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Negotiating Female Judoka Identities in Greece:  
A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

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25 Abstract

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

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

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

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

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

40

41

42

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

## 44 Negotiating a Female Judoka Identity in Greece

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

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

66

67 **Theoretical Considerations**

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

83 Within sport psychology, the concept of identity has been researched from diverse  
84 theoretical perspectives, such as standpoint feminist, feminist cultural studies, critical feminist,  
85 critical race and queer (e.g., Butryn, 2002; Fisher & Bredemeier, 2000; Gill (Ed.), 2001; Krane et  
86 al., 2004; Krane, Waldron, Kauer, & Semerjian, 2010). The contribution of feminist post-  
87 structuralism in furthering the analysis of women’s experiences in sport and exercise as  
88 constituted within the discursive sociocultural realm has been illuminated by McGannon and  
89 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

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

124         The issue of choice when negotiating identity and/or taking up a subject position has been  
125 discussed by post-structuralist scholars (e.g., Cosh, Crabb, & LeCouteur, 2013; Cosh, LeCouteur,  
126 Crabb, & Kettler, 2013; Foucault, 1978, 1983; Jiwani & Rail, 2010; McGannon & Spence,  
127 2010). Drawing on the aforementioned literature, we consider female athletes as agentic  
128 individuals, who have agency in decision-making processes. However, women are also  
129 discursively subjected to particular subject positions, which are structured with both possibilities  
130 and constrains for action. Subsequently, identity negotiation (or identity management) is an  
131 active process that entails levels of agency, consciousness and self-knowledge (Foucault, 1983).

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

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

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



**159 Previous Studies on the Female Martial Artist**

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

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

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

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

#### 200                                   **Positioning the Female Judoka in Greek Culture**

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

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

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

217           A study by Marcos and Bahr (2001) sheds some light on the prevalent Greek gender  
218 attitudes. Greek men seem to hold less egalitarian attitudes than Greek women and factors such  
219 as age and level of education do not have a strong impact on gender attitudes. Physical education  
220 and sport science university students appear to hold even less egalitarian attitudes than other  
221 university students (Grigoriou, Chroni, Hatzigeorgiadis, & Theodorakis, 2011). Complex social  
222 mechanisms and the ways in which Greeks are socialized (mainly through family) seem to be  
223 responsible for this persistence of traditional patriarchal values. According to Athanasiadis  
224 (2007), both men and women (re)produce such values in multiple ways. Men resist change  
225 because they do not want to lose the benefits of their dominant social position, and women seem  
226 to submit because of the ease of conformity that these traditional values offer. Conforming to  
227 dominant ideologies that position women as passive agents hidden in the private space of the

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

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

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

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

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

262         One can only wonder how female Greek judokas construct gender and negotiate identity,  
263 having to face the patriarchal beliefs of their coaches and being themselves subjected to the  
264 dominant gender stereotypes in Greece (not to mention the implications of this identity  
265 negotiation on their psychological experiences and performance). Further research is needed in  
266 order to understand the current gender dynamics and power relations in Greece, as well as how  
267 these dynamics are tied to the low numbers of female participation in sport and to the  
268 experiences of female athletes. Giving primacy to language and socially constructed discourses,  
269 feminist post-structuralism has the potential to shed light on these issues (McGannon &  
270 Busanich, 2010, McGannon & Schinke, 2013; McGannon & Spence, 2010) and cultural praxis  
271 can serve as a discursive framework for blending theory with applied work (Ryba & Wright,  
272 2005). This is the first study exploring the experiences of female Greek martial artists and as far  
273 as we know, this is also the first study within sport psychology that has systematically studied

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

## 276 **Methodology**

### 277 **Researching Greek Female Judokas**

278 A cultural praxis framework led us to favor particular methodological strategies, such as  
279 ethnography, qualitative interviewing and Foucauldian discourse analysis. These approaches  
280 align with the underlying assumptions of the cultural praxis framework, in which the  
281 (re)examination of identity through the lens of post-structuralist theory was proposed as a central  
282 vantage point to open up additional possibilities of understanding sporting experiences (Ryba &  
283 Wright, 2005, 2010). Ryba and Wright (2010) further argued that cultural praxis favors  
284 qualitative methodologies and "critical forms of ethnography more than any other research  
285 tradition" (p. 19). Recently a poststructuralist perspective has been productively utilized in the  
286 ethnographic project by Crocket (2014) who studied athletes' experiences of sporting retirement.  
287 In a similar manner, the reported study is part of the first author's ethnographic doctorate  
288 research in which data were constructed through various methods, such as participant  
289 observations and qualitative interviews (see also Krane & Baird, 2005; Sands, 2002; Thorpe,  
290 2010). While the participant observations certainly shaped our understanding of the global judo  
291 culture, providing an additional lens for the interpretation of women's experiences, in this paper  
292 we only discuss findings drawn from the interviews.

