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Title: Negotiating female judoka identities in Greece : A Foucauldian discourse analysis

Year: 2015

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Kavoura, A., Ryba, T. V., & Chroni, S. (2015). Negotiating female judoka identities in Greece : A Foucauldian discourse analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 17, 88-98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.09.011>

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Negotiating Female Judoka Identities in Greece:
A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

Objectives: The objectives of this paper are to trace the discourses through which female Greek judokas articulate their sporting experiences and to explore how they construct their identities through the negotiation of sociocultural beliefs and gender stereotypes.

Design: This article is based on interview data from a larger ethnographic research with women judo athletes, grounded in a cultural praxis framework.

Method: Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted during fieldwork in Greece. Interview data were analyzed drawing on a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis.

Results: We identified four concepts--biology, gender, femininity, and judo/sport—that were central to unearthing the discourses in which female Greek judokas constructed their identities. Female athletes (strategically) negotiated multiple identities, each serving different purposes.

Conclusion: The gender power dynamics in Greek society at large are reproduced in the sporting experience of Greek female judokas. Although women have agency to negotiate their identity, they tend to accept the “given” subject positions within dominant discourses of gender relations. By doing so, female athletes become agents in the reproduction of patriarchal power.

Keywords: cultural praxis, discourse analysis, ethnography, gender, martial arts

Negotiating a Female Judoka Identity in Greece

In most cultures, images of fighting are incompatible with the socially constructed ideal of femininity. Since sport is one of the major contemporary sites where physical prowess is paramount, the taken-for-granted association of combat with the male physique and psyche creates gendered relations of power, which perpetuate patriarchal structures in the cultural field of martial arts (Halbert, 1997; Hargreaves, 1997; McNaughton, 2012; Sisjord, 1997; Velija, Mierzewski & Fortune, 2013). Feminist researchers and critical scholars of sport psychology have asserted that asymmetrical power is linked to gender inequalities and discrimination, creating additional obstacles that female athletes face in the course of their athletic (and non-athletic) development (e.g., Choi, 2000; Gill, 2007; Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2004).

Sporting experiences are certainly unique, but the meanings they acquire are shaped by specific social and cultural contexts (Kavoura, Ryba, & Kokkonen, 2012; McGannon, Curtin, Schinke, & Schweinbenz, 2012). Despite the growing body of research in cultural sport psychology (CSP), little is known to date about how social norms, as well as (sub)cultural values and beliefs are implicated in the identity negotiations of female martial artists. Responding to the call from the editors of this special issue to “reveal the importance of intersectionality in CSP,” we focus on women’s judo in Greece. Our purpose in this paper is to (1) trace the discourses (systems of knowledge) through which the female Greek judoka (judo athlete) articulates and makes sense of her experiences; and (2) develop a theoretically informed analytical understanding of how she constructs her identity through the negotiation of sociocultural beliefs and gender stereotypes. Our overarching goal is to produce culturally situated research, which contributes to feminist cultural praxis.

Theoretical Considerations

To explore the identity negotiations of female judoka specifically in the Greek cultural context, we drew upon the cultural praxis framework proposed by Ryba and Wright (2005). Cultural praxis was developed as a critical approach in sport psychology and employs cultural studies to highlight the complex interactions of power and sociocultural difference in the production of knowledge and applied work in the field. Drawing on the cultural praxis framework, scholarship by Ryba and Schinke (2009), Ryba, Stambulova, Si and Schinke (2013), and Schinke, McGannon, Parham and Lane (2012), added rich theoretical and methodological layers to the concept of inclusion and consideration of marginalized identities and experiences. In this paper, we focus on issues of sociocultural difference, social justice, and identity within a cultural praxis framework in order to situate our research in the glocal culture of judo. By “glocal” we indicate that the female judokas, who participated in this study, practice and understand judo in a unique way due to the juxtaposition of the sport’s globalized culture and the local Greek culture. Moreover, this research is epistemologically grounded in Foucauldian and feminist post-structuralist theories (Butler, 1990, 1997; Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1978, 1983, 1988; Weedon, 1997).

Within sport psychology, the concept of identity has been researched from diverse theoretical perspectives, such as standpoint feminist, feminist cultural studies, critical feminist, critical race and queer (e.g., Butryn, 2002; Fisher & Bredemeier, 2000; Gill (Ed.), 2001; Krane et al., 2004; Krane, Waldron, Kauer, & Semerjian, 2010). The contribution of feminist post-structuralism in furthering the analysis of women’s experiences in sport and exercise as constituted within the discursive sociocultural realm has been illuminated by McGannon and Busanich (2010) in one of the first CSP textbooks “The Cultural Turn in Sport Psychology”

90 edited by Ryba, Schinke and Tenenbaum. From a post-structuralist perspective, identity is
91 understood as a shifting temporary construction communicated to others, which is fluid, and a
92 discursive accomplishment that is simultaneously local, social, cultural and political (Butler,
93 1990; Foucault, 1988; McGannon & Busanich, 2010).

94 Foucault's (1972) concept of discourse and Butler's (1997) articulation of subjectivity are
95 particularly useful in understanding the roles that language and cultural discourses play in the
96 process of identity negotiation. For Foucault (1972, 1978), discourse consists of certain sets of
97 knowledge and social practices, establishing what is accepted as reality in a given society. For
98 example, there are cultural standards regarding a woman's appearance, behavior, and values that
99 shape our understanding of what is considered as feminine (e.g., youthful, thin and (hetero)sexy
100 body; emotional and nurturing disposition) and what is not feminine (e.g., bulky body and
101 aggressive temperament) (Krane et al., 2004; Markula, 1995; McGannon & Spence, 2012).
102 These socially constructed sets of knowledges, or the way we talk and think about the feminine
103 ideal, constitute a discourse of ideal femininity. Subjectivity, or who we think we are and how we
104 situate ourselves in the world, then is constituted through the discourses to which the subject has
105 access (Butler, 1997; McGannon & Spence, 2010, 2012; Weedon, 1997). Thus, the limited ways
106 that female bodies are represented within dominant discourses are tied to the experiences and
107 subjectivities of female athletes. For example, a female athlete whose subjectivity is constructed
108 within a discourse of ideal femininity that represents the ideal body as thin and sexy might feel
109 "not feminine enough" and experience tensions about her athletic and muscular body (Krane et
110 al., 2004).

