

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

MORE THAN A BLACK BELT: EMBODIED LEARNING IN TAEKWONDO WOMEN

A Dissertation in

Adult Education

by

Valerie Ann Cholet

© 2020 Valerie Ann Cholet

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

December 2020

The dissertation of Valerie Cholet was reviewed and approved by the following:

Elizabeth J. Tisdell
Professor of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education, School of Behavioral
Sciences and Education
Professor-in-Charge, Doctor of Education in Lifelong Learning and Adult
Education
Dissertation Adviser
Chair of Committee

Robin Redmon Wright
Associate Professor of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

Karin Sprow Forté,
Assistant Teaching Professor of Teacher Education and Adult Education,

Glen A. Mazis
Distinguished Professor of Humanities and Philosophy, Humanities...

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how women make meaning of the embodied learning experience of earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo. The study is grounded in two-intersecting theoretical frameworks: embodied learning (in light of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body); and critical feminist theory, highlighting the participants' experiences as women participating in the martial arts sport of Taekwondo. Like the six participants in the study, the researcher also has earned a black belt in Taekwondo. Hence the design of the study combined an autoethnographic approach, integrating the researcher's experience earning a black belt in conjunction with narrative inquiry to examine the six participants' stories.

Data collection for narrative analysis was collected through semi-structured individual interviews, focus groups, a video elicitation exercise, and researcher field notes. Additionally, participants were encouraged to share personal artifacts in the form of symbols representing their Black Belt journey including an essay written just prior to testing for their black belt. Participant stories were written from these data. In addition a modified constant comparative analysis of data analysis across participants' stories revealed three themes of findings: a shift in an embodied identity that translated to a new way of being in the world; greater consciousness of embodied learning through reflection and the significance of accessing embodied learning through physical activity; and the sense of feeling powerful as a woman. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings as they relate to the research questions, utilizing embodied learning theory and a critical feminist analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
PART 1	1
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
MY BLACK BELT JOURNEY.....	2
<i>Coming to know through my body.....</i>	4
<i>Body epiphany.....</i>	6
PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	7
BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	8
<i>The Philosophy of the body of Merleau-Ponty.....</i>	9
<i>Embodied Learning in Adult Education.....</i>	11
<i>Defining Embodied Learning</i>	11
<i>Researching Embodied Learning.....</i>	12
<i>Movement and Learning.....</i>	15
FEMINIST THEORY AND PEDAGOGY	17
OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	20
A QUALITATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE STUDY	20
STUDY DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	22
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	23
<i>Prevalence in Adult Learning Theory.....</i>	24
ASSUMPTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS	25
<i>Assumptions.....</i>	25
<i>Limitations.....</i>	25
<i>Strengths.....</i>	26
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS	26
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	28
CONSIDERING THE FEMALE BODY IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT ..	28
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	30
<i>Experiential learning.....</i>	30
<i>Experiential learning and physical activity</i>	32
<i>Embodied learning</i>	34
<i>Feminist Theory.....</i>	44
<i>Feminist epistemology.....</i>	49
<i>Feminist theory and the physically active body</i>	52
FEMINISM AND SPORT	53
<i>Physical Feminism and Sport Feminism.....</i>	55
<i>Somatic Feminism and Corporeal Feminism.....</i>	57

EMBODIED LEARNING, WOMEN, AND SPORT	58
<i>Embodiment and sporting females</i>	59
<i>Women in Sport</i>	63
<i>Sporting female identity</i>	65
SONGAHM TAEKWONDO	66
<i>Philosophy of Taekwondo</i>	67
<i>Taekwondo, Embodied Learning, and Self Awareness</i>	68
<i>Women and Taekwondo</i>	69
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS: RESEARCH, WOMEN, AND TAEKWONDO	73
<i>Philosophy and the sporting female</i>	73
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	76
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM	76
RESEARCH TYPE: NARRATIVE INQUIRY AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY	81
<i>Narrative Inquiry</i>	81
<i>Autoethnography</i>	83
COMBINING NARRATIVE INQUIRY AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY	84
RESEARCHER BACKGROUND	85
PARTICIPANT SELECTION	88
<i>Informed consent</i>	89
<i>Data collection</i>	90
DATA ANALYSIS	97
VERIFICATION STRATEGIES	100
SUMMARY	102
PART TWO: EMBODIED NARRATIVES	103
INTRODUCTION TO EMBODIED NARRATIVES	103
EMBODIED LEARNING IN TAEKWONDO: A FEMINIST	
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY	104
<i>Making Further Sense of My TKD Experience: Academia Meets Life Experience</i>	108
<i>Embodied Learning</i>	120
<i>Overall Reflection and the Role of Symbolic Knowing</i>	125
INTRODUCING THE CHAPTERS ON THE PARTICIPANT FINDINGS	127
CHAPTER FOUR: IT BEGAN IN OUR CHILDHOOD	128
MARISSA: CLAIMING CONFIDENCE	128
<i>Overview of Interview</i>	128
<i>Getting Involved in Taekwondo</i>	130
<i>Gender</i>	130
<i>Embodied Experiences</i>	131
<i>Black Belt Journey</i>	133