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

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

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

### 311 **Participants**

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

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

### 321 **Reflexivity**

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

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



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

### 345 **Analysis**

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

376 **Thematic Analysis: Overarching Concepts**

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

381 **Biology**

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

389 All 10 female judokas interviewed drew on such sets of knowledge to make sense of their  
390 bodily experiences in judo. For instance, the participants made statements about gender  
391 differences in judo. When asked "Why do you think there are so few women doing judo?",  
392 Martha, a 35-year-old coach, replied that "women by nature cannot [do judo]. They do not like to  
393 toil much. Their body also does not help them. They get injured a lot". Martha was an elite  
394 competitor who represented Greece at international tournaments, including the Olympic Games.  
395 Although she was a woman with a successful judo career, she subscribed to dominant biological  
396 beliefs about female bodily incapacity. Similarly, Eva, a young champion in her category,  
397 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.

420 **Gender**

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

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

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

444 (and boys) learn to behave according to the social expectations. Both girls and boys grow up to  
445 believe that a woman's natural role is to perform childcare and household chores (Lazaridis,  
446 1994; McGannon & Schinke, 2013), while a man's role is to compete in the public sphere, show  
447 leadership and protect/support his family. Our findings also suggest that family plays a  
448 significant role in the beliefs, practices, and behaviors of the female Greek judokas. Regarding  
449 physical activity, Greek girls learn from the past generations which sports are suitable for boys  
450 and for girls. Korina believes that family and parental beliefs about physical activity influence  
451 female participation in judo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 482 **Femininity**

483 Being a feminine woman requires behaving, talking, looking, and acting in accordance to  
484 the social standards of femininity. In all times and places, these social standards are shaped by  
485 everyday communications, practices and knowledge. An ideal feminine body is articulated as fit,  
486 thin and sexy (Markula, 1995) and a feminine woman is attractive to the opposite sex  
487 (McGannon & Spence, 2012). In order to comply with the socially constructed ideal of  
488 femininity, women engage in various disciplinary practices, such as diets and physical activity  
489 (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



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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 541 **Judo/Sports**

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

547 Similarly to contemporary talk about sports, the notions of hard training, of investing  
548 time and effort in return for victory and success, are prominent in the self-descriptions of female  
549 Greek judokas. Being a high-level judo athlete is associated with competition, travelling for  
550 tournaments and training camps, coping with stress and adversity, as well as with a specific body  
551 image. In order to comply with the high-level standards of the competitive judo, female judokas  
552 have to undergo disciplinary practices (Foucault, 1977, 1978), including hard training, weight  
553 management, and dieting. The time required for training and competing at the elite level often  
554 leaves no time for other endeavors, such as studying, working, going out with friends, and  
555 romantic relationships. For example, Martha describes the life of a judo athlete on the national  
556 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.

**580 Discourses, Subject Positions and Identity Negotiations**

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

**590 Discourse of female biological inferiority: The naturally strong woman**

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

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

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

610 **Patriarchal discourse: The persistent woman**

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

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

622           It is also our fault. There are some women in the field that are trying to impose  
623 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

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

655 **Alternative femininity discourse: The internally feminine athlete**

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

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

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

672 **Performance discourse: The silent and committed warrior**

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

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

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

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



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

#### 694 **Conclusions**

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

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

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

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

727         How then could we hope for progressive social change in women's judo? To date, we  
728 have limited knowledge on how to enhance female participation in martial arts, as well as how to  
729 make the experiences of female martial artists more positive. Future research needs to be  
730 directed at developing effective interventions that could support training environments in which  
731 women martial artists could reach their athletic potential free from fear, harassment, and  
732 discrimination. McGannon and Schinke (2013) have recently argued that in order to intervene to  
733 make women's experiences more positive, we first need to make women aware of how daily  
734 conversation and practices contribute in their feelings and experiences in relation to sport and  
735 exercise. The authors further argued that post-structuralism has the potential to raise awareness  
736 in these issues. There is a growing body of literature within sport and exercise psychology that  
737 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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