111 According to Foucault (1977, 1978), discourse entails mechanisms of power that regulate
112 the behavior of individuals in the social body. For example, failing to conform to the cultural

standards represented within a discourse of ideal femininity could have social consequences for the female athlete, such as experiences of discrimination and stigmatization, limited (and/or negative) media attention, and fewer sponsorship opportunities (Krane et al., 2004; Shilling & Bunsell, 2009). Highlighting the relationship between discourse and power, the term “subject position” is used by Foucault (1978, 1983) to point out the ways that people are categorized into hierarchies (of normalcy, health, class, gender, etc.). A subject position is a location for people in relation to dominant discourses, associated with specific rights, limitations and ways of feeling, thinking and behaving (Weedon, 1997). For example, being subjected to a biological discourse that represents women’s biological nature as incompatible with sport (Vertinsky, 1994), a female athlete might occupy the subject position of the weak, or the one in need of help, positioning herself lower in the hierarchy than her male counterparts.

The issue of choice when negotiating identity and/or taking up a subject position has been discussed by post-structuralist scholars (e.g., Cosh, Crabb, & LeCouteur, 2013; Cosh, LeCouteur, Crabb, & Kettler, 2013; Foucault, 1978, 1983; Jiwani & Rail, 2010; McGannon & Spence, 2010). Drawing on the aforementioned literature, we consider female athletes as agentic individuals, who have agency in decision-making processes. However, women are also discursively subjected to particular subject positions, which are structured with both possibilities and constraints for action. Subsequently, identity negotiation (or identity management) is an active process that entails levels of agency, consciousness and self-knowledge (Foucault, 1983).

Previous empirical work within exercise psychology has contributed to our understanding of women’s subject positions constructed within dominant discourses of motherhood and exercise (McGannon & Schinke, 2013; McGannon & Spence, 2010), as well as within media representations of women’s exercise (McGannon & Spence, 2012), and the implications for

women's motherhood identities, experiences and exercise behavior. Within sport psychology, Cosh and colleagues employed a discursive psychological approach to explore issues of choice and identity in sporting retirement (Cosh, Crabb, & LeCouteur, 2013) and in transition back to sport (Cosh, LeCouteur, et al., 2013) as represented within newspaper media. In addition, Crocket (2014) explored athletes' subject positions within competitive sports in relation to sporting retirement. To our knowledge, no previous research published in a sport psychology journal has attempted to empirically study and theorize women's identity within sport contexts using a Foucauldian approach. This study aims to extend the work exploring discourse and subject positions that already exists within sport and exercise psychology, into the area of women's martial arts and combat sports.

In the rest of the paper we discuss the ways in which female Greek judokas construct and negotiate identity while being subjected to dominant discourses and cultural stereotypes. Specifically, we examine how they speak about themselves and what discourses offer them possibilities to make sense of themselves and their experiences. This approach opens up additional possibilities for research and practice within sport psychology by furthering our understanding of the psychological and behavioral implications of subject positioning as a useful concept to explore identity. Moreover, women's underrepresentation in martial arts and combat sports (as in sports in general) is often presented as a "women's issue" (Hovden, 2006). Therefore, explicating how the discursive field of power relations forms the conditions for female athletes' understanding of themselves (as expressed in the specific ways of speaking about their sporting activities) is important for disrupting the existing taken-for-granted culture in judo. Our research offers insights for how women may act on their agency and adopt specific strategies to negotiate their identities as well as craft new subject positions within discourses.

Previous Studies on the Female Martial Artist

In a recent review, Kavoura et al (2012) examined the sport psychology scholarship on martial artists from gender and cultural studies perspectives. The authors argued that gender in martial arts has been overlooked as researchers have focused mainly on the male martial artist. Research on the female martial artist remains limited and concentrates on different aspects than research on the male martial artist. For instance, while mainstream sport psychology research on male martial artists emphasizes psychological issues related to performance and competition (e.g. Gernigon, d'Arripe-Longueville, Delignieres, & Ninot, 2004), study on the female martial artist focuses on the examination of differences and similarities, comparing the female martial artist to her male counterpart, or to the “ordinary” woman (Bjorkqvist & Varhama, 2001; Mroczkowska, 2004, 2009). Researchers tend to ask such questions as: Are female martial artists as eager to win as male martial artists? Are female martial artists more aggressive than ordinary women? By focusing persistently on differences and drawing predominantly on positivistic inquiries, such studies aid in the reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Female martial artists are constructed as a homogeneous group, essentially different not only from ordinary women but also different from male martial artists who appear to be the norm.

In contrast, sociological research offers rich insights on the experiences of women participating in traditionally male sports, such as bodybuilding (Shilling & Bunsell, 2009), snowboarding (Thorpe, 2009), rugby, rock climbing and ice hockey (Young, 1997). In this paper we concentrate on the rapidly expanding sociological literature on women in martial arts and combat sports (e.g. Channon, 2013; Guerandel & Mennesson, 2007; Halbert, 1997; Macro, Viveiros, & Cipriano, 2009; Mennesson, 2000; McNaughton, 2012; Mierzwinski, Velija, & Malcolm, 2014; Sisjord, 1997; Velija et al., 2013), which reveals that construction and

negotiation of gendered identity for the female fighter are much more complex than once thought. Martial arts training can provide empowering, transformative experiences for women and pose clear challenges to discourses of male superiority (Channon, 2013). Women who dare to transpass into this male-dominated territory appear to “deconstruct the normal symbolic boundaries between male and female in sport” (Hargreavers, 1997, p. 33) by challenging the existing gender order, as well as gender stereotypes and cultural beliefs (Mennesson, 2000). These women “may face particular challenges with regard to gender negotiation” (Sisjord & Kristiansen, 2009, p. 232), experiences of discrimination (Halbert, 1997; Sisjord, 1997; Sisjord & Kristiansen, 2008), and often struggle to find balance between the socially acceptable feminine identity and the identity of a fighter (Guerandel & Mennesson, 2007; Halbert, 1997; Mennesson, 2000).

From a feminist post-structuralist perspective, Kavoura and colleagues (2012; Kavoura, Kokkonen, & Ryba, 2014) argued that female martial artists cannot be understood as a homogeneous group. Socialized in different cultures and subjected to different discourses, female martial artists have different experiences and negotiate identity in different ways. As women’s judo is largely overlooked in scholarly work, this study contributes to the growing genre of CSP by highlighting how female Greek judokas’ subjectivities are discursively constructed as well as implicated in (re)producing judo practices in particular ways.

Positioning the Female Judoka in Greek Culture

To provide the social setting for our research, we first draw upon the existing scholarship on gender in Greece. Second, we engage some recent sport studies indicating that sport in Greece remains a male dominated terrain. Given the absence of current knowledge regarding the workings of gender in Greece and more specifically the ways that gender dynamics are

reproduced in the sports field, we conclude this section by suggesting feminist cultural praxis and post-structuralism as approaches that can contribute in filling these gaps.

In cross-cultural research, Greece is presented as a patriarchal, masculine culture (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Although gender attitudes are more egalitarian than in the past (Marcos & Bahr, 2001) and laws have formally abolished all discrimination against women (Lazaridis, 1994), traditional values persist in Greece (Kyriazis, 1998), and women's subordination is reproduced by various mechanisms (Lazaridis, 1994). A huge gap between law and practice exists (Lazaridis, 1994), and Greece remains a country where women do not have as equal opportunities as men, compared to other European countries (Marcos & Bahr, 2001). Examining the Greek national identity, Varikas (1993) argued that holding onto traditional gender values and sexual morals can be seen as an act of resistance "to the invasion of foreign standards of behaviour" and the "cultural hegemony of the West" (p. 271).

A study by Marcos and Bahr (2001) sheds some light on the prevalent Greek gender attitudes. Greek men seem to hold less egalitarian attitudes than Greek women and factors such as age and level of education do not have a strong impact on gender attitudes. Physical education and sport science university students appear to hold even less egalitarian attitudes than other university students (Grigoriou, Chroni, Hatzigeorgiadis, & Theodorakis, 2011). Complex social mechanisms and the ways in which Greeks are socialized (mainly through family) seem to be responsible for this persistence of traditional patriarchal values. According to Athanasiadis (2007), both men and women (re)produce such values in multiple ways. Men resist change because they do not want to lose the benefits of their dominant social position, and women seem to submit because of the ease of conformity that these traditional values offer. Conforming to dominant ideologies that position women as passive agents hidden in the private space of the

household and protected by male relatives, Greek women appear to develop a sense of both safety (Athanasiadis, 2007) and innocence, since excluded from power, they are not responsible for the “evils of society” (Varikas, 1993, p. 279).

Issues such as femininity and female sexuality remain unspoken in Greece where religion and traditional family values hold strong influence to this day (Athanasiadis, 2007). Arnot, Araújo, Deliyanni and Ivinson (2000) argued that notions of femininity remain incompatible with power, and women must imitate male behavior in order to succeed in male-dominated fields. In addition to copying the male way of being and doing, Athanasiadis (2007) suggested, women also adopt the male way of seeing, even of their own bodies and sexuality.

According to Foucault (1978), family is a social structure historically connected with the control of women’s bodies and sexuality within a system of traditional gender roles and values. Does this association of family with women’s subordination mean that women should resist the conventional family structures? Are women who choose to be mothers or hold more conventional roles weak and passive? Are women only considered strong if they fight or play sports traditionally understood as masculine? These are some puzzling questions that post-structuralist research has the potential to answer, giving emphasis on language structures and discourses in constituting female subjectivity, as well as associated behavioral practices (see for example, McGannon & Schinke, 2013; McGannon et al., 2012).

Recent sport studies reveal that Greek cultural norms and beliefs, as well as the country’s dominant religion influence the proportions of women engaging in sport and exercise (van Tuyckom, Scheerder, & Bracke, 2010), as well as the representation of women in sport leadership roles (Chroni, Kourtesopoulou, & Kouli, 2007). Comparing gender inequalities in sports participation across Europe, van Tuyckom and colleagues (2010) found that Greece is one

of the countries with the lowest female participation levels. Women athletes are less interested in taking up coaching, refereeing and administration roles, feeling that they would not be respected due to their gender (Chroni et al., 2007). Moreover, Greece is one of the few countries where some of the female physical education and sport science university students (depending on the institution enrolled) are still educated in single-gender classes, separated from their male counterparts (Chroni, 2006). This separation is based on gender stereotypes and dominant biological beliefs that women are biologically inferior to men and thus they would not be able to keep up in mixed-gender sports classes. Chroni (2006) argued that being educated in this context, male and female physical education teachers reproduce the same gender stereotypes when working in sports clubs or schools. Thus, the gender stereotypes in the sports field are reinforced by institutions and reproduced by both men and women coaches and physical educators.

One can only wonder how female Greek judokas construct gender and negotiate identity, having to face the patriarchal beliefs of their coaches and being themselves subjected to the dominant gender stereotypes in Greece (not to mention the implications of this identity negotiation on their psychological experiences and performance). Further research is needed in order to understand the current gender dynamics and power relations in Greece, as well as how these dynamics are tied to the low numbers of female participation in sport and to the experiences of female athletes. Giving primacy to language and socially constructed discourses, feminist post-structuralism has the potential to shed light on these issues (McGannon & Busanich, 2010, McGannon & Schinke, 2013; McGannon & Spence, 2010) and cultural praxis can serve as a discursive framework for blending theory with applied work (Ryba & Wright, 2005). This is the first study exploring the experiences of female Greek martial artists and as far as we know, this is also the first study within sport psychology that has systematically studied

the female athlete's discursive conception of identity, using a discursive approach as articulated by Foucault.

Methodology

Researching Greek Female Judokas

A cultural praxis framework led us to favor particular methodological strategies, such as ethnography, qualitative interviewing and Foucauldian discourse analysis. These approaches align with the underlying assumptions of the cultural praxis framework, in which the (re)examination of identity through the lens of post-structuralist theory was proposed as a central vantage point to open up additional possibilities of understanding sporting experiences (Ryba & Wright, 2005, 2010). Ryba and Wright (2010) further argued that cultural praxis favors qualitative methodologies and "critical forms of ethnography more than any other research tradition" (p. 19). Recently a poststructuralist perspective has been productively utilized in the ethnographic project by Crocket (2014) who studied athletes' experiences of sporting retirement. In a similar manner, the reported study is part of the first author's ethnographic doctorate research in which data were constructed through various methods, such as participant observations and qualitative interviews (see also Krane & Baird, 2005; Sands, 2002; Thorpe, 2010). While the participant observations certainly shaped our understanding of the global judo culture, providing an additional lens for the interpretation of women's experiences, in this paper we only discuss findings drawn from the interviews.

The interviews were conducted by the first author, who has approximately 10 years of training experience in judo. During ethnographic fieldwork that took place in Greek judo clubs between November 2010 and May 2012, interviews were conducted with female athletes older than 17 (16 is the age of consent in Greece), as well as with other key informants, such as female

judo coaches and retired elite female athletes. The locations of the interviews varied from quiet coffee shops near training sites to participants' residences to competition arenas. The purpose of the inquiry was explained in detail, and a consent form was signed before the interview.

Similar to Crocket (2014), we used semi-structured interviews to make open-ended inquiries, focusing on participants sporting experiences. The interview guide used contained questions that defined the issues to be explored initially. For example, the participants were asked to describe in detail when and how they started judo and to discuss their sporting career. They were also asked about the challenges they had encountered and how they coped with those difficulties. However, the interviewer and interviewee could diverge from the questions to pursue other important themes in detail. The interviews lasted from 20 to 60 min. Ten formal interviews were conducted, audio recorded and transcribed. All interviews were conducted in Greek, the mother tongue of the principal researcher and the participants. Only the quotes that are presented in this paper were translated in English, by the first and third authors who are native Greek speakers, studying and teaching respectively in English.

Participants

The interviewees were 10 women with a median age of 29, having a median of 13 years of training experience. At the time of data collection, five were active competitors with competitive experience at the national and international levels and training experience of 5-20 years. Their ages ranged from 17 to 29 years of old. The other five women were retired international judokas between the ages of 29 and 40, with training experience of 12-21 years. At the time of the interviews, four participants were working as coaches. Five participants had competed in the Olympic Games. In general, we invited high-level judokas to participate in this

study since our purpose was to study identity within an elite sport context. In this article, we refer to the participants by pseudonyms.

Reflexivity

In carrying out reflexive cultural sport psychology research, researchers must acknowledge their own experiences and subjectivities, as well as their influence in the research process (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Ryba, 2009; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012). Fieldwork and qualitative interviewing entail relationships of power and the researcher plays a central role in the construction of data (Sands, 2002). Thus, a meaningful point of reflection was how Anna's subjectivity, athletic experiences and epistemological situatedness played a role in producing and interpreting interview data.

Anna is a judoka and a Greek woman close to the mean age of the participants. She has spent most of her life in Greece and her experiences in sport echo the literature findings of women fighters who struggle to find balance between muscularity and socially accepted femininity. When thinking of her judo practices in Greece, Anna can recall times that she felt gender harassed (discriminated because of her gender) and sexually harassed (in the form of unwanted sexual attention and comments) (see Chroni & Fasting, 2009). The participants, knowing that they were talking with a female Greek judoka who shared similar experiences, provided Anna with detailed accounts of their gendered experiences in judo. As an insider to the Greek judo culture, Anna shared the same language and understanding of social practices with the participants, whereas her subjectivity was also constructed through the negotiation of the same cultural discourses. However, as a gender scholar studying, living and training in Finland's more egalitarian context, Anna was able to distance herself from taken-for-granted cultural understandings; and to interrogate the dominant discourses and social practices that exist in her

home-culture. Second and third authors are experienced qualitative researchers whose relevant life experiences and research expertise in issues of gender and culture were significant in shaping the results.

Analysis

The interview transcripts (that were in Greek) were read and re-read by the first and third authors. The second author regularly discussed the research process with the principal investigator and served as a “critical friend” (Wolcott, 1995), furthering the analysis by encouraging reflection regarding theory, data and emerging themes. First, a thematic analysis was completed which consisted of identifying meaningful fragments and coding them into themes and concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim of performing thematic analysis was to identify patterns across the interview data, or across the way that female judokas talk about themselves and their sporting experiences. This procedure resulted into four main concepts that were largely present within all ten interviews. Second, the interview extracts that consisted these main concepts were further analyzed through the lens of Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA). FDA is concerned with the role of language in the construction of social life, the discourses available within a culture, and the psychological and social implications of these discourses for those who live in the culture. While there are many ways to perform FDA, we applied the stepwise approach proposed by Willig (2008) which consists of six stages: (1) discursive constructions, (2) discourses, (3) action orientation, (4) positioning, (5) practice and (6) subjectivity. First we sought for self-related talk (e.g. the various ways that female judokas constructed themselves as “strong” or “weak” or “feminine” etc.). Second, we placed these discursive constructions of identity within wider discourses. Third, we looked at the possibilities for action that the constructed identities offered (e.g. what could possibly be accomplished by

365 constructing these identities). Fourth, we looked at the subject positions offered. Fifth, we looked
366 at the practical implications (e.g. possibilities and limitations for action, or what could (and could
367 not) be said and done, by constructing these particular was of seeing and being in the world).
368 Sixth, we looked at the psychological impact of adopting certain subject positions. This process
369 helped us to identify the discourses which female athletes invoked to make themselves
370 intelligible as they discussed their beliefs, values, behaviors, and life choices. Multiple identities
371 were constructed drawing upon the identified discourses, each offering different opportunities for
372 action and ways of positioning the female athlete. In the following two sections, first we present
373 the key overarching concepts and themes first identified through the thematic analysis; second
374 we discuss the identities and discourses that were identified through FDA, within which the
375 concepts take on certain shape and meaning in the participants' lives.

Thematic Analysis: Overarching Concepts

Four concepts emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews: biology, gender, femininity, and judo/sport. These concepts were repeated to a great extent by all the participants when talking about their sporting experiences. Below, we present each concept, along with interview extracts.

Biology

Certain sets of knowledge regarding human biology determine what male and female bodies can and cannot do (Foucault, 1978). Taken-for-granted biological norms present women's bodies as frail, fragile and incapable of high-intensity exercise, due to their reproductive nature (Jette & Rail, 2012, McGannon & Spence, 2010; McGannon et al., 2012). These sets of knowledge appear as scientific and are taught as such by medical doctors (Vertinsky, 1994). Thus, we tend to accept them as objective truth or reality, allowing them to become deeply embedded in our cultural discourses and practices (Jette & Rail, 2012).

All 10 female judokas interviewed drew on such sets of knowledge to make sense of their bodily experiences in judo. For instance, the participants made statements about gender differences in judo. When asked "Why do you think there are so few women doing judo?", Martha, a 35-year-old coach, replied that "women by nature cannot [do judo]. They do not like to toil much. Their body also does not help them. They get injured a lot". Martha was an elite competitor who represented Greece at international tournaments, including the Olympic Games. Although she was a woman with a successful judo career, she subscribed to dominant biological beliefs about female bodily incapacity. Similarly, Eva, a young champion in her category, believed that judo (and elite sports in general) is designed for male bodies.

398 Elite sports, in addition to strong will, require enormous effort and truly endless hours of
399 training in order to succeed. So, when a sport requires capacity, requires strength, power,
400 explosiveness, all these features favor more the male athletes. (Eva)

401 In addition, participants shared a number of concerns about issues such as menstruation and
402 pregnancy and how these could be combined with judo. Korina, an international competitor who
403 represented Greece in the Olympic Games, seemed to believe that her female reproductive nature
404 sometimes limited her training.

405 A man [coach] cannot understand women. When I menstruate, to say the simplest thing,
406 when I menstruate, a man cannot understand why I cannot fight, why I'm in pain. He
407 cannot understand me. (Korina)

408 For very long time, medical doctors have been educating women on what they can and
409 cannot do, as a result of their biology and reproduction (Foucault, 1978; Jette & Rail, 2012;
410 Vertinsky, 1994). Women learn "to see their bodies and view their natural functions in particular
411 ways," and consequently, biology can be exploited to support an "ideology of female bodily
412 incapacity" (Vertinsky, 1994, p.149). McGannon et al (2012) argue that medical narratives
413 positioning sport as incompatible with women's reproductive nature still exist. Our findings
414 support previous research by Velija and colleagues (2013), suggesting that while women develop
415 physical strength through their involvement in martial arts, they do not question normative views
416 which position women as weak and men as strong. Similarly, the female athletes in the present
417 study naturalize the male judoka's superiority and reproduce the existing patriarchal order in
418 judo, as they draw upon these taken for granted notions that tie women's weakness to their
419 biology and reproduction.

Gender

Particular social and cultural practices are bound to a socially constructed meaning concerning gender. For instance, feminist post-structuralist theorists have argued that the role of the caregiver is prescribed to women, while men have the role of the provider (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1997). The interviews with female judokas reflect the social expectations and gender roles present in the Greek cultural context. In line with McGannon and Schinke's (2013) findings, social expectations for Greek women are tied to domestic duties and motherhood, leaving little space for sport. Moreover, our interview data suggest that Greek women learn at a young age what behaviors are deemed to be socially appropriate for girls and women (e.g. staying in the private sphere of the house and taking care of the family), which they tend to accept and even enjoy performing. These "socially appropriate" behaviors are again grounded in women's biology and reproduction, which places them as being "naturally" suited to care for the family and domestic duties within the home. For instance, Anastasia, the judo coach who competed internationally, accepts the traditional gender roles she learned from her family.

What I have as a figure is this here [my family]. This is what I have accepted. This is what I like. I do not want someone who is lying down and doing nothing, but I cannot stand a man in an apron and doing household chores. Meaning, it looks bad to me. I don't like it. And this has to do with what I was seeing as a child. Let's say, my father never did such things—ever. Neither my brothers. They still do not. (Anastasia)

According to Foucault (1978), family serves in the (re)production of patriarchal structures and conventional gender roles. This is also the case in Greece where traditional family structures and gender relations persist and Greek women find it hard to escape from their webs of power (Kyriazis, 1998; Lazaridis, 1994; Varikas, 1993). The institution of the family plays a significant role in maintaining traditional roles and values, because it is within family that girls

(and boys) learn to behave according to the social expectations. Both girls and boys grow up to believe that a woman's natural role is to perform childcare and household chores (Lazaridis, 1994; McGannon & Schinke, 2013), while a man's role is to compete in the public sphere, show leadership and protect/support his family. Our findings also suggest that family plays a significant role in the beliefs, practices, and behaviors of the female Greek judokas. Regarding physical activity, Greek girls learn from the past generations which sports are suitable for boys and for girls. Korina believes that family and parental beliefs about physical activity influence female participation in judo.

What kind of parent would tell his/her child to go and do judo? All parents think that the right thing for the girl is to do ballet and for the boy to do soccer. These [stereotypes] are coming from the parents. (Korina)

Female judokas seem to be aware that, by participating in a male sport such as judo, they are challenging the stereotypical gender roles and expectations in Greek society. Many participants reported experiences of taunting (a form of gender-based harassment) and/or discrimination. For example, Korina experienced taunting from her peers at school.

The boys were teasing me because I was doing judo, or they were not talking to me because I was a bit different. I was not playing the usual feminine games like dolls, and I was playing hide and seek. They did not want to hang out with me. (Korina)

Unfortunately, such experiences were not limited to the school environment. Some participants reported gender-based discrimination from the judo federation. Melina, a retired elite athlete, believes that she was excluded from international tournaments and training camps because of her gender.

You have passion and love for what you are doing, and there are some people who are restricting you and block your way because you are a woman. For example, when I asked why I hadn't been promoted to international tournaments (like male athletes had) since I am a national champion, an official from the federation told me that I was too old. And when male athletes of the same age I was were sent abroad, I was told that this is the best age for male athletes. So, according to them, as a woman, I should have already quit at the age of 28, while 28-year-old male athletes are at the peak age. (Melina)

According to Foucault (1977, 1978), society has its mechanisms to discipline and/or punish the people that do not adjust their lives to comply with the accepted norms of society. Challenging the traditional gender structures and dynamics, female judokas have to face discrimination, as well as the belief of the male heads of judo organizations that women are more suited to domestic duties of "caring" within the family and home than training in the dojo. Instead of resisting the dominant gender stereotypes, it appears that female judokas are themselves subjected to the belief that judo (and sports in general) is not a natural place for them. Thus, the gender structures and power dynamics in Greek society are reproduced in the experiences of female judokas.

Femininity

Being a feminine woman requires behaving, talking, looking, and acting in accordance to the social standards of femininity. In all times and places, these social standards are shaped by everyday communications, practices and knowledge. An ideal feminine body is articulated as fit, thin and sexy (Markula, 1995) and a feminine woman is attractive to the opposite sex (McGannon & Spence, 2012). In order to comply with the socially constructed ideal of femininity, women engage in various disciplinary practices, such as diets and physical activity (McGannon & Busanich, 2010). Particular exercises (e.g. aerobics and dance) are thought to

490 obtain a “feminine” body and others (e.g. body-building) are thought to obtain a “masculine”
491 body (Markula, 1995; McGannon & Spence, 2010, 2012). Foucault (1977) wrote about “docile
492 bodies”, referring to disciplinary practices aiming to control the human body. The female body
493 with its sexuality and its reproductive nature was always a central target that had to be controlled
494 (Foucault, 1978).

495 The narratives of the female Greek judokas show their views of what is feminine (and
496 what is not) within the Greek social context. For example, Eva, a young female judoka, believes
497 that femininity is expressed in physical characteristics, as well as by how a woman talks and
498 behaves.

499 Regarding the physical characteristics of a woman, such as breasts, you cannot do much.
500 If a woman does not have breasts, she certainly is not pretty, but you cannot do much
501 about that. But regarding the way she talks, the way she behaves, the way she walks, the
502 way she does her hair, or the way she moves—all these, I think relate to femininity. For
503 instance, a female judoka that I know and comes to my mind, I think she does not look
504 feminine, and I think that men would not like this. (Eva)

505 Gaining appreciation, not only for one’s athletic achievements but also for one’s beauty
506 and femininity, is important to female judokas, especially the young ones. Male views on this
507 issue (what men like and do not like) appear as a significant concern among female judokas.
508 Melina, a retired elite athlete with an extremely long judo career, believes that being a judoka is
509 at odds with the dominant images of femininity.

510 Because you have chosen this particular sport, you might acquire specific characteristics.

511 When you are an athlete that fights, you cannot be the ethereal creature that moves like

dancing. You might acquire a specific athletic-type posture, and men usually do not like that in a woman. They prefer something more airy. (Melina)

However, Melina sees judo (and the body that is produced by it) as her choice and has accepted the social costs of this decision.

Feminist scholars have pointed out the tensions that female athletes experience when attempting to combine physicality and femininity (e.g., Choi, 2000; Krane et al., 2004). Research on women's martial arts and combat sports has yielded conflicting findings. Mennesson (2000) studied female boxers and argued that, while these women challenged norms, they also displayed traditional modes of femininity. Other scholars provided evidence that high-level female fighters are comfortable with their bodies and unconcerned with public perceptions of their femininity (Macro et al., 2009). Sisjord and Kristiansen (2009) studied elite wrestlers and concluded that, although junior wrestlers were concerned about their bodies, senior wrestlers had accepted their athletic, muscular bodies and the social costs associated with them.

Similarly, variations in how different athletes relate to the femininity discourse are apparent in our study in the Greek cultural context, where notions of femininity are incompatible with power (Arnot et al., 2000) and women have adopted a male gaze, even of their own bodies and sexuality (Athanasiadis, 2007). Some participants, especially the older ones, view femininity as an internal quality unrelated to what one wears or how muscular one is. Others, especially the younger participants, are concerned with maintaining an external, socially acceptable femininity visible to others (see "discourses and identity negotiations" section).

Does this mean that female judokas' views of femininity and how they relate to the discourse of ideal femininity change over the course of practicing the male-dominated sport of judo? Or that female judokas actively choose how to position themselves in relation to the

discourse of ideal femininity according to the context and the situation? Previous research has shown that such changes or choices are not entirely voluntary, as female athletes are constantly pressured by the cultural expectations and face social costs for failing to conform to the ideal femininity (Krane et al., 2004). Thus, the cultural construction of femininity in Greece influences female judokas each time they decide how to relate to the femininity ideal and can alter their experiences and behaviors in each situation.

Judo/Sports

Judo as a sporting (sub)culture has its own ornaments, settings, rituals, etiquettes, ethics, and values. Moreover, each judo club shapes its own unique glocal culture. The sets of knowledge that constitute our understanding of what does it mean to be a judoka draw on popular narratives about elite sport, as well as on unique glocal features which have an impact on the Greek judokas' experiences.

Similarly to contemporary talk about sports, the notions of hard training, of investing time and effort in return for victory and success, are prominent in the self-descriptions of female Greek judokas. Being a high-level judo athlete is associated with competition, travelling for tournaments and training camps, coping with stress and adversity, as well as with a specific body image. In order to comply with the high-level standards of the competitive judo, female judokas have to undergo disciplinary practices (Foucault, 1977, 1978), including hard training, weight management, and dieting. The time required for training and competing at the elite level often leaves no time for other endeavors, such as studying, working, going out with friends, and romantic relationships. For example, Martha describes the life of a judo athlete on the national team as a life fully devoted to training:

557 All men and women athletes in the national team, we were living in the Olympic
558 Stadium. There, you had your program. You were waking up to train; then again, you
559 were training, three times a day. (Martha)

560 Like Martha, the female judokas in our study drew on dominant beliefs regarding elite sports to
561 construct individual narratives of past sporting accomplishments and failures. For example,
562 Melina describes a very long athletic career in judo with competition and victories.

563 I was a medalist for 19 years. Me and another female athlete, based on a survey on
564 competition participations, we were found to be the ones with the longest careers in
565 Greek judo among all athletes (men and women) of all times. (Melina)

566 In addition, themes from the philosophy of judo emerged in all interviews. For instance, Korina
567 employs these themes to describe her eagerness to win.

568 Judo means the gentle way. It means that I fight because I want to win, not because I
569 have something against my opponent. I fight because I have to win for me, not for anyone
570 else. (Korina)

571 Critical scholarship within sport and exercise psychology has elucidated how cultural
572 metanarratives concerning elite sports have implications for the ways of being an athlete (e.g.,
573 Cosh, Crabb, & LeCouteur, 2013; Cosh, LeCouteur, et al., 2013; Kavoura et al., 2014;
574 McGannon et al., 2012). Drawing on taken-for-granted beliefs about judo and elite sport, all
575 participants created self-descriptions in the process of (re)-constructing the athlete's identity (see
576 "discourses and identity negotiations" section). In contrast to self-descriptions constructed within
577 the concepts of gender and biology, the self-descriptions constructed within the judo/sports
578 concept position the female judoka as equal to her male counterpart and as a strong, autonomous
579 agent who has power both on and off the judo mats.

Discourses, Subject Positions and Identity Negotiations

Our discursive analytic procedure revealed that female Greek judokas drew upon certain discourses (i.e. a discourse of female biological inferiority, a patriarchal discourse, a discourse of ideal femininity, an alternative femininity discourse and a performance discourse) when talking about themselves and their sporting experiences. Drawing upon these discursive resources, they constructed multiple identities, each serving a different purpose and positioning the female judoka in different ways. These identity constructions were essentially linked to the subject positions offered within the aforementioned discourses. Below, we present the identities that were constructed and the ways in which each identity functions to construct particular ways of being in the world and to constitute the athletes' experiences in judo.

Discourse of female biological inferiority: The naturally strong woman

I was doing well [in sports] because I have natural strength. (Maria)

The dominant biological discourse positions women as biologically inferior to men and thus less suitable for judo, offering for female judokas the identity position of "the weak athlete". Being subjected to this discourse, female Greek judokas felt that they had to justify their choice to do the male sport of judo. Constructing the identity of a naturally strong woman or a tomboy, they positioned themselves as different and superior to ordinary, weak women. However, this identity construction does not resist (and even reproduces) dominant biological beliefs that position women as weak and fragile. Occupying the subject position of the weak athlete (compared to the biologically gifted and strong male athlete), the female judoka tries to find a location, by comparing herself with the male judokas on one hand and the ordinary women on the other.

In recent decades, mainstream research has extensively compared female martial artists with the normative male athlete or the normative woman (Kavoura et al., 2012). Findings from this research stress the influence of dominant medical and scientific discourses that represent women as fragile reproductive machines (Jette & Rail, 2012; McGannon et al., 2012), on women's experiences and identity negotiation (Foucault, 1978; Vertinsky, 1994). We would also like to stress mainstream research's role in the reproduction of gender dynamics and stereotypes (Kavoura et al., 2012). Being subjected to such gender stereotypes, female martial artists do not problematize normative views of male superiority (Velija et al., 2013).

Patriarchal discourse: The persistent woman

You have to be stubborn and oppose to this whole thing. If you don't have this, you won't make it in this specific sport. Sometimes I blame myself for not insisting as much as I should on some matters. I was young and hot-blooded, and I could not think clearly in order to find the right tactics and strategies to handle the difficulties. (Melina)

In relation to the gender roles and stereotypes that exist in the judo context, as well as in the wider Greek societal context (patriarchal discourse), female Greek judokas constructed the identity of a persistent woman; a resilient athlete that does not give up on her choice to do judo, even if this choice conflicts with the traditional gender norms. However, this identity construction does not oppose the gender order, but instead uses situation-specific strategies and tactics to cope with inequality. These tactics have to be strategically planned in order not to insult patriarchy and the male heads of judo.

It is also our fault. There are some women in the field that are trying to impose themselves in a wrong way. They are coming into opposition with the wrong people, and

624 they are losing their right to be in this field. Such women are giving an ugly picture for
625 the female judokas. We need to be careful how we behave in the field. (Melina)

626 On the one hand, the identity construction of a persistent woman positions the female Greek
627 judoka as an active agent with opportunities for action. On the other hand, being socialized
628 within traditional gender norms and values, the female Greek judoka occupies the subject
629 position of a woman who behaves according to social standards and respects the gender order.

630 Previous research on how gender is framed in the mixed-gender judo training
631 environment indicates that judo athletes have to conform to gender stereotypes and order
632 (Guerandel & Mennesson, 2007). Female martial artists use identity management as a strategy to
633 become accepted in this male-dominated field (Halbert, 1997). Moreover, this strategy of
634 adopting the role of the passive woman who behaves is deeply embedded in the mentality of the
635 Greek woman who often chooses to be hidden behind the male heads surrounding her
636 (Athanasiadis, 2007).

637 **Discourse of ideal femininity: The successful and feminine athlete**

638 I think it's very sexy for a woman to participate actively in a sport and at the same time
639 to be able to maintain her femininity visible to the world. Because, truth to be told, if a
640 woman loses her femininity, she ceases to be a woman, and this looks very ugly,
641 especially to the male population. (Eva)

642 Within a discourse of ideal femininity, women have to be "feminine", meaning that they
643 have to comply with specific characteristics (e.g. a thin and sexy body). Drawing on this
644 discourse, women are categorized into hierarchies (subject positions): the "feminine woman" vs.
645 the "non-feminine woman". The "feminine woman" is more privileged than the one that has
646 failed (or does not want) to comply with the socially constructed standards of femininity. Being

subjected to the ideal femininity discourse, young female judokas constructed the identity of a successful and feminine athlete, positioning themselves as superior to other judokas who might have succeeded as athletes but not as women. This identity construction functions in gaining acceptance and appreciation both as a competent athlete and as a sexy woman. Previous research has shown that socially constructed ideals of femininity affect the experiences and subjectivities of women athletes (Krane et al., 2004; McGannon & Busanich, 2010) and that female athletes who manage to comply with the social standards are more appreciated and enjoy more media coverage (Krane et al., 2004).

Alternative femininity discourse: The internally feminine athlete

Femininity is something that you have since you are born. Sports have nothing to do with your femininity. Neither what you are during the [competition] fight has nothing to do with your femininity. So, a feminine woman would never get angry, or pissed, or out of control? Or, a feminine woman would never defend herself, or raise her tone of voice? Same way, a woman that does judo, on the mats she is an athlete. She is not a man. She is an athlete. Outside of the training mats she can be as feminine as she wants. (Korina)

The older female Greek judokas seem to reject the discourse of ideal femininity that represents the ideal female body as thin and sexy. However, at the same time, they position themselves as “feminine women” by essentializing femininity as an internal quality. These findings are consistent with previous research on female wrestlers that found that young female martial artists struggle to combine physicality and femininity, while older, more experienced athletes have accepted their athletic body (Sisjord & Kristiansen, 2009). However, even as some athletes reject notions of ideal femininity, the normative view that a woman needs to be feminine and a man masculine is still present in the way they construct their identity. By constructing the

identity of the internally feminine athlete, female athletes can still adopt the privileged subject position of the “feminine woman”, although their femininity is not obvious externally.

Performance discourse: The silent and committed warrior

At times I become a bit competitive, because I want to show that boys cannot always win us in judo. We [girls] are also strong. We can do many things, and we have proved it because we too have gotten medals. They [boys] are not the only ones. (Alexandra)

Drawing on a performance discourse, female Greek judokas constructed the identity of a silent and committed warrior, a serious athlete who is equally competent to her male counterpart. Being a woman in the male dominated sport of judo can be a lonely and challenging path. Commitment and determination are key elements in this path of the silent warrior. This identity construction functions in demanding respect and equal treatment from coaches and the federation, as well as from male teammates and significant others. Women athletes are often less appreciated than male athletes (Krane et al., 2004) and, consequently, often feel the need to work harder and win more medals in order to be accepted and appreciated as athletes. However, this identity construction also entails obedience to the rules and loyalty to the team.

I learned how to be in a team, to follow the rules, to be disciplined. This has an impact on how I behave in society too. When I do something, I will do it right because this is what I learned in training. When I want to do something, I will fight for that, and I will do everything in order to succeed. (Alexandra)

Female judokas position themselves as silent warriors, loyal to the judo etiquette and way of doing. They accept the existing structures without critique and submit themselves to the power of authority. Again, the power dynamics in Greek judo culture mirror those in the Greek

patriarchal cultural context that reproduce women's subordination through various mechanisms (Lazaridis, 1994).

Conclusions

Through the thematic analysis of interview data we identified four concepts--biology, gender, femininity, and judo/sports—which allowed us to trace the discourses that female athletes drew upon to make sense of their experiences. Foucauldian discourse analysis further revealed that drawing on certain discourses (i.e. a discourse of female biological inferiority, a patriarchal discourse, a discourse of ideal femininity, an alternative femininity discourse and a performance discourse), female judokas construct multiple identities. Various identities, such as the naturally strong woman or the silent and committed warrior, serve specific purposes offering different possibilities for action in the glocal culture of judo. Our findings indicate that dominant beliefs and discourses are reflected in the identities and subject positions of the female Greek judokas. The gender dynamics and hierarchies of Greek society and culture underlie the participants' identity negotiation who themselves reproduce women's subordination in Greek judo, as they try to become accepted and appreciated in both the male culture of judo and the Greek social context.

In line with findings from previous empirical work within exercise psychology (McGannon & Schinke, 2013; McGannon & Spence, 2010, 2012), this study outlines that language and cultural discourses shape the experiences and identity negotiations of women. Extending these findings to the sport context (and specifically to the masculinized martial arts and combat sports context), we found that fluidity and multi-dimensionality of identity reflect the complexity of the social contexts that surround the female judoka, as well as the conflicting roles and social expectations with which she also has to wrestle. The female Greek judoka manages

her identity strategically in order to adapt (and become accepted) in all these different contexts, which unfortunately remain patriarchal. The identity management of the elite judokas in this study is interpreted as an adaptation strategy, which appears to support the female Greek judoka in achieving a successful career in the male-dominated sport of judo.

However, to which degree one can choose an identity? The issue of choice when it comes to subjectivity and identity negotiation has been discussed in the past by post-structuralist scholars (Foucault, 1978, 1983; Jiwani & Rail, 2010; McGannon & Busanich, 2010; McGannon & Spence, 2010). While female Greek judokas have some agency, they are forced into this identity interplay by the gender power dynamics that exist in both Greek culture and the culture of judo and are extremely resistant to change. Drawing on dominant discourses, Greek judokas become agents in the reproduction of gender power dynamics. Subjected to dominant gender beliefs and stereotypes, the participants accept the male way as the only way.

How then could we hope for progressive social change in women's judo? To date, we have limited knowledge on how to enhance female participation in martial arts, as well as how to make the experiences of female martial artists more positive. Future research needs to be directed at developing effective interventions that could support training environments in which women martial artists could reach their athletic potential free from fear, harassment, and discrimination. McGannon and Schinke (2013) have recently argued that in order to intervene to make women's experiences more positive, we first need to make women aware of how daily conversation and practices contribute in their feelings and experiences in relation to sport and exercise. The authors further argued that post-structuralism has the potential to raise awareness in these issues. There is a growing body of literature within sport and exercise psychology that offers considerable support for feminist cultural praxis and post-structuralist theorizing, to be

738 useful frameworks for a more sophisticated integration of research with applied work. While
739 changing coaches and officials' attitudes toward female martial artists could be one goal for
740 inquiries aiming to instigate social change, the present study, located in a feminist cultural praxis
741 framework suggests that it is equally (or even more) important to change the attitudes and
742 perceptions of the female martial artists themselves. Supporting female martial artists in re-
743 constructing martial arts as a field that is not male only, as a field to which they possess the
744 ability and right to belong, might be the most significant (and challenging) aim for future
745 research and practice.

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