<i>Symbolism</i>	134
<i>How has life changed</i>	135
BRIEF REFLECTIONS ON MARISSA AND HER STORY	136
ALLISON: FEMALE EMPOWERMENT	137
<i>How did you get into Taekwondo</i>	139
<i>Gender</i>	140
<i>Embodied Experiences</i>	141
<i>Black Belt Journey</i>	144
<i>Symbolism</i>	146
<i>How has life changed</i>	148
REFLECTIONS ON ALLISON	149
ANDREA: THE PINK POWER RANGER.....	150
<i>Interview Overview</i>	150
<i>Tell me a story</i>	152
<i>Gender</i>	153
<i>Embodied Experiences</i>	158
<i>Black Belt Journey</i>	161
REFLECTIONS ON ANDREA.....	163
CONCLUSIONS AND WHAT I LEARNED	163
CHAPTER FIVE IT BEGAN IN ADULTHOOD	167
COLLEEN: THE PERFORMER.....	167
<i>Tell me a story</i>	169
<i>Gender</i>	171
<i>Embodied Experiences</i>	172
<i>Black Belt Journey</i>	176
<i>Symbolism</i>	177
<i>How has life changed</i>	178
WENDY: RISING ABOVE.....	181
<i>A Story of How I Began Taekwondo</i>	181
<i>Gender</i>	182
<i>Black Belt Journey</i>	182
<i>Embodied Experiences</i>	183
<i>Symbolism</i>	185
<i>How has life changed</i>	185
REFLECTIONS ON WENDY	186
MICHELLE: TAEKWONDO MOM	187
<i>My Taekwondo story</i>	189
<i>Gender</i>	189
<i>Embodied Experiences</i>	191
<i>Black Belt Journey</i>	192
<i>How has life changed</i>	194
REFLECTIONS ON MICHELLE	195
CONCLUSIONS AND WHAT I LEARNED	195

PART THREE	197
CHAPTER SIX DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS	197
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	199
Q1: HOW DO WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES LEARNING TAEKWONDO INFLUENCE THEIR SELF- PERCEPTIONS, INCLUDING THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY EXIST IN AND INTERACT WITH THE WORLD?	199
<i>Increase in Self-confidence</i>	200
<i>Difference in Bodily Presence</i>	202
<i>Ownership of Space</i>	206
Q2. WHAT ROLE DOES THE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE IN THE TAEKWONDO SCHOOL PLAY WHEN EXAMINING THE EMBODIED LEARNING EXPERIENCE AS A WOMAN PRACTICING TAEKWONDO?	209
<i>The Significance of Ritual that Relates to the Spiritual</i>	210
<i>Perceived Culture and Environment of Gender Equality</i>	214
Q3. HOW DOES THE EMBODIED LEARNING EXPERIENCE AS A WOMAN PARTICIPATING IN TAEKWONDO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY.	220
<i>The Embodied Knowledge of the Taekwondo Woman</i>	221
<i>Becoming Conscious of Embodied Learning through Reflection</i>	226
IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE.....	232
<i>Implications for Theory</i>	234
<i>Implications for Practice</i>	239
LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	241
CONCLUSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS	244
FINAL THOUGHTS	246
REFERENCES	249
APPENDICES	269
APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM	269
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	271
APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT FLYER	273

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1 : Categories of terms.....	100
Table 6-1 : Data Display	230

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am awestruck at this moment in writing my acknowledgement section of my dissertation. It is almost surreal that I have finally come to this point. There are several people who I would like to recognize for their contribution to this endeavor.

I must first recognize my parents, Joan and Richard, who supported all of my lifetime academic pursuits, and especially my father, without whom my desire for learning would not be present. While he is no longer among us, his influence has remained a constant throughout this process. It was his belief in me and my academic pursuits that have motivated me to see this undertaking to completion. I dedicate this work to my father, Richard Cholet.

Equally important has been the immense guidance and inspiration from Dr. Elizabeth Tisdell, my dissertation committee chair. I am incredibly grateful for all the direction, wisdom, and positive energy she provided throughout this process. Additionally, I am grateful to Dr. Glen Mazis for his instruction and support in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and embodied learning, Dr. Karin Sprow-Forte for her encouragement and instruction as I wrote, and for Dr. Robin Redmon-Wright for her support, resources, and belief in me to see this task to its completion.

I would also like to thank my study participants for allowing me a glimpse into their experiences practicing Taekwondo. Their eagerness to support me in the study and their candid input to the data collection process was invaluable. I learned so much from the entire process.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my children, Hannah and Thomas, for putting up with my weekly trips to campus, late nights studying, and many delayed requests until I finished. They put up with a lot as I read, wrote, cried about and celebrated my writing. I am forever grateful for their patience, love, and understanding of the importance of this accomplishment.

PART ONE
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

"As long as we know there is always more to learn, anything is possible,"

Grand Master Soon Ho Lee.

I earned a Black Belt in Taekwondo. Upon doing so, I experienced a shift in the way I perceived how I inhabited my world. I noticed a change in my personal bodily comportment and a shift in my sense of self efficacy and began to wonder if other women who earned a Black Belt in Taekwondo had the same experience. Guided by Merleau-Ponty's (2002) philosophy of the body and a critical feminist lens, in this dissertation I seek to problematize the intersection of feminism and the martial arts while examining this nexus of women, martial arts, and embodied learning. As a martial artist and scholar of adult education, I am in the unique position of bridging these two seemingly unrelated disciplines through scholarly research. As will be demonstrated throughout, it is important to situate the practice of women performing martial arts within a feminist framework. Doing so provides the context through which women engaging in physical activity and sport are recognized for their role in facilitating change in the perspective on women and emancipatory sport. I define emancipatory sport as activity through which women participate in physical activity and sport in a way that allows the female participant to connect her lived bodily experience with an emancipatory outcome. As Grosz (1994) notes, corporeal feminism recognizes the agentic body and that being true, the lived bodily experience of women participating in specific sports such as martial arts then becomes agentic. The woman's body in physical activity then becomes the mechanism for agency and emancipatory

knowledge as she continues to learn, transform, and evolve through her sport participation. While reflecting on my lived bodily experience of earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo, I discovered that I began living and understanding the world around me differently.

The following is a description of how I came to a better awareness of myself and how I move about the world through my journey in Taekwondo, and how that subsequently informed my curiosity about the experiences of women in similar circumstances. In this chapter, I first provide background and context for the study, primarily based on my experience, followed by the problem and purpose statements, research questions, brief overviews of the theoretical framework and methodology, and a discussion of the assumptions, limitations, and strengths of the study. The chapter ends with a consideration of the study's significance.

My Black Belt Journey

My journey began long before I actually started practicing Taekwondo. The first step toward claiming my power or placing trust in myself, my decision making, and my emotional and intellectual strength began when I chose to file for divorce. Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998) refer to a "feminist care-of-self-ethic" (p. 67), which I believe I discovered when I determined that the quality of my marriage was no longer healthy, necessitating its dissolution. By asserting my voice and establishing the beginnings of autonomy and independence, I set the stage upon which I would reconstruct my identity, not only psychologically, but also through my bodily experience in Taekwondo.

Scholars investigating the motivation for women to begin practicing martial arts often credit the role of women's safety in public spaces, as well as the need for self-protection (Castelnovo & Guthrie, 1998; Hollander, 2015; McCaughey, 1997; Rouse, 2017). My motivation to practice Taekwondo actually began as a way to support my son as he worked

toward his goal of becoming a Black Belt. As I continued through the process of learning Taekwondo, I began to feel differently *in* my body and *about* my body. I began to *feel* my voice. In other words, as I discovered my competency as a martial artist, I believed in my competency as a human. I began to believe in myself and my capability to be successful in many aspects of my life. Previously, and especially when I began the doctoral program, I was suffering from “imposter syndrome” or the experience of individuals who believe they are not at the level of intellect as perceived by others (Clance & Imes, 1978). Initially, I did not believe I had the intellectual capability to succeed academically. Conversely, the movement of my body in the space of Taekwondo practice, was guiding my bodily comportment and providing the space to come to know myself through a significantly different perspective. There is something incredibly powerful about knowing that I can defend myself physically, if I have to, but I do not necessarily share that fact with everyone I encounter. Just simply *knowing* has been and continues to be enough to provide a sense of power in my daily life.

But what is it about this sense of power I have come to know through my body? Do other women experience the same shift in perception? This requires the problematizing of women’s bodies and Taekwondo practice to uncover ways through which the journey toward earning a black belt challenges structures of power and also examines what it is about Taekwondo practice that changes the way women perceive themselves and how they inhabit their space. As Mazis (2016) notes, the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty has the potential to address “the contemporary widespread interest in giving the body a more central role in thought and practice” (p. ix). Applying an embodied philosophy to women practicing Taekwondo blends the concept of gesture, or purposeful movement of Taekwondo, with an intentional presence in space (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Problematizing this presence allows space to question what impact that

intentionality of movement has on the body subject of the female practicing Taekwondo. In other words, how does a woman practicing Taekwondo come to know through her body and furthermore, does she indeed come to know herself differently, and is she even aware of this difference in bodily comportment resulting from the journey toward a Black Belt in Taekwondo?

Coming to Know Through My Body

As a kinesiologist and avid participant in many forms of physical activity, I do my best thinking while I am moving. Frequently, when considering writing assignments for my graduate studies, I found myself most inspired during times when I walked my dog or ran on the treadmill. Somehow, this engagement in movement figuratively freed up space in my grey matter to open myself up to more creative thinking and cognitive processing. It is this connection of mind and body, or thinking through movement, which expands the space of knowledge creation (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

However, a different dimension of thinking and moving occurred when I practiced Taekwondo. In the Taekwondo school, the movement was different. I *felt* different. Engaging in Taekwondo opened me to a different way of moving my body in terms of *how* I was connecting with the movement. The movement was intentional as Merleau-Ponty refers to gesture as intentional (2012). The gesture of Taekwondo differed from the movement of walking for example because in Taekwondo, the purpose of practicing the form or sequence of hand and foot techniques presented my body with the opportunity to grasp the movement of a specific kick or punch in a way that made it connect with the body at a pre-reflective level (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). This pre-reflective space is often referred to in the world of kinesiology as muscle memory. Muscle memory theory is a theory describing a type of procedural memory where the action becomes automatic through constant repetition or “the concept that muscles

have excitable circuitry capable of directing complex behaviour on their own” (Liu & Jorgensen, 2011, p. 775). In sport and physical activity, repetition is an essential part of developing competency in the skill set associated with the activity. This repeated movement becomes ingrained in the deepest element of the muscle to the point where it becomes habitual. This intentional repetitive movement in Taekwondo is what distinguished my martial arts practice from the everyday activities of walking, hiking, and cycling for example. I was purposefully, intentionally executing a knife-hand strike, a hand technique where my hand, with fingers extended, purposefully sliced through the air in a horizontal movement, parallel to the ground in order to strike my target at an exact point of contact. The Taekwondo form allows the martial artist to execute these actions at an imaginary target in preparation for the potential of having to be used in a real life situation. Anticipating the potential use is always in mind when practicing the form as the practitioner visualizes the target or opponent as the form is practiced. This is where the notion of gesture in Taekwondo is most apparent (Merleau-Ponty, 2012).

The process of preparing for and conducting this research study allowed me to be mindfully attentive to situations during which I am aware of my thinking processes during movement. One example happened recently when I was working out in the weight room on campus and had just finished a set of squats, an exercise which strengthens various leg muscles. While resting, I was in such deep thought that I did not even realize that someone was standing next to me until he asked if I was OK. He said I looked as though I was miles away. I was, in fact, miles away in my mind, processing the organization of this very chapter. Time and time again, I am keenly aware of the connection movement and cognition have on my mental processing. I call this a body epiphany, or an awakening to the relevance of my body, in mental processing or moving cognition. That epiphany may have occurred long ago, when I first

recognized my body as something more than an object, and I am constantly reminded of the significance of my body in learning and how I encounter the world.

Body Epiphany

This awareness first became apparent to me when I saw someone whom I had not seen since before I began practicing Taekwondo. She commented that I seemed to be a different person, which made me wonder if there was a connection between my Black Belt journey and the way I inhabited my world. It was in that moment that I began to reflect on what may have changed. Motivated by an increasing number of people commenting on what they perceived as a difference in how I presented myself, I decided to reflect on what they saw, what in my experiences brought me to this perceived difference, and what this new way of being meant to me. As Mazis (2016) suggests, relying solely on language to communicate a felt sense creates space for errors, as language is a “paradox of articulation” (p. 15), prone to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Knowing this, I retreated to my practice of yoga and a moving, mindful meditation to dissect the phenomenon. It was through *this* movement that I was able to make the connection between my movement experience earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo and my subsequent change in bodily comportment.

Unknown to me at the time, I had developed a different way of being in my world resulting from my Taekwondo practice. Subconsciously, as I practiced, I was claiming power over my body and also claiming my voice, being able to advocate for myself and teach others how I deserved to be treated, something I had surrendered during my marriage. As I reflect now on the journey toward my Black Belt, I recognize that I overcame numerous obstacles both physically and mentally. Not only did I train to break boards, but my training also forced me to break through my recurring negative internal dialogue, subsequently allowing me to recognize

my power. It is a sobering and reassuring moment knowing that I have the ability to defend myself, even though I may not physically appear so. More empowering was the fact that while I possessed this physical strength, I did not feel as though I had to verbalize it. It was enough to know that, should a situation present itself in which I had to defend myself, I could. It was not necessary to announce that to the world. This epiphany translated into a shift in my presentation to the world. My physical power became a manifestation of the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual power I had uncovered through my practice of Taekwondo.

Castelnuovo and Guthrie (1998) pointed out that while there has been significant research in embodied learning, a flaw present in the findings was the necessity to verbalize those changes as a requisite to demonstrate the concept. Relying on cognitive interpretation of a felt sense may diminish the importance of learning in the body and suggests that language is essential to decipher the bodily experience. This minimized the importance of the body in learning, a notion illuminated to me as I reflected on the role of my body in my learning in creating a shift in how I moved about the world. By analyzing the impact of Taekwondo on women and learning, I seek to examine ways women become aware of their embodied learning as they earn their Black Belt in Taekwondo through the lens of Adult Education.

Purpose and Research Questions

This study, in a broad sense, examines the embodied learning of women who attained a black belt in Taekwondo and how it affected their lives overall. More specifically, how do women earning a black belt in Taekwondo make meaning of the embodied learning experience associated with movement? Using qualitative narrative inquiry and autoethnography, I seek to explore connections between women, embodied learning, meaning making, and movement activity. The following research questions guide this exploration:

- 1- How do women's experiences learning Taekwondo influence their self- perceptions, including the ways in which they exist in and interact with the world?
- 2- What role does the culture and environment in the Taekwondo school play when examining the embodied learning experience as a woman practicing Taekwondo?
- 3- How does the embodied learning experience as a woman participating in Taekwondo contribute to the development of identity?

Background to the Problem and Theoretical Framework

This research study examines ways women experience their bodies in the world resulting from earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo, and how they make meaning of their experience. To that extent the study is an experiential learning study, and while the literature on experiential learning will be discussed to a some degree in Chapter Two, it is not discussed here in Chapter One, since embodied learning, a more specific form of experiential learning, is most central to the study. The primary theoretical frameworks guiding the study are embodied learning in light of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body and feminist theory as informed by feminist pedagogy. Hence this section begins with a consideration of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body. The second section focuses on the embodied learning literature in adult education and connects this back to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body. Because embodied learning has some similarities to movement learning which is more commonly discussed in kinesiology and relates, the third focus is on movement and connects back to Taekwondo. Finally the fourth section examines the feminist theory and pedagogy literature that connects most to women's learning. This forms the background to the study.

The Philosophy of the Body of Merleau-Ponty

Examining the body's presence in human experience is part of Merleau-Ponty's (2002) philosophy of the body. His emphasis is on the pre-reflective, and how human beings construct knowledge through the body without being fully conscious of doing so. While Merleau-Ponty does not discuss the gendered body, how one constructs knowledge through the body is impacted by gender. The body is actively engaged in the creation of knowledge through physical activity; and as Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998) suggest, when one moves in an environment which promotes a sense of safety, care, and a personal regard for the individuals engaged in physical learning, this learning (as in Taekwondo) can be very empowering, perhaps especially so for women, who are not as encouraged as their male counterparts to construct knowledge through sport. In any case, while Merleau-Ponty does not discuss gender, his work provides a philosophical rationale for acknowledging the presence of the body as essential for knowledge construction, and hence related to embodied learning.

Merleau-Ponty offers a philosophy of the body that can be used as one possible filter through which one examines the literature when associating embodied learning and adult education. The exploration of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (2002) *Phenomenology of Perception*, along with other collected works in embodied learning (Jordi, 2011; Freiler, 2008; Lawrence and associates, 2013; Tobin & Tisdell, 2015) provides the grounding for a philosophical look at embodied learning in the field. This perspective provides a thoughtful lens through which to critique literature in adult education as it establishes a way of knowing in terms of the body, that also relates to kinesiology, the study of human movement (Hoffman & Knudson, 2018).

Many scholars such as Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre were forerunners of Merleau-Ponty's perspective of embodied subjectivity (Mazis, 2016). Drawing from this initial

body of work, Merleau-Ponty derived his own conclusions regarding the phenomenal body, including *how* the body inhabits the world, and how the world *informs* the body (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), thus propelling us toward the notion of embodied subjectivity.

Merleau-Ponty sought to shift the focus from the body as object, to body as subject, and “that dualistic logic must be abandoned in order to articulate the flesh of the world” (Mazis, 2016, p. 44). Addressing the mind and body unitarily focuses on the lived experience of the phenomenal body in relation to how it inhabits space, building up the body schema, and, subsequently, the way the body moves in and through space, and how these movements reveal themselves in the body. Being in the world is not simply a collection of reflexes in response to stimuli; “it is the junction of the ‘psychical’ and the ‘physiological’” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 82). This bodily comportment provides the basis for the wisdom of the body as it moves through space. The fundamental components of spatiality, lived space, depth, and freedom represent the dynamics of bodily comportment as the body moves through and inhabits space. These dynamics define the relationship between the body and the varied interactions the body has in its interplay with the world around it.

As will be discussed in the next section, there is a developing body of literature within the field of adult education on embodied learning, but here’s been relatively little consideration of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of the body in published discussions in the field, though a few doctoral dissertations have drawn on Merleau-Ponty as a theoretical framework (ie, Crothers, 2018; Behmer, 2019). Clearly, some of the concepts being discussed in the literature discussed by scholars in the field are similar. Lawrence (2012) for example, suggests, “knowledge is present in the body before it reaches our conscious awareness” (p. 7). This is certainly what

Merleau-Ponty is getting at when he refers to the pre-reflective. In any case, this dissertation will expand on Merleau-Ponty's theoretical influence in the field.

Embodied Learning in Adult Education

The embodied learning literature in adult education certainly informs this study. Adult education as a community of practice recognizes myriad possibilities in learning. As such, embodied learning situates well within the broad spectrum of approaches to and theories of learning. There is a developing body of literature on embodied learning in the field, though there is a limited number of published research studies. The discussion began to gather steam with Freiler's (2008) discussion of embodied learning. A few years later, Lawrence (2012) acknowledged the lack of conversation about the body in learning in adult education and edited an anthology addressing learning in the body. Lawrence's (2012) goal was to "challenge the dominant paradigm of how knowledge is constructed" to contribute to the larger discussion of lifelong learning (p.1). Lawrence achieved this by highlighting multiple ways of knowing through including the work and discussions of colleagues in her collection who address embodied learning in situations such as patient education (Swartz, 2012); social justice (Nieves, 2012); and outdoor education (Howden, 2012). In specifically discussing movement, Lawrence (2012) notes "Human movement is a way of making sense that cannot occur in any other way" ...and we need "to acknowledge and validate knowing from a variety of cultural perspectives and incorporate those into our practice" (p. 12). A deeper discussion of the literature takes place in Chapter Two, but understanding the terminology of embodied learning and the different ways it is described will provide some clarity of terms.

Defining embodied learning. Common to many interpretations of embodied learning is a unanimous contesting of the Cartesian paradigm of mind/body bifurcation (Castelnuovo &

Guthrie, 1998; Clark, 2015; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Lawrence, 2012; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Phrases such as embodied learning, embodied subjectivity, somatic wakefulness, embodied self-reflexivity, bodyfulness, and embodied knowing (Barbezat, 2013; Brendel & Bennett, 2016; Caldwell, 2014; Freiler, 2008; Lawrence, 2012; Sohdi & Cohen, 2012; Swartz 2012; and Tobin & Tisdell, 2015) provide a sense of the heterogeneous references to embodied learning in the literature. Admittedly, there can be subtle differences in what is being about the body in relation to the use of different terms.

Freiler (2008) in summarizing the literature on embodied learning up until 2008 when she was writing, notes that many authors conflate embodied learning, and somatic learning, as well as other terms. She notes that somatic learning tends to focus on learning through movement, but that embodied learning tends to refer to a “more holistic view of constructing knowledge that engages the body as a site of learning, usually in connection with other domains of knowing (for example, spiritual, affective, symbolic, cultural, rational)” (p. 39) Lakoff and Johnson (1999) refer to the lived experiences of inhabiting a space (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999); while Bateson et al. (2011) refer to “cognition shaped by bodily experience” (Batson et al., 2011, p. 186). Freiler sums up to say that it is “a way to construct knowledge through direct engagement in bodily experiences and inhabiting one’s body through a felt sense of being-in-the-world” (p. 40). There are many more definitions and references to embodied learning in related fields, which will be discussed further in Chapter Two, but suffice it to say here, that from an adult education perspective, Freiler’s definition is probably the most useful here.

Researching embodied learning. There is a limited body of research literature on embodied learning in adult education (Michelson, 1998; Musial, 2011; Sodhi & Cohen, 2012; Tobin & Tisdell, 2015). Additional inquiry into embodied learning outside of adult education

literature is challenging. With limited exception (Tisdell & Tobin, 2015) most have not utilized the terminology of embodied learning in Merleau-Pontian terms that refer to the philosophy of the body or embodied subjectivity. Scholars outside of the realm of adult education more loosely define the meaning of embodied learning as they apply it to contexts in psychology, teacher education, and teaching and learning (Delafield-Butt & Adie, 2016; Downey, Dalidowicz, & Mason, 2015; Skulmowski & Rey, 2017). Research regarding women, embodied learning, and physical activity is even more limited in the literature of adult education.

Tobin and Tisdell (2015) discussed connection between embodied learning and theories in adult education by studying how the body informs the work of creative writers. Drawing on work from Gendlin (1996), Merleau-Ponty (2002), and Jordi (2011), Tobin and Tisdell addressed the concept of felt sense of creative writers during the writing process and the extent to which participants were aware of their bodies during the writing process. Further they described a process designed to help participants to become more consciously aware of their bodies in the process.

Earlier published studies broadly related to adult education includes Sodhi and Cohen's (2012) investigation of social workers, focusing on their embodied knowing experiences in the field, and Somerville's (2007) exploration of on her experiences researching mine workers, by analyzing the connection with their bodies through "pit sense," or the ability to assess the level of safety within the mine at any given moment. Moving closer to embodied learning and physical activity, Cheville (2005) conducted research observing female bodily comportment of players on a basketball team. Part of the research included a recording of how the players handled themselves on the court in terms of movement and negotiating spaces among and between the players of both teams. It was their sense of *knowing* where the other bodies were

moving on the court, which dictated their physical responses during ball play. This combination of bodily perceptive and cognitive reasoning contributed to their ability to navigate the playing field.

While not studies per se, there are many first person accounts of how learning through the body happens. Snowber (2012), for example calls us to contemplate dance as a way of knowing, by drawing on her own experience. She notes that one could recognize that dance is not simply a formal repetition of steps; but rather, “creative movement, improvisation, and ways of moving marked by expressivity” (Snowber, 2012, p. 53). This expressivity requires a connection of mind and body to master the muscle memory and creative license afforded to those who express themselves in a kinesthetic way. Without the mind to reflect on the bodily expression, some of the meaning behind the movement can be lost.

Movement and Learning

Taekwondo is form of movement and is recognized as a sport by researchers in kinesiology and leisure studies (Bu, Haijun, Yong, Chaohui, 2010; Lee, Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2012; Schwartz, Takito, DelVecchio, Antonietti, & Franchini, 2015) as well as its presence in summer Olympics (Pieter, 2009). Movement activities naturally lend themselves to recognition of body as the center of cognition. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) refer to this combination of movement activity and the lived bodily experiences arising from such activity. “Kinesthetic learners prefer to take a hands-on approach to learning as opposed to hearing a lecture or observing” (Lawrence, 2012, p. 6). In her piece on the dancer, Snowber (2012) introduces the freeing experience of utilizing dance as means for knowledge construction. “Dance ...has the capacity to invite us into what it means to be uninhibited in our bodies” (p. 55). Emphasizing uninhibited bodily movement to create knowledge allows the learner to come to know in a manner exclusive to

movement. This type of knowledge would not occur without the movement component in this instance.

Research into embodied learning in women and physical activity addressing the lived experience of the sporting female is required to further the cause of seeking the female body as a site of resistance. Contesting the narrative associating males with the mind and females with the body addresses dualistic thinking regarding the socially-constructed dichotomy of male versus female. As previous scholars suggest, “There has been a felt need to engage the traditional gendering of the body as female and to problematize traditions of knowledge based on the conjoining of masculinity and rationality” (Michelson, 1998, p. 222), as “women’s nature was believed to be particularly associated with their bodies and...males were linked with the mental sphere...consequently viewed as superior” (Castelnuovo, S. & Guthrie, 1998, p. 9). Doing so allows us to “reject common held assumptions that women’s bodies are weak and vulnerable” (Velija, Mierzwinski, & Fortune, 2013, p. 527). Sporting females, by their athletic nature, already contribute to the limited discussion surrounding women and embodied learning through physical activity (Anna Wilson, & Low, ., 2017; Calogiuri, Johansen, Rossi, & Thurston., 2019; Gray, Mitten, D., & SpringerLink (Online service), 2018; Markula, & Kennedy (2011) and even more limited specific to women, learning, and Taekwondo (Channon, 2014; Finkenberg, 1990; Guthrie, 1995). Studies addressing women and Taekwondo address more of the physiological effects of Taekwondo participation (Chiodo et al., 2011; Lee & Shin, 2016) versus how women feel in their bodies as they perform Taekwondo. Because sport participation is experiential, I follow here with a brief explanation of the nature of physical activity and experience in the body relevant to the embodied learning experience practicing Taekwondo.

Experience and the body. If we return to the experience of the body, experiential learning occurs as the body inhabits its space while intentionally engaged in a physical activity, such as Taekwondo. It is, then, through the experience of Taekwondo that the individual constructs meaning as it is felt in the body and as the body actively inhabits space at that moment. Here we have an intermingling of experiential learning, embodied learning, and constructivism, which all represent a similar thought: through active, bodily engagement, the participant is able to construct knowledge as s/he inhabits the space in which the knowledge is becoming evident through the activity.

The experiences the women encounter in Taekwondo are situated in a community of learners in the dojang, or Taekwondo school, and subsequent reflections on the classroom experience. In my case, the Black Belt essay was an opportunity to mindfully reflect on the experience of earning the belt and putting into words what I learned through my body. Further contemplation revealed I was reflecting daily on my experiences in the dojang, as I visualized what I learned not just through creating muscle memory, but building up the habit body in a new Gestalt, every time I physically practiced my form for each belt level. It is the experience in the body and the resulting interpretation that allows the individual to come to know. Here, knowledge generation occurs when women are exhibiting the specific behavior of Taekwondo, that is, practicing any of the hand and foot techniques taught in the Taekwondo school. They are coming to know a martial arts system by the “continuous process grounded in experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). A foundational element of experiential learning, according to Kolb (1984), and in this case, embodied experiential learning is that the individuals engaged in the experience come to know as a result of physically participating in the experience itself. Kolb’s (1984) theory of

experiential learning and his model of experiential learning illustrate the model's relevance in the context of learning Taekwondo and the resulting knowledge construction.

The participants in this study however, are all women. Examining how women learn and move how that informs the idea of embodied learning in women can add to the larger discussion of ways to observe embodied subjectivity of women. Hence feminist theory is one of the theoretical frameworks of this study

Feminist Theory and Pedagogy

There are a number of feminist theories that inform women's learning (English & Irving, 2015; Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Researchers use myriad filters through which to interpret data and derive meaningful conclusions from the themes of findings. As will be discussed further in Chapter Two, one aspect of all *feminist perspectives* allows the researcher to examine how women engage with issues of power and/or oppression in specific situations (English & Irving, 2015). This lens is often complemented by *critical theory*, in terms of how women potentially rise above the issues of power and oppression by their active engagement in an activity. An important feature of the theoretical lens is that it helps define the parameters through which data is interpreted thereby maintaining a degree of reliability, in combination with other data collection strategies. Knowing the categories of research and theoretical perspectives provides a specific strategy to guide research. In terms of a study of women in Taekwondo this lens would be useful in examining an embodied learning approach of women earning their Black Belts in Taekwondo. This area of inquiry represents a holistic approach of education through physical activity grounded in spiritual teachings and practices, and then assessing the type of knowledge constructed through the embodied learning experience utilizing feminist discourse as a lens of critique.

This study is particularly informed by some key feminist texts that examine different aspects of women's empowerment, power, and oppression, particularly Gilligan's (1982) discussion of women coming to voice, that was further conceptualized in Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) study of women's ways of knowing. Tisdell's (1998) discussion of poststructural feminist pedagogy that focuses on women's construction of knowledge, views on authority, positionality, and the notion of voice is also key to this study. Feminist pedagogy is a perspective regarding "educational practices informed by feminist theory" (Butterwick, 2005, p. 257). Scholars in the 20th and 21st centuries have contributed to the body of literature addressing women's learning and identify specific attributes of women's learning such as being a critically reflective learner; addressing gender, race, and socio-economic matters; and elevating the importance of women's empowerment (Belenky, et al., 1986; Castelnovo, & Guthrie, 1998; Hayes & Flannery, 2000; hooks, 1994; Maher & Tetreault, 2001; Mansfield, Caudwell, Wheaton, & Watson, 2017; Michelson, 2015).

Over thirty years ago, Belenky et al. (1986) published their research findings on how women come to know. This foundational study discussed the myriad ways through which women create knowledge. Overlooked in this study, however, is the concept of coming to know through the intersection of embodied learning and movement. The authors discussed subjective knowing in terms of the "still small voice" that resides within the woman in relation to her "growing reliance on ...intuitive processes" (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 54), but did not refer to it as embodied learning. Another important consideration is the notion of recognizing embodied learning experiences. Significant in feminist research is that it interrupts traditional ways of knowing and in this way creates newer meanings sometimes exemplified in agency and voice. An under-tapped area of women's ways of knowing from an adult education perspective resides

in the arena of physical activity. The potential outcome of women participating in sport results in agency and voice (Mansfield et al., 2017; Roth & Basow, 2004; Thorpe, Toffoletti, & Bruce, 2017). Whether traditionally male-dominated or somewhat gender neutral, when women participate in an activity that challenges the dominant narrative, either consciously or unconsciously, a new or renewed identity emerges (Faulkner, 2018; Finkenberg, 1990; Rouse & Slutsky, 2014; Theberge, 1987). Key scholars in adult education literature who discuss women and embodied learning can contribute valuable perspectives to the ongoing conversation of women and embodied learning. Central to women's learning is the emphasis placed on the lived experiences of women as they seek knowledge and engage in meaning-making activities such as sport. Coming to an understanding of learning through experience informs how to perceive connections through experiential learning, women, sport, and voice. Hence the key aspects of feminist theory and pedagogy that will constitute a frame of analysis for this study are how women develop a sense of their own power through movement, claiming voice, and authority as they construct knowledge through the body and Taekwondo.

As has been discussed above there has been some research on embodied learning in the field of adult education, but there is certainly little research on women's movement and none on how women come to know, learn, and reframe their identity through the embodied learning experience of earning a black belt in Taekwondo. This is the purpose of this study.

Overview of the Research Methodology:

A Qualitative Autoethnographic Narrative Study

This is a qualitative research study, since qualitative research tries to understand how people make meaning, and in this case how these women make meaning of their experience of

attaining a black belt in TKD. As Van Manen (1990) notes, the methodology is the theory behind the method” (p. 27) and is determined by the type of inquiry the researcher is pursuing. Over the years, scholars have described common research designs and characteristics present in different types of qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell 2016; Patton, 2002). Here I will describe the intersection of a qualitative autoethnographic and narrative inquiry, which is the methodology that was used in this study.

In order to gain a better sense of the embodied learning experience of women earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo, I employed a narrative study, coupled with an autoethnographic analysis of my experience as a Black Belt women in Taekwondo. A more detailed discussion of the methodology will be presented in Chapter Three; however, an abbreviated description of the methodology is provided below.

Narrative Inquiry. Narrative inquiry utilizes the subjects’ stories as the data for the research. It is not simply telling a story; rather, it is the collective of experiences, behaviors, and knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It is in the narrative analysis, by connecting words, meanings, and experiences into themes, that the researcher can identify the significance of the experiences of the individual. In doing this, the researcher implements text interpretation or hermeneutics to gain insight into the deeper meaning of their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Fenwick, 2003, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016;).

Narrative inquiry permits the researcher to inquire into the subjects’ experiences through various data collection methods. Growing in popularity in the social sciences, narrative inquiry delves further into the deeper meaning of the experiences of the individuals, using their stories to illustrate events which provide greater meaning in the context of their lives (Clandinin, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). Narrative inquiry allows for a different approach to understanding an

individual's experience by examining various sources of data, such as interviews, accounts of life histories, creative non-fiction, journaling, and other artifacts from the subjects' experiences. It facilitates revealing the lived cultural and social experiences which shape the subject's perception of the experience and offers a more translucent lens into how the individual interprets the experience as it relies on how they tell the story, and makes use of their own words. (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; and Patton, 2002). How I implemented this narrative approach will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Auto/Ethnography. This study is also autoethnographic since I too have earned a black belt in Taekwondo. Ethnography addresses the experience of individuals with particular attention to the cultural significance of these experiences. Autoethnography, a subset of ethnography, is not merely journaling but allows the researcher to use personal experiences to create the context through which the overall study is being examined (Foster, McAllister, & O'Brien, 2006, Patton, 2002). Also important is that autoethnography is not just storytelling but using the author's story to provide insight into the culture and experiences that are being examined. Utilizing these personal experiences creates a connection with the reader to draw upon the reader's own life experiences and perspectives in light of the study. Examples in the nursing field for instance, include the researcher's personal experience as the impetus for extending this inquiry into the greater population (Foster, McAllister, & O'Brien, 2006; Sealy, 2012). Not only does this approach allow the reader to connect to the content, but it also provides examples on how the issue was approached from the author's personal perspective. Adding another layer of analysis in the form of a theoretical lens, allows the researcher to sift through the data and establish themes of findings parallel to the theory used in explicating significant research findings.

Study Design and Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Given that this is an autoethnographic study, it begins with a reflection on my experience earning my Black Belt in Taekwondo, and how it changed my life. It also focuses on how through my own graduate studies, I wondered if other women who also earned a black belt experienced a similar shift.

As detailed in Chapter Three, after developing specific criteria through which to select the subjects, since qualitative research makes use of a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2013), I then conducted in depth narrative interviews with participants. These interviews, along with the “Black Belt Essay” were the primary forms of data collection. However, in addition to the interviews and essay, I asked the participants to perform their favorite Taekwondo form which I recorded, and then played back to participants, and I asked them key questions related to embodied learning such as, “How did you feel in your body as you demonstrated the form?”; and “What are you feeling now as you view yourself performing the form?” These forms of data collection allowed us to move beyond the written dimension and as Castelnuovo and Guthrie (1998) note, relying solely on written work fails to overcome dualistic thinking (p. 33), and gave the participants the experience of viewing and experiencing their embodied knowledge in a near present moment. Later I conducted a focus group with the participants. I analyzed the data in light of my own experience, and further reflected on how the participants’ stories facilitated my further learning. This process is outlined more specifically in Chapter Three.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study, in a broad sense, is to examine women and embodied learning in the context of sport participation. More specifically, this study represents adult learning in that it utilizes adult learning theory and philosophy in the form of feminist discourse to

legitimize the embodied learning experience of women engaging in a specific, non-traditional, type of physical activity in which my assumption is that embodied learning lives. It will contribute to the body of literature in adult education which addresses the multiple ways through which individuals come to know and specifically pays attention to the way in which women come to know building on the foundational study embarked upon so many years ago by Belenky, et al. (1986).

Prevalence in Adult Learning Theory

A foundational practice in Adult Education is to frequently examine the why of practice in the classroom. What the traditional philosophies in Adult Education (Liberal, Progressive, Behaviorist, Humanistic, Critical, Analytic, and Postmodern) do not formally address is the role of the body in learning (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Tisdell and Taylor (2001) even refer only to five most prevalent philosophies in the field: those which address learning from a more autonomous perspective such as humanist, critical-humanist and critical-emancipatory and the more relationally driven philosophies of feminist-humanist and feminist-emancipatory. None of these really discuss the body. This study expands on ways of knowing first explored by Belenky et al. (1986) by expanding the notion of ways of knowing to include those that are embodied. Furthermore, as Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998) suggest, “women’s diverse identities are mind-body configurations” (p. 28) thus necessitating an exploration which addresses learning from the physical dimension rather than cognitive. As gender is performative, thus embodied, it begs the question surrounding the performative nature of martial art, women as martial artists, and how that gesture translates as knowledge in the body. Research in this arena can generate a new way of translating embodied learning in a way that does not necessarily require language to

demonstrate that learning has occurred but rather recognize the role of affect in ascertaining the presence of learning through a performative act.

It wasn't until the recent past that women's voices were recognized in terms of identity and knowledge construction and that power and positionality was considered as a factor in learning. The feminist voice was initially overlooked in terms of ways of learning but the literature of scholars such as Belenky et al. (1986), Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998), hooks (1994), Gilligan (1982) and others, takes the work of the former scholars to contextualize it from the feminist perspective and apply to learners of all genders, races, and class structures utilizing their findings in terms of the feminist voice, discussion of identity, and ways of knowing. Additionally, expanding on the prior work of Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998) upon their recommendation to conduct "empirical research that focuses on concrete issues and problems that concern diverse groups of women...premiered on the notion that women's diverse identities are mind-body configurations" (pp.27-28) is what, philosophically, makes the purpose of further research in the adult education body of literature relevant. It provides a unique context in which women learn, to be analyzed via embodied learning experiences through physical activity, bringing to the forefront the notion of physical embodiment as a way of learning through physical activity. This perspective however, does not come without certain assumptions and limitations which will be addressed next.

Assumptions, Limitations and Strengths

When conducting research, inherent in any study is the notion of assumptions, limitations, and strengths. When the researcher explicitly addresses these biases, it can support the filter or theoretical framework through which the researcher analyzes findings and draws conclusions.

Assumptions

1. Women learn informally through their embodied experiences while performing Taekwondo.
2. Women experience a shift in their perception of themselves as they inhabit the world.
3. Practicing martial arts creates the circumstances where women experience embodied learning.
4. By comparing my experience with the women who participate in the study, it will allow me to draw conclusions regarding my personal journey of earning my Black Belt in Taekwondo and also revealing the cultural context. I expect their experiences to parallel mine.

Limitations

1. While my personal experience of earning a Black Belt allows me an insider perspective of the process, it may also impact the way through which I interpret results. This bias will be evident however, as I introduce my autoethnography as part of my research findings.
2. The study will involve a unique sample of women indigenous to Southeastern Pennsylvania. The results may be true for this specific population but may not be applicable to populations in other geographical locations.
3. The data will be derived from a group of women practicing a specific system of Taekwondo. There are other interpretations of this style and as such, those practicing Taekwondo in other ways may not have the same experience.

Strengths

1. As a Black Belt woman in Taekwondo, I have an insider perspective to the world of Taekwondo which will allow me to relate to the individual experiences of each of the participants.
2. This insider perspective may create feelings of comfort on the part of the participants and develop the environment through which they may be more able to be more forthcoming about their experiences.
3. An artifact being used as part of data collection is called the “Black Belt essay”. This essay is required of all individuals in preparation for their final test to become a Black Belt. This artifact may provide real time perspectives of the experience of finally being able to wear the Black Belt as a symbol of their accomplishment.

Definition of Terms

Identifying terminology unique to martial arts, women, and embodied learning will allow the reader to develop a better understanding of the process of data collection, the notion of embodied learning, and what it is like to practice Taekwondo.

Agency – the ability to claim power over one’s situation.

Body schema – an underlying sense and awareness of how our body moves through and occupies space.

Black Belt – part of the Taekwondo uniform which indicates rank. It requires at least three years of Taekwondo practice to achieve.

Black Belt Essay- This is a written reflection on the experience of each individual preparing to test for the Black Belt. It is part of the requirements for Black Belt Testing and summarizes the experience of the journey toward earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo.

Dojang – Taekwondo school.

Embodied learning, embodiment, embodied subjectivity - terminology used to describe the kind of experience gained through the body versus relying solely on cognition. It refers to feelings that represent a sort of inner dialogue that melds the mind and body experience. “associated with an evolving awareness of bodily experiences as a source of constructing knowledge through engaged, lived body experiences of physicality, sensing, and being in both body and world” (Freiler, 2008, p. 39).

Ethic of Self-care - Castelnuovo and Guthrie (1998) refer to the care-of-self ethic in terms of engaging in physical activity as a means of positive self-expression and claiming agency.

Form – a series of Taekwondo hand and foot gestures when combined, create a pattern of steps to represent a specific level of learning.

Gesture – the expression of the Taekwondo hand and foot techniques symbolizing various strategies practiced in self-defense. Gesture in this context denotes the lived experience of women in the Taekwondo school. There is a knowing, or an apprehending through expressing meaning.

Kinesiology - the study of human movement (Hoffman & