’d see her training in the adult class, and at that time there weren’t too many women in the class, but she out-shone everyone – men, women. She was just a really good fighter and had a good confidence about her. She was never timid or anything like that, she just always looked confident and strong fighting men, and kicking them in the head. I just thought – yes! I want to be like that! Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

One of the women who used to win the national championships when I was a child, she went to the Europeans when they were over here to watch, and she came down and saw me before the semi finals and she gave me some advice and was there when I was warming up. And I think for her she was like 'I'm going to support this young girl because I've been there, I know how she feels, she is there on her own, and she needs someone there'. And like every competition she came and gave me feedback and supported us, and that really meant a lot. She was someone I could only dream to be anything like when I was little, so it really did mean a lot. Katie, Bushido.

The lack of women in senior positions in British karate magnified the importance of the few women karateka as role models for younger women and girls coming through the sport. Seeing women holding their own or out performing men appeared to be a key component of the idolisation of experienced women karateka. These expert women acted as visual symbols that karate was not a male domain, but rather a space where girls and women can also participate, become very skilled, *and be better than men*. In doing so, the women of a generation ago paved the way for karate to be viewed as something for women and girls too, and are perhaps at least partially responsible for the large increase in women and girls presently participating in karate across Britain.

Highly graded women karateka commanded high visual prominence within the karate clubs I trained in: black belt women were often asked by the Sensei to demonstrate moves to the rest of the club as an example of how to execute the techniques correctly; women bringing home medals from competitions were highlighted by Sensei's at the start of the class to rounds of applause; experienced women would be asked to referee in-club competitions; and high grade women were often seen assisting lower grades with technical queries. Skilful women were paraded in the club as much as their male counterparts of equal skill level, and were looked up to as role models by both men and women:

Sam - she's the one in the club everyone's scared to fight! She has no fear. It's always brilliant to fight her or train with her... but you just know a kick in the face is just around the corner! Scott, Lothian Wado-kai.

We're really lucky we've got lots of good women here. Lots of good men too, but lots of black belt women who train really hard. I try to train with them as much as I can, trying to learn how to be like them! You need to train with people better than yourself to better yourself. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

Again, highly graded women held particular importance to young girls and women:

I was delighted as Sam was here today - a woman with probably more medals than everyone else in the class put together, and, despite retiring after having a child, who still fights with sheer tenacity. To fight her is always a brilliant, and painful, learning experience. But to get near her to fight her was impossible! Swarms of children, mainly young girls, surrounded her asking to fight her, to tell her about their day, or just to be near her to hear her funny stories or pieces of advice. No matter where Sam was in the hall, groups of young girls always seemed to be near, vouching for their chance to spar with her, or to catch her attention as they performed their fighting moves with noticeably heightened determination. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

The practice of becoming a karate expert appeared to involve embodying a performance that challenged many gendered expectations of women. Indeed, performing combative moves with aggression, strength, and determination are actions traditionally considered as inherently masculine, and often seen as in conflict with notions of femininity. Not only did women karate experts perform capacities conventionally associated with men and masculinity, they did so in front of an audience: be it as a practitioner in front of a karate class; a coach to students; a fighter to a crowd of spectators; or a referee to spectators, competitors, and coaches alike:

When you look at some of these championships - there could be 500 people standing in the crowd, you could have a final that's England vs France, or Scotland vs. England, and the whole crowds screaming, and no matter what happens, half the crowd aren't going to be happy with you. So I think it was just the confidence to get up there, and the confidence in my own ability that actually I know what I'm doing, I know karate, and I know how to fight. Katie, Bushido.

The visual profile karate women had to perform masculine capacities a high level for men, women, and children to see, created a space for conventional understandings

and interpretations of women as more fragile, weak, passive, and less able than men, to be re-evaluated by a broad audience:

When I first started refereeing you would get the odd guy that would say 'Pff! There's a women, great, a woman referee.' And it made it even worse when I was pregnant - I was a pregnant woman referee! But as soon as I went up there it gave me the determination to show them - I am a good referee and I'm going to show you just how good I am. I was in Europe for the Wado championship 2 years ago and there was a male referee who kept going round the referees and missing me out. So I went up to him and said excuse me can I referee? And his answer was 'in my country women don't referee' and so my answer was 'well in my country I'm the best woman referee you'll have.' And again, once I went up and done it, he never had me off the mat - he had me up refereeing all the time because he realised I wasn't maybe the stereotypical female referee he imagined. Morna, Lothian Wado-kai.

The male and female world champions are seen equally, men and women compete in the same world championships although obviously different categories, but each world champion is given the same respect. They are on a par - there is no difference. The performance is of the same quality. David, Juniper karate club.

Through skilful karate performances, the prominence of successful women karateka's gender in the eyes of others became secondary to their identity as successful karateka. Having an equal value for women as expert karateka at the very top levels of the sport built into the wider structures of karate a recognition of women as able to perform karate just as well as men, whereby many men saw women karate as idols, or role models too. Here the visibility of their bodies as women's bodies was rendered unimportant, and thus gender was rendered unimportant, to karate success.

Being a woman, however, was felt to be significant women karateka's experiences of being a role model. Women senseis and referees in particular recognised themselves as still a minority in the British karate scene, and successful women karateka more broadly reflected on themselves as women in reflection to supporting other women through the stigmas and restrictions that often prevent women from taking up karate, or reaching the highest levels of practice:

I really push the women, and really want them to do well. I mean, I want the boys and men at the club to do well, but I really push the women – they all say I’m much stricter than sensei Craig! I probably am with them, but I just think... Sometimes women aren’t pushed to realise they can do things, like in life, and they definitely don’t realise just how good they are, or can be. So I push them and hope that they realise (how good they can be) and become more confident in that. Katie, Bushido.

As such, through their skilful presence in the field, women experts crumbled notions of combat sport as a male domain whilst normalising and encouraging women and girl’s participation within the karate world. They became role models for other women and girls that highlighted women’s ability to perform embodiments that rejected dualistic restrictions of gender ideals, and instead embraced both characteristics conventionally considered masculine and feminine. Importantly, successful women karateka being seen as role models for men and boys too further dismantled assumptions of men’s hegemonic position to women in sport and the difference, or importance, gender makes to karate performance.

5.3. ‘The Woman’s Fight’ vs. ‘The Man’s Fight’: Fighting with Ideas of Difference

Perceptions, norms, and expectations of women and men held outside of karate at times came into conflict with the lived, gender eclectic, practice of karate, posing particular dilemmas for women’s practice, and the extent to which karate practice could de-gender karateka’s embodiments. Gendered ideas of men and women were inscribed onto karateka’s bodies through visual interpretations of men and women’s karate performances. In karate’s blend of artistic traits conventionally seen as masculine or feminine, karateka found space to reproduce ideas of difference by realigning women with performances of movements conventionally deemed feminine, and aligning men with a ‘natural’ propensity for the movements conventionally deemed masculine. One of the primary ways in which this was done was through constructing ideas of ‘the woman’s fight’ and ‘the man’s fight’. Every fighter fights differently; however, interviewees perceived women and men to have more ‘naturally suited’ fighting styles which reflected the conventionally deemed masculine and feminine characteristics within sport:

I really enjoy training with the guys because I think they have a different way of fighting than we do. Men can obviously hit harder and look for those kinds of hits. Kirsty, Bushido.

I'd say there's small differences in how men and women fight. Not big differences, but small ones. Like y'know, women usually have a bit cleaner - extravagant maybe - technique. Just small things like that. Sean, Lothian Wado-kai.

Alongside this, often it was the behaviours displaying dominance, and thus encoded and perceived as conventionally masculine, that were viewed as most impressive - spectacular notions of hitting hard, fearlessly taking risks within fights, and displaying dominant aggression in performances of techniques. In discussing karate, the conventionally feminine characteristics fundamental to the sport's performance were either hardly ever highlighted, nor part of the way karateka presented the excitement and prestige of their sport.

The treatment of kata in comparison to fighting provides a good example of this. Kata and kumite are often seen as two opposite ends of karate practice. Karate's eclectic embrace of 'soft' and 'hard' uses of the body is exemplified in Kata, deployed with an emphasis on precision and appearance. As a performance to be watched, both women and men who compete in kata often ensure they are well groomed and their gi is crisply ironed before the performance. The perfection they seek to achieve in their kata is embodied in their own appearance. Karateka who focused purely on fighting viewed kata's solo display of the soft, subtle, elegant, alongside swift and strong movements of the sport, as something particularly suited to women, whilst at two of the clubs the sexuality of men who chose to specialise in kata was questioned. Alongside being seen as feminine by some, kata was also regarded by many with less excitement or prestige than fighting:

When people think of karate they think of fighting. So that's what most people want to do. Kata is fine, but it's not really my thing. David, Juniper karate club.

My sister's not much of a fighter, she's far more Kata. She's very, kind of, floaty and soft with her moves. She wouldn't last in fighting, but at least she can do Kata. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

The comparative association of elements of the sport deemed less prestigious to femininity, and karateka's interpretation of women karateka as more commonly performing such elements thus aligned women to a subordinated position in the sport. Women often attempted to directly divorce subordinated notions of femininity from their bodies by amplified performances of praised 'masculine' qualities such as being 'fearless'. For instance, when observing a particularly intense sparring session, I noted:

Despite blood dripping from her nose Sophie insisted on continuing fighting: 'No, no, I'm fine.' Steven looked hesitant as Sophie continued trying to fight. Her eyes were filled with water, she probably could hardly see, but she insisted on finishing the fight as if she hadn't been hurt at all. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

In her insistence to keep fighting, Sophie attempted to stifle conventional understandings of fragile femininity, which questioned her suitability to a fighting sport. By virtue of enacting perceived masculine capacities, these performances sought to refute ideas of an inevitable tie between women's bodies and conventional notions of femininity, in order to resist subordinating perceptions of women's talents (Menesson, 2000).

Through women karateka's displays of conventionally masculine characteristics, the extent to which interpretations of difference and conventional femininity reflected the reality of women's bodies and fighting 'style' was sought with question and confusion. In my observations, the practice of women and men seemed almost identical, and varied more between different physicalities rather than different sexes. Both men and women would utilise hard hitting punches, elegant movement, and aesthetically stylised kicks. Both could be good at kata, both could be good at fighting. In reflecting on themselves and women they knew, perceptions of different fighting styles appeared to be something which the karateka found less legitimate:

Yeah there's differences between women and men's fights. Guys are a wee bit more physical, some of them can be sharper...but it depends. I mean some guys are pretty crap and the women in the club always beat them. Actually, I take it back, there's lots of men I'm way sharper than! Fiona, Juniper karate club.

If you have anyone in a contact sport that says 'look at that lassie fighting' they need to adjust themselves because they should be thinking 'look at that brilliant fighter' because it makes no difference (whether you're a man or a woman). You could go onto the mat and wipe the floor with most people, and it's not because your female you're doing all that – it's because you're a fighter. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

With women hitting the same as, and being able to beat, some men, Hayley and Stuart point out ways in which the visual differences between men and women's fighting were not so clear, if not in-fact more similar than different. This exposes the clash of expectations of gender difference, with the demands of men and women to perform the same task: to be agile, graceful, aggressive and violent to perform karate. The outcome of this clash was an exaggerated interpretation of differences in fighting styles to fulfil expectations of difference between women and men. This sat alongside continuing doubts that such differences could really be applied to the respondents themselves or women karateka they knew and trained with.

5.4. Physical changes to the body



Image 7: A peeling blister and hard skin on a woman's foot - the result of repetitive footwork.

Learning the bodily techniques of karate not only adapts, or adds to, an individual's set of bodily dispositions over time, the practice of repeating such movements alters their body's physique: sweating, smelling, bruises, niggling injuries, hardened skin, muscle development, weight loss, and in rare cases, broken bones. Whilst many of these physical developments tied in with conventional expectations of masculine embodiment – to be active, strong, powerful, hard working, and reckless with one's body - the ways in which karate practice changed the body posed particular challenges to conventional ideas of how women should use and experience their bodies, or more aptly, how they should not.

Whilst the white gi worn by all is used to wipe out any notions of difference, drawing attention to the colour of their belt for legitimate judgments of distinction, this did not strictly wipe karateka of all gendered markings. Some women wore makeup, nail polish, and had their hair neatly in varying, intricate, styles despite such aesthetics becoming bedraggled and sweaty during class. Although not all women done this, and some women did not do this all the time, karate is an area where not only is it practically unnecessary to pay attention to personal aesthetics, but also where they cannot be maintained due to the nature of moving, sweating and being hit. Sometimes I would leave classes with more makeup smudged onto my karate mitts than left on the faces of the women I had been sparring with.

The attention to hair and makeup certainly comprised one way of doing gender whilst doing a sport seen to be masculine, although for many women this was perhaps more because they wore makeup everyday and thus did not take it off for training, rather than putting it on for training. Many karate women were bound to the management and maintenance of beauty ideals held outside the sport in more subtle ways:

I realised on the way to training I had packed a sleeveless t-shirt to wear, and hadn't shaved my armpits in a few days. This panicked me. I'd never been in this situation before because in normal karate classes we wear a gi where no arms or legs to be seen, and usually in the fitness class I'd have a t-shirt with sleeves. I couldn't work out if my stubble was going to be noticeable, but I

was worried that if people seen it: 1. They will make jokes about it (this wouldn't actually be too bad); 2. They'd notice, be disgusted, and not say anything; Or most embarrassing, 3. Somehow they'd feel it. Ironically the reason I had packed that t-shirt was to show off my muscles! Which I am proud of, and think of as a desirable feature. The whole situation felt like a burden – because physically having stubble on my armpits did not affect my ability to do karate, and I actually do not really care about my armpit hair, but it did effect how comfortable I felt doing the class. I still done the class, and forgot about my armpits during. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

Although I experienced breaking the taboo of being a woman and having visible muscles with pride, the other taboo - of being a woman and having hair on my armpits – I certainly did not have pride in. It acted as a way to remind me of my duties as a woman to maintain a beauty ideal for others. Similarly, in talking about her plans for the weekend, Jenny highlights the conflict of doing a ‘masculine’ sport and maintaining expectations of feminine beauty for the world outside of the dojo:

Jenny joked of how her husband had warned her that her arms are getting bigger due to gaining muscle and suggested ‘you don’t want them any bigger do you? What will you look like at the office party next week in your dress?!’ She laughed this off, but equally reflected an uncertainty in her face, almost looking at me for reassurance or guidance as to how to feel about her growing muscles. She continued negotiating her seemingly unsure position on the subject whilst maintaining a lighthearted, jokey tone: ‘I mean, I just want to keep healthy anyway, I don’t need to get big strong muscles really’ to which Nick replied ‘Better than bingo wings anyway! Ha-ha!’ Field notes, Juniper karate club.

The interlude of jokes around Jenny’s arms from both her partner and Nick, although opposing comments from each, both reinforced ideas of women’s bodily beauty as centrally important in ‘doing womanhood’, and an expectation which at times came into conflict with her identity as a karate athlete.

The visual markings karate practice leaves on the body – such as muscles and battle scars - are not kept within the dojo only to be seen by fellow karateka, but transcend into karateka’s everyday lives. These visual markings on the body sit at the junction between the karate world and everyday life, and, as suggested above, it is often at this junction they become problematic for women. Within the karate club however,

women's muscles or bruises were often read as signs of dedication, bravery, and good training to be praised:

I got a black eye at the start of the year - it was a multi-coloured swollen one, and it just obviously looks quite unsightly...and you get scratches. It's just the way people look at you sometimes... I mean it's not pleasant. In a slightly vain way, we all like to think we aren't vain, but at the same time I don't want to walk around with a facial injury. It's not fun. I think a range of things comes into peoples' heads as to what you've been up to...At karate it's completely different - no one notices really. They might say 'that's a peach!' or something like that, and if it came from a good fight you get to tell a good story, but then everything quickly moves onto whatever we are doing next. It's not really a surprise for anyone there. Kimberley, Wado-kai Karate.

The examples above draw attention to the tensions of adhering to beauty ideals - to treatment of the body as an object - whilst practicing karate – utilising the body as an experiencing subject. The outcome is an embodiment that entails an, at times contradictory, self-regulation to both expectations of being a woman beautiful to the eye, and expectations of being a karate athlete ready to commit their body to the practice of the sport.

In reflecting on the physical changes of their body developed through karate, not all were experienced as problematic to their presentation of self, or indeed their 'gendered' presentation of self. Many were experienced with pride:

I've got a bit of fat but I've got abs underneath. Mum and dad have always said me and my sister have strong stomach muscles, and I think that's from all the sit-ups from karate. From doing it for so long I think that's something that you can get with karate, strong stomach. I notice it when get punched - I don't find it that sore. It's because of the muscles I think. Another thing I've noticed is the different muscles karate uses in my hamstrings compared to football. Football tightens your hamstrings but you need them for karate. So when I first came back I struggled a lot. I've definitely, no matter how many sit-ups my friends do, I have stronger abs than them. It's probably just a build up from over the years of doing karate. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

5.5. Chapter summary and discussion

This chapter has argued that visual codes and symbols essential to the practice of karate impact upon understandings of gender within the field and practitioners' embodiments of gender. Firstly, the visual uniformity of women and men's karate practice – to wear the same uniform and perform the same movements together - sits in stark contrast to most sports practice that is infused with visual signifiers of difference: men and women training separately; wearing different kit; and/or performing different tasks/roles (Wachs, 2002). The only visual difference karate structurally asked of its practitioners was their belt colour, which denoted a visual hierarchy of ability.

The visible hierarchy of ability in karate conflicted with notions of sport as an arena to reproduce a gender order, and particularly one centred around the display of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1990; 2009; Hirose and Pih, 2010; Light and Kirk, 2000; Mennesson, 2000; Messner, 1988). Rather, karate's unisex practice produced a gender-neutral structure that enabled women to both achieve, and be seen to achieve, higher positions within the karate club than men. This rendered a gender-based hierarchy in karate as unsubstantiated. Tendencies for women to underestimate their achievements, underplay their worth, or be unsure of their bodily abilities (Young, 2005) were challenged by the omnipresence of their belt. This enabled women to recognise their position as a competent karateka within the club hierarchy. As such, the structure of karate practice enabled karateka to build embodiments within the dojo that challenged conventional understandings of hierarchical differences between men and women.

Within this structure, expert women karateka's visual presence and illustriousness in karate particularly threw into question ideas of sport, and combat, as something inherently male or for men. Displays of women's excellence in combat drew into question karate as a male domain, and the lines of distinction between what is for men and is masculine, and what is for women and thus feminine. The admiration such women had from other women and men alike, suggests that such embodied

relations between women and men side-lined the importance of gender to the importance of being a good karateka, and as such, that gender was made less relevant to karateka's embodiment within the dojo.

However, the extent to which a gendered hierarchy was disrupted was complicated by the intermitting ways karateka imagined other's practice with a gendered lens. Whilst, as also discussed in the previous chapter, women and men performed the same movements as one-another, certain motions remained coded as masculine or feminine in reflection to and discussion of women and men's visual performances. In praising conventionally masculine behaviours they deemed to be performed more frequently by men - aggression, strength, and a fearless spirit - women had to craft gender performances which emphasised these praised qualities to attain positions above men in the club hierarchy. Yet deeper reflection on the practice of training together allowed the contradictions of conventional gender expectations of women and men's performances to be illuminated (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008), enabling karateka to question the appropriateness of such notions of distinction. This suggests that deeply ingrained ideas of gender can shape how we see, and that our ways of seeing can be difficult to shift despite a wealth of embodied knowledge that suggests otherwise.

Gendered expectations held outside of karate held further problems for women's performances within karate. Karate women often played a tedious balancing act of practicing the tasks of karate whilst maintaining at least a minimal standard of beauty expectations. Here, women's karate practice came into conflict with societal objectification of women that often frames women's embodiment:

'An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention.' (Young, 205:44).

Maintenance of hair and makeup was hard to ensure as the performance of karate embraced sweaty combative action, and created bodily changes that left visible

marks on women's bodies. The result was an embodiment that sometimes experienced their karate practice as problematic for expectations of their body out-with the dojo, and in trying to meet such visual expectations, some sometimes experienced their body as restricting their karate performances (Young, 2005). For many women however, and particularly those whom were highly skilled, the status gained through performing karate skilfully appeared to be enough to override concerns about beauty ideals within the dojo. Women experts particularly acted as symbols highlighting to other women the possibility and acceptability of an embodiment that is active, aggressive, sweaty, muscly, and sometimes conventionally pretty too. This suggests that the beauty ideals often deemed central and conflictual to women's embodiment in sport (Butler, 1998; Dworkin, 2003; Guerandel and Mennesson, 2007; Women in Sport, 2015; Young, 2005) are not as omnipresent to women's lived experiences of sport nor as central to their sense of embodiment as the literature affords.

Although conventional gendered expectations of women and men's visual performances at times infused embodied understandings in the dojo, key visual symbols of karate discussed in this chapter challenged the relevance and applicability of such gendered expectations to karateka in the dojo. The visual symbols of karate aided the disruption of a gendered hierarchy, and in doing so, challenged gendered ideas informing karateka's embodiment. The visual hierarchy within karate was based on, and worked around, recognition of women and men's skill, rather than domination as assumed by Connell's notion of a gender order (1987;2009). Through karate's unisex practice whereby women could be publicly recognised as better than men, the stage was set to facilitate performances and embodiments that undo gendered power relations (Deutsch, 2007).

6. Rolling with the punches: Negotiations of tacit engagement in the dojo

'Partner up!' shouts the sensei. Eyes scatter over and under bodies looking for a suitable or favourite training partner. For some, it is the first person they come to that they choose, others cautiously avoid eye contact to find the partner they are looking for. They tap each other's gloves, bow, and then sparring commences. Across the dojo pairs of people bounce and weave in and out, focused on their training partner, gliding, scuffing, sometimes full-on pushing into other karateka, in order to maintain alert to their training partner and in a safe distance from their partner's hands and feet. Fists cushioned in gloves pat down the others guard and feet tap legs to shake their partner's concentration. Darts of fists and feet tap faces, slam into the body, thump round the back, carefully touch the chin, slap cheeks, dunt the back of the head, and crash into the blocking hands and arms of training partners, all surrounded by booming shouts – 'Oosha!' Bruised arms rise to bat-off attacks, whilst ever-heavier legs burst back to evade. Stomachs quickly tense as unavoidable punches make their way through the defence and pierce into the body, the blow softened by stomach muscles and sparring gloves, but none the less leaving a puncturing ache. 'Nothing wrong with a bit contact, but mind your control' the sensei reminds the class as the tumbling of punches and kicks continues. The sensei draws the sparring to an end: 'Yamae (stop)! Gloves off, kata next'. With a pat on the back, a tap of hands, or a short bow of the head, partners separate and head back to their bags taking off their now glistening and damp shin, feet and hand protectors coated in sweat.

A key part of karate training, and indeed most martial arts, is partnered work. A typical karate class partners people together for multiple training objectives: to perform set routines of attacking and defensive moves between two people; to act as a target to improve the partner's control when throwing techniques; to learn the correct distance to attack from; to correct one-another's technique; to stretch; to work together through fitness drills; and to spar, utilising the moves of karate in a free flowing, creative, way. Whilst individual work on Karateka's technique and kata are seen as important in developing delicate control over their body, and discipline of

their mind, partnered work is where the techniques and tools of karate are shown at work in a practical context. Karate appears to be not just about controlling your own body, it is also about defending your body from the bodies of others, and controlling the bodies of others. As such, karate requires a tactile intimacy between karateka, entwining karateka's bodies in their own development through the sport.

Karateka's experiences of touch hold implications for sociological understandings of gendered embodiment. Touch is one of the primary ways in which we build and communicate an intercorporeal relationship with the world and build our sense of being in the world, yet is largely sociologically overlooked (Classen, 2005a). Women and men are expected to utilise touch in distinctly different ways to reflect moral and social boundaries, 'innate natures', and gendered hierarchies (Classen, 2005a; 2005c). The touch in British karate, as such, exists within a British framework where tactile contact between people is scarce – unless drunk - and between non-familial men and women, often taboo. In alignment with a culture that has increasingly come to connote touch between bodies as sexual touch (Classen, 2005a:71), and of touch between women and men with forms of abuse, the interconnecting physical closeness demanded in karate training is coated with moral and social dilemmas for women and men who train together. Such issues of bodily contact and closeness with others' bodies arise in other settings such as saunas (Edelsward, 1991) and doctors' practices (Bruhn, 1978) whereby the bodily practices required in these settings come into conflict with the close guarded barriers we are encouraged to place around our bodies. As such, who karateka touch, who they are touched by, and the ways in which they share touch, are important in informing or subverting a gendered embodiment.

This chapter will explore the tactile negotiations between karateka's bodies of what types of touch are suitable when, and with whom, alongside the pleasures the close bodily practice brings to karateka, and how these inform/subvert gendered embodiments within the dojo. This chapter will first describe the variety of non-combative touches essential to karate practice, and analyse such touch in regards to normative expectations of touch between women and men. The informal and formal

rules of hitting and being hit in karate, and how such experiences impact upon karateka's understandings of their bodies, will then be explored. This will be followed by a closer look at the particular gendered negotiations of exchanges of hits between women and men, and how such negotiations challenge or reinforce ideas of gender and gendered embodiments. Finally, in relation to karateka's ability to hit and be hit appropriately, what makes a 'good' training partner will be discussed, suggesting that broken down gendered expectations of touch between women and men enables understandings of women as good training partners.

6.1. Types of touch in karate

Within karate, close bodily contact is central to practice, and draws the bodies of men, women, young, old, and of all races within the dojo, together in fluid touching moments and movements. Before fighting or sparring drills commence there are a myriad of uses of touch between karateka's bodies that weave together the tacit backdrop of karate practice. This section will briefly explore the soft, painful, sweaty, stretchy, supportive, and subtle variety of non-combative touch in karate, before discussing the experience of hitting and being hit in more detail in the following sections.

A primary use of touch in the dojos was to improve the technique of another. As karateka learn the movements of the sport, the embodied feeling of 'doing it right' is isolated from a visual critique of their body's form and intricate positioning. Here, an instructor or training partner could help pull, push, twist, nudge, and bend another's body into the correct position: extended fists are pushed lower to hit the correct target; shoulders are twisted and arms pulled to encourage the powerful use of their hips; feet tapped to face varying directions to enable specific moves to glide with ease; and backs straightened for efficient posture. This helping touch was seen as not only beneficial to karate practice, but at times essential in 'finding the right position':

It's good to get different angles on things because some things click when explained or shown in a certain way... You know like when you're in a stance and you need to get into an exaggerated position, and you need to be

physically pulled by your partner to find it? Or squats with someone on your back to make it that bit harder, to really make you work. Sandra, Bushido.

Applying hands onto another karateka to improve their technique was often done by the Sensei or a higher graded karateka. Karateka's graded belt colour created informal rules around who could touch whom in this way, granting those with higher grades the authority to physically manipulate another's body to improve technique. Whilst bodily touch by people outside of our intimate circle is rare and often seen as an invasion of privacy, the respect and authority afforded to high grades acted to justify their corrective touch over lower grades, aiding newcomers comfort with their bodies being moved by relative stranger:

I knew it would probably be quite hands-on before I started because you know karate is about fighting. At first I guess it was a bit strange having a stranger moving you all about when your practicing your basics or partner work, but I just assumed, well they know better than me, and this will make me better – so thanks for moving me into the right shape. David Juniper karate club.



Image 8: Woman correcting training partners technique whilst being watched by the sensei.

These corrective touches were used by high grade women as well as high graded men to shape lower graded men and women's technique, crossing a boundary of

usual bodily contact between non-familial, and yet not sexually intimate, women and men. As such, high grades use of corrective touch began the process of normalising touch between karateka to newcomers, and alongside this, desexualising and normalising touch between women and men karateka.

Whilst in this particular relationship newcomers and lower grades could not reciprocate a corrective touch, they could provide, and be a part of, team building and supportive touches in the dojo. Such touches included a routine tapping of gloves before the start of sparring, pats on team mates backs after a gruelling fitness exercises, high fives at the end of sparring, and between some women and girls, hugs after intense matches in training:

Today the sensei had us doing a mock competition in the club. Two women around 17 years old were the last to fight – their match decided which team won overall. The heightened stakes on their match made both of them noticeably twitchy and alert, darting with their movement from side to side. One twitched into distance, the other fired off one, two, three punches, with the third thudding into the side of her opponent's head, and then past it. The sensei stopped the match and gave a warning, reminding both girls about their control. As the match started again straight away the woman who had just received the thump to her head fires a kick to the others head with a stinging precise snap against the opponent's cheek. She is awarded the points for the kick and is awarded the win. The two girls bow and walk towards each other with arms open and hug, holding each other's bodies in close from behind the shoulders. Whilst one of them had a face of relief, the other looked slightly disappointment, but they both held the hug for a good few seconds before walking back to their teams. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

Everyone is so supportive. Sometimes you're on the pads and you need to keep punching for a minute – as fast as you can – and you are dying. But everyone's cheering 'come on, keep pushing!' You manage to finish it - sometimes well, sometimes badly, but it doesn't really matter. You come off and your line (of training partners) gives you that hand on the shoulder that says 'Good job'. It's nice to have people there wanting you to do well, and pushing you to do well. It's a good atmosphere. Sean, Lothian Wado-kai.

The types of touch mentioned above are routinely and frequently expressed in the dojo. They mark moments where karateka recognise the strains and pains of others training – be it from being hit by an opponent, or through gruelling training exercises that leave the body exhausted. By warmly placing a hand on another's shoulder,

slapping their back, or embracing in a hug, karateka communicate reassurance and support drawn from an empathic understanding of what their body has gone through. Often, the type of supportive touch offered also expressed gender distinction. Whilst women would often hug other women and some men at the start of training or after sparring - embracing openly emotional and caring physical connections - the supportive touches between men were more commonly fleeting or distanced touches such as slap on the back. Such actions by men in the dojos mirrored interactions found across other sports whereby men's touch was required to balance upon a tight and unclear line between being a fundamental part of team bonding, and maintaining a distance from interpretations of homosexuality. Men's restraint from hugging in training, but frequent embrace of more distanced types of supportive touch acted to reinforce a masculine embodiment that may refute notions of homosexuality, yet was also connected to and supportive of their club mates. Through these supportive touches karateka communicated feelings of closeness and a team unity within the club, albeit in gender distinct ways, which built an intimacy that acted to bandage the physical harm karateka might have done to one another through karate practice.

Equally, karateka of any grade were able to reciprocate a helping touch through pulling and pushing bodies just to the brink of pain when stretching. Here, karateka's bodies were pressed in close to their training partner's, sharing an intimate bodily proximity whilst their hands push down on their partners back, arms are pulled forward, and legs pushed higher or wider. In the intimate and potentially painful extended bodily positions of stretching, trust and communication between the stretcher and the person being stretched was important to avoid stretching too far and thus damaging their body. As the stretcher's hands pushed or pulled against the resistance of the body, together the stretcher and the karateka being stretched negotiated how far to push against their body's resistance. In this relationship both trust not to stretch too far, and an intimate knowledge of the partner's active body and its potential was built.

The intensity of training often left stretching and many other touches in karate's partnered work warm and damp with sweat. As such, whether they liked it or not,

karateka were often asked to bridge a very personal physical boundary – the rubbing together of bodily fluids:

As I kicked towards Mathew's face I could see a splash of sweat spray from my footpad towards his face, and even worse I could see Mathew's eyes close and face screw just for a second before he opens his eyes again as if to pretend nothing had happened – nothing disgusting had happened. I felt embarrassed, but continued to kick. I had had sweat splash onto me from a training partners body before, and it would be wrong to say it wasn't momentarily disgusting feeling a warm drip of sweat from someone else's body hit me in the face, *but* I didn't really mind it happening. Its natural, people are training hard, they sweat, and realistically I'll forget about the wet feeling a moment later when other parts of my body are kicked, pulled, slammed into etc. Field notes, Juniper Karate Club.

You sometimes get that feeling of wetness from other people's gi. Some people sweat more than others, I don't think I'm too bad for it but some people if they are wearing a heavy gi they're sweating up more. And sometimes you'll come out of a grab with these people with a wet face from their sweat... That's minging, it's so horrid. But you just get used to it because then you go right back in for it don't you. I suppose it could be quite a horrible thing but its not - its magic. It's what we do. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

The tacit revealing of a sweaty body remains something people apologised for, however it was not only experienced with shame or disgust in karate. Skin contact with a training partners sweat was also experienced as a symbol of the partner putting great effort into their training, and thus reflected good training *together*. The tacit engagement with the sweaty body of another was transformed from an individual experience, to a joint effort, and a joint opportunity to push their bodies to the point of exhaustion in order to improve.

As something experienced together, contact with a training partner's sweaty body also reminded karateka that the tacit experience of the sport was something 'we do', and others certainly would not. In engaging in sweaty body to body touches, karateka are given privileged access to an intimate type of touch – that of a sweaty body - and equally, accept sweaty contact as normal. Here, it appeared the interpretation of sweaty bodies were transformed from shameful, disgusting, uncivilised, untouchable bodies to hardworking, normal, karate bodies. Although an air of disgust still

lingered in some sweaty touches between karateka, the routine act of engaging time and time again with another's sweaty bodies was something which, outside of a sporting context, only a lover would do so willingly and acceptingly. The taboo around sweaty touch thus made contact between karateka a highly privileged, intimate, and bonding. Equally, the more karate was the focus of tacit engagement, the less civilising rules and expectations of touch were important.

Whilst corrective and supportive touch between women and men were generally seen as unproblematic, if not slightly strange upon people's first karate classes, the intimacy of sweaty bodily touch, touch close to the chest area – such as a grab of the gi for self defensive techniques – and stretching were laced with undertones of uncertainty around the appropriateness of such touch between women and men:

I don't mind stretching with guys... because I know its just stretching!
Whereas an older woman might feel a bit uncomfortable with that because... They've got someone of the other sex over them and it might make it seem, too close, like an invasion of personal space. But I don't see it like that. Steph, Juniper karate club.

Things like that you maybe couldn't do in a mixed class, whereas we can do more physically close stuff in an all female class. I mean personally I wouldn't be too bothered. But you know what I mean? I think some women would feel a bit uncomfortable with a man. Sandra, Bushido.

Within these practices, connotations of sexual touch between women and men resurfaced, bringing the visibility and importance of karatekas bodies as a sexed and gendered bodies back to light. However, the discussion of touch that could be perceived or experienced as sexual touch dominantly discussed how 'others' might feel, rather than something the karateka I interviewed mentioned feeling themselves. It was always other women who were presumed to potentially feel uncomfortable with certain forms of touch, not the women or men who were speaking for themselves. As such, despite the reality of practice, ideas of forbidden touch between women and men based on notions of heterosexual normativity and of women's bodies as sexual objects in the eyes of men permeated karate practice, intermittently bringing one's body as a gendered body back into light. The ability for karateka to

distance themselves from being an individual who is uncomfortable with intimate karate touches with members of the opposite sex highlights a crossing point between karateka's embodied intercorporeal experiences of karate practice and the practical emphasis karate places on such touch, and expected/forbidden touch experiences as a gendered body. In crossing the line of expected touch between women and men, karateka built bodily relations that rejected the sexualisation of women's bodies, and in doing so, desexualised and normalised touch between women and men.

Through the wide range of non-combative touches between karateka in karate practice, karateka built intimate knowledge of each other's bodies, trust, feelings of mutual support, and a bond between one another. Whilst notions of heterosexual normativity and masculinity acted to limit certain types of touch between men, and infused certain touches between women and men with undertones of uncertainty, touch between bodies remained a frequent and integral part of karate training, transgressing a cultural taboo of bodily touch. Here touch between women and men was normalised, enabling positive, desexualised, experiences of touch between women and men. Such touches further acted to make sexuality, and entailed gendered enactments, less relevant to Karateka's embodied experience of karate.

6.2. 'It's not about who can hit hardest': Learning the rules of hitting and being hit in the dojo

As sparring and partnered work reflect a core intention of karate – to be equipped to defend one's self, and engage in combat – a large section of karate classes were dedicated to combative training with a partner. Getting hit, and hitting others was a frequently reoccurring exchange of bodily contact. It is also a form of bodily contact that is intertwined with ideas of pain, aggression, dominance, violence, and masculinity. As such, the interspersing of hitting and being hit was a type of touch that particularly drew up tactile dilemmas: Is it okay to hit someone? Is it okay to be hit? Who should be hit by whom? With what intensity? With what intent? How do karateka maintain a status as a good training partner, and good person, whilst hitting

another's body? How do karateka avoid leaving another feeling violated? And how do karateka remain safe whilst practice dynamic kicks punches and throws?

Whilst fighting is commonly associated with violence as an intent to cause bodily harm to another, the practices of combat sport hold very different intentions and meanings to their practitioners that centre on bodily control, acquiring technical skills, and freedom to move and use their bodies creatively. Combat sports presents an arena to play with *mimetic displays* of violence, that allow practitioners to experience emotional thrills and releases of fighting whilst being guarded by rules that safeguard practitioners from serious harm. Karate practice was embedded with formal and informal rules that karateka were strongly encouraged to learn through the rough and tumble of practice, that enabled them and their partners to perform effectively, safely and distinguish their practice from intrusive, harmful, violence.

6.2.1 Learning to hit

When first joining a karate class, the idea of hitting someone else and getting hit may be quite daunting. In everyday life we are told not to hit our siblings, not to fight with our friends, to stay away from violence at football games, pubs, and clubs, and that those who do engage in such behaviours should be demonised and punished. A rhetoric that hitting others is wrong echoes from the law through society, and with it is the subsequent message that getting hit is a highly undesirable experience. On the flip side, we see boxers shrouded in prestige, admiration (from some), and money for hitting so hard that they knock an individual unconscious. Within this context, a lesson karateka had to learn in order to participate in the sport was the difference between hitting in karate and violence. In the karate clubs I trained at, four main messages regarding hitting were verbally expressed by the club Sensei: That you must hit your opponent; that it must be done with control; that karate moves are not to be used outside of karate; however, they could be helpful if you did end up in trouble. The messages threaded a fine line for karateka to tread in order to hit appropriately, within the right context. Digesting these messages into bodily actions

wielded on going negotiations and uncertainties for karateka, revolving around who can hit who, and with what intensity in the given context:

I don't like hitting people. I mean I did hit someone hard last week because they got me angry... This lad really had a go at me, and I did hit him, and I quite enjoyed it actually. But then again a few weeks ago I hit a child - well she was around 15 - but she's still a child, and I caught her in the face, and she looked like she might cry, and I hated that. That was another point I thought I was going to pack it in. I work in a school, and for me to hit a child - it's just wrong. And I know (sensei) Katie says its a controlled environment, but in my head I still think 'I hit a child, and that's not right' Rebecca, Bushido.

I punched one of the orange belts (beginner) at training the other week, and I thought I'd controlled it quite well to be honest - you know yourself when you've made that perfect connection - but you could see in his face he didn't like it one bit. I think he was taken aback by it. I felt a bit bad at first, but then I thought no, it's part of the sport, he needs to get used to taking a hit every now and then. David, Juniper karate club.

The use of 'control' when throwing techniques was felt to be a pivotal component in learning how to hit in karate, and marking a distinction from non-sporting/violent forms of hitting. Hitting *hard* and *being* hit hard, although it did happen, was not the central aim of karate training. Rather, in the structure of the martial art-come-sport, strength played a minimal role. Its practice is indeed for self defence with the idea that one hit should be all it takes to end the fight (*Shobu Ippon*), however what was emphasised as more important than the strength of an attack was its precise aiming, technical execution, minimal exertion so as not to waste the body's energy or leave oneself open to danger, and controlled contact to the opponent. As such, hitting hard, particularly to the extent of hurting training partners, was not felt to be crucial, nor desirable, in karate training:

When we're sparring or doing techniques back and forward I don't actually want to hurt the person I'm with. Karate's not about who can hit the hardest, it's about scoring techniques, so I don't want to hurt them. Sean, Lothian Wado-kai.



Image 9: Practicing timing and distance to use a soft block against a strong but controlled punch.

Karate's emphasis on clean, clear, controlled, and efficient technical execution of moves meant that most hits never left training partners in any serious pain. The body was deemed to be capable of taking heavier hits and thus would be hit with more depth than hits to the head, in which being close to the head or light skin touch were the desired level of appropriate control. Controlling the strength of attacks, and the degree of contact to their training partner's skin, was enjoyed with a sense of relief, particularly for lower grades whose technical ability was less finely tuned than more senior grades. Wary of their relative lack of skill, often lower grades were found trying not to accidentally hit people too hard, and would use tactics such as aiming for the body to avoid problematically hitting someone too hard:

I don't mind hitting to the stomach because you know its gonna' come so can brace yourself and just hope it doesn't hit as hard as it looks. Me and Claire have started to be brave and go for the face when fighting each other. We are nearly brown belts now so we thought – right, we better start hitting face. Kirsty Bushido.

The ability to throw punches and kicks that could hit a training partner without hurting them was experienced with a sense of achievement and pride:

When you do get a punch in you feel like -Yes! It's just a good feeling to be able to get through and catch them – not to hurt them or anything, just to, like, catch them. And then tiredness kicks in and you think 'Oh no this punch is coming for me', and you have to try and block it, and that's a good feeling too cause you know you managed to stop it from hitting you. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

Executing fast and powerful techniques to training partner's bodies, with the ability to choose how hard they land demanded a lot of technical coordination from the body: to coordinate hips and arms to twist and extend with speed, focusing on the target, engaging the stomach muscles to maintain the body's posture, and recoiling the punch upon the correct tap against the partners skin. Being able to do so not only marked an achievement in performing karate techniques with success, but further built karateka's sense of control over their body. The prestige found in having 'the ability to knock them out, but controlling it at the last second' lay in contrast to the embodied experiences older members mentioned from British karate's more 'brutal' past:

It was about hitting things as hard as you could. So if you were doing pad work it would be - put your hand through the pad. If you were fighting it would be - knock their head off. It was a lot more brutal. So when I came back to Colin's class I kept getting a row for control. Its about knowing you could hit them hard if you wanted to, but having that control and discipline... So it's more about etiquette, or speed. It's about being an athlete rather than just knocking someone's head off. Steph, Juniper karate club.

Back then it was seen that things like punching walls will make you stronger, and that was kind of accepted. If you were going to punch someone you were going out to drop them and make sure they didn't get back up. When I first started it was very much an adult thing, but it was also very much a male thing as well. There were very few women and children... It was like 'if they

can't handle what the men do they shouldn't be here'. It was an issue of: make it as hard as you can, and if people don't come back, well, they're the weak ones. Craig, Bushido.

The shift in prestige from being able to hit hard to being able to control techniques marks a shift not only in karate's direction as a sport, but also in karate's relationship with ideas of hegemonic masculinity. Whilst notions of hitting hard tie in well with legitimising ideas of hegemonic masculinity, and indeed framed British karate's practice in the past, men and women karateka are no longer expected nor desired to hit their training partners as hard as they can, but instead hit with control, speed, technical accuracy, and respect for one's opponent. Being able to hit hardest no longer appeared to warrant prestige, nor fast track the largest men in the club to top positions, but rather was seen as poor karate etiquette and thus discouraged. Redirecting prestige from being able to hit hard, to being able to control darting and agile technically excellent kicks and punches not only rejected notions of hegemonic masculinity, but also opened up interpretations of the best fighters to be women as well as men.

Despite the overarching understanding of the importance of control that framed karate practice, women karateka were notably more reluctant than men to make contact with others when throwing attacks. Some women in the karate clubs I trained with found it particularly hard to separate hitting in karate with 'being' a violent person:

I apologise every time I hit somebody. And I think 'no I'm not suppose to say sorry!' But it does bother me because I don't want to hurt someone. And it is about having control, and my control is getting better but sometimes you do make mistakes and its like 'oh sorry sorry sorry'. I'm not a naturally violent person so I don't want to hurt someone – I never hit to the face just to be safe. I mean I've never hurt anyone really or burst anyone's noes or anything like that. Its kind of an internal thing not wanting to hurt the others but you just kind of need to get the confidence in yourself that actually you are not going to hurt anyone. Claire, Bushido.

Karate promoted a logic of hitting to improve performance, which came into conflict with societal rules and expectations of what a moral citizen is, and particularly of

what a woman is. Women and their bodies are more tightly held to bestowing moral responsibility in society immersing their bodily touches with expectations of being caring, nurturing, and passive. As such, hitting in karate required women to step away from a gendered embodiment that asks them to be caring and passive, and instead, to actively seek to further their own ability by hitting their training partners with control. Women's reluctance to hit was another kind of logic, however one less rewarded. Women who would not hit their training partners restrained their own ability to develop their accuracy, timing, and control skills, and thus stunted their improvement. As such it was important that women karateka overcame uncertainties around hitting, detached themselves from a passive embodiment, and were confident in their own ability to control their body when sparring with other karateka.

Concerns around hitting were predominantly an issue for women who had started karate in their teens or as adults. Women who had done the sport from a young age were often unfazed by the process of hitting and being hit in training:

Because I've already done it, probably more of my life than not, I'm not scared to hit, or scared to be hit. It's just normal. But I do feel if it's an older lady, or someone whose new, they don't have the confidence to hit because they feel it's just wrong. Like Louise -she will pretend to hit me, and I'll say 'Louise! Hit me!' and I'll encourage her to hit me so it feels more natural. Steph, Juniper karate club.

For these women, throwing attacks and hitting other's in the dojo had become a normalised type of touch. The rules around hitting in karate practice had been fully embodied into their practice over a number of years, and as such, hitting was not seen as something violent, or something to hurt another, but as a normal, safe, and enjoyable part of training.



Image 10: A woman karateka throwing a strike to a male training partner's head as part of a paired defence exercise.

6.2.2. Learning to take a hit

On the other side of learning to hit, karateka also had to learn to be hit. Deep punches to the stomach, thumping kicks around the side of the body, feet slapping across the face, fists tapping the chin, arms blocking attacks and being left with bruises, heels clipping the back of the head, fists accidentally squashing the nose flat, and hits to the solar plexus that steal the air from karateka's lungs and leave the body grasping for breath are a collection of the types of hits commonly experienced in karate training. The experience of being hit entailed both physical sensations and marks left on the body such as bruises, cuts, and grazes, that formed a foundation for the embodied experience of karate.

Again, for newcomers, these physical touches to their body could initially be daunting, despite taking place under rules and within a safe place. Newcomers and

low grades were visibly much more cautious about being hit. Often low grades would screw their faces after being hit with light skin touch, stay far away from their partner to avoid getting hit, move back not to allow their partner to make contact when being a target, or, in a few cases, complain to the sensei of being hit too hard. Newcomers had to be persuaded that getting hit was not as painful or damaging as they imagined it to be, and often this persuasion developed through being hit either in sparring, when holding a pad for a partner, or standing as a target:

You take a hit to the stomach and you stop for a minute and go ‘Ooh! Okay, okay, I’m still here’, you know, you realise you can take it. David, Juniper karate club.

I don’t mind being a practice dummy. It doesn’t bother me when you just have to stand there and take it. If you do get a sore one, well, you learn you’re a bit tougher than you thought you were. Claire, Bushido.

Through taking a hit low-grade karateka came to realise both that their bodies were capable of taking a hit, and that the hits themselves often did not feel as painful as the thought of them was. Through these on-going hits, karateka built an embodied understanding that transformed the sensation of being hit in the dojo from something painful, scary, and damaging, to something normal, within their body’s capabilities to deal with, and enjoyable. Senseis would encourage this interpretation of being hit by responding to moments when karateka looked uncertain at the blow they had just taken:

We’re not scared of contact, because (sensei) Colin encourages it: ‘nothing wrong with a wee bit contact’...As long as you’re not going out of your way to hurt some one. Steph, Juniper karate club.

Some of the clubs at competition, and you know the kids have been punched in the face and they are having a cry and you see a coach shouting at them to get back up. James, Juniper karate club.

Through such actions, senseis and senior graded karateka asserted a feeling rule that being hit was okay, and expressing pain, unless under exceptional circumstances, was not. However, a fear or discomfort around being hit was not something that necessarily disappeared as karateka became more developed in the sport, but was

continually renegotiated as karateka went through their grades. As karateka became higher grades, the intensity of the force behind techniques thrown at them by other high grades also increased, and thus karateka had to continue to re-evaluate how much contact their body was capable of taking. Whilst there was an understanding that lower grades might not be used to getting hit, being hit was seen as ‘part of the sport’, and as such, established karateka’s disgruntlement at being hit or exaggeration of injury was frowned upon by the senseis and other karateka. People who had started karate as adults found this feeling rule hardest to digest, and were most frequently culprits of carrying disdain towards being hit as they progressed to more senior grades. I recall warming up with a recently turned black belt, who had started karate around five years earlier:

I had partnered with Lisa who, despite being a black belt, tended to stick with other adults who had started as parents, and thus had only five or so years’ experience, even though she was a black belt now. I decided to partner her because I felt she is one of us and she should be more confident in herself to train with more experienced people. We were to start with body punches then moved onto head kicks - ten each to warm up. The first kick I threw made a perfect slap against her cheek, and although it did make contact, it was only a little tap – in competition I would be delighted with it, it was the perfect level of contact. I could see instantly in her face that she was completely shocked; her previous smile had dropped to a look of concern before quickly trying to fake a smile again. The reaction shocked me, because the kick really wasn’t hard, however to Lisa it was, because it mustn’t of been the degree of contact she had been used to. I felt slightly guilty, however, it really wasn’t hard, and to be a black belt, she needs to get used to being hit like that – because it’s going to happen again, and she can take it. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

In situations where high grades show distain to being hit, as described above with Lisa, negative reactions to being hit with appropriate contact often resulted in: hitting the partner again with the same intensity; a senior grade telling the partner they must learn to take a hit; in some cases, hitting the partner harder; and in rare cases, the individual having to fight numerous people one after another, in an attempt to cement the idea that in karate, you will get hit, and you can take it. Whilst high-grade women were sometimes excused for showing distain towards being hit, particularly if they were partnered with a man, high-grade men were held tightly to taking a hit by the punishing mechanism mentioned above. Such treatment moulded men and women’s

embodied experiences of karate differently. Whilst high grade women's embodied experience did often entail receiving painful hits, and hiding emotional distress, women had leeway to express pain and be excused of punishment based on underlying assumptions of women's bodies as less suitable or capable than men's to take a hit. Receiving painful hits and hiding emotional distress was made fundamental to high-grade men's embodied experience of the sport, in turn reinforcing ideas of men as 'natural' fighters. Within the division of treatment, the idea of (all) men being able to handle being hit better than (all) women was mediated, and a hierarchical distinction between the sexes suitability to the sport enabled.

A crucial part in karateka accepting being hit was interpreting the kicks and punches being thrown as without an intention to do harm and without being vindictive:

Within that 30 second window, whatever happens happens. The minute the fight stops it's all forgotten about. When it comes to training you can't hold a grudge no matter what happens. I've had burst lips, black eyes, bloody nose... Getting hit is just normal now, you get used to it. I don't think 'I'm going to get you for that'. What I have thought is 'you silly bugger Sean, you should have gotten out the way... How could you put yourself in that position to let that happen'. And the minute you are told to stop, you have to stop. You have to leave it on the mat because if you didn't you couldn't train. Every time you'd turn up to training you'd be thinking 'I'm going to hurt that person' and you can't do that. Most of the time if someone hurts you they are apologetic about it! Sean, Lothian Wado-kai.

Instead, such hits were seen as part of improving karate skills – both for the karateka throwing techniques, and the karateka receiving them. As part of a mutual exchange of thumps, bumps, and bruises in an attempting to get better at a shared passion, pain caused by one partner to another was overlooked. Accepting being hit, and appreciating it as part of learning rather than being from vindictive intentions, was seen as important both in being able to improve in the sport, and in being able to emotionally come to terms with being hit and respond in an appropriate manner. In sparring, often what hurt karateka more than the physical punch or kick striking into their body, was the recognition of their poor defence the hits alluded to:

I get disappointed in myself when I get hit and I felt I shouldn't have... Like there was a time a couple of weeks ago when I got hit, and I was really disappointed in myself because I thought I really should have been able to move out the way, or block it, or whatever - but I didn't. And sometime I think when I get hit 'oh, yeah, fair enough', but other points where you think actually I should have done better there. Sandra, Bushido.

Sometimes the disappointment at being hit was fleeting, and at other times, as suggested in the quote above, being caught with a hit could have a more damaging effect on practitioner's sense of worth as a fighter and a karateka. More commonly an exchange of hard hits was experienced positively. Sharing stinging punches and thumping kicks backwards and forwards in sparring, with control, generated feelings of respect between training partners. The process of being able to catch an opponent in sparring raised the excitement of the match for both involved – the puzzle of how to score and minimise getting scored on became more tricky, intense, and as such, exciting. Sharing exchanges of hard but controlled hits to one another built a respect for the sparring partner's skill. In these exciting fights, being hit hard was a symbol of being seen as a worthy opponent who warranted the intensity of a good match. As such, the stinging hits were a sensation enjoyed by many karateka:

A boy Steven, I fought him at Wishaw last year and he broke my ribs, and Abigail was like 'aw you must of been raging' and I was like 'nah I wasn't, I should have had my guard up'. People wonder why you aren't raging with them - but it's your mate. It was a great punch! Stuart, Juniper karate club.

In learning how to hit, and how to take a hit, karateka embodied a set of rules around bodily contact with other karateka. Through body-to-body exchanges they learnt that they must, and can, hit with control; that they can take a hit; and that hitting hard is not fundamentally crucial to karate practice, but rather hitting *right* is. In positioning prestige in the control of techniques, and treating 'hitting hardest' as unskilled, disrespectful, detrimental to karate practice, a macho hegemonic masculinity was discouraged. On the other side of this, karateka were expected to be able to take hard hits without expressing distain, whilst men in particular were held tightly to this rule. As such, men and women's bodies were conditioned to hit with skill, be hit without fear, and enjoy the challenge in perfecting technique and tactics to be able to do so.

This conditioning challenged a conventional feminine embodiment that encourages women to be passive and restrained, by asking women to hit and be hit, and in doing so, recognise their bodies as capable of withstanding a hit, and capable of hitting others with controlled expertise.

6.3. Is it okay to hit a woman? And are all men fair game?

One day Arleen got a split lip off Fred - a split lip. Because she was sparring with him and he just ran in with arms swinging. And Arlene said she moved her head back but he still got her and she said 'you've split my lip Fred, what have you done?' and he said 'I dinny discriminate against who I hit, you should have got out the way'. This was before I'd come back to training, but even if I was fighting you - you can kick my head in but I wouldn't throw a full force punch at you because... I mean I wouldn't throw a full force punch at anyone in sparring. On that one occasion it might hit you... You just don't hit a woman like that. See if I had burst a woman's lip I would be devastated. I wouldn't come back to training. If I'd done that to a woman I'd be sending her bunches of flowers and apologising to her husband. I wouldn't be saying 'well if you dae karate you fight who you fight, if you get hit you get hit' - that's just a shit attitude. Keith, Juniper karate club.

The quote above by Keith is rich in a variety of ideas and issues that hover around men hitting women in karate, which will be explored throughout this section. Whilst the informal and formal rules of karate asserted that hits should be thrown with control, and that, in practice, karateka do not try to hit one another hard, men hitting women posed moral challenges. Here men, and women, had to juggle both the rules and expectations of karate training – to hit one another and do so with control – and the gendered rules and expectations of society that mark women as fragile, unequipped for combat, and to be protected.

Although hitting a training partner with kicks, punches, or throws was something recurrently expected of and done by women and men in the karate clubs, the comfort with which karateka would do so distinctly varied based on their partner's sexed body. Both women and men were more hesitant about hitting women with force. Sometimes these men and women would either pull their hits short in order to make little or no contact with the woman's body, avoid throwing techniques to the face,

and in some cases, avoid throwing any techniques at all. Although some women engaged in this behaviour, often these were the same women who struggled with the idea of hitting anyone. It was primarily men who differentiated their contact levels along gendered lines, and struggled to work out whether it was acceptable or not to hit a woman, and if so, how hard:

I can hit Keith and hit Neil because they are bigger guys, and sometimes I've accidentally hit too hard and lost the control a bit. I'm very aware of that so if I'm fighting a girl, I know it shouldn't matter, I know we are all the same, but I think subconsciously 'oh I need to watch myself I better hold back'. James, Juniper karate club.

Obviously if I'm fighting you I probably won't hit you as hard as I'd hit Adam. Not in a 'you can't handle it' way, but, you know, because you are a girl and I don't want to hit you hard, not because I think I'm better or anything... just... its different partners. Sean, Lothian Wado-kai.

In explaining their reluctance to hit women hard, men often implicitly linked hitting women to ideas of domestic abuse, and a fear of being associated with such abuse. As such, in an attempt to embody a civilised masculine identity, the assumed vulnerability and fragility of women as potential victims of male violence was drawn on by some men, inhibiting them from training properly with some women. Misunderstandings of women's anatomy also played a part in some men's reservation when sparring with women:

I'm a fan of women and men fighting but I'm not a fan of...I mean me, fully punching you in the stomach, and then what if you want to have children? I just don't like it. Steven, Lothian Wado-kai.

Tensions around men hitting women peaked when men injured women club mates. Amongst the darting movements of fighting bodies, when men hit women hard causing injury the fights would hit a standstill. Once hurt, focus returned to the femininity of the woman, reinstating conventional societal interpretations of women as fragile, aesthetic, and to be protected. As a result, the man in question would often appear reluctant to attack her again for the remainder of the fight, and the suitability of women as a karateka would fall into question. In these instances, women would

often try to underplay their injury and continue to fight hard in an attempt to resume their treatment as a karateka, and refute any question over their ability to participate in a combat sport that has arisen in light of her body being read as that of a woman. Highly graded women in particular found men's reluctance to hit them frustrating and insulting to their capacities as a karateka:

Sometimes your fighting at another club and they see you as a girl... they think 'oh that's a girl... I better be careful with her. I better just pretend to hit her' and that way you're not getting a good fight. You feel like you can't hit them, because they aren't hitting you. Which I don't like. I want them to hit me because that's what I'm there for. Steph, Juniper karate club.

Here Steph, and many other high graded women karateka, asked not to be seen as women, but to be seen as karateka. Indeed not being hit in a sport centred around hitting acted to question women's suitability to the sport. In positioning women's bodies as fragile, vulnerable, and as such untouchable, women karateka were positioned as problematic to karate practice. Alongside this, men's reluctance to hit women inhibited women's ability to train properly, and thus impinged their development in the sport. Yet some lower graded women actively wished to be seen and treated differently as women:

That was the thing with Fred, his punches were flying out of nowhere, and he didn't really take into consideration that I was a girl... whereas like Neil and Paul and stuff, they will still have a fight with you, but they do take it into consideration that you're a girl. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

In seeking to be treated 'like a girl' low-grade karate women like Fiona desired fights with men where they would not be hit hard, or trained with at high intensity. As such, related to their grade, varying women saw conventional ideas of gender difference and a fragile femininity as more or less part of their embodiment in karate.

Often the discussion of restraints around hitting women and women's fragility left implicit an understanding that, in contrast, hitting men was unproblematic:

It's easier to hit men in the face. I'm not a man hater! Its just men are supposed to be tougher, aren't they? So I think men are easier to hit in the face because I think ... I think women maybe aren't as tough. Although I think there are two women (at training) who really don't like being hit - they give it out but they really don't like it. But every other woman is fine with it. It's more like social expectations. That idea that you're not suppose to hit women but men are big and tough - even though I know that's not true.
Claire, Bushido.

Based on orthodox notions of masculinity and the male body, men were expected to more readily embody and perform aggression, strength and the physical toughness that would enable them to take a hit. In practice however, not all men acted unscathed when hit by training partners, some were indeed very touchy about getting hit. Equally, not all men were hit with the same intensity. Smaller men were unlikely to be hit as hard as larger men, and holding focus pads to be punched and kicked with full strength was a task undertaken by the larger men of the clubs rather than smaller men. As such, the idea of men as naturally tough falsely positioned *all* men as more 'naturally' suited to the sport than *all* women, and thus positioned men above women of equal grade within some karateka's understanding of the club hierarchy.

Men's assumed natural fit to karate enabled men to experience the full physical range of the sport should they wish, be seen as prestigious training partners, and entailed taking more hits. Some men's association of hitting women to domestic violence, and other's confusion over the resilience of women's anatomy, limited the number of good training partners for women who would hit them with control but intent, and thus aid their development in the sport. By overlooking women's capacities as karateka and focusing on gendered ideas of their bodies, women's embodied experience of karate was, at times, bubble wrapped against their own wishes.

In the story by Keith at the start of this section, sparked by the injury of Arleen's lip, both Keith and Fred contend for the moral high ground upon whether a woman can be hit by a man in karate or not. Whilst Keith suggests Fred is in the wrong for hitting a woman, drawing on Arleen's gender as the primary source of the injustice,

Fred suggests that he is in fact treating women and men equally during his sparing, and as such, is marking Arleen's face with a symbol of gender equality. Here the moral battleground pits gender equality against protecting women from men's violence. Yet despite this, the underlying issue is not that Arleen is a woman and has been hit by a man, rather it is that Fred isn't following the rules of karate – he is hitting people without care for his control. Here, as in the examples shown throughout this section thus far, gender is made central to understanding and explaining issues of hitting between women and men in karate, where in fact the gender of one's training partner is not really the issue - the issue is people's ability (or belief in their ability) to control their techniques, their level of experience in being hit, and partners varying sizes that require varying levels of control.

Gendered readings of women and men's bodies were fleetingly made in the dojo to frame understandings of what women and men do, and how they should physically interact. Here we seen men withholding against women, and women and men hitting men hard without worry. Yet if, and when, men and women's intercorporeal interactions are read under a 'karate framework', the problems that arise around hitting women's body's vanish, as under a karate lens all karateka are worthy of being hit:

People do occasionally say things like 'I love going with the men because you can hit them' - you can hit women...It's not the fact they're a man, its maybe the fact that they are good. But you can have a good woman- so its not because they are a man, its because they are a particular standard. Its nothing to do with gender, I mean...*laughs* It's nonsense. Craig, Bushido.

So, if gendered discrepancies are unnecessary under the rules of karate training, and women and men are actually unlikely to be hit to the extent of being hurt during training due to karate's rules on control, then what is going on when karateka draw on ideas of gender to frame who they hit and with what intensity, or how they expect to be hit? Rather than karateka's sexed body being the reason for receiving a dense, deep, thumping kick to ones back, or a punch thrown and withdrawn before even making contact, the different ways in which some karateka spar with, and explain discrepancies in training with, men or women worked to present a false hierarchy of

ability that would position men as superior to women (Kimmel, 2000). This point was illustrated when karate women scored multiple points on their male training partner, or when women's skills were demonstrated as better than their male training partners though hitting with cleaner, faster, and more technically demanding techniques. Here, the very same men who suggest they hold back when sparring with women were often found attempting to hit women with multiple attacks, and in some instances were deemed to be purposefully trying to hurt women in order to reassert their own dominance:

I do feel that, if I'm training with a male opponent who's maybe taller than me, bigger than me... if I score something on them - that annoys them. So they'll maybe try...not hurt me but maybe... put me in my place. It's like they think 'I'm not being hit by that woman like that, I'm going to score at least another 4 or 5 or maybe 6 more, and put them on the floor'. Sometimes I think they don't like it if a woman gets them with a good point, or with a good sweep, because they are embarrassed because we are smaller than them. And its like - 'oh no I'm the man, I should be putting them on their arse' or whatever. It's a bit caveman like. Steph, Juniper karate club.

In out performing their male training partners women karateka became worthy to hit. Gendered ideas of fragility and protection tied to their bodies vanished as they challenged men's competency. Here, the illusion of all men being better than all women is disrupted, and with it, men's automatic hierarchical position to women karateka. In certain men's determined attempts to hit women back hard, or put them up in the air with a sweep, it became clear that it was not the case that women could not be hit, nor that the men in question were not prepared to hit women. Rather, these situations highlighted the underlying assumption of women not being *worthy* to hit that lay underneath men's reluctance to hit them. This message was transmitted to women through the deliberate lack of bodily contact asserted to them. When women out performed these men, puncturing their sense of masculine dominance stinging punch by punch, women became targets for men to reassert their masculine dominance. Whilst the experience of being purposefully hit hard, or thrown around, in an attempted display of men's dominance was frustrating for many skilled women karateka, many also found the experience exciting and empowering as an opportunity to reconfirm their own status as skilled karateka:

I have been in the situation where, if you are good, they (men) will try to bully you and smash you a bit to... I don't know... Knock you back a bit so you don't come flying at them again with more scores. But I think that's fine because it just makes me want to beat them more. I think for some people that might put them off. But I think if you are an idiot, and taking advantage, I'll just work harder to beat you before you smash me. Katie, Bushido.

Such women took men's inappropriate attempts to hurt them as an opportunity not only to demonstrate their own skill, but to further cement their own dominance over such men. Through their status being challenged, confident assertions of skilful punches and kicks by women fought not only to defeat their male training partner and put them in their place, but fought to challenge notions of women karateka as less capable, or suited to karate, than men.

Whilst some karate men appeared to view being hit by women karateka as a challenge to their masculinity and dominance, many men accepted and embraced being hit by, or hitting, women karateka as a normal part of good training. Through intercorporeal experiences and frequent tacit exchanges women and men developed a deep understanding of the bodily capabilities of the other that challenged conventional notions of women and men's bodily capabilities, and the difference between the two. Through the tacit knowledge developed of their training partners, many men recognised and respected women karateka as skilled training partners, and as such were able to hit women and receive hits from women without struggling for gendered dominance:

You do hold back with the lower grade women because they don't want a 16 stone black belt beating on them. But if I'm fighting you or Pam, size doesn't matter because I'm fighting against speed and technique to try and hit you – you guys are the ones with the advantage not me! So I don't really hold back. There have been times where I've went to put a kick in, and if I done it full force it would do quite a bit damage, but I wouldn't hit anyone with those types of kicks. So there's certain things I won't do, but really fighting people like yourself I'm going in there to try and get a score. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

In sharing punches, kicks, grabs, throws, and strikes openly with one another, men

and women karateka pushed conventional ideas of their gendered bodies, and expected interactions between such bodies, aside. They overlooked ideas of women as fragile, and of men as infinitely stronger and tougher than women, in order to train effectively together. Gendered bodies, although intermittently becoming visible, were cloaked as karateka bodies.

6.4. Choosing a sparring partner and being a good sparring partner

In the sparring sections of the class women, men, tall, small, old and young would all mix and mingle to perform their art. The fights would change quickly so that the karateka had the opportunity to spar with as many people as possible, all of whom held differing strengths and posed different challenges. In choosing who to fight, what was noted by karateka as primarily important was having someone they trusted not to injure them, and someone who ‘pushes you’ to improve as a fighter:

As long as they push you, and as long as they try, I’ll happily spar with them. There’s different ways of pushing me - like you can, even though we are completely different physically. If you punch me I’m not gonna’ worry about having a broken jaw like I might if I was fighting Duncan. With him, if I get hit, he’ll do some damage, so I’m more alert for the defensive side of things and not getting hit. Whereas with you I’m more focused on the actual sharpness, the actual scoring techniques clean. Then when I’m fighting someone like Thea, I’m more about trying to sweep and try new things because she’s less experienced but around about my weight. Sean, Lothian Wado-kai.

Being able to give a challenging fight full of puzzles, or a less skilled fight but full of dedication, come backs, and opportunities, was seen as fundamental to improving, and as such fundamental for many in choosing who to spar with. Those that could ‘push you’ were not exclusively men, nor were they exclusively members of the same sex. Rather, in choosing who to fight, the classes divided predominantly by height and weight rather than sex, with women and men frequently choosing each other as partners. The queues to fight some of the skilful women in the class were just as long as those waiting to fight skilful men. Equally it was sometimes women in the clubs who were felt to be the hardest fighters, or best technicians of their sport.

The karateka reflected on this as karate being a sport that embodies a plurality of physicalities that can perform exceptionally with varying specialties and obstacles:

You need to fight to suit your height and weight, that's what good karateka do really. Everyone's got their technique, everyone has something to give.
Scott, Lothian Wado-kai.

In this space the idea of a hegemonic (masculine) fighting body appeared to be broken down, in favour of a recognition of a plurality of bodies whom can fight well, allowing varying builds of men and women the potential status of top fighter. This subsequently dismantled hegemonic masculinity as an ideal embodiment in karate. In these one-to-one battles women were provided the opportunity to directly contend with men to be the best fighter in the club, and some proved themselves to be so. The women reflected on the interchanges of stinging punches and thumping kicks between men and women as an empowering and rewarding part of karate - a tacit symbol of their skill, strength and respect in the sport. Sam and Katie highlight this:

I really like fighting with the guys. We've got some really good guys and it's good because they know they can properly fight you. It's like you can show them that you're a woman *and* an amazing fighter. And they accept that - they have to, haha! Sam, Lothian Wadokai.

I think it's good to challenge yourself against men that are stronger and bigger - I'm not saying all men are, they definitely aren't, but you'll always have at least one guy that you can think 'right I'm going to match him'.
Katie, Bushido.

In my own field notes I reflected similarly:

The hits were coming thick and fast: I'd catch him with a face punch, he'd instantly respond with a big body kick slamming into my side, I'd come back at him with a burst of combinations...It was both brilliant and nerve-wracking. David is a good few stone heavier than me and about 9 inches taller, so his hits were hard, and his reach made it trickier for me to sneak in to attack without getting hit on the way in. But nonetheless, if he hit me, I wanted to hit him back quicker and better - and he seemed to feel the same way - making it a great fight to be part of. Fieldnotes, Lothian Wado-kai.

Women's enjoyment of training with men in intense and challenging training drills touched on a number of gendered issues simultaneously. On the one hand, the pleasure found in training with men derived from an assumption that men would be naturally quicker and stronger than women. As such, many women enjoyed fighting men, and viewed men as partners who were 'good', with the underlying assumption that women would be slower, weaker, and thus not as good training partners as men. Following this assumption, women felt glad to have been chosen to train with by men, and saw this as a mark of respect. In being chosen as a sparring partner by men, women's ability as karateka was respected and valued as capable of challenging and helping male training partners, and as such, gendered assumptions about women's bodily suitability for karate was blurred.

Part of the enjoyment in training with men was not only feeling respected as a good training partner, but also the opportunity to be better than men, and be recognized as better than men, through the conquest to evade attacks and score the most hits to the partners' body. In the latter case, women's out performance of men became tacit facts which could not be woven into a narrative of female inferiority. As such, as suggested in the previous section, in choosing male training partners and being chosen by male training partners, ideas of women and men's bodies 'natural' abilities, and actual abilities were challenged. Through training together and realising the other's physical abilities each hit at a time, men and women found value in training with one another. In doing so, the *importance* of karateka's bodies as gendered bodies diminished, overshadowed by understandings of them as competent karateka.

Through frequently choosing to engage in combative training with members of the opposite sex, conventional ideas about men and women, and the subsequent interactions expected between the two, were challenged:

A good thing about training with men is you know that you can handle yourself and stand up to them! Not necessarily just physically, but also if you do have an issue – maybe at work - to stand up and let them know and get your opinion out. You realise that you can do that. Rebecca, Bushido.

For being a relatively young man I'm probably quite old fashioned in my thinking in that I just want to wrap them (women) up in cotton wool and look after them. But from training in karate and see them at competition I've learnt that actually they are pretty tough and they can hit you pretty hard and they are no scared. They're just as up for it as the guys – when they want to go for it, they go for it. Some of them are better than a lot of the guys, and are actually less bothered about getting hit than some of the men! I guess it just depends on the person. Keith, Juniper karate club.

The shared physical contact between women and men allowed karateka to realise the abilities of one another, and through continual exchanges of blows, built a respect for one another's karate ability. Here, ideas of bodily difference were broken down, enabling karateka to realign the expected relations between women and men to a relationship grounded on a more equal footing, that challenged men's natural superiority to women, and women's insecurities around asserting themselves towards men. Such challenges to conventional ideas of women and men, as suggested by Rebecca, had potential to deeply dislodge conventional notions of gender that inform our embodiment, in a manner which transgressed the karate hall.

Ideas of *being* a good training partner for others was important to most karateka, and centred on asserting the right level of bodily contact with their training partners. Here, building up an intercorporeal rapport of understanding was seen as central for informing how to be a good training partner for the other, and how both bodies could get the most out of their inter-bodily exchanges:

I think everybody realises when you step up to someone how hard you can go. I know certainly when I spar with someone, and if its a full contact kind of fight, there's times where I'll think 'oh I could have hit you in the head at that point' but it would just knock there confidence, and there's nothing really to gain from that. Slowing it down a bit and working at their pace so we are both getting something from it would be better. I like that a lot of the class is about confidence boosting for everybody – it's not about putting others down or showing you are loads better than everyone else. David, Juniper karate club.

In aiming to be a good training partner, karateka sought to employ a caring approach that was open to learning the abilities of their partner to engage in fast and furious

interchanges of hits, or slower and more technical exchanges, and open to viewing the possibilities that training with their specific partner brought. As such, being a good training partner was not about giving the hardest hits or being the best technician, but rather about developing an inter-bodily dialogue with the training partner that enabled *both* karateka to progress. For higher grades, being a good training partner was often also deemed to entail correcting or guiding lower grades when their training slipped away from the standard expected of them:

If I'm sparring with someone and they are just going through the motions of the technique, I think we have a responsibility as senior grades to say 'hey, you either do it right or go home'. If you're going to do something - do it. If your sparring and they are going for a triple combo, and they go to do it and then stop and pull back from it, I always stop and say to them 'why did you stop? Don't stop?' Whether you hit, miss, fall on your arse, it makes no difference - do it. We teach you to do it, so when you have an opportunity - just do it. People won't progress if they don't. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

In encompassing aiding others' improvements as central to being a good training partner and a good high grade, high grades within the clubs developed a helping, caring, and knowledgeable embodiment that stood in contrast to the selfish and egocentric ethos often found framing sport, and particularly expected of men in sport.

However not all high grades embraced an understanding of themselves as able to help their partners improve. Some high graded women worried about not being good enough training partners. This notion, although relatively uncommon, was notably found from those who started karate in the women's only class. Rather than embracing the skills and knowledge embodied in their karate movements, these women doubted their physical abilities and worried they would be a burden for others:

'When I was a low grade I used to always want to train with people that were higher grades and black belts because I used to think: you always want to be pushed, and you want to be with people who are like that. But part of me now feels a bit guilty if I am fighting someone who is so much better than me I think - they're not getting anything out of it.' Sandra, Bushido.

Women who lacked confidence in their ability as a training partner often partnered other's who similarly lacked confidence, or would work mostly with those a grade or so below them, avoiding those in the class who were seen to be excellent. In struggling to find confidence in their bodily abilities, and struggling to view themselves as good training partners, these high-grade women limited their improvements by choosing sparring partners less capable than themselves, and thus maintained a cycle of restricting their physical development and opportunities to recognise and express their bodily ability.

As such, a choosing and being a good training partner did not simply entail choosing someone of the same sex, nor necessarily someone of the same grade. The reciprocal to and fro of hits tacitly negotiated to a level where both karateka gained something from the engagement, and felt positive about their part in the engagement, encompassed a 'good fight' between 'good' training partners. This spoke to a level of trust and intercorporeal understanding between karateka. The intensity of such a fight was not only warranted on skill, but also on a mutually negotiated understanding, built through repetitive training drills together, of how hard a hit each could take, alongside a trust not to purposefully exceed that in the heat of the fight, and to seek to help one another improve. As such, the repetitive tacit exchange of punches and kicks between karateka infused their relationship with respectful understanding and trust. Through hitting and being hit karateka built a bond founded in intimate contact with their partner's body, intimate knowledge of their partner's body, and a shared mutual desire to improve their karate:

At this time these two were both strangers and I said 'oh come get your picture taken' - and it was just a laugh. I mean he has his nose broken there - and that's the sorest thing in the world - but its that thing that how you can break someone's nose, he can accept it, and the both of them let me take a photo of it and laugh about it? I just think that says everything about karate: that probably best describes the familiness or friendliness about karate. Keith, Juniper karate club.



Image 11: Image discussed in previous quote. Friendship after breaking an opponents nose in competition.

The commonality of karateka to choose a training partner of the opposite sex meant that karateka built detailed embodied knowledge of members of the opposite sex, and subsequently embodied knowledge of themselves, that was grounded in tacit respect and trust. In turn, being ‘good training partners’ built embodied relations between women and men that refuted notions of women’s subordinate position to men, but rather cherished one another as fellow karateka who can aid one another’s development.

Whilst being a good sparring partner entailed being able to ‘push’ a training partner, aid their development, and being trusted to hit with the correct intentions that could overlook an accidental injury, a bad sparring partner was often marked as one whom consistently and purposefully did not follow the rules of control:

I don't really think you need to hit hard - its not about hitting hard. But some people do. And I think their attitude is that they need to show that they are better. And for me I'm not really competing with anyone, I'm not trying to be better than the person next to us, I'm trying to do my best. So I have a different level affability to someone else, so for me it's not about competing with those beside you but for a certain someone it is. I just can't be bothered with that. So if your fighting that person they have to prove that they are better than you and in doing that they hurt people - they hit them hard. So I'll hurt them back. Claire, Bushido.

These ‘bad training partners’ utilised, or were at least felt to utilise, the physical touches of karate to assert power over those they trained with. Continually hitting a training partner hard in order to hurt them was seen as both unnecessary, unfair, and unproductive for karate training. Regular culprits of this were well known within the karate clubs, and were often avoided by karateka. High grades would often police such behaviour by partnering the culprit and unleashing hard, fast, and rough techniques in an intense fight to punish the deviant karateka, show them they were not the only karateka who could hit hard, and encourage them to thus adhere to the rules of control. Here, karateka's policing worked to reinforce the norms of hitting, and punishment acted to assert authority over other's embodied actions. Such treatment could be seen within low-level club fighting to the very top level of karate training:

Nobody should be getting black eyes or bleeding noses in here. It'll be physically intense, and it'll be scary, and there will be a lot of techniques being thrown, but nobody should be getting hurt. If you're here to hurt people and bully people, well, you're in the right place – the national coaches here have no problem in bringing you out to fight with us. Scotland coach, national squad training.

Whilst all high grades have the skill to hit and hurt an opponent, not all had the physical build to out-punch karateka who kept hitting others hard. The reinforcement

of the rules of control to macho types was predominantly performed by large black belt men, and particularly carried out when a man was deemed to be purposefully hitting a women training partner too hard. As such, whilst a ‘macho man’ embodiment centred on exerting physical strength upon the bodies of others to gain prestige was discouraged within the dojo, an association between men’s bodies, violence, control, and authority was maintained. Here, black belt men became the physical guardians of social order within the dojo, whilst women were predominantly isolated from this role because of their body size, and thus isolated from an ultimate authoritative embodiment.

6.5. Chapter summary and discussion

Use of touch indeed formed a prominent part of the embodied experience of karate and negotiations of women and men’s gendered embodiment within the dojo. Touch was not merely sensations felt on the skin, it was a form of communication informing relations with other karateka. Through different uses of touch karateka: asserted a position in the karate hierarchy above or below those they trained with; showed respect to one another; marked their feelings of similarity or difference; challenged treatment of difference; asserted the tacit norms of the dojo; asserted their authority over another; and offered and invited intimate understandings of one another. Touch thus informed karateka’s embodiment in relation to their relations with their training partners. The ways in which touch was shared between women and men physically negotiated power relations and ideas of difference between women and men, that powerfully refuted (and at times reinforced) distinctly gendered embodiments.

Understandings of touch in both academic and public contexts largely focus on touch as sexualised and/or about control (Classen, 2005a; 2005b; 2005d; Channon and Jennings, 2013; Elias, 1994; Foucault, 1977; Gregor, 2005) and in turn, part of men’s contestations of power over women and other men (Brackenridge, 2001; Messner, 1990; Gregor, 2005). For the close-contact practice of karate, taboos of touch between bodies, and particularly between women and men’s bodies (Classen, 2005a;

Finnegan, 2005) were framed differently. The informal rules of karate announced by the sensei, or demonstrated by the actions of higher grades, were key in easing anxieties of beginners around taboos of touch, and reframing touch as essential and practical to karate practice. In engaging in stretching, combative, and helping touches to improve their practice, women and men karateka developed carnal connections that normalised and desexualised touch. Here touch worked to assert respect and trust as training partners that could facilitate feelings of social closeness and of similarity:

‘The fleshly companionship that arises in the course of years of daily training and suffering side-by-side, and especially sparring together—which implies entrusting one’s body to the other, and an other increasingly like oneself—is conducive to developing carnal connections’ (Wacquant, 2005:450).

The bonding and sense of similarity founded in the close bodily contact of sport has been highlighted as central to men’s bonding with other men (Anderson, 2008; Classen, 2005d; Gregor, 2005; Wacquant, 2004). In engaging in the tactile practice of karate alongside women, this form of intercorporeal bonding enabled a sense of similarity as karateka to be bridged, overriding notions of gendered difference. Uses of helpful, corrective, and demonstrative touch between women and men in karate thus neutralised, rather than asserted, power differences between women and men.

Whilst the uses of touch mentioned above were normalised relatively quickly and with relative ease, hitting and being hit posed much more ambiguity and discomfort because of the association of such actions with violence and domestic abuse. Yet hitting hard was not central to karate practice – in fact the social rules surrounding hitting emphasised control, precision, and good technical execution with care not to hurt one’s training partner. The positioning of prestige in technical excellence and control not only framed touch in karate as not about dominance through hurting another, it specifically took away a source of dominance often imagined as natural to men (Bourdieu, 2001). As such, men were encouraged to develop an embodiment that diverged from conventional ideas of masculinity that exude strength and aggression as a form of dominance, and rather embraced control, technical precision, and care for one’s training partner as grounds for gaining status and prestige. Further,

in lowering the value of strength amongst the competencies required to train and perform well, assumptions of men's natural advantage over women in karate practice often sourced in ideas of differences in physical strength were disrupted.

However, uses of touch were at times utilised to draw on and reproduce ideas of men's natural capacities for fighting, and to assert their dominance – particularly when sparing with skilled women. Some men would refrain from hitting women, and some would purposefully hit skilled women hard. In drawing on ideas of gender difference to frame their physical interactions with women, these men attempted to maintain a superior positioning to women, regardless of their own ability: if women out performed them, their prestige could be shielded by assertions that they did not want to hurt the woman, and gain a gentlemanly honour; or purposefully hurt women, and present themselves as dominant. In doing so, such men made murky the spectrum of ability within their dojo that interspersed women and men across the line of talent, with many women above many men. Both reinforced ideas of women's karate skills and ability as being less than men's (Guerandel and Mennesson, 2007:176), the former by performing physical dominance, and the latter by reinforcing ideas of women as fragile, to be protected, and thus unable to engage *fully* in karate practice. As such, some men's excessive or absent physical exchanges of hits with women karateka worked to maintain ideas of gender distinction, and a dominant masculine embodiment. This not only had consequences for men's embodiments. Reluctance to hit women limited women's abilities to learn to take a hit or defend effectively, thus restricting women's ability to progress as karateka. Here, ideas of women as fragile were cemented through practice that prevented women from realizing and developing the physical capacities of their bodies (Young, 2005).

Whilst the taboos of touch between women and men, and assumptions of women and men's natural capacities, may lead an outsider to assume karateka would train with members of their own sex, within the web of considerations of whom to train with, the importance of gender was commonly subordinated to the importance of grade, height, or familiarity for finding a partner whom embodied the physical traits and

characteristics that made a good training partner. Most men embraced training with women, and chose to partner women frequently based on a bodily-learnt appreciation of women's skills and potential as good training partners. In sharing combative touches with men, many women particularly enjoyed the opportunity to test their skills against men, and directly challenge assumptions of men's superiority to women through intense tacit exchanges of kicks and punches. In doing so with men or women whom would reciprocally hit with the appropriate level of contact, karateka forged relationships centred on the mutual development of one-another. In engaging in fleshy skin-to-skin combative touch, and choosing to do so with members of the opposite sex, karateka embedded relations between women and men with respect and reciprocal value.

Through the embodied experiences of sharing varying types of touches in the dojo, karateka lived out an 'undoing of gender' whereby, through a wealth of tacit knowledge accumulated with training partners of the opposite sex, conventional understandings of bodily difference, and hierarchical difference, between women and men were quashed. In contrast to other sporting arenas, including other mixed sex sports, where women practitioners were separated from the men, given distinctly different tasks from men, enshrined with differing rules, or side-lined in practice (for examples see Grindstaff and West, 2006; Henry and Comeaux, 1999; Hills and Croston, 2011; Wachs, 2002), women karateka could and would engage in the same sweaty body-to-body tacit exchanges of karate, under the same rules, *with men*. In sharing exchanges of touch between women and men, understanding of one-another's bodies and capabilities were developed that dissolved myths of women's weakness and men's strength. Negotiations of touch between women and men in karate thus predominantly communicated and developed a recognition of similarity as karateka, that undermined much of the importance of karateka's gender. Rather than a mechanism for reinforcing male dominance, touch in karate primarily worked towards dislodging it.

Interlude: Policing and punishing disobedience in the dojo

Controlling the physical contact of a technique on a training partner's body was seen as both a sign of respect to our training partners, and a practical necessity if we want our training partners to be able to, and want to, train with us again. When karateka were deemed to be purposively hitting their training partners hard, it was common that another high grade would pull their behaviour in line by either telling the karateka in question to control their techniques, or, failing to do so, hitting the deviant hard. Here the behaviour being punished is the same behaviour that will be used to punish. Most commonly this deviant behaviour was performed by men, and was punished by another man. Such confrontations raised contentions not of whether it is okay to hit hard, but of who has the authority to hit hard within what context. The men's focus on their ability to do physical damage transformed the controlled, hierarchically-skill-structured, 'art' of karate into a contestation to be the hegemonic male, enabled and moralised by claims of being for the greater good.

A person who was really trying to hurt people was big Freddy. Me and him nearly had a fight in the car park about it. He was throwing these massive big kicks, punches, and hooks, and nobody was wanting to fight him because of it. And I didn't really want to fight him either - I don't want to go to work with a black eye! I stayed away from him and I also felt he stayed away with me. I watched him and watched him halving folk - low grade, high grade, it was just shocking. I just thought that's not karate, that's just shocking. It was getting out of hand and I mentioned it to Sensei Colin one day and he said 'someone will put him in his place' sort of giving me the nod.

So I paired up with Fred, we bowed and he through a hook at me - I stepped back. He through a round house kick at me, and I ducked - and I'm 6'2 - and I ducked under it and he swung right through like a pirouette. And Colin said 'ho ho! lucky you ducked there Keith' and I'm thinking 'aye, I'm lucky to have my head with his massive leg swinging about'. When he came back round out of no where I threw probably one of my best technical face punches I've ever thrown, and I caught him

right under the nose and he fell back. He threw his pads off and got straight back up shouting 'I'll fucking show you' so then I started to take my hand pads off, then Colin just sort of walked over - he didn't say anything - but walked over as if to say 'put your pads back on boys and simmer down. This is karate.' So we put our pads back on, and he kept doing the same as before hooking all over, and then I got him again with a perfect hook kick that had that snapping noise of the suit hitting against your ankle that says 'there you go, I could of hit you hard, but I controlled it and kicked you in the face'. After that in the car park he was shouting over and I said 'Fred if you want to, go for it, but if you do one of us aren't coming back to training'. And I just thought, he's a bully, nothing but a bully. He was so bad to everyone and he lost face in front of everyone.

The next again week I was stretching and he came in and came over and said 'I had that coming last week. I've no had that much competition here to fight against and give me a hard time, and you did. You caught me a good punch and I deserved it.' And that was it, he left it with that. I just thought that's ridiculous him saying he's not getting enough competition... I mean big Derek wouldn't hold back, and people like yourself and Paul... who does he think he is. He's terrible at karate... I mean you are the fastest thing on two feet, but if he was to time you coming in and to throw a front kick - even with someone the size of me to be honest - he'd do some serious damage. He'd at least puncture a lung. But again that's not technical strong, that's just brute strong. That was doing my head in. I felt a bit like Robin Hood going out to sort him. But do you know, I said to Derek after big Freddy had come up and spoke to me, and Derek said 'well, he's either scared of you, or genuinely sorry. Maybe both'. Hitting people I don't take great pride in, but with him... the first thing I said to my wife Julie was that I punched Fred off his feet, and she said 'did he deserve it?' and I said 'aye he did' then she said 'well he had it coming then'. So I was kind of gloating at home but also trying to process it in my own mind - was that right what I did? What's Colin going to think? So aye, that I did take pride in. Keith, Juniper karate club.

7. Karate as a journey of self-development

Karate is so good for so many things. It's not just a competitive thing; there are so many life skills you can apply to everyday life. And anyone can be successful in karate - maybe not as in competition, but successful in... the thing with karate is it's such a positive thing with people, and anyone can be good at it, because it's not just about competition. Being a good karateka is such an amazing thing to do: Its having that determined attitude, having that positive frame of mind, having a never give-up attitude, it's all these things that you can't get by winning a medal. You could be a fantastic competitor but not really a great karateka. Craig, Bushido.

For many, the sensory experience of karate was more than just a physical activity; it was felt to mark something more permanent into their ways of being. The practice of karate was felt to have the capacity to change their physical body, mental capacities, and personality – to take karateka on a journey of self-development. Our sense of self is moulded and pieced together through a combination of our sensory experiences in the world; our interactions with others; our sense of how others perceive us; our social biography; and reflection to societal expectations of our ascribed characteristics. Through sensory experiences of our body in the world, we build a consciousness of who we are, what we are capable of, and of others around us (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Our experiences, and the dispositions developed from our experiences, are shaped by ascribed characteristics such as our class, gender, and race, as these characteristics are embedded with societal expectations and inequalities that inform, although do not strictly define, the opportunities available for individuals to develop physical and mental dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990).

Expectations of gender have been suggested to shape the opportunities and avenues through which we develop a sense of self in a manner that leads women to underestimate their bodily capabilities (Young, 2005), and men to over-estimate their capabilities (Kimmel, 2000). However, as women have gained increasing access to previously male domains, such as work and power positions within the working world, the extent to which women and men develop such gender distinct senses of self has become more complicated. Here, sport is often cited as providing men an arena to develop a masculine sense of self, and the reaffirmation of a gendered

hierarchy, in relation to the absence of women and performances of power (Messner, 1987; Dunning, 1999).

Within this context, this chapter will explore the ways in which karate practice informed women and men karateka's sense of self, and the extent to which their sense of self was gendered. Karateka's sense of self developed through karate appeared to be built through the accumulation of three journeys of self-development – physical development, mental development, and personal development. This chapter will firstly discuss the development of mental characteristics deemed central to karate practice, and the challenges such understandings posed for the importance of the gendered body to karate practice, and to fulfilling a 'good karateka' identity. The chapter then looks at karateka's perceptions of their physical embodiment of the mental qualities of karate as becoming ingrained within their character and informing 'who they are', and the extent to which gender was central to this embodied sense of self. Through embracing a unisex set of mental and physical dispositions that blended traits conventionally seen as masculine and feminine, this self developed in karate enabled women to challenge restrictive underpinnings of a conventional feminine embodiment, and for men, was founded in recognition of women's shared identity and capacity as karateka that challenged notions of hierarchical gender distinction. Finally, the chapter explores the particular poignancies of women karateka's self-development, and the potential this had to develop women's intentionality and belief in themselves as capable, able and deserving, and thus undoing a conventional gendered embodiment.

7.1. 'Get the right mind set and the (sexed) body follows'

Whilst there might not be a coherent idea of what the 'ideal karate body' would look like, there did seem to be a coherent idea of what the ideal mind-set for karate would be. The ideal mind-set for karate described by karateka I interviewed comprised of confidence, respect, resilience, perseverance, discipline, and a commitment to 'push' themselves in order to improve. This mind set was seen to be *more* important to being a good karateka than karateka's physical abilities:

I think karate is mostly mental. Because obviously you've got to have that kind of cockiness, maybe arrogance, but that kind of belief that you can beat the person in front. You need to have the mentality that if you get a hard hit, not to worry about getting hit again, or bother about being hurt. You have to have a mentality where even if you are hurt, you try to hide it and keep going. Mental strength. Because, while everything is going so fast, you need to have the mental strength to think about the problem, figure out what you're gonna do, what's happening - you need to keep strategising. And it's when people get emotionally involved and stop thinking and just want to hit them back, and ken, not really think about it, and then that effects how well they fight or perform. You have to have the mental discipline to keep thinking and not get too emotionally involved. You could have great potential, good technique, but if you didn't have that mental approach, that determination, you wouldn't last - you'd quit. We see it all the time. Sean, Lothian Wado-kai.

The importance of karateka's mental approach to karate was woven into the practice since it's popularisation in the 1920's by Funakoshi. In Funakoshi's *Twenty guiding principles of karate* (1938/2003), Funakoshi emphasises the mentality required of karateka, with its importance emphasised in principle five: 'Mentality over technique'. This principle was reinforced by sensei's encouragement of karateka to execute their techniques with 'zenshin' - warrior spirit. In doing so, senseis emphasised the importance of weaving karateka's technical movements with the correct mentality. In aiming to perform their techniques with zenshin, karateka experienced their mental approach as being capable of changing their bodies capacities:

If your mind isn't 100% in it, your body reflects that. And if that was me in training or competition, if I wasn't feeling 100% I'd try to change my mind set so my body changes to that. I know it is very difficult when you know your body isn't 100% to do that, but I try to do it as much as I can. I just force myself to think the opposite because, its such a strange thing but, what you tell yourself your body seems to do. So if you think 'I'm rubbish' your body starts to feel weak and tired, then that's how you perform. But even if I am really tired I will tell myself the opposite - and your body just follows. And like yesterday we were doing kicks and at first it got me a bit down because I felt 'ugh, because of my hip injury I can't kick head level'. But then I thought 'well, I'll do it body level'. And by the end of the lesson I was fine. There were so many perfect head kick options, but I had to figure out how to go to the body instead. Katie, Bushido.

Through karate practice, karateka experienced the relationship between their body and mind as one of reciprocal influence, and interlinked intentionality:

Before the lesson I have a little bit of a stretch, and whilst that loosens off my body, it also alerts my mind that it's time to start training. I can feel my mentality shift as I shift the weight from left leg to right leg stretching. Thoughts about problems with my car, university work, the news, disappear and are replaced with a sense of focus and excitement. My warm up gets me ready – heating up the body, sweating, changing the pace of my breathing, and becoming prepared to commit. I hate it if I'm late for class, my mind feels like it's all over the place; it always takes me a while to settle in. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

The bodily dispositions of karate thus entailed more than just physical movements, but also entail a correct intent behind the movement. The intent, or mind-set, expected to be embodied within karateka's interactions were set out by the actions and encouragements of each club's sensei, broadly reflecting the *Twenty guiding principles of karate*. The overarching mentality to be embodied through one's actions was respect. The way a karateka entered the hall, moved in solo practice of their kata, interacted during partnered sparring drills, or asked questions to the Sensei, were expected to express a respect to the Sensei, respect to their partners, and respect to themselves:

Greg, when he finishes his kata he mopes around. You should bow carefully and slowly and then say 'Oss'. He huffs and puffs and swings his body forward saying 'oss' ... and its like, you've been told so many times to do it properly ... and that's sort of like a basic move and a basic respect. Kirsty, Bushido.

The respect expected was one that showed regard to karate as an art, and thus something to be executed with precision and care, a respect to the physical safety of training partners, and a respect to other's experience in the sport. Drawn from karate's hierarchical structure, expressions of respect were particularly important in interactions with black belts and the Sensei:

Coming in as a white belt, if there's a black belt coming in the door behind you, you should automatically hold the door open for them and let them enter first. It's just a sign of respect. And obviously if they say 'Oh no, on you go'

then that's fine, but it's just to show respect. Even if it's a higher grade at all, I suppose it's a respect thing. And you know if you are in class and Jim's talking and you want to excuse yourself you are meant to bow to him and walk backwards out. That doesn't happen with us, I think Jim's quite laid back in that respect anyway, but in some places it will. People don't resent giving respect like that. If we were told to do it tomorrow we would do it. You have to give that respect to people like Jim and yourself who have been in the sport for so long and achieved so much, and just so skilled at what they do. Jim will have been doing it for 40 years next year, to have that level of self-discipline to stay for that long you have to respect that. James, Juniper karate club.

As such, the centrality of hierarchical respect in the structure and practice of karate was not only expected to be felt, it was expected to be embodied and expressed in the way one interacted with other karateka. This philosophical underpinning of karate practice entailed an expectation that women and men shared a mutual respect in the dojo, and that lower grade men showed higher graded women particular respect as high grades: be it in watching the women's technique to learn from, listening to their expertise, moving out the way for them in the dojo to allow the women the room they required to practice, or asking to spar with them. This propensity with which the vast majority of men followed this pattern of respect in the dojo shook up conventionally embodied male dominant power relations embedded in women and men's relationships, in favour of a respect that was mutually exchanged, and at times outweighed in favour of women. The exchange of respect between women and men fostered in karate practice lead some men to not only develop more equal relations with women in the dojo, but to challenge sexist experiences and opinions found elsewhere in their lives:

I've played Sunday football and there's definitely a blokes locker. Back in the early days, it upset me hearing bad comments made about women, I always felt uneasy when guys would be demeaning to women 'oh I'd do this to her or I'd do this to her' because that wasn't my environment. But when I heard other people talk like that it wasn't upsetting, but it was just that these people were idiots and I didn't want to get into the conversation in the first place. I've got no experience of that - my experiences in sport with women were completely different. I don't know if it's because I was the youngest in my family as well but maybe it was because of the dancing and being in a woman sport - I was in the minority when I danced! I'm taking out of 100 dancers only about 10 would be guys, if that. Girls were girls you partnered. And in

karate, again, women are women you partnered, and I've been beaten up by enough to know that you give them respect! So maybe being in that environment it's made me think that when I hear attitudes towards women ... and as I'm older now I'm confident to say 'hey, that's not how you conduct yourself'. I'm confident in my self to say 'you're wrong, you need to adjust the way your thinking' and that will stand them good stead in the future. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

As such, the hierarchical framework of karate and expectations of respect throughout this framework consequently highlighted reasons for men to respect women, and entailed men *should* respect women, based on a recognition of women's worth as fellow karateka. In viewing women as fellow karateka worthy of respect, notions of difference between women and men that frame and enable gendered embodiments, were replaced by notions of similarity.

Alongside embodying respect to self and others, in performing the kicks, punches, and strikes of karate, karateka were also expected to do so with a commitment to push their body 'to the limit' in order to improve. Here, intense physical exertion, repetitive perseverance to perfect techniques, and hours of dedicated practice became physical symbols of karateka's 'zenshin':

Some of the pad circuits Jim gets us to do - we done 6 sets last week! And like at the start I was flying through them, but it only takes to the 4th set and then your heart is racing! And you just start to feel so weak all of a sudden, that even just throwing a punch is hard. And to get power into it as well. And you think 'oh no, I'm not going to make it!' You feel like your going to vomit a bit. And then when it's over I love it. You get that feeling that you know you've really pushed yourself. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

I think after the class if you are feeling really drained its good because you know it really pushed you to your limit, or maybe even past it. So that's a good feeling. I like a bit of sore muscles and stuff because it just shows you you are pushing your body. And the types of people we are we like the idea that each time we are pushing our body more and more. Katie, Bushido.

Through intense physical exertion, the uncomfortable bodily feelings of exhaustion, sore muscles, and sweat dripping down their body were reflected on by karateka as desired bodily experiences. Being seen as a symbol of hard work, and thus something to be praised, enabled these experiences of discomfort to become

embraced bodily dispositions developed within the karate hall. The feeling of ‘pushing yourself’ in karate training was also enjoyed for the risk-taking opportunity it provided. Here karateka were encouraged to take risks to score points, or try techniques they never use, and in doing so, learn about their body’s physical limitations, and strive to reach them, within the safe environment of the dojo.



Image 12: Focus practicing kata.

Karate women’s engagement in risk-taking tasks marks a particular contrast to the expected gendered uses of women’s bodies. Whilst men and boys are often encouraged to take risks with their bodies – be it in climbing trees as a child, traveling across the world, or joining professions such as the military or police – women and girls are, in contrast, often taught to protect their bodies. In taking risks, we realise what we can and cannot do. If women do not take risks with their bodies, and are encouraged to protect their bodies, then the extent of their embodied potential, and realisation of their bodily ability, is vastly cut short. Through requiring women to ‘push’ and test some of their body’s limits, karate practice developed a bodily relationship that asked women, such as Fiona and Katie above, to explore their bodies’ physical potential. Women’s recognition of their ability through such mental approached to practice appeared to begin to bridge the gap between women and men’s belief in their bodily ability.

Through women's perseverance to 'push themselves' to achieve within a practice conventionally seen as masculine, some karateka perceived karate women to be mentally stronger than men:

I mean if you were to fight a man, I think men give up quicker than women. I've learnt that from fighting with women that when they want to go for it, they go for it. There's a big determination there. There's no looking back. I mean look at Steph. It's not that she's got a point to prove, it's more that she's just saying 'I'll show you what I can do, if there's any question, I can show you'. Keith, Juniper karate club.

The importance placed on mentality to perform well in karate challenges the importance of karateka's biological make-up to karate practice. It in turn challenges the notion that biology makes men more suited to the prestigious arena of sport, and positions both women and men as equally capable of becoming good karateka. Furthermore, the ability for women to be seen as mentally stronger than men, presents further challenges to ideas of male dominance in sport. The importance of mind-set to the practice of karate thus detracted from the importance of karateka's body as a sexed body, and thus enabled gender to become less relevant (although, as previous chapters suggest, not completely irrelevant) to embodiments formed in karate and embodied interactions.

7.2. 'It's part of who you are'

'The deeper truths of the martial arts are not tied to techniques, tricks, and strategies for winning - they are tied to strategies for life.' Funakoshi, 1938/2003.

For many karateka, performing the physical and mental motions of karate was experienced as more than just an activity they done, but was seen as forging a deeper part of who they were:

I think karate builds you so much as a person that... unless someone knows you in that environment then they don't really know you. And unless you're in it, then I don't think you can really know or understand it. It's funny when you think of your best friends you have outside of karate because they are

still your best friends but they don't know the whole of you. There's this big piece missing. Katie, Bushido.

To hang in there and to get to Black belt, it certainly requires some amount of tenacity. I do think as well that I'm at a point now where it is just part of me and what I do. It's not like a hobby, it's more ingrained than that. Its part of like, me personality in a way, a part of what makes me, me. So it's more than a hobby. Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

This sense of karate being part of who karateka are partly emerged from the way in which karateka reflected on the mental qualities encouraged in karate practice, and their embodiment of these qualities. Through embracing the mentalities of karate practice – respect, dedication, and pushing ones self – intertwined with their bodily exertions, karateka experienced specific ways of projecting themselves and their intentions within the world. These mental approaches were felt to become part of a repertoire of ways in which karateka saw themselves' and the ways they can, and perhaps should, interact with the world. As such, karate was felt to have the capacity to 'build' or develop karateka's 'self' in a way that could transcend the karate hall and impact other areas of their lives:

Even when I choose to finish competing, I'll still try to get better. Karate doesn't stop there for me. I think of it as a ... new beginning I suppose - like something different. Again, I think this is from karate - I will always try to be better, or if I want something I will always try my hardest to achieve it, and if I don't and I've tried my hardest, okay but... I think that's a big thing for me: that if I want something I'll work hard for it. And I've done that all my life. But if you do work hard generally you can get there on some sort of level. If you keep pushing and pushing, if you fail at one thing then you don't quit, you keep trying and pushing. And I'm like that with my work definitely. Even if I get a knockback from one publisher, I'll try again with another. Katie, Bushido

In a class and your motivated to push yourself, and often in life... I think, in karate you'd push yourself that step further, and so maybe in life you do the same - it makes you think well I can do that, and I will push myself to do that! Rebecca, Bushido.

The ways in which karateka reflected on how karate's 'mind set' had changed their self and their relationship with the world held distinctly gendered patterns. Women, such as Katie and Rebecca, commonly highlighted how karate had helped them

develop a strive to improve, to take chances, and to challenge ideas of their limitations. These mental qualities of karate that women sited as creating changes to themselves and their relationship with the world were ones that contrasted and refuted conventional expectations of feminine embodiment. Men more frequently sited changes towards embracing the softer mental qualities of the sport such as a calm and peaceful manner, patience, and ridding themselves of anger and frustration:

Anyone that picks up the sport will find a physical difference in themselves - and that's not just being fitter. But also a mental difference. I think it's a sport that allows you to focus. You almost get to the point before you do something you go to a nice place, calm yourself mentally, and then apply what it is you need to apply when you're doing things like kata. You relax and take the time to centralise and focus on what you want to do. So it's not just the physical side that develops but also the mental side. It teaches you to focus, to be calm, not just a tense ball of testosterone. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

Being able to throw punches and kicks and control them also helps me balance things in my mind. It shows me I can do these things, but not go too far with it. Like, if I have a bad day, rather than sitting in a mood - which I would have done before - I come to training, and then everything is alright. Ken, this is good, this is what I need. If things are horrendous with work I can go to karate and get a big guy to hold a big pad and rattle it ten times - and that's the best therapy you can get. It wipes out all the negativity to approach things more positively and be more balanced as a person. I'd say it helps me more mentally than it does physically. Keith, Juniper karate club.

The men above suggest they were actively seeking a calming or balancing of an implied testosterone-fuelled masculinity. Whether they indeed wanted a calming of their masculinity, or they used this as a way of safeguarding their masculinity whilst describing the pleasure they found in embodying less masculinised approaches of being, either way, men's recurrent praise of the calming approach karate instilled to their ways of being and sense of who they are suggest a distancing from ideas of hegemonic, aggressive, masculine embodiment.

The 'mind set' seen to be essential for karate practice enabled, and *encouraged*, women and men to experience mental approaches and ways of being in the world which typically contradicted expected was of being a man or a woman. Here, broaching a balance between conventionally deemed masculine and conventionally

deemed feminine embodiments was desired. As such, karateka built a self-consciousness that rejected a dualistic identification with *either* conventional masculinity or femininity respective to their sexed body, and embraced a collection of conventionally deemed masculine and feminine ways of being in the world.

The mind set deemed to be developed through karate practice took on an elevated importance for some, whereby karate's mind-set was seen as not only part of who they were, but also as 'giving direction', or guidance, to their life. This was particularly felt when facing a personal crisis' or stresses in life outside of karate:

What you give karate it will give you back. All you need is to turn up - karate will give you the rest. Karate will give you what you need. I think over the last few years, it would be a bit strong to say it's given my life direction, but, its, gave me a purpose to focus on, and taught me how to focus, at a time where I really needed something to focus my mind on. Everyone will speak to you, and welcome you and try and help you, and everyone is there for each other. So its definitely helped me as a person to have a purpose, to feel included. It has developed me from being someone who's job can take its toll at times to having this release and control. And at the same time I can get fit with it, I can make friends with it, I can thump a pad as hard as I want with it if I've had a bad day. So I like the physical side of it, and if you are physically healthy you're mentally healthy generally. Keith, Juniper karate club.

For me karate was a really good way of dealing with the anger side of things when I was going through my separation. Firstly, when we are doing stuff on the pads you can really unleash yourself, and there's has been times where I've just lost myself a bit. It's just really out-pouring the anger into a pad - and, you know, as long as the right person is holding it you're fine. Getting rid of that energy that would help control the anger side of things. I'd find even doing kata at home - and losing myself in that for an hour - was a form of meditation I guess. I've always found that really helpful if things were really not good, you could take the principle of focus needed for kata and redirecting my thoughts. I always find that after a karate class I can approach a situation a lot differently. It kind of removes a lot of the emotion, the testosterone, and things to look at it a bit clearer. David, Juniper.

Karate was seen as not only providing a physical activity to take karateka's mind off of their stresses, but also as developing the techniques to re-evaluate who they are, and who they are becoming. At moments of crisis, or when we take a new direction in our life, our sense of self undergoes particular examination and reflection. For

some, karate's meditative and focus-centred practice was a central part in aiding reflection of themselves. In being a vector through which some karateka re-evaluated themselves during key moments in their life, karate was thus positioned as a stable and steering part of their self, and their self-development. Another key part of support karate was felt to provide at such times was a sense of belonging felt with teammates and club:

There was a time I was really struggling with my confidence and, although things weren't going that great at karate either for me, I found that, when I kept training I had something - a routine - that I always had. I saw friends that I loved there. Things like that help, it gives you somewhere to vent your frustrations...that kind of constant. That really helped me at the time. And just... that is something about it. It's always a constant- its always there. Like if I'm having a crap run at uni, like a couple of crap grades, I always know I can just go to training - almost like stepping out of reality. I can go there, and be amongst people that always make me smile, and just enjoy the training.
Kimberly, Lothian Wado-kai.

In moments of evaluation and re-evaluation of self, the karate club was a place many of my interviewees sited as providing a sense of consistency and belonging. In asserting a unified belonging with their karate club, karateka express a deep connection and comfort in themselves' within the dojo. In asserting their belonging in karate, karateka assert that they are both part of the karate club, and the karate club is part of them, in some cases, emotionally, physically *and literally*:

I feel like I belong here. I feel like this is what I'm meant to do, and I enjoy it. Nothing else, everything else is a secondary thought. I feel like I belong and that's enough for me. You need to feel like you belong to do something no matter what it is, and when I go to karate and I put my suit on and I stand on the mats I feel a sense of belonging. It's a part of me and it's where I belong.
Stuart, Juniper karate club.

I'm a tattoo person, and if you're not a tattoo person fine. But I am, and to me I think tattoos are something that means something to you... And that's what Juniper karate club means to me. Everyone that's involved in the club, and everything that Jim puts into it. We'll say to him 'well it's your club Colin' and he'll say 'no its not, it's everybody's club. Everybody makes the club'. He teaches the karate but he says if nobody comes there wouldn't be a club. So it shows we are doing something right and he's doing something right. It's just my tribute to the club. And Lawrence apparently wants 'and Lothian

Wado-kai on a Monday' up here. And that's what the club means to me. I know one day I'll no be able to train, I've been told by the time I'm 40 I'll have to have a knee replacement. So I'll not be able to train, but a tattoo will always be there. Keith, Juniper karate club.

The depth with which karateka seen karate practice as informing their sense of who they were often varied depending on the length of time they had spent in the sport, and subsequently, their grade. Many lower grades reflected on karate as something that changed parts of who they were, or gave them the mental tools to address areas of their life differently. Most black belts, as embedded within the community of their club and having embodied the mental and physical dispositions of the sport over many years, referred to karate as 'part of who they are', as 'making them who they are', and for a small few who were very involved in the sport, as defining them:

My life revolved around karate when I was in my early twenties: training, and competitions. At that time basically I'd be away at the weekends on-off. I had a part time job at a pub to fund it, and I don't think you could do this now, but I told them they had to expect that they were second best, and that if I was to work there my karate was a priority. Everything in my life was aimed towards karate, that was who I was and what I wanted to do. Craig, Bushido.

For many black belts, those in crisis, and many others who invested large amounts of time and emotion into karate practice, karate became more than just one of the many selves they had, or roles they played. The karateka identity transitioned from a role karateka took-on and left at the stage door, to a more deeply ingrained sense of self carried throughout the multiple roles and selves they performed across their social life. The karateka identity steering many karateka's broader sense of self was one grounded in embodied challenges to conventional masculine and feminine projections of self in the world.

7.3. Wonder women

My friends think that I am super motivated and really dedicated to everything I do, but I just think of it like normal life. They think it's like over the top crazy - that I'm some sort of super woman. I think being brought up in karate, I think that just is the norm, so I think that, you know, that's just what people do. But then my friends show me that no actually, that's not just what people

do. Which is strange to think, but other people in karate understand it and they take it into their life in other ways as well. So that just alone - being dedicated. If you want to reach the next level you put your heart and soul into it. And although my other friends do work hard, it's something deeper with karate... The discipline... even just standing still in the class, I suppose you have to be disciplined to do that. Even like when people have injuries and they just train around it, people outside of it think - don't do it till your better. But you feel like 'well why, I can work around it'. And I guess that's still that fight to keep going, even when you're broken. Katie, Bushido.

Due to the combative nature of karate, and the association of combat with men, karate practice posed particular challenges to ideas of 'doing' womanhood appropriately. As our sense of self is constructed in relation to our sensory experiences in the world, alongside the reception of an audience, and imagined expectations of an audience (Goffman, 1959), the apparent contradiction between women and fighting appeared to make karate practice a more poignant contributor to women karateka's sense of self than men's.

By broaching a deemed contradiction in their gendered performance by engaging in a combative sport, women karateka were often caricatured by their friends and family outside of karate as 'wonder women'. Karate women were imagined as having super strength, mental toughness, and a calm composure to deal with not only the flying fists and kicks in the dojo, but broader elements of their lives. Men were particularly intrigued by the prospect of women they knew having combative skills:

I think people have a sort of respect for you when you say you do karate. Like, my friend asking me 'oh, could you batter me?' is just this thing where people have a fear - or not a fear but - they are sort of taken aback. And its kind of like that with guys, they really want to know 'oh could you batter me?' and, well, maybe haha. I think there's kind of a thing of, a respect that you do something like that. But again I don't think people know what it takes to be good at it because I don't think you know that till you try it. So I think it's also a bit underestimated how good a thing it is too. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

You always get the classic reaction 'Oh! Not messing with you!' I think, especially with my male friends, I think they think I am some kind of female Bruce Lee! They always seem to think 'Oh, Kimberley could beat you up' and in my head sometimes I think 'I don't know... you're about 6ft 4... I don't know, but I'll keep going with this facade'. They all seem to think I go

to the gym all the time and, I like to think I take care of myself, but my friends seem to think I'm super hard! But I do get the reaction as well when people first find out I do karate that they don't believe me. They say 'nah, you couldn't do karate?' and I'm like, how? I think people think you need to be a stereotype to do something like that - you need to be super serious, and rough. And they think I'm cheery and bubbly, and don't look like someone that would beat other people up. My friends love the whole idea of it which is really nice. They seem to think I'm a super kick-ass person and I think 'okay, I'll run with this profile'. Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

The intrigue around women's abilities to 'batter' others reflected an understanding of fighting as an unexpected component of femininity, and as such inconsistent with being a woman appropriately. As something not expected of women, women karateka were seen as an exception and *exceptional*, and thus subjected to being defined by their karateka identity in a cartoonistic way - as 'female Bruce Lee's' or 'superwomen'. The propensity to view karate women as 'superwomen' reflected an understanding that covered up the ability of *many* women to be better fighters than men by presenting it as a quality capable of an exceptional few. In being seen as 'exceptional' because of their karate practice, the importance of karate to how others seen women karateka was magnified.

The shock expressed at Kimberley and Fiona's combination of fighting and being female, suggests that Kimberley and Fiona's friends recognise this as a role not usually adopted by women, but at the same time appear to admire them for their physical engagement in karate. Their friends appear to encourage their participation in karate, and place them on a pedestal for it, praised for their accomplishment of what are deemed to be masculine capacities. The reassurance and praise of their karateka identity from other's outside the karate world eased the tensions of challenging conventional ways of being a woman by providing external support to karate women's chosen ways of using their bodies and of being in the world. In reflection to other's perceptions of their participation in karate as something to be admired, and predominantly to be admired because of its association with praised masculine qualities, karate women began to recognise themselves as physically skilled, and with the capacity to take on men:

Karate didn't seem like something I'd want to actually do. But then I went along and felt really kick ass and cool at school. When I started I felt like 'Ooh I've got skills - none of you boys push me around!' Whenever it was girls vs. boys stuff at school I'd be like 'yeah!' It just turned me... quite boisterous! Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

In learning how to use their body in conventionally deemed masculine ways, women karateka gained access to a masculine capital and status as a fighter that in turn, as Kimberley suggests above, reduced women's ideas of their own subordinate differences to men. Further, in participating in karate, women were able to develop the conventionally masculine skills of fighting that many men they knew did not have. This enabled an unravelling of the idea that all men are better at fighting than all women, revealing the spectrum of ability whereby conventionally gendered skill sets can be exposed and recognised as of both men and women. Women's praised karate identity thus enabled women to build a sense of self that recognised and enjoyed their capacity to out-do men.

Whilst friends' perceptions of women karateka may have overstated the extent to which women doing karate were unlike normal women, women karateka did see themselves as different from their female friends and relatives who did not do karate. There was a sense that karate practice did indeed make them different, although falling short of turning them into exceptional superheroes:

I think women who do karate are confident. Me - confident. Amy - confident. Courtney - confident. They all seem to do cool things outside of karate, like, they have good and exciting jobs, and I think that because karate gives you the confidence to go out and do it. Whereas people who haven't done a martial art maybe aren't as confident in themselves. I think that's the main thing, I don't know what it is, but it just gives you confidence. I've even seen young girls at the karate who have started off very quiet, shy, inward, and then after a few months of training they come out of their shell - they grow. And it's the karate that makes them confident people. Steph, Juniper karate club.

In my own reflections, I think through the differences I felt between myself and women that came from the area I grew up in and live in – a working class housing estate in Edinburgh formerly nicknamed 'little Beirut' (in reference to the Lebanese civil war):

With the area I live in holding comparisons to a war zone, my story might fall nice and neatly into Hollywood-style narratives of being toughened up by my background; of working class combat gyms full of, mainly male, bodies, and funnelling the violence needed to get by into rising out of the scheme through more legitimatised means of sport-violence. But, of course, this naturalisation of violence to working class bodies does not reflect the reality of the area I live in. The people that lived around me mostly weren't involved in violence, or organised sport. I feel there are some ways in which I am different from a lot of women in my area. There are the more obvious differences such as many of the women who grew up around me had children at a young age, many left school early, and some have addiction problems, whilst I'm a PhD student and an international karate athlete with no children in sight for a good time yet. But those aren't the differences I mean - they are part of the picture, but how is it that women growing up in the same area can end up so different? I think the underpinning differences are in mannerisms and outlook – I have self-belief, and I look confident, which I think goes quite far in deterring trouble. I think the differences largely stem from confidence, and I think my confidence stems from karate.

Karate women themselves did not view their fighting abilities as the primary source of difference to other women, nor as something exceptional beyond other women's reach, but rather identified their differences to other women in the less dramatic domain of how women saw themselves. In finding differences between ourselves and other's we reaffirm who we are by reflecting on who we are not. A primary difference karate women cited between themselves and other women was their belief in their own abilities, and confidence use their bodies to reach their own means. The significance of the working class backdrop to my reflection is important as working class women are particularly held to demonising accounts of respectability and thus hold low confidence (Skeggs, 1997), and that the vast majority of karateka I observed were from working class areas. Despite this, many women karateka saw themselves as confident in their bodily abilities, confident to voice their opinions, and with a belief in themselves that enabled them to strive towards prestigious goals, whereby karate was seen to be the origin of this embodied belief.

Part of the self-belief women sited as emerging from karate emerged in relation to realising their abilities *amongst men*:

I always make a wee joke, and I don't mind joking about it, that I'm a female in a man's world because, I mean, I'm just back from Turkey (for a European refereeing qualification) and I was away with 7 men – and, you know that might be some peoples dream * laughs*. So it is difficult because you are mainly surrounded by men, but it's made me a confident person because, obviously, I'm standing up there in front of everyone saying 'I know this'. Even in my work I can go up at my work and chair meetings, or give presentations and it's not an issue. And a lot of that comes from learning to deal with the pressures of refereeing at a championship. Going in and doing a presentation in front of these managers, in comparison, is nothing! So it really does boost confidence. Morna, Lothian Wado-kai.

In developing their karate skills, and negotiating their practice, alongside men, karate women could gauge their abilities in direct contrast to men's. Women karateka thus built an understanding of themselves in relation to men within the dojo, whereby they exchanged punches and kicks; corrected each other's technique; lead each other in kata practice; judged each other's karate performances; instructed the other with what to do; shared the stresses of gradings; fought one another for sporting capital; and shared a journey of self improvement. Through these shared physical experiences with men, as discussed in more detail in previous chapters, women karateka came to recognise their capacity to hold their own with men, and outperform many men, despite being in a 'man's world'. With some women unable to recognise their body's capacity to act in the world, and with societal structures subordinating things deemed female, the opportunity to outperform men enabled women to recognise their own worth against a valued subject – men. As such, through karate practice with men, women could come to recognise their competency in comparison to men, and in doing so, develop a sense of self that held belief in their bodily abilities.

The idea that karate could make 'wonder women', or certainly make more confident and self-believing women, was embraced by Sensei Katie at Bushido, who embedded her women-only class with tasks to 'make strong women':

I think confidence is something the younger boys have naturally over the girls. Like all the girls in that class are so, like, delicate and nice girls, but, because I can in that class, I try to push them to be bolder. Or that's why I get them to take the warm-up sometimes, just to talk to the class, because that

takes a lot of confidence. Or sometimes if they have a selections coming up they would get up – one their own - just to put them under a bit pressure to come out them selves. I guess I'm trying to help make strong women. But the boys don't have that training, they seem to just have it a bit more naturally. I think massively confidence – that's the biggest and the best thing karate can do. Because if you can learn it here, you can start to apply it to other areas. Whereas in other areas I don't think its necessarily encouraged, and so because you're not trained to do it (act with confidence), you don't necessarily challenge it yourself. Whereas here someone is telling them they have to challenge it. Katie, Bushido.

Through a process of bodily action sensei Katie tried to use karate as a way to help women undo a relationship with their body grounded in a lack of self-belief, and replace it with a confidence grounded in their experience of their body fulfilling the physical tasks they intended it to do. As discussed further in chapter 4, the embodied practice of karate, alongside sensei's target attempts to improve women's confidence, thus enabled women to recognise their mental and physical capabilities, with the consequence of transforming the way women saw themselves as people who 'can't' to people who can:

The things I do now, if I had of thought about doing them 3 years ago before I started karate – even just raising my point of view to my boss, or chatting to you for this interview – there's no way I would have. Never mind trying to kick someone in the head, or getting up in front of others and doing kata! And now I do. And if I've got a problem at work, I say it; I let people know what I think. So obviously my confidence has increased... even if I didn't realise it at the time. Rebecca, Bushido.

7.4. Chapter summary and conclusion

Our sense of self – of who we are - is built through our constantly moving myriad of interactions in the world, what we think society expects us to be based on our gendered, classed and raced statuses, and how other's respond to our embodied selves acting in the world. As developed in reflection to our constantly emerging interactions, our sense of self is thus in a position of constant development and re-evaluation. Karate, as an institution, was seen by Karateka as playing a role, and for many a crucial role, in developing their self as a person. The sense that karate practice enabled self-development was sourced in the mind-set seen to be at the heart

of karate practice that was expected to be embodied within karateka's movements and exertions in the dojo. Having an approach to using their body that embodied commitment, determination, dedication, pushing one's self, and respect was seen by karateka as more important to their karate performances than their bodily capacities. Further, the mentality expected to be embodied by karateka was required to be performed uniformly, regardless of gender. In contrast to the ambiguities karateka held about women and men's bodily capacities to perform and participate in the sport equally, karateka saw the expected mind-set of karate as something that could be developed regardless of gender. With the mind-set of karate being seen as more important than their body, and to be expected of both sexes, karate practice thus derailed the importance of karateka's bodies as *gendered bodies* in favour of their ability to embrace 'zenshin'. The framework of karate thus enabled and encouraged performances of self that side-lined the importance of gender, and subsequently, supported embodiments that side-lined gender.

Through embracing the mentalities of karate practice – respect, dedication, and pushing ones self – intertwined with bodily exertions, karateka experienced specific ways of projecting themselves and their intentions within the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) that challenged conventional gendered embodiments and relations. Through karate practice men found a space to realise and embrace their capacities to be calm and focused, and in doing so, distance themselves from ideas of a macho masculinity. Through karate's hierarchy of respect, men embedded their relationships with women with respect, and reflection on women's capacities to be *better* karateka than themselves. In doing so, notions of men's inherent superiority to women was disrupted, enabling men to develop an understanding of themselves in relation to their similarities with women as karateka, rather than hierarchical differences. Women emphasised developments of themselves as sourced in the perseverance through exhausting training drills, in pushing themselves to perform their kata stronger and better than before, and to commit themselves to taking chances - to dive face first in to the danger zone within an opponents reach in order to score a point. In reflecting on their capacity to take risks and to strive towards their goals, women karateka unravelled chains of a conventional feminine

embodiment sourced in objectivity that often lead women to underestimate their bodily abilities, and thus inhibit their intentionality (Young, 2005:37). In doing so, women and men karateka embodied a relationship between themselves and the world within which they act, whereby their consciousness of themselves was moulded (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) in a de-gendered manner.

The extent to which karate practice challenged ideas of a gendered self were most notable amongst women karateka as karate practice held particularly striking contrasts to conventional ideas of feminine embodiment, and thus the ways in which women experience themselves. Women karateka's sense of self was forged at the crux between societal ideas and expectations of women, and women's experience and engagement with the combative practice of karate. Whilst women karateka may experience their own bodies as capable and talented within the dojo, the reception of their karateka identity also played a part in the extent to which their sensorially experienced understanding of themselves translated into their sense of self, and how important their gender was to that sense of self. Presentation of the self is constructed relationally with the audience who interpret these selves and determine their appropriateness (Goffman,1959:66) thus, the audience determines as much as the female karateka what is an appropriate performance of her gender. As women karateka's friends gloated of her karate identity, their praise and support helped legitimise women karateka's breach of expectations of femininity. In the process of enjoying their karate experiences, and having their karate identity legitimised by peers, 'karateka' was a way in which many women saw themselves, and for some women was a dominant part of their sense of self.

For many karateka who had spent a long time in the sport, their karate-self was seen as not merely a self amongst many, but a more prominent piece of who they are. Such a sensation equated the journey of personal development travelled within karate practice as informing karateka's broader sense of self grounded in their experiences within the dojo. The sense of karate being part of 'who I am' was cemented in a sense of belong within the dojo. The mutually expected embodiment by women and men karateka of conventionally deemed masculine *and* feminine projections of self

in the world enabled the development of a sense of self that diverged from conventional ideas of what it is to be a woman or a man, the differences between the two, and the subsequent embodiments entailed. Through embracing their karateka identity as a fundamental part of who they are, karateka developed a sense of self grounded in the principle of equal capacities and similarities of women and men in the dojo, that in turn side-lined the importance of gender to their embodiment in the dojo. The centrality of some karateka's karateka-self to their sense of 'who they are' further positioned the gender-neutral identity of karateka at a key point for influencing their broader sense of self and life outside of the dojo.

8. Karate Family

Before the adult's class begins Lawrence and his son Ewan chat amongst themselves deciding who shall use which parts of the hall, and which people in the class. As they chat children from the previous kid's class run around the hall, swooshing in and out of the adults entering for their class, and try to cheekily engage Lawrence and Ewan in their game. Lawrence laughs as he avoids a soft ball thrown at his legs, 'too slow for me my girl'. Carol, Lawrence's wife, sits with the register, chatting and laughing with parents who come up to pay for their child's lesson. A line of parents sit at the back of the room, chatting amongst themselves like a little social club, whilst their children - who are sometimes no longer children but adults - train. Ewan takes those who wish to practice kumite to the bottom of the hall where brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers mingle within the group – some avoiding family members, some teenagers desperately seeking to spar with their parents, and others switching between club member and family member without a glimmer of difference. At the back of the hall with the parents who watch are little brothers, sisters, and children of the karateka training who are too young themselves for karate. Ewan's son sits beside his gran, Carol. Only a toddler, he has hand pads dangling on his arms, almost as big as his body. Bouncing up and down in front of a focus pad another parent is holding for him, he taps the pad mimicking the movement of those in the class delightedly announcing: 'Oosha!' Carol laughs, 'He won't take them off, he tries to go to bed with the hand pads on'.

As a martial art encouraged to be practiced and perfected over a lifetime, karate classes were open to a broad range of age groups, from four years old until their body can no longer hold itself. The broad age range welcome to karate practice meant that many people who done karate, and engaged in a journey of self-development through karate, did so with other immediate family members. For those who engage in karate with family members, karate becomes one of many family practices – acts of 'doing family'. Through family practices, roles and ways of doing gender, are negotiated and normalized (Morgan, 1999) and can steer away from conventional gendered patterns of the 'traditional family' that are often still drawn upon to understand our familial relations (Jamieson, 1998).

During karate classes karateka may spar with their siblings, learn from their daughter, train with their father, and cheer on their mother. Here, whilst a relationship between family members exists before entering the dojo, through the embodied relations within karate, karateka further negotiate what it is to be a mother, father, son, daughter etc., and to what extent a (gender based) hierarchy is embedded within these relations. This chapter will explore the relations developed between family members who do karate together, how such relations infuse the gender-neutral practice of karate, and how they are both moulded by and mould karateka's gendered embodiment within the dojo. This chapter will firstly discuss the prominence of families running karate clubs in Britain, reflecting on the structuring of tasks within such set-ups, and the consequences for gendered embodiments and a gender order. Following this, negotiations of power and gender in the parent-child relationship in karate will be explored, followed by discussion of the transmission of ideas of the family to understand close non-familial relations forged within the dojo, and its implications for gendered relations between karateka.

8.1. The family business



Image 13: Father (far left), son (centre), and daughter (far right) teaching a children's karate class.

Many karate clubs around Britain are run by families who do karate. Karate classes often ran in the evening after work and at weekends to optimise the amount of people able to attend classes. Karate classes thus cut into time the family might spend

together, but for those whom karate is the family business the opposite can be said – karate is a primary way in which the family spend time together, and binds their work/family life together. A prominent pattern of organisation for a family’s karate business has the father figure as head coach and often the person who started the club; the head coaches partner often deals with administration duties like taking the register, taking equipment orders, and competition forms; sometimes the partner takes up karate practice too; the children take part in the classes, and often help out with coaching; and once the children are older, sons often take on a senior coaching role and expand the family business by taking on classes of their own. In taking on classes of their own, the sons were able to further develop skills of assertion and planning, alongside gaining the prestige and recognition of their authoritative position. The combination of authoritative action and respected reception as an authoritative figure enabled an embodiment that believed in and embraced their power position:

Over the last five years or so Lawrence has increasingly taken a back seat in the club, giving over more opportunities to Euan to steer the direction of the class. The difference over the last 5 years is huge. 5 years ago some club members were wary of Euan and preferred Lawrence, which meant in class some karateka’s focus would drift as Euan tried to explain our next drill, sometimes chatting whilst he spoke, or just performing with less enthusiasm and conviction when he taught. Now, karateka wouldn’t get away with chatting whilst he speaks. When he speaks the class listens. His voice is louder, more certain, and quick to pull up those not training hard enough. He commands a respect that he didn’t necessarily have from all five years ago. Field notes.

Alongside gaining social status and developing a respected authoritative embodiment, the sons were also able to make financial gains through their coaching positions, varying from pocket money from a small club to a full time business running multiple classes throughout the week. Whilst of course not all families who ran karate businesses had sons but may have daughters, currently there are few clubs in Scotland where the daughters have taken on classes of their own. Often daughters did help out during their father’s classes by teaching groups of karateka within the class, and helping out at competitions, however few have started classes of their own. Thus daughters did not take on karate as *their* business in the same way as their

fathers, or brothers; rather, they more prominently adopted supportive roles within their father's business. As supportive staff rather than class-leading senseis, daughters were often not aligned with the same social status of their brothers that enabled an independent, confident and authoritative embodiment. The structure of karate family businesses thus often mimicked traditional family arrangements that position men as heads of the household, breadwinners, and position women in supporting roles. Here, the family took on the father's interest and centred family life around this interest.

Although the structure of family karate businesses appeared rather patriarchal and affirming of conventional ways of doing gender within the family structure, the centring of family life around karate also enabled gender subversions, particularly for karate daughters. As mentioned in previous chapters, karate practice required women to embody a blend of both conventionally deemed feminine and conventionally deemed masculine uses of their bodies, whereby those masculine uses posed challenges to conventional ideas of women's bodies and their capabilities. Their father's passion for the sport supported and encouraged their embodiment of conventionally deemed masculine uses of their bodies:

My dad is 110% supportive. It's his passion, so for him to see his daughters doing it, y'know... He knows what it's like to train, he is in the same mindset as us. He loves that we still love doing karate and wants to help us with our karate anyway he can. Carla, Scottish karateka.

Whilst karate fathers provided a supportive environment for their daughters to subvert conventional notions of women's embodiment, karate families running their own clubs also appeared to set the conditions for their daughters to become highly successful at the level of governing, coaching, and officiating. In Scotland, almost all women coaches, officials, and governing members were daughters, nieces, or partners to male karateka who ran their own clubs. For these women, karate was a normalised family practice:

My dad had his own club so it was just natural that as soon as I could my dad would get me started at karate. And from there I just wanted to follow in his

footsteps - I got involved in the club, got involved in competition, got into the Scotland Wado kata squad and represented my country as part of that, and then moved onto refereeing. Morna, Lothian Wado-kai.

It (karate) was the norm kind of thing. It's kind of always been a family thing. Everyone we knew, and were friendly with, does karate. Abigail, Scottish karateka.

As a normal part of doing family life, women from karate families frequently engaged in, witnessed, and became familiar with the bodily practices of the sport, its organisation, its competition rules, and how a class can be taught and controlled. This provided these women with an embodied familiarity with the tools needed for more senior positions in the sport. Further, they were surrounded by a supportive network to practice and take on more powerful positions within karate, albeit positions that prominently 'followed in the footsteps' rather than lead, their male relatives/partners. The lack of women adopting such positions who did not have families engaged in the business of karate, particularly in comparison to the hundreds of men who take on such roles without following a senior family member, suggests that family plays a more significant role in women's karate lives and their development to successful positions within the sport. Whilst karate daughters' access into karate, and desire to succeed in the karate world, was supported by a rather conventional family structure of gendered power whereby female family members pursuits are shaped around the desires of the male head of family, within the everyday practice of karate as part of family life, women were not only able, but encouraged, to embrace a strong, assertive, risk taking, and powerful embodiment to develop as successful karateka. Here the traditional gender arrangement of fathers influencing family life appeared to have had the unanticipated outcome of challenging gendered expectations of women, and the embodiments available to their female family members.

Often successful women karateka from karate families developed a couple relationship with another karateka. Successful karate women who are not from a family of karateka but do take on prestigious positions within karate such as sensei, referee, or board member were too, often in a couple relationship with another

karateka they trained with, and were far more likely than their male counterparts to do so. Whilst a relationship developed through the close physical practice and shared passion of karate is not surprising, the propensity for women who hold power positions in karate to do so, is. A large part of this seemed to be framed by experiences with men who did not do karate, and who showed disdain, rather than support, to women's karate lives:

The way guys react when they find out I do karate... Sometimes I feel like they are a bit... put off by it. Like most people you meet are really cool with it, but sometimes I think guys... I don't know, are a bit funny about me doing karate. Like I've had it in the past where, when they find out it's a really weird response, and it's a bit awkward. I feel as a sport it sometimes gets in the way. Like I was seeing a guy for a bit but it ended up that it just couldn't work out because I was busy with uni and karate. With guys, you don't want to call them out on it, but you get the impression they don't like that fact you do it, like its completely put them off. It's hard to put my finger on though. Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

In Kimberley's story there is an underlying suggestion that karate women, particularly those in power positions, present a challenge to conventional ideas of the power disparities embodied in heterosexual couple relationships, and of non-karate men's sense of masculinity. There is also a suggestion that women's engagement in karate takes away time from the couple relationship, and that she may thus have to sacrifice karate or the relationship, rather than karate being a part of who she that is loved and supported by potential partners. In developing relationships with another karateka, powerful karate women thus overcame two hurdles set up by heterosexist ideas of women's role in a couple relationship: 1. Karate did not take away from women's attention to the relationship but rather was part of it; and 2. The threat women's position as a karateka posed to their partner's masculinity was reduced, or eradicated, by their partner's position as a karateka too. In developing a couple relationship with another karateka, women, on the face of it, were able to forge relationships that more neatly fitted with the gendered power relations expected in a heterosexual relationship (Wade and Ferree, 2015). However, women's ability to be equal or higher grades than their partner, competitively more successful, or hold other senior positions that aligned them with a more powerful role in karate than

their partner, added complexity/ equality to the construction of a gendered hierarchy within their relationship.

Through these relationships between highly established women karateka and male karateka, the couple would often start-up karate classes and teach together as a 'family'/couple karate business. The division of tasks between partners did appear to fall along gendered lines at times: women were commonly approached by students with concerns, and were commonly the prominent giver of emotional support to students, whilst men in many of the couple-run clubs I have seen took on the majority of the teaching, and were often seen by students as the head coach. However, for some couple-run clubs, the couple's more conventional divisions of family life -women attending to the home and children, and men holding another job – entailed that women had more time to coach, and thus became the head coach of their couple-run club. Equally, due to the prestige some karate women held, students appeared to view both partners as equal in their coaching role. Thus, due to a mixture of successful women's expertise, and practicalities of fitting teaching around already existing work, karate couples broached more gender egalitarian ways of 'doing' couple/family relationships in the context of karate. This is a trend emerging amongst a younger generation of karateka, which embraces in practice an egalitarian ideal that has replaced traditionally gendered frameworks of family and couple relationships in theory, but has largely failed in practice (Wade and Ferree, 2015). As such, women karateka's couple relationships with male karateka could embody some of the egalitarian nature of karate practice.



Image 14: A husband and wife sparring whilst teaching an adult's class together.

Women and men starting a karate business together as a couple is currently quite rare, although is perhaps an upcoming trend enabled by the increase in women's participation, and participation in prominent karate roles, partly enabled by fathers' support of their daughters in the sport. The most common structure of a karate club in Britain is to be run by one male sensei. The comparatively small numbers of karate men in power positions within karate who built a partner relationship with another karateka predominantly done so as instructors with a student. This is not to say that successful karate women have not started relationships with their students, however, the distinct pattern of couple relationships between karateka was for highly skilled women to couple with roughly equally skilled karate men, and for highly skilled men to couple with a student. This type of relationship, although supported by a mutual respect for one's shared personal interest, entailed a conventional arrangement of power between women and men: of men as experts, and women as respectful admirers. Here, it is the power relation of sensei and student that set the foundation for their couple relationship.

Although some of these relationships may be ingrained with mutual respect and distribution of power elsewhere, the beginning of such relationships, particularly when the women are a lot younger than the men, raises questions around an abuse of their power position. These questions of power abuse were often turned a blind eye to by other students due to the man's respected position as a Sensei, and remained at least publicly unchallenged by other senseis. As the structure of karate places such importance on respect for those in hierarchical positions, alongside the current propensity for men to be in such positions of power, the structure of karate both: enabled potential abuses of power by men over their students to forge sexual or couple relationships grounded in their students' admiration for them; and reduced questioning of such relationships based on the respect other students devote to their sensei. As such the common structures of karate businesses in Britain entail a patriarchal structure, and one that often handed down the top positions to men. However the developments of a younger generation of karate daughters, and the relationships they forge, may begin to change that.

8.2. 'You have to hit your Mother!': The parent-child relationship

The most prominent familial relationship to share karate practice together was that of parents and children. There were two main patterns of parent and children's joint engagement with karate: 1. Children - both boys and girls- followed in the footsteps of their father who was already an established karateka; 2. Parents of both sexes joined after seeing their child practice the sport. In the latter case, there was a relatively even spread of mothers and fathers following in their children's footsteps at the clubs I attended. Mothers, however, were much more vocal about their child's role in building their confidence to start karate through coaxing and encouraging them:

I was bullied into it! To be honest, I was bullied into starting karate by Katie and Abbie (her daughter). I've been taking Abbie since she was 5 years old, and I'd never ever considered starting, it had never crossed my mind, I maybe wanted to though. And we were here one Saturday and Katie was speaking to the kids and they all had big smirks on their faces and I thought 'hmm what's going on here' and then Abbie came over and said 'Mam, Katie's starting up

a new class (women only), you need to start karate.’ And I said ‘What?!’ and she said ‘You need to start karate!’ with this big grin on her face. Abbie was really excited, so I thought it would be nice to do it with her. But another part of it horrified me as well. I think if the other mums hadn’t of said yes, then there’s no way on earth I would have considered it. Rebecca, Bushido.

Whilst many mothers may have secretly wished to engage in a sport like karate for some time, their children’s encouragement enabled them to do so in a manner that fitted with expectations of family-centred motherhood. In viewing and experiencing karate as a shared family practice, mothers justified their entrance to the sport. Alongside this, their children’s participation generated a sense of familiarity with the motions of the sport and of belonging to the club that further eased many mother’s confidence to start karate:

I was also kind of part of the club in a way. I wasn’t training myself but I was in that club environment as one of the parents, chatting to the other parents. So I sort of already felt part of it, and I guess initially I started because it was something I could do with my son together, that really appealed to me as a parent. Sandra, Bushido.

Sharing an activity together appealed to many parents, and was a primary reason for joining the sport together. Not only did sharing karate practice allow parents and children to share understanding and excitement with one another, many karate classes provided the opportunity for parents and children to train together. The option of training together eased practical issues such as finding childcare whilst they trained, or dedicating their time to watch their child in a rather dull sports halls for hours on end, which typically limit Mother’s engagement in their own leisure pursuits.

In the shared classes of parents and children, the hierarchically graded and visible belt structure of karate presented challenges to the conventional power structure of the family. The adult karate classes often allowed teenagers to participate in the class, and some classes are a mix of adults and more advanced children in order to have enough people to make the class work, and to allow the advanced children to develop in a less games-orientated class. Here, the authority and power of the parent

was open to subversion by the children's superior grade as a karateka. In the dojo, children indeed could be the experts who stood further up the graded line than their parents, performed more advanced tasks, and were in a position to correct or teach their parents. Many parents viewed this role-reversal as a positive experience that deepened the intimacy of their relationship and enabled both parent and child to develop as karateka:

I think doing the sport with him, he'll see my faults too, and he'll be able to help me get better. He pulled me up for being too slow in my kata, and then a week later Coach Mark said the same, he said I needed to be faster. I said I'd tried and it felt sloppy - I felt I wasn't landing the techniques, or finishing them properly...like I wasn't quite able to land in the right position quick. But he told me I need to try getting it a little faster rather than rushing it.
Kirsty, Bushido.

In some cases, the role-reversal of authority granted by children's higher grade to their parent enabled not only a reversal of practical help from child to parent, but also of emotional support that is more commonly expected to flow from parent to child:

See, I have a love-hate relationship with karate! Every few weeks I'm packing it in. Abbie is sick of hearing it probably. Every few weeks I'm packing it in. I just get angry with myself because I don't think I'm good enough... Abbie always tries to persuade me not to, and so far its worked.

I've never been to a kata class because I get Abbie to teach me them, because I like to do a little bit at a time. So she can take me a few moves at a time and I can ask stupid questions, and she doesn't laugh. So yeah its good, and she can point out things that I'm doing wrong, so it makes me feel more confident that way. Rebecca, Bushido.

Emotional support came in the form of reassuring the parent of their ability, cheering on their parent in competitions, and pep-talking their parent before and after important karate events such as gradings or competitions. In the case of Rebecca, her daughter provided practical and emotional help that was a crux for Rebecca's confidence to continue her practice. Through sharing karate practice together, and receiving practical help and emotional support from their higher graded children, parents engaged in interactions with their children which shared the conventionally one-sided flow of authority, expertise, and control. In acknowledging their children's

expertise whilst doing so, parents and children blurred the conventional distributions of power within familial relations, and embedded 'doing family' within the dojo with a mutual respect and appreciation for the skills and support of one another.

Mothers appeared more accepting and positively encouraged by their child's hierarchical position as a karateka than fathers. Whilst there were many fathers who started karate after their children, and were lower grades than their children, often fathers still perceived themselves to be the experts over their children.

When I'm in the house trying to improve my kata sometimes Harry and Freya will watch and join in, and I'm delighted when I see that. So I take them though that and its really nice to see them learn a bit off of me, and then them take that to training to learn it properly - with me they can learn the moves, Sensei will show them how to do it properly. But yeah that thing about being able to help them with that and see them improve, it an enormous sense of wellbeing to quote Blur. It's really good to have that sort of... being able to see yourself develop and see your family develop. James, Juniper karate club.

Fathers maintenance of the role of 'expert' despite their children's hierarchical karate grade funnelled the intimacy family members shared in karate through a more conventional route: that of father's bestowing knowledge, and children respecting their fathers knowledge. Only when children were of an exceptional standard – such as an established and well-decorated competitor - was the role between father and children reversed. Whilst both mothers and fathers appreciated the ability for their family to develop together through training in karate together, the resistance of fathers to relax their authority and recognise their children's potential to aid their development through the sport meant that subversions to conventional power relations of the family were limited, and limited along gendered lines.

The desire to share karate as a family activity and part of building family intimacy raised gendered dilemmas for father's patriarchal control most notably when their daughters participated in the sport. For fathers who had participated in the sport for a long time and understood the principle of control behind karate practice, their daughter's participation seemed relatively unproblematic. These fathers were happy to see their daughters engage in an activity they shared a passion for, were proud of

their daughters, and generally maintained a hierarchically graded position to their daughter in training which overlaid their relationship with copious respect from their daughters. There were no adult daughters of a higher grade than their father, thus an element of age at least, and sometimes age and grade, left a conventional structure of fathers power position above daughters intact. However, some karate father's both loved and feared their daughters' participation in karate:

With karate I can't describe it - you'll know it - but the family feel of it and the friendliness that that brings. And that's a fantastic atmosphere, and its one these other sports just didn't have for me. Which is why James (his son) comes to karate, and even with his wee karate pals now, he won't miss a session. And Alex (his daughter) she's been desperate to come to karate, and one of the reasons I stopped her was because of big Freddy. I didn't want her getting hit by him, because if she got hurt... I wouldn't let the wind hit her. If anyone else done it I'd think - well that's just karate. But if big Freddy done it I'd think 'well that's just because your a dick and don't care'. But because I'm off karate with my toe just now she's not got round to starting, she's waiting till I come back. And I'd like her to get that kind of family thing. Keith, Juniper karate club.

James: now everything's fine and Freya's confidence has shot up and you can see a big difference in her. Harry is still a wee bit shy, a bit shy to ask if he needs help or doesn't understand, he wants to try and work it out himself.

Chloe: did you have any worries about them doing karate?

James: I think with Freya - with Harry being a boy I wasn't so bothered it was a bit more like 'get stuck in their son' - but with Freya I was a wee bit more worried about what was going to happen with the fighting. I think even now when Jim says get your gloves on I still watch who she's with. Most of the kids in the club are great, there's some who don't... who are a wee bit vindictive or... they like the hitting aspect. James, Juniper karate club.

Both Keith and James wanted to share the practice of karate with their daughters, which in itself was a step towards undoing conventional gendered divisions of family life that typically group fathers with sons and mothers with daughters. Both fathers actively sought to encourage their daughters to participate in what might otherwise be seen as a masculine practice, and in doing so, break an inherited exclusion of women from 'men's' activities and lives. Here, because of their father's, daughters were introduced to the 'masculine' acts of fighting. However, such fathers done so with greater surveillance and protection of their daughter's participation than their son's. Despite James reflecting that his son Harry was shy and his daughter was not,

gendered ideas of girls, particularly daughters, as fragile and of needing protection from men lead him to monitor Freya's interactions in the karate class, whilst allowing his son the independence to fight and deal with the physical confrontations of karate himself. In doing so, the gender subversive potential father's introducing their daughters to karate and sharing the combative activity together was laced with gendered surveillance and protection of their daughter's actions. Through this, some karate fathers maintained an embodiment of patriarchal control, alongside aiding the development of their differently sexed children to use and understand their bodies differently – to build gendered embodiment.

Alongside the challenges to familial power positions presented by karate's visible hierarchical practice, training as a family together also threw up other challenges to the conventional roles, interactions, and distributions of power between family members. The practice of training combatively together presented interactions that often stood in stark contrast to the ways in which, particularly children, were expected to engage with other family members. Whilst in the home, children are commonly told not to fight with their siblings, and certainly not to hit their parents, in karate the opposite was true. The sensation of hitting a parent was thoroughly enjoyed by many young children as a legitimate opportunity to break from a household rule - a rule which marks their parents' authority over children's physical actions, and curtails children's physical power. The grins on these children's faces, and the intense excitement in their eyes, was uncontainable as they stood in front of their parent ready to pounce. For other children of all ages, the conflict of familial and karate rules was experienced with a nervous uncertainty

I think it did shock him when he hit me the first few times, and I thought 'ooh, you little monkey!' ... And it was about 30seconds later and he wouldn't come anywhere near me. Sensei Katie obviously seen it, and Craig seen it too, and so a few minutes later Katie came up to him and said 'you have to hit your mother!' and so after that he was fine. Kirsty, Bushido.

In hitting their parents, children were asked to break a common household rule. In doing so, parent and child are positioned on a level playing field as equally hittable, and equally able to hit the other in principle. Here, rules of how karateka should

interact with their mother, father, son, or daughter are thrown out the window, and replaced by the rules of karate: you must hit your training partner – with control - and you must take a hit. The negotiation of such rules was initially fraught with anxiety by parents and children sparring with one another, however, through instruction of the Sensei's the taboo of hitting their child or parent was legitimised and eased. For karateka well versed in the expectations of a karateka in the dojo, separation of the expectations of familial roles, ways of interacting with family, and ways of interacting as a karateka, were easier to broach:

My first real class I took was in a small town, a small club, and my mum started training with me there, and that was about 12 years ago. So I taught her for quite a while, I'm quite used to it. When she comes here, I mean obviously it's nice cause she's my mum but when she's doing the class, you know she's just someone in the class. She's just another person in the class. Craig, Bushido.

Karate practice appeared to ask its participants to overlook age, gender, and family position, to engage with fellow karateka based on their grade within the sport and their dedication to practice. This often appeared easier for karateka who had practiced the sport with their family member(s) for a number of years, and particularly for adult children in a hierarchical or equal grade to their parents, or between siblings, where relationships are constructed on more equal terms than the hierarchical position of parent to child. The longer karateka participated in the sport with their family members, the further rules of family engagement were replaced by rules of the dojo during karate practice, enabling children and parents to train, spar, and develop as karateka through sharing physical exchanges of punches, kicks, words of advice, technical corrections, and a shared, although not necessarily equal, respect for one's ability.

8.3. The karate 'family'

I sometimes see my karate friends sorta like - its gonna sound daft or cheesy - but like an extended family. Because you see them so often, I'm maybe seeing these people 3 or 4 times a week, and they are as passionate about karate as me. So because you have so much in common, you end up

becoming really good friends. So it's nice. It's strange because... if you just go down to the gym, you don't make pals with the person on the treadmill beside you because that would be a bit creepy. And you certainly don't feel close with gym people like family! But with karate, you socialise with these people, go on nights out, go out for dinner... You get a real closeness. Steph, Juniper karate club.

The term 'karate family' was a common phrase emerging from across the clubs I interviewed in my research, and from different people I have met throughout my karate career, who saw karate as more than just a hobby, but a deeper passion or sense of who they were. 'Karate family' was the way in which such people described their relationship with other karateka, and referred to the closeness they felt with the non-biological grouping of people they trained with, or came into contact with through karate. Often karateka felt their use of the term was unique – a feeling of intimate closeness that some did not verbally share with one another – however, emerged frequently during discussions of karate relationships as an often unspoken yet shared interpretation of such relationships.

Whilst friendships are characterised as chosen, non-biological, relationships entailing a mutual sharing of intimacy (Allan, 2005; Jamieson, 1998), and are often constructed in contrast to familial intimacy which is bound together by ideas of duty and obligation (Jamieson, 1998), the concept of 'karate family' as an expression of intimacy between non-familial karateka is theoretically perplexing. Karateka found the relationship themselves hard to pinpoint:

I'd never want to give up karate because it would be like dumping your family as well. All these people you train with, they are a part of you. It's so strange, it's a really hard thing to try and explain but I think if you are in it - you just get it. Like you don't even have to describe the feelings. Katie, Bushido.

Whilst sharing a passion for karate provided the groundwork for building a sense of 'karate family', the relationship was cemented through various elements which further developed a sense of intimacy with one another: the vast amount of time karateka spent together be it in training, at competitions, or at club social events; the in-depth emotional and tacit knowledge of fellow club mates developed from sharing

the physical experiences of training together week-in week-out; and the mutual help and support karateka offered one another to improve in their shared passion.

Combined, such shared elements of intimacy generated a sense of closeness and loyalty to one another:

They (club members) are almost like your family, I always think of them as my karate family. Because you spend so much time with them, especially if you've done it from a young age. And you have to really trust these people because, in a way, you're trusting someone not to take your head off. I've got some friends in the Scotland squad that when we are away we have a great time, but outside of the squad I wouldn't necessarily meet up with them. Its not a bad thing cause I still feel very close to them but its one of those friendships that even though you might not see them for 3 months as soon as you go away again you just gel instantly - no questions asked. And then at the end, it's just like 'it's been great, catch you another time!' I feel like you friends in trading, the are like your proper family, because they are the ones that have been there from the start and you see week in week out. So you go away to a competition and when you come back it feels like you are back home, amongst your family. Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

Your friends in karate are like family, and you support your family, and if there is something up with a member of your family you try and make sure it gets sorted, or you pick up on how they feel. And maybe between the karate, because there is a lot of emotion involved, if someone is normally bubbly but they are being quiet you think - well why? Then you might go and check out what's up, because it's not how they would generally be. And again it's like family - you know when there's something up. Like your relationships in karate are completely different from ones elsewhere. Katie, Bushido.

Entailed in the loyalty was not just a commitment to support those who karateka enjoyed training with – as would be characteristic of friendship – but also those they did not enjoy training with:

Richard can be so clumsy, so I try to avoid partnering with him when I can. He isn't always the best with his control, and sometimes I think he's not particularly trying to get it better either. Despite his relative lack of skill he is also quite arrogant. Outside of karate I don't think I would of gave a person like Richard this amount of time, however, he is part of the club, and because of that I do spar with him, I do try to help him improve, and I do end up on nights out with him. In normal life I wouldn't like him, but he is part of my club, so I'd always look out for him – I would never leave him left out. Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

Much like we cannot choose our family, karateka cannot choose their karate club members either. With clubs holding anywhere in the region of twenty to a couple of hundred members (across multiple different classes), inevitably not everyone would enjoy the company of everyone. Some members would rarely speak to one another, avoid each other during sparing, or have particularly tense fights where the tensions between the two became visible through the loosening of control and the increased serious intent held in their eyes. Within networks of relationships that are felt to be intimately close, the potential damage caused by a fall out of members is intensified. Yet despite this, a sense of duty or obligation to other members who individual karateka would not necessarily *choose* to be friends with was felt by many karateka, and prevented such dislikes from leading to fall outs in the majority of cases. The sense of duty to one another was grounded in a broader sense of duty to the club – the broader family. This acted to maintain the peace within the club:

Karate's got a family mentality about it. I know a lot of families do karate, but it's not even that, it has a family feel about it. It's your club, and even in the whole association, everyone is really friendly towards everyone. So it's a mentality thing that you know nobody is out to hurt you whether it's a man or a woman. If people have a little fall out, 99% of the time it's petty and its resolved and forgotten about, and it's back to happy families. It needs to be for the bigger picture of the club. Keith, Juniper karate club.

Further to the intimacy felt and enacted between karateka, the family feel of karate relationships was facilitated by the variety of ages, and collection of men and women, who participated in the sport together. With few other areas of life that involve such a variety of people, family was a term that made sense of the enjoyment and closeness felt across age groups and genders:

Having people coming and taking you aside and helping you develop, it's just fantastic. And meeting all these different people: There's Chris and Dawn and everyone that takes part in training. And even getting involved with the 16 year olds is nice as well, you know, if you feel you can help them out and bring them along. I think karate is like that. It's like a big family, and you help out someone like me and now when new people come in I try to help them if I can too. James, Juniper karate club.

Every time I come against Glen - he's only 18 - and I just think he could be my son! So I have a bit of an affinity with him - I just want to protect him a bit. And every time I partner him I can't help but smile at him. So the last couple of lessons I said to him 'I'm sorry Glen, I'm going to try and stop smiling at you because I know your trying to be serious and we're trying to be serious', and he said 'oh, you're alright!' Kirsty, Bushido.

Understanding the closeness and affection between karateka as a familial style relationship enabled karateka to override taboos of intimate relationships between non familial men and women, and intimate relations between older adults and younger or more vulnerable adults that may be framed as inappropriate due to conventional power disparities expected between such people, and ideas of sexual inappropriate sexual desire. As such, the term 'karate family' enabled intimacy to be shared between women and men of varying ages within the dojo, in a non-sexualised manner. However, the highly gendered framework of 'family' used to understand these relations complicated the way in which karateka were freed or not of reference to their sexed body, and expectations of them as a sexed body.

Some karateka in interviews, and some openly in the dojo, referred to their teammates as 'like brothers or sisters'; those who were much younger than them as 'like' nephews or nieces; and their male senseis as 'like a father', a 'karate dad', or an uncle. In doing so, these karateka applied gendered labels with gendered connotations to their teammates that, at least linguistically made distinctions between women and men. Embodied consequences of familial interpretations of women and men's roles and relationships in the dojo could perhaps be seen in reviewing men's actions discussed in more detail in previous chapters that could be seen to mimic the ways in which senior male family figures assert their power position knowledgeable protectors: high grade men (and not-so-highly graded men), rather than high grade women, advising other karateka on corrections to their technique; Refraining from hitting women; Punishing men who were deemed to be hitting too hard; and wrapping their arms around the shoulders of women karateka to express support and symbolically placing women under their authority and control. Women's propensity to allow men, even those of graded belts below them, to technically advise and

police, was perhaps aided by interpretations of their male training partners as ‘like a father/uncle’.

However most people who used the term ‘karate family’ used it to describe those they felt close with without applying specific familial roles. As such, the term ‘karate family’ did not necessarily allude to gender distinct roles, but rather often pointed towards a feeling of intimacy shared amongst men and women, that in turn defied conventional gendered patterns of intimacy. By drawing on the framework of the family to understand and conduct relationships in karate, relations between karateka were both infused by conventional ideas of family roles which legitimised enactments of men’s authority, knowledge, and control that occasionally surfaced within the dojo, *and* grounded in an intimacy which forged a sense of closeness, similarity, and mutual respect that reduced the relevance of gender to karateka’s embodied relations.



Image 15: Photograph used by an interviewee to show the ‘familiness’ of their relationships with their training partners.

8.4. Chapter summary and discussion

As highlighted throughout this thesis, the unisex structure and practice of karate holds the potential to disrupt conventional gendered power relations between women and men, and ideas and embodiments of difference. The questions arising in this chapter point towards the prominence of families to practice karate together, and asks: does the unisex structure of karate remould the often highly gendered and deeply embedded ways of doing family? Or does the presence of families infuse the gender neutral practice of karate with gendered interactions and embodiments? Indeed, the answer is a bit of both.

On the one hand, the data discussed in this chapter points towards the maintenance of conventional patriarchal structures and relations between family members in the karate hall through: the father-led structure of the karate-family-businesses; some fathers reluctance to recognise their child's hierarchical position to themselves; some fathers' attempts to protect and control their daughters interactions in the dojo; and a pattern of participation whereby there were no adult daughters or partners who were higher grades than the father. Alongside this, conventional ideas of 'doing family' were drawn on to legitimise gendered enactments of power between non-biological fellow club members. These findings point towards conventional gendered arrangements of families within the dojo that maintained men in a positions of power above women and children. In turn, such practices and structures provided space for men to develop both authoritative skills, an understanding of themselves as capable of being authoritative, and an assertion of themselves as authoritative. These patriarchal practices had contrasting embodied consequences for women. Such practices overlooked women family member's existing karate capacities, and limited their development of skills required for more authoritative or senior positions. As such, some karate family's ways of doing family reinforced a gendered hierarchy of family life into karate practice that further fuelled gender distinct embodiments of their members in the dojo.

However somewhat ironically, for many women family members conventionally gendered patterns of family life enabled and supported their participation in karate, and thus their ability to build gender-subversive embodiments. Following in the footsteps of the male head of family was what initially brought some women to karate, and thus enabled them to learn to use and understand their bodies in ways that challenge conventional assumptions of women's capacities, and bodily distinction from men. British karate's first generation of male sensei's introducing their daughters to karate has arguably contributed to the vast increase in women's participation. The prominence of women within senior positions in karate to be related to, or in a long-term couple relationship with, another senior karateka suggests that family presence and support was more important to women's participation in karate, and embodiments developed through karate, than men's. As such, karate as a family practice gave some women a 'foot-in-the-door' to karate that drew upon, and in some cases further embedded, family centred expectations of women (Wade, and Farree, 2015), whilst simultaneously disrupting expectations of women's leisure activities.

Through training together, ideas of gender distinction that often frame family life and segregated family leisure pursuits (Jamieson, 1998), were dismantled. The rules of the karate club forced the rules and ways of doing family to be renegotiated. As mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters were required to perform the same physical tasks and meet the same criteria as one another to achieve their grades in karate, female family members could displace their male relatives as experts; male relatives would have to hit their female relatives; and children could be recognised as most knowledgeable. The longer karateka had participated in karate, the easier they appeared to be able to draw on the unisex rules of karate to determine their interactions with family members, suggesting that subversions to gender are more likely to become embraced and embodied over time. The propensity for the emerging generation of couple-led karate family businesses to embrace more egalitarian distributions of authority and prestige amongst the male and female senseis perhaps points to a more longitudinal dismantling of gendered divisions of power enabled by karate practice. They certainly present a distinctly different couple relationship role-

model for the children in their classes than the heavily gendered ones often found in children's books and television.

The desire for an extended sense of familial ties to non-biological teammates that karate referred to as 'karate family' suggests that rather than ever more inward individualistic tendencies of intimacy as suggested by Giddens (Giddens, 1992), karateka sought to embrace a broader network of relationships grounded in shared care, physical engagement, and understanding. The development of a mutually expressed and sustained intimacy is often limited to relationships of same sex friends (Jamieson, 1998). As such, the intimacy between the range of age groups and genders found in karate is relatively rare. The concept of 'karate family' enabled a shared intimacy between women and men whether related or not, that challenged conventional gendered frameworks of relationships between women and men, that forged a sense of unity.

The findings of this chapter point to the complexity of negotiating appropriate ways of doing gender when embodied selves constructed in different arenas with different gendered norms and expectations – that of the family and karate – must combine. As gendered ways of doing family, at times, infused practice, the subversion of gendered embodiments developed through mixed sex karate practice and enacted in the dojo were restricted for some who trained with family members. However, the subversions to gendered relations and embodiments family members did enact held a magnified potential to transcend the dojo, and renegotiate the roles, capacities, and distributions of power and intimacy between mother, fathers, daughters, and sons. Within the context that the family is one of the primary institutions informing our understanding of the roles and capacities of women and men (Jamieson, 1998; Morgan, 1996), and a key institution for the reproduction of society, the disruptions to ideas and embodiments of hierarchical gender distinction enacted within karate held particular potential to become ingrained in embodied ways of being that transcended the dojo.

9. Friendships worth fighting for

As alluded to in the previous chapter, the mixture of women and men of a wide range of ages practicing karate together not only enabled family members to practice karate together, it also set the grounds for friendships to be formed between groups of people who otherwise would not find themselves in similar social circles. Of these friendships were friendships forged between women and men. Such friendships posed challenges not only to conventional ideas of women and men's bodily capacities, but also conventional gendered expectations of doing intimacy between women and men.

Conventional expectations of intimacy between women and men is framed by heterosexist assumptions that such intimacy would be predominantly found in couple and familial relationships, and grounded in a gendered unequal distribution of power and duties (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; Jamieson, 1998). Friendships, in contrast to familial and couple relationships, are grounded in a sense of being freely chosen and embracing more mutual distributions of intimacy (Allan, 2005; Budgeon, 2006). As chosen relationships tied together by embodied practices and mediated feelings of shared intimacy, our friendships have a strong impact on our sense of who we are in relation to others, and as such our embodied sense of self. As such, friendships woven between women and men in karate hold potential to renegotiate the inequalities often structuring women and men's intimate relations, and in doing so, build embodied relationships that reduce the importance of gender to their embodiment.

Sport broadly is recognized and enjoyed as a field founded on generating, encouraging, and amplifying emotions (Elias and Dunning, 1986). As a shared physical and emotional experience (yet one disproportionately experienced by men), participation in sport lays the grounds for building intimate friendships. Yet there remains little sociological investigation into friendships in sport: how they are crafted, who they are crafted between, how gender is constructed/performed within these sporting relations, and their role in recreating or challenging ideas of women's subordination to men. The ways in which friendships are forged in mixed sex karate

settings thus provides an insightful contribution to the sociology of intimacy and sociology of gender literature. This chapter will draw on the notions of close ‘family-like’ friendships alluded to in the previous chapter, and will further explore how such friendships were made through embodied interactions in karate clubs, and the impact of these relationships on the construction of gendered embodiments.

9.1. Sharing Space, Activity and Passion Together

In the dojos a blend of people from different social classes, religions, ages, and genders came together to learn, practice, and improve their karate. All these people sparred, sprinted, sweat, hit, hurt, learnt, and laughed together within the same karate class. Within this mix of karate practitioners, many individuals were placed in a situation where they met and physically interacted with others they would not usually come into contact with. In this space, boundaries and hierarchies that usually divide people’s social life by class, race, and gender, melted away (at least temporarily):

Karate is great because it’s something everybody can do, and when you go into the dojo everyone’s the same. You might have a Doctor in there who, you know, is very high up - wealthy, highly educated. And then you might have someone else in there, in the same dojo, who’s unemployed, or a tradesman, or a student. There are so many variations of people within the dojo on an equal level, I think it brings together people that otherwise wouldn’t mix. Craig, Bushido.

The tendency to interact, socialise, and befriend others who are similar to ourselves is stirred by bringing all sorts of people together in the dojo where, inevitably, they will have to train with one-another at some point - be it in sparring, practicing technique, examining each other’s technique, or holding punch bags for one-another. Sharing the experience of doing karate together was seen by karateka to bridge a privileged understanding of each other:

They know everything about you because I think karate builds you so much as a person that unless someone knows you in that environment, then they don’t really know you. And unless you’re in it then I don’t think you can really understand it. Katie, Bushido.

This privileged understanding was seen to build a unified karateka identity that overrode notions of differences between them:

It's like the 'Casa Nostra' - the mafia. It means 'our thing' and with karate it's 'our thing' - we all understand each other because it's 'our thing'. So its like, my friends in karate are closer than my friends at work because it's 'our thing', we are training towards the same thing. You're trying to help each other that special bit more. Keith, Juniper karate club.

Through sharing the same physical activities, the same passion, in the same dojo, in the same gender neutral outfit, within intimate interactive proximity, focus shifts from class, race, or gender as central sites of homogeny that enable bonding, to that of being karateka. The shared unisex sports practice provided a counter framework to 'doing gender' allowing ideas of differences between women and men to take a secondary position to their similarities as karateka. The idea of sharing a karateka identity - of being 'cut from the same cloth' - set the foundations for mixed-sex friendships to be built:

I haveny got any female friends outside of karate, I think it's just something programmed into you: Your friends should be men. There's women I was at school with that I'd say hi to and speak to, but I wouldn't class them as friends. But in karate I do. Emma's a friend, Sally's a friend - the women you train with you get close to. You know, you socialize with these folk in class and you get the giggles and the laughs with them. Keith, juniper karate club.

Indeed, the unifying ground of sharing an activity, passion, and understanding with members of the opposite sex created an environment where mixed-sex friendships were viable, and embraced. As Rachel and Scott highlight, for those who had practiced the sport since a young age, the idea that there would be a social division between men and women in training seemed particularly obscure and undesirable:

I think growing up doing karate with guys makes you more comfortable and confident around guys. You don't really think 'oh, I'm training with guys' - you just are. We have a good laugh, we train... I wouldn't have a second thought about it. It's normal for me. I'm comfortable with these guys. Kimberley, Lothian Wado-kai.

There's nothing at any point where I think 'oh I should stick with the lads'. Its more relaxed, we all chat as you would. I don't see any segregation. I can go up to a woman and just start chatting away, just as a friend - not thinking 'oh your good looking' - ken, nothing like that. It's just an 'Awright, what's the crack?' because at training that's what it is: everyone goes in and mixes - doesn't matter if you're a girl or a guy. Scott, Lothian Wado-kai.

As notions of gender difference were dissolved in recognition of, and doing of, a shared karateka identity, a gendered segregation of friendship based on ideas of difference between women and men was challenged, and along with it, a primary understanding of men and women's relationship as a sexual relationship. Here, relationally formed embodied understandings of self prioritised cherished similarities, rather than differences, with members of the opposite sex. As such, sharing a karateka identity and understanding provided the base for friendships between women and men in karate to be generated, and ideas of hierarchical gender distinction to be disrupted.

9.2. Helping, Supporting, and learning: Building Practical Intimacy

A large part of training involved close bodily work with others: to execute techniques, understand how the moves are effective, tweaking the positioning of body parts in order to hit the opponent correctly, and in sparring, to playfully use the techniques learnt in creative, fluid, interaction with a sparring partner. The reciprocal intercorporeal helping, supporting, and learning from one-another to aid each other's development as a karateka formed a type of practical intimacy (Jamieson, 1997)¹ which layered greater depth to the initial mixed-sex friendship-relations of similarity found in karate.

As women and men trained together within the club, higher-level karateka intermittently provided advice on technique, tips on movement, and suggestions of training drills to lower or equal graded partners. Lower grades utilized other ways of offering help in the dojo such as: being a target for another; holding pads; sharing

¹ The term 'practical intimacy' is not used to suggest that such intimacy involves no emotional elements. Rather it is used in comparison to 'disclosing intimacy' – that of reflexively talking about feelings, experiences, and emotions with others.

equipment; and providing words of encouragement. These offerings of help not only aided the training partner's karate development *practically*, but also built a bond of being there *with another* through their emotional journey of a sport they both love:

Some people will say to me 'try this or try that' and I say 'oh thanks, and you should try this or that' And we all try to help each other get better at what we love. It's just such a great thing that all these people go out of their way to help *you* - where else do you get that? Steph, Juniper karate club.

The more two karateka choose to mutually share these aspects of practical help with one-another, the deeper feelings of closeness and affection were made. Karateka tended to pair most frequently with those of the same coloured belt as themselves, and as such, women and men frequently chose to pair with each other in karate due to being placed on the same skill level. Through interchanges of advice, help, and inspiration developed *with* training partners, men and women came to learn about each other's bodies and capabilities quite intimately, and in ways which challenged conventional ideas of women as passive, fragile, and weak, and of men as distinctly physically superior and emotionally silent. Women's potential as *good* training partners who could physically help, share, and support the development of another's karate was drawn into light, appreciated, and respected:

I was training with Emma on Saturday and she just let rip on me, and it was brilliant - she can move so quick. So what I focused on was, not hitting hard, but trying to get out of the way quickly with a sweep. So she's coming in full pelt and I'm saying to her brilliant and having a wee shot at sweeping when she's coming in. That helps me because it pushes me, and hopefully the sweeping pushes her. Stuart, Juniper karate club.

Here women and men were expected to be both givers and receivers of help, support, and advice. As equal training partners, and equal intimacy providers, a respect for the training partner of the opposite sex was built, as well as an appreciation of the other's support. Part of this supportive role was reading, and being mindful of, the training partner's emotions in order to gauge *how* to train with them: to fight intensely with them when they were in good spirits; allowing them to score a couple of hits when they needed to build confidence; to shout in words of support when they looked like they were tiring or needed encouragement; or to be prepared to fight hard when they

needed a break from whatever else was going on in the outside world. These supportive elements were highlighted by all karateka interviewed, but appeared to be particularly appreciated by women when the support came from men:

When you're fighting someone you have to give your best, particularly if you're with someone that's good... they help you push yourself. And the guys, are like 'come on Fiona! Come on Fiona!' They always encourage you so much. There's not many places you're with guys together and you're all giving that level of support. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

Friendships between women and men in karate created a space where women and men can, and did, feel and express relatively mutual levels of care. With such mutual levels of respect and care often missing in women's couple relations with men (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; Jamieson, 1998), the meaningfulness of men's support of women was amplified. Women's appreciation of men's support reflected feelings of being embraced within caring, *respectful*, and supportive relations with men, where women felt equally treated to the men around them - as fellow karateka, and as potential friends. Through frequent and chosen interchanges of physical help, support, and learning together, women and men karateka formed friendships grounded in challenges to conventional assumptions of gender differences and gendered patterns of physical and emotional intimacy. Such intercorporeally grounded challenges enabled feelings of mutual respect and closeness to develop between women and men karateka.

9.3. Inclusive Banter

Alongside the elements of practical intimacy entailed in mixed-sex friendships in karate clubs, banter amongst karateka was used to further solidify friendships between men and women during training. Joking 'banter' bounced backwards and forwards throughout karate classes, leavening the serious atmosphere of technique work and intense atmosphere of competitive sparring, encouraging an inclusive atmosphere. Such banter was characterized by light-hearted mocking of either themselves or others, often in regards to: lack of control of techniques; hitting or being hit hard; and ability in comparison to a training partner.



Image 16: Three karateka laughing as one tricks the others into attacking early during a training drill.

Banter in karate worked as a mechanism to forge light hearted unifying bonds by 1. Sharing an *equal and privileged* position with everyone else in the club as someone *close enough* to be playfully mocked; 2. The desire to make others, especially those the banter is directed at, laugh; and 3. Carefully avoiding any sentiments that might actually be hurtful (although this line was sometimes walked very closely). Banter is often seen to be something characteristic and fundamental to men's friendships with other men - a 'masculine form' of affection expressed through humour - and far less recognized as something embodied in women's friendships. Due to its prominence in men's close friendships with men, lack of recognition of women's ability to engage in banter places a barrier between women and men developing feelings of affinity and friendship. Yet in the karate hall, it was something women too were included in, and contributed to:

There's a lot of banter at karate. I don't know if it's just karate or just how I am, but I do have a lot of guy friends, and I like the banter there is with that. I

don't know why but some girls (who don't do karate) are afraid to be friends with guys because of the banter they have, but I've never found that. Fiona, Juniper karate club.

Women's participation in the banter of the karate hall also shaped the type of banter produced:

When I done football it was always lads vs. lads, and it had that boyish banter - ken, talking about girls sometimes, and just stupidity. In karate we still have funny chats, but at football lads would talk about lassies, which, obviously at karate wouldn't happen because lassies are there. But I wouldn't say it's completely different... In football we done sport, had a laugh, got on. In karate, even with girls, we talk and have a laugh, and like nobody holds back with each other - it's the same sort of banter and openness. Scott, Lothian Wado-kai.

The mixed-sex set-up of karate appeared to at least temporarily displaced sexualized discussion *of* women as a form of banter and a way of bonding. In engaging in cross-sex banter together, women and men were placed on a level (and privileged) playing field to mock, make laugh, and build friendships with. Women too used this space to be publicly funny, silly, and make other's laugh, and in doing so challenged the perception of banter as an exclusively male behaviour, whilst forging feelings of similarity and solidarity between women and men. Here, the nature of the banter shifted away from being based on sexist ideas of women. Rather, banter between men and women within karate often emerged from, or drew upon, the lived *contradictory* nature of gendered stereotypes:

Keith was fighting with Sarah - a woman feared as a fighter by most in the club due to her intense determination, merciless stamina, and thundering body round kick. I could see out the corner of my eye kick after punch darting at Keith, whilst he tried to find a space to hit Sarah. Coach Alan shouts in 'stop going easy on him Sarah' with a cheeky smile across his face. Sarah laughs and continues to work away whilst Keith jokes back 'Aye, I'm just *letting* her get all those kicks and punches in!' Stuart joins in laughing at poor Keith, and Sarah shouts 'You're next Stuart!' Field notes, Juniper karate club.

We were both trying to knock off the other's timing, waiting for the right moment to catch the other out of step and pounce with a face punch. Unfortunately we both chose that moment at the exact same time, and as 6ft 2'' Scott's arms are a good bit longer than mine, my movement forward was met with his punch in my face. Sean stopped for a moment, wide-eyed, unsure how

to react, until I burst into fits of giggles. It was like something out of a slapstick comedy - a disaster waiting to happen. 'I am the champion!' Sean announces in his laughter. We stayed crunched over laughing, trying to build composure to continue fighting, until the coach shouted for us to change partners. I was, of course, completely fine physically - a bit of a stinging nose, yes, but I wasn't hurt. As we moved onto the next partner we tapped gloves and Sean said 'Where else could me, hitting a woman in the face, cause so much laughter?'
Field notes, Lothian Wado-kai.

Both excerpts above challenge conventional ideas of women as: fragile and weak; unsuitable for fighting; and less skilled than men at fighting. The jokes and laughs which surround these events laugh at the contradictions of such gender stereotypes in relation to karateka's embodied experiences of mixed-sex karate training, and act to reinforce an appreciation of the women as skilled fighters who can hit and *be* hit, and as friends close enough to 'take a laugh' and make other's laugh.

9.4. Chapter summary and discussion

Sociological literature on friendship often presents friendships as grounded in elements of 'disclosing intimacy' (Giddens, 1992) – of respect, shared interests, understanding, as freely chosen, as void of the obligations of family - and as often sex-segregated. Yet the findings of this chapter suggest the ways in which we forge and maintain friendships are grounded in a backlog of interbodily, sometimes mundane, practical exchanges too. Mixed-sex relationships in karate were turned into friendships through sharing a mutually respectful and respected practical intimacy, and light-hearted inclusive banter. Such intimacy challenged the idea that men's friendships in sports are purely competitive, lack emotional disclosure, and refrain from showing it (Anderson, 2008; Curry, 1991; Pratt, 2000), notions of women as primary emotional intimacy providers in relationships (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; Jamieson, 1997), and of men as exclusive 'expert knowers' in sport (Theberge, 1993). The inclusive banter thrown between and amongst karateka addressed conventional ideas of women's friendships and men's friendships: the former by allowing women a space to be publicly funny, and the latter by sharing laughs *with* women, and inadvertently laughing at, rather than laughing because of, sexism towards women.

Through such intercorporeal interactions karateka forged mixed-sex friendships that diverged from conventional ways of doing intimacy in relationships between women and men. Through sharing the dynamically sensuous experiences and passion for karate, the gender homogeneity characteristic of much sports practice and many friendships (Belot, 2009; Davies, 2011; Jamieson, 1997), was broken down, allowing for the development of mixed-sex friendships founded in a mutual understanding of the other. The sex-integrated practice of karate elevated the respect given to women by simultaneously disrupting both ideas of bodily differences between women and men, and of men and women as having, offering, and wanting distinctly different qualities in their intimate relations. As such, mixed-sex friendships reduced the prominence of ideas of hierarchical gender distinction to karateka's understanding of their embodiment and embodied relations.

This is not to suggest that all ideas of gender difference and entailed inequalities were washed away in the practice of karate, that all karateka became best friends with members of the opposite sex, or that there were not gendered elements to the ways in which some of these friendships were made and performed. Indeed, women karateka did lean towards having other women as their strongest friends in the dojo, at times there were elements of men protecting their female karate friends in more gender-conventional manners, and of course not everyone who practiced karate wanted to make friends. However, within a context where sport is often cited as a male domain often used to subordinate women (Burstyn, 1999; Connell, 1990; Connell, 2012; Hargreaves, 1994), and friendships in western countries are predominantly sex-segregated (Belot, 2009; Davies, 2011; Jamieson, 1997), friendships that did emerge between women and men in karate practice posed significant challenges to ideas of women and men's embodied relations, forms of intimacy, and notions of hierarchical gender distinction. In club training many karateka chose to form relationships that disembarked from expectations of (exclusively) sexual relations between men and women; that avoided jokes or talk that objectified women; that laughed *at* such stereotypes; that appreciated women's expert advice and encouraged men to be mutually supportive; that were grounded

in mutual respect; and that were underlined by an understanding of each other based on notions of similarity - of being karateka. Here, karateka built embodied relations that undone conventional gendered patterns of doing intimacy, and in doing so, embodiments that reduced the importance of gender. Unlike other sports, men and women's friendship in karate were not bound by performances of sexism (Anderson, 2008; Curry, 1991), but rather were friendships that began to unravel it.

10. Conclusions

At the start of this thesis I introduced you to my revelation that the relations built and embodied within karate practice presented complexities to the ways sociology has understood and framed gender. This thesis has argued that the sensory experiences of our body, intercorporeally produced, felt, acted upon and given meaning, piece together the normalised ways in which we use our bodies that underpin our embodiment and the extent to which our embodiment recreates gendered distinction. Central to this assertion is an understanding of our embodiment as relationally constructed, and gender as a relation of power sustained by an embodied 'doing' of difference. As such, our embodiment is gendered when its relational construction produces differences between the sexes that recreate or support unequal distributions of power between women and men. We 'undo' gender from our embodiment when our actions reduce the unequal distributions of power between women and men, and thus minimise bodily difference.

In this concluding chapter I draw together the sensuous information gathered across my findings chapters to address the two primary questions of this thesis: How does the sensory experience of karate inform or subvert a gendered embodiment? ; And, do these embodiments, and the extent to which they 'undo' gender, vary between mixed sex and single sex settings? The first question I answer directly, drawing upon the ways in which sensuous engagement in karate impacts upon the construction of gender-distinct ways of moving and being that in turn support gender inequalities. The second question I answer in reflection to the embodiments built with a focus on addressing whether single sex or mixed-sex karate classes are better for women's empowerment. I then look forwards to the implications of my thesis findings, firstly in regards to the sociological understandings of gender, embodiment, and sport; then in regards to doing research that takes the body seriously. I conclude by presenting recommendations for the organisation and practice of physical activity drawn from my research findings, with the aim to highlight ways in which physical activity organisations can enable the building of embodiments that undo gender inequalities.

10.1. How does the sensory experience of karate inform or subvert gendered embodiment?

This section of empirical conclusions focuses on the ways in which women and men used their bodies within karate practice, and how this reinforced or de-gendered their embodiment. These conclusions are drawn in reflection to Young (2005) and Martin's (1994) contentions that men and women's bodies are made to move differently in often unnoticed ways, and Kimmel's (2000) suggestion that such differences are a product of, and reproduce, gender inequality. As such, they also sit in line with, and support, an approach to gender as an embodied relation of power.

Firstly, the unisex structure and practice of karate required and developed unisex ways of using our bodies and being in the dojo that overshadowed the prominence or importance of gender. A lot had to be done to reach this point, as karateka enter the dojo with a pre-existing gendered embodiment that aligns more or less with the dispositions expected within karate. As shown in chapters 4 and 6, karate asked its women and men practitioner to perform the same kicks, punches, throws, blocks, and strikes to people, thin air, or focus pads, with the same focused concentration on their faces, elegance of motion, and aggression in their kiai's. This entailed embodying an array of motions that blended both characteristics conventionally deemed feminine – such as control, elegance, and rhythmic flow - and characteristics conventionally deemed masculine – such as combative techniques, aggression, and strength. In doing so, this created space for women and men karateka to: drawn on some of their pre-existing gender dispositions to aid practice; to develop bodily dispositions conventionally assumed to frame the embodiment of the opposite sex; embrace and develop the same bodily dispositions as one another; and potentially undo/remould previously held ways of using their bodies.

For men, this enabled an embodiment that combined the development and performance of mimetic violence - suggested as central to masculine embodiment in the majority of the literature on masculinity and sport (for examples see: Connell, 1990; Dunning, 2002; Elias and Dunning, 1986; Messner, 1990) – alongside agile,

artistic, and controlled uses of their body. The changes from British karate's 'brutal past' towards its current gender-eclectic form devalued overly aggressive and powerful uses of their bodies, and as such discouraged 'macho' masculine embodiments commonly imagined to underpin or reflect a hegemonic masculinity (Bryson, 1987; Connell, 1990; Light and Kirk, 2000). As such men were encouraged to build an embodiment that reduced the importance of conventional characteristics deemed masculine, that in turn, reduced the grounds for privileging men's performances over women's in the dojo.

Given the restrictive and subordinating nature of ideas of conventional femininity (Connell, 2009; Young, 2005) women's development of karate dispositions that were conventionally deemed masculine enabled the subversion of embodied subtleties of gender inequality, that held particular potential for women's lived lives. To engage in karate women had to negotiate conventional ideas of women as fragile, as caring towards the needs and desires of others, and beauty ideals that make sweaty combative action problematic. Women role models who acted as symbols of women's combative possibilities, as discussed in chapter 5, and supportive family members who also done karate, as discussed in chapter 8, facilitated women karateka's participation in karate and the development of dispositions conventionally associated men by providing social acceptance and support to their gendered subversions. Developing combative skills, strength, assertiveness, and belief in their bodies agency as they seen, felt, and heard their limbs perform karate movements aided women's realisation of their bodies active ability, often underdeveloped or discouraged in other arenas (Brescoll, 2011; Martin, 1994; Satina and Hultgren, 2001; Young, 2005). In turn, women's embodiment in karate indeed largely diverted from Young's conception of feminine embodiment. This renewed understanding of their bodies and themselves was felt to transcend the dojo, and facilitated challenging gender inequalities experienced in other areas of their lives. By learning to fight specifically, women built bodily capacities that could resist the violence often used by men to assert their power over women in personal life (McCaughey, 1997), and in doing so, built an embodiment that could undo gender power relations outwith the dojo.

The sweaty intensity of practice not only entailed karateka developing ways of using their body, it also marked and altered their physical appearance and bodily resources: sweat would drench hair and ruin make-up, sweaty smells would be exuded from the body, muscles would develop, and bruises would be left on the skin. Whilst such physical changes could provide a resource aiding men's doing of gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987), such changes came into conflict with objectified expectation of women. As the majority of women karateka side lined beauty ideals expected of women, in favour of performing and developing their karate skills, such actions side lined the importance of gender to their embodiment.

To enact many of the bodily motions of karate, chapter 6 suggested women and men often had to work together as targets, sparing partners, stretching supporters, or movement-correctors, whereby the distance often encouraged and maintained between bodies as a symbol of civility (Elias, 1994; Finnegan, 2005), and particularly women and men's bodies (Classen, 2005a), had to be broached. Shared tacit exchanges and smelt revealing of sweaty bodies entailed in the inevitable partner work between karateka within the mixed-sex or women-only classes required women in particular to broach conventional expectations of women's bodies to hide the 'unpleasant' carnality of their body (Riach and Warren, 2015; Young, 2005), and enabled karateka to generate a depth of knowledge of one-another's bodies. In both situations, breaking conventional taboos of bodily smell, sweat, and touch together further bound the relationships formed in karate with a cherished intimacy. The close interbodily exchanges between women and men, as key components of karate training, thus further reduced the importance of karateka's gender to embodied engagements within the dojo.

As discussed in chapter 7, karate practice was also felt by practitioners to encourage a specific mindset to be embodied by all its practitioners that was deemed by many as more important than bodily motions. The shift of importance from the body to the mental capacities of the martial art thus derailed the importance of karateka's bodies as gendered bodies, in favour of their ability to embrace zenshin. Zenshin appeared

to be the specific way karateka, regardless of gender, were expected entwine the mental and physical dispositions of karate to project themselves and their intentions in the world. The eclectic mix of conventionally masculine and feminine traits comprising this way of projecting themselves challenged both conventional expectations of men's embodiment – to centre their being on domination (Bourdieu, 2001; Connell, 2009) - and women's embodiment – to act towards the needs and desires of others (Connell, 2009; Young, 2005). In encouraging women and men to develop the same projection in the world, karate practice both reduced embodied differences between women and men that recreate inequalities, and in doing so, reduced the importance of doing gender for karateka's embodied being in the dojo.

For the performance of the mental and physical dispositions explored in chapters 4, 6 and 7, men and women were awarded coloured belts that positioned themselves on the same sliding scale of ability as one-another. The scale of ability largely framed the expectations and opportunities afforded to karateka, in turn positioning grade, rather than gender, as the predominant feature influencing karateka's access to opportunities to use their bodies and status granted to themselves. As such, the unisex structure of karate provided a framework that set foundations to enable, and justify, movements, actions, and sensory expulsions of women and men that were similar to one another. The structure of karate thus encouraged men and women's bodies to move the same, to recognise one-another as similar through such performances, and ultimately, develop embodiments which undo gender.

However, despite the de-gendering potential of karate as a structure, in intercorporeal practice differences between women and men did occur in the ways in which women and men sensorally infused the dojo, which reinfused the ways they used their bodies with gender distinction. The majority of differences between women and men in karate's unisex practice emerged in the ways they sensorally used space as they conducted their practice, as shown in chapter 4. Such differences included: women minimising the floor space they took up in the hall whilst men often used up too much; women positioning themselves beside those who were lower grades than themselves, whilst men often done the opposite; women refusing to kiai or doing so

quietly whilst men appeared less anxious, or over keen, to shout and command their space in the hall; and women sometimes covering up the smell of sweat with ‘feminine’ fragrances, and men ‘masculine’ ones – if at all. The differences emerging from sensorial ways of doing gender reinforced a privileging of men’s access to space, and thus men’s opportunities to practice and perform karate. In turn, this embedded inequalities with women and men’s embodiments by privileging men’s practice and subordinating women’s.

Differences in exchanges of tacit hits as illuminated in chapter 6 also gendered the experiences, opportunities, and thus embodiments of women and men in the dojo. Some karateka refrained from hitting women, whilst in contrast men were more tightly held to taking a hard hit. Here, ideas of women as fragile were transmitted through tacit exchanges that limited women’s development of key dispositions such as taking a hit, and prevented women from realising the physical possibilities of their bodies (Channon and Jennings, 2013; Young, 2005). These tacit variances communicated a sense of difference between women and men, and built differing bodily capacities of women and men, that reinforced the illusion of men as naturally more suited to karate, and thus in this context, naturally superior to women.

Whilst at first glance women and men appeared to move their bodies in the same ways as one another within the dojo, within the intricate differences in sensory uses of space and tacit exchanges, differences between women and men were made. These differences reflected differing intensions and tensions held within karateka’s bodies: for men, a comfort to use space to reach their own needs; for women, a conflict between performing the sweaty, smelly, loud, and spacious practice of karate, and an embedded orientation towards the needs and desires of others (Young, 2005); and for both, an understanding, and active producing of, men’s bodies as better equipped for the full range of karate practice, that thus restricted women’s development and enabled men’s. Thus the intricate sensory details of karateka’s movements affected and informed the intentionality overriding their practice, and though such actions, inequalities were subtly embodied and reproduced as if natural.

The extent to which karateka infused their practice with such differences or broached a 'karate embodiment' that undone bodily differences was influenced by both their length of time engaging in the sensuous, dynamic, interactions of karate, and the age at which they began karate. This was demonstrated at some point throughout most chapters as newer members appeared to use their bodies in more gender-expected ways than more experienced members (with roughly five years and upwards experience). New men often over emphasised strength of a technique, making clumsy and clobbered movements; new women often tightened their body together to throw techniques that took up little space and asserted little aggression; neither initially felt comfortable kiai-ing; and both appeared anxious with tacit exchanges of hits, corrective help, or stretching one another.

As women and men progressed through the sport, in general the less they appeared to perform gendered deviations of karate's dispositions. This was most noticeable in those whom had started karate as children, and, as shown in chapter 8, particularly daughters of karate instructors. Between these women and men there was little difference at all: women kiai-ed with aggressive assertion embodied through voice, facial expression, and posture to the knuckles of their punching fist; women demonstrated to the class and corrected others, assured of their ability; men gave up their space for higher graded women; men threw techniques with elegance, control, and rhythm; and alongside this both shared intense exchanges of hits with members of the opposite sex during sparring, and sweaty touches at intimate proximity, with apparent comfort. Indeed, differences in bodily dispositions were much more prominent between newer practitioners and experienced members than between women and men. Further, for those who had spent many years in karate, the mental and bodily dispositions developed that comprised their karate-self, that largely de-centred the importance of being a gendered body to their embodiment, was felt to be not just a self amongst many, but a prominent part of who they are. As such, for some experienced karateka, karate's unisex sensuous bodily practice enabled the development of a sense of self that made ideas of gender distinction less relevant to who they are. These findings suggest that embodiments – whether grounded in karate dispositions or gendered dispositions - are easier made than 'unmade'. This supports

Martin (1994) and Bourdieu's (1990) suggestions that early conditioning plays a particularly important role in our embodied being.

Thus, the overall picture painted is that the unisex structure and practice of karate, alongside key mechanisms such as familial support for women, and women as visual role models, enabled women and men to develop the similar mental and bodily dispositions within the dojo that were particularly prevalent over time, and affected karateka's sense of who they were. Whilst this remoulding of women and men's embodiment did not create uniform embodiments that might suggest a complete undoing of gender, the embodiment of karate's dispositions did challenge the appropriateness of conventional gendered embodiments; adapted, overrode, or dislodged gendered dispositions karateka previously held; and by building similar embodiments, reduced the grounds for recreating gender inequalities and differences. As such, the importance of gender to karateka's embodiment was reduced by the social and structural expectations to perform karate dispositions.

10.2. Are single sex or mixed-sex karate classes better for women's empowerment?

The previous section addressed the extent to which karate practice conditioned men and women's bodies in ways that undone or degendered their embodiment, primarily in terms of the similarities in the mental and physical ways karateka used their bodies in the dojo. Largely omitted from the previous section of empirical conclusions was how such dispositions were relational negotiated with others within the dojo, and made meaningful to karateka's sense of being a gendered, embodied, being. This section will draw conclusions around this issue, and in doing so, will address whether single-sex or mixed-sex karate classes are better for women's empowerment. These conclusions are situated amongst on going debates around the positives and negatives of sex-segregation in sport (see: Anderson, 2008; Channon et al., 2017; Hills and Croston, 2011; Love and Kelly, 2011; McDonagh and Pappano, 2008) and broader spheres of society (Aitchison, 1999; Lewis et al., 2015; McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Spain, 1993).

I will first discuss the relationally constructed understandings of women and men's gendered embodiments made in mixed-sex karate classes. Whilst all karate classes presented challenges to conventional gendered embodiments, as discussed in the previous section, mixed-sex karate practice enabled such challenges to be seen, felt, and made meaningful in *direct comparison with* members of the opposite sex through embodied interactions. In engaging in the same practices, exuding the same sensory expulsions of their bodies, with one another, ideas of 'innate' capacities of women and men could be challenged. As women and men shared interactions where women gave hits and received hits, and men performed with elegance and control, distributions of violence, dominance, care, and aesthetic performance that are commonly gender-divided in women and men's relations in a manner that empowers men (Connell, 2009; Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; Jamieson, 1998) are redistributed, performed, and embodied by women and men within their interactions. Here appears an important outcome for gendered embodiment enabled by mixed-sex practice, but not single sex: men's ideas of women and relations with women could be altered. This is important for challenging sexist oppression (Christian, 1994; Stanley and Wise, 1993) that is consciously or unconsciously embodied by men and affects women's lived lives. Furthermore, it enabled women to reframe understandings of their bodily capacities in relation to men, that provided women a confidence in their ability and worth to make themselves visible and heard by men within and outwith karate.

As illuminated in chapter five and drawn on throughout the rest of this thesis, one of the most significant outcomes of women and men performing the same bodily tasks as one another within the dojo was that mixed-sex practice enabled ideas of men's natural superiority to be unmasked as a myth, and the spectrum of women and men's karate ability to be recognised (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008). The visual prominence of successful women karateka enabled by the colour of belt they wore, and the tacit reaffirmation of their ability in comparison to men through the corrective touch they conducted over men, and fast attacks they could hit men with, disrupted the foundations for a gender based hierarchy within karate. The mind set expected of within karate practice further entailed such relationships were bound

with embodied respect for women's higher grade. As women tacitly and visually outperformed men, and were rewarded for doing so, an association between masculinity, violence and power were, too, disrupted, making a hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1990), and macho-male embodiments, unviable within karate.

These challenges to unequal distributions of power often embodied within relations between women and men held a magnified, and complicated, impact for those who trained with family members of the opposite sex. As highlighted in chapter 8, the equalising of status and opportunities for men and women in karate, and the gender-neutralising of embodied actions to perform karate correctly, enabled a rearrangement of ways of doing gender embedded within doing family for those who trained with family members. The redistribution of embodied power amongst familial relations based on their karate skills within the dojo were often met with deeply embodied resistance, mainly from fathers, drawing upon a (gendered) familial framework of embodied power relations, rather than a karate framework. Yet subversions to ways of doing gender whilst doing family that were made held a magnified potential to transcend the dojo, and pose deeper set challenges to the roles, capacities, and distributions of power between mother, fathers, daughters, and sons. The propensity for the emerging generation of couple-led karate family businesses, ran by women from karate families and men with a long immersion in karate, to embrace more egalitarian distributions of authority, control, and prestige, perhaps points to a more longitudinal dismantling of gendered divisions of power between women and men's intimate relations enabled by karate practice.

Recognition of women's capacities to outperform men, as highlighted in chapters five and six, meant that women and men often chose to train with one another grounded in a respect for one another as good karateka. This not only reflected and reproduced a reduction of the importance of karateka's gender to their training relations within the dojo, it also enabled women and men to build a depth of knowledge about one another drawn from their intercorporeal interactions. The more women and men trained together, the more they learnt about one another's bodies, the more they shared a practical intimacy with one another, and the more their

relationship bridged a sense of similarity as karateka, and bond as karateka sharing a journey of development together:

‘The fleshy companionship that arises in the course of years of daily training and suffering side-by-side, and especially sparring together – which implies entrusting one’s body to the other and an other increasingly like oneself – is conducive to developing carnal connections’ (Wacquant, 2005:450).

Indeed, as discussed in chapter 9, the necessary tacit, intercorporeal, engagements within karate, alongside its unisex structure, set the grounds for developing mutually respectful and emotionally close bonds between women and men that deconstructed conventional heterosexist and hierarchical assumptions that commonly frame relations between women and men and distributions of intimacy between women and men (Jamieson, 1998; Wade and Farree, 2015). As similarities as karateka overrode notions of difference as women and men, karateka built cherished embodied relations that reduced the importance of their sexed body, muddled the applicability of a gender order, and thus reduced gender inequalities.

However, mixed-sex karate classes were not gender-irrelevant havens, and indeed women karateka were at times subject to sexist treatment they would not necessarily experience in a women-only class. Within the mixed-sex class: men would often take-up women’s space limiting women’s ability to train; some men would refrain from hitting women or purposefully hit women hard, to tacitly state that women are not as suitable to karate as men; occasional sexist jokes would be made; and for some daughters who practiced with their fathers, their father would survey and monitor their training partners. As such, combinations of pre-existing embodied ways of using our bodies, pre-existing embodied relations held with other karateka, and long ingrained ideas of women and men’s natures at times interwove with karateka’s experiences of karate, restricting women’s practice and development. De-gendered embodied relations had to continually be renegotiated through women and men’s intercorporeal interactions.

For some women, pre-existing confidence levels, religious beliefs, and belief in their bodily capabilities made the thought of stepping straight into mixed-sex karate classes with relatively non-gendered practice a jump too far grounded in their existing sense of embodiment. The women's only class provided a setting that enabled such women to participate in karate and build social relationships, bodily skills that both supported and challenged conventional expectations of women, and a re-evaluation of their bodily capacities they otherwise would not have had access to. The extent to which women in the women-only class could develop embodiments that subverted restricting, subordinating, expectations of women was facilitated by the ethos of the coach to 'make strong women'. Through tasks set out with specific intentions to develop women's belief in their bodily ability and assertiveness, the dispositions broached in the women-only class moved these women away from an embodiment that largely reflected Young's (2005) conception of feminine embodiment, towards a recognition of their bodies as capable and worthy. Through embodied practice and reevaluation of their bodily capacities, most women from the women-only class gained the courage to transition into the mixed-sex classes.

However, women's ideas of the women-only class as a safe place to learn karate were predominantly grounded in an assumption that the class existed because men would be better than women, and that they would be afforded differential treatment and expectations in women-only class. As such, the women-only class unintentionally created a space that further cement ideas of hierarchical differences between women and men. The embodied consequences were visible in the differences between women who started in the mixed-sex classes, and women who transitioned into the mixed-sex classes. Actions such as *kiai-ing*, maintaining aggression in their face, and strength in their posture appeared to be developed and embodied at a slower rate by those who started in the women-only class. Women from the women-only classes selectively embraced the unisex motions of karate, justified by ideas of their bodies and themselves as less suited karateka than men. As such, whilst the women-only karate classes made karate more inclusive for some women, and did provide such women with bodily capacities and re-evaluations of their bodies that challenged certain conceptions of femininity that act to subordinate

women, the sex-segregated starting point limited the extent to which embodiments illuminated the illusion of men's innate hierarchical difference from women (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008).

Many of the bodily dispositions embodied by women karateka could have been embodied in varying collections across other women's sport contexts, that indeed could have challenged their bodily capacities, and in turn their intentionality within the world (Young, 2005). However, we do not live our everyday lives in isolation from men, and as such, whether such dispositions challenge gendered relations is relationally decided through embodied relations with men. Indeed bodily interactions, knowledge from the senses, relationships, and sense of self are all intertwined as our embodiment. The potential to undo, or minimise the importance of gender to men and women's embodiments through karate was magnified within mixed sex karate training. Alongside providing a practice that favoured and developed embodiments that moved the same, and that minimised the importance of gender, understandings of men's 'innate' capacity for violence underpinning ideas of male dominance (Bourdieu, 2001), and the intercorporeal relations between women and men, were re-evaluated. This enabled both the disruption of a gender hierarchy and subsequently women and men's embodiments within the dojo to be grounded in a mutual respect. In changing the bodily relations between women and men, and in turn karateka's embodied understandings of themselves in relation to members of the opposite sex, the degendering of karateka's embodiment made within mixed-sex karate held particular potential to transcend into other areas of life we share with members of the opposite sex. Through such embodiments, there is also potential to infuse other arenas with challenges to conventional power laden expectations of what it is to be a man, what it is to be a woman, and the relationship between the two. As such, whilst the women's only classes provide an important stepping-stone for some women to build a positive relationship with their body, and over ride certain suppressive notions of gender, mixed-sex karate practice presented the greatest potential to undo gender as an embodied relation of power.

10.3. Looking forward: Implications and knowledge exchange

The empirical findings of this research are made meaningful in relation to their contribution to knowledge, and potential to influence change in peoples everyday lived lives. Below I outline this thesis's contributions and implications for sociological understandings of gender, embodiment, and sport, before addressing contributions to methodology and suggestions for practice.

10.3.1 Implications for and contributions to the sociology of gender, embodiment, and sport

Whilst on the surface this thesis has looked at the topic of gender within a specific sporting context, it has primarily been about embodiment – how it is made, moulded, and used to negotiate power relations. As such its primary contributions are to understandings of embodiment. In chapter two I suggested sociological theories of the body and embodiment predominantly treated and understood the topic with varying levels of disembodiment. Whilst by no means perfect, this thesis has added both empirically and methodologically to exploring and understanding the fleshy, sweaty, tactile, emotional, intercorporeal, lived experience and construction of our embodiment. In illuminating the sensuous base of our embodiment and embodied relations, my thesis contributes to the growing sociological scholarship on the senses, and the well-established literature on embodiment.

This thesis has drawn on the idea of power relations - explicitly gender - as embodied relations 'done' and lived through the body, whereby to understand the maintenance of power relations we must look at the intercorporeal intricacies of our everyday experiences that pass by unnoticed – as 'normal' and 'natural' – that build or level-out power relations. In doing so, this thesis has engaged with Bourdieu's concept of bodily dispositions, and further added weight to the suggestion that our bodily dispositions are malleable yet difficult to change due to their deeply ingrained nature (Bourdieu, 1990; Wacquant, 2013). This has implications for the concept of presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) - as an embodied way in which we reflect upon

our body and the real and imagined judgments made by others - and the extent to which we can choose self to present to specific audiences. By following Goffman's micro-sociological interactionist approach, with the lens turned even tighter to the minute intercorporeal interactions between bodies, the findings from this thesis suggests there are parts we bring to our performances of self unknowingly that impact upon our embodied relations. As such, this thesis draws attention to embodiment as something we both have agency to actively mould, and the nuanced ways in which we unconsciously mould our bodily motions and are moulded.

The implications for theories of embodiment grounded in this thesis have subsequent implications for theories of gender, and in particular, theories of doing and undoing gender. Through this thesis it has become apparent that, on one hand, gender provides a resource that individuals can draw more or less upon to guide their embodied interactions and embodied sense of self. Through exploring and illuminating the unconsciously absorbed and performed underbelly of our embodiment however, it becomes apparent our doing or 'undoing' of gender is not something we completely *consciously* choose. The subtleties that construct the base of our performances are built more or less consciously through our corporeal engagement within the institutions we are emplaced within. As such, even when we actively choose to present ourselves in a less feminine or less masculine way – to 'undo' gender - though readily observable clues such as clothing choices, hair styles, and the interests we talk about and engage in, we find ourselves using our bodies unconsciously in ingrained ways that mark us as men and as women – such as the way we walk, how we hold ourselves, and the ways we occupy space with our bodies. In illuminating the subtle, sensory, base underpinning our gendered embodiment I seek to add to the work of Martin (1998) in presenting gender as something done through, and done to, our bodies. Further, the findings of this thesis problematise Connell's (1987;1990) notion of hegemonic masculinity and a gender order valorising such embodiments. By presenting an arena which, on the face of it, would be imagined to be a perfect context for constructing a gender order in relation to a hegemonic male, yet in practice was neither structured underneath a dominant male, nor practiced in relation to ideas of such a figure, this research suggests that

Connell's notion of a gender order framed around a lived or imagined hegemonic masculinity is certainly not universal to all social contexts.

In regards to implications for the sociology of sport, this thesis adds further empirical data to the argument that sport is a key arena for generating or dismantling gendered hierarchies. Rather than looking at ways in which women and men's bodies are discursively framed in the field, or indeed athletes negotiations of ideas of gender difference enlightened by their sports practice, that much of the literature on gender in sport focuses upon, this thesis adds a fleshy, intercorporeal, dimension to understanding the particular potential of sport in forging or dismantling a gender hierarchy. In digging out and bringing to the surface the multisensory, relationally constructed and experienced, facets that piece together karateka's embodiment during practice, and how these contribute to doing gender or an active un-doing of previously gendered embodiments, this thesis highlights the potential of sport and physical activity, as bodily practices, to mould gendered or less gendered bodies. Further, it specifically adds to literature on the particular gender-subversive potential of martial arts and combat sports, and examinations of sex-integrated sports practice upon gender relations and gender egalitarianism.

10.3.2. Contributing to a feminist methodology

Argued throughout this thesis is the importance of our embodiment in creating gender relations, and the centrality of the senses in informing our everyday experiences, expressions, and relations that build our embodiment. This thesis presents a methodological approach that takes the body seriously. In illuminating the sensory expressions and experiences woven between people and the setting in which they are emplaced, sensory ethnography provides a research approach that can pick apart the minutia of lived and embodied relations that construct and deconstruct gendered embodiments. Issues of the body and embodiment have been central to feminist scholarship, but often fall short of producing outputs that elude to the fleshy texture and bodily experiences of everyday life. Perhaps this has partially been a methodological issue.

Calls for feminist methodologies have sought to ground research in principles that: draw into light the underrepresented lived lives of women (Oakley, 2005); recognise the humanity of the research (Stanley and Wise, 1993); challenge the binary conception of objectivity and subjectivity (Stanley and Wise, 1993); reflect on the researchers role in the production of the research findings (England, 1994); reflect on and minimise power embedded in researcher-researched relationships (Fine, 1994; McRobbie, 1982); and use research as a way to generate social change (Reinharz, 1993). The sensory ethnographic research design of this thesis provides a methodological approach that embraces these feminist principles and acts in line with them.

Sensory ethnography does more than illuminate the role of the senses in social relations: it forces the researcher to reflect upon, and in doing so realise, their fully-embodied position in the field, and the intercorporeal basis of social relations they are both part of and observe. In embracing our embodiment as a *source* of social knowledge, we acknowledge ourselves having a shared humanity with those we research, positioning ourselves alongside them, experiencing with them, and sensorally constructing relations and the field with them. Shared corporeal action and empathetic reflection of our intercorporeal position within such action minimises the power relations between the researcher and researched. As the senses are indeed often overlooked in our everyday lives and often experienced as abstract (Pink, 2009), discussion or embodied reflection on the role of the senses within our intercorporeal interactions was complex. Whilst photo-elicitation interviews provided a useful mechanism for making discussions of the senses less abstract, the extent to which they could illuminate the sensory was limited by both misunderstandings of the task, and practicalities that meant only a small number of participants took photographs to their interviews. None-the-less, the detailed depth of personal stories, sensory descriptions, and emotional reflections speak towards the success of the sensory ethnographic design in generating mutually respectful relations.

10.3.3. Recommendations for practice

In line with the political imperative of feminist research, fundamentally this research was conducted with the desire to uncover knowledge that can produce positive change for women's lived lives (Reinharz, 1993; Stanley and Wise, 1993). At its heart this research aimed to produce outcomes that can aid both physical activity practitioners and organisers' understandings of gender relations as relations embedded with power inequalities, and inform ways in which sport can 'undo' such power inequalities. Through the research process and the writing of this thesis, the first half of the task has been tackled – knowledge has been uncovered that comments on and has implications for women's lived lives. The second part of the task is to produce information and guidance from the knowledge uncovered that enables the insights of academia to make changes on the dojo floor, pitch, running track, or sports hall where women and men engage in physical activity.

As my findings are grounded in karate - a martial art come sport with a specific philosophical approach, teaching traditions, and technical practice - my findings can be most fittingly translated into guidance for karate and other martial arts with similar contexts of practice. However as an exploration into the impact of physical embodiment upon ones gendered embodiment, I believe the research findings can also be useful for broader contexts of physical activity. As such, below I have outlined four key recommendations for practice that can be applied broadly to physical activity practice.

1. Encourage mixed-sex physical activity, and start this from a young age:
 - Mixed-sex activity has magnified potential for developing bodies that move similarly that can break down ideas of women and girls inferiority to men and boys, and in turn, neutralise access to status/ future opportunities for women/girls and men/boys.
 - Reduce the competitive focus to enable a more comfortable inclusion of women/girls *and* less physically confident men/boys with older age groups in

team sports in particular. This takes the pressure off of ability on entrance to the sport, enabling such participants the opportunity to develop the bodily capacities of the sport other's may have a head start on.

- For karate and similar martial arts, allow boys and girls to compete together in the same categories throughout childhood. This will both allow the children to gain the most experience they can to improve in their sport, and reduce ideas of difference.
2. Use and frame women-only physical activity classes as a place to build positive embodiments for targeted groups of women whom have limited access to build positive relationships with their body:
 - Whilst there is great gender subversive potential in mixed-sex physical activity, for some women sex-integration may be a barrier that cannot be broached. This may include women who have been victims of violence or abuse; women who are discouraged to participate in physical activity due to cultural or religious backgrounds; and some particularly subjected to body-shaming. It may be helpful in some instances to conduct such classes in collaboration with women's organisations.
 - Embed these classes with an ethos to empower women through raising awareness of the possibilities and capabilities of their bodies, and arrange tasks that encourage women to develop capacities such as assertiveness in voice and posture.
 3. Utilise physical activity as a way to challenge bodily limitations placed on men and women by promoting the breadth of motions of the body:
 - The competitive and gender-distinct framework of sport as a field is a social construct that need not be replicated. Utilise the mimetic frame of sport and physical activity to enable practitioners to play with an array of uses of their bodies and expressions of their body, that over time may become embodied resources and ways of being that may include: Artistic movement, explosive

movement, collaborative ability, adaptiveness, soft, elegant motion, strength, patience, respect, assertiveness, light-heartedness, quick reactions, empathy, observant, determination, and the strength to step out with their comfort zone.

4. Make the most of women role models:

- Women coaches, skilled athletes, and confident women normalise physical activity practice to other women and girls and thus encourage their participation.
- Women often down play or underestimate their own talents. Use skilled women to demonstrate, coach, etc. to both develop your class *and* further her development as an authoritative, knowledgeable, practitioner.

In the future, the findings from this research will inform a 'guidance for coaching women and girls' booklet for Scottish karate which I hope will have the potential to be adapted for other sports and physical activities.

Appendix

Appendix i : Table of interviewees

Participants name	Sex	Level of ability	Club	Type of interview
Steph	Female	Intermediate	Juniper Karate	Photo-elicitation
Fiona	Female	Intermediate	Juniper Karate	Semi-structured
Keith	Male	Advanced	Juniper Karate	Photo-elicitation
Stuart	Male	Advanced	Juniper Karate	Semi-structured
James	Male	Intermediate	Juniper Karate	Photo-elicitation
David	Male	Beginner	Juniper Karate	Semi-structured
Kimberley	Female	Advanced	Lothian Wado-kai	Semi-structured
Sam	Female	Advanced	Lothian Wado-kai	Semi-structured
Morna	Female	Advanced	Lothian Wado-kai	Semi-structured
Sean	Male	Advanced	Lothian Wado-kai	Semi-structured
Scott	Male	Advanced	Lothian Wado-kai	Semi-structured
Katie	Female	Advanced (and women's class sensei)	Bushido	Semi-structured
Sandra	Female	Advanced	Bushido	Photo-elicitation
Claire	Female	Intermediate	Bushido	Photo-elicitation
Rebecca	Female	Intermediate	Bushido	Photo-elicitation
Kirsty	Female	Beginner	Bushido	Semi-structured
Craig	Male	Club sensei	Bushido	Semi-structured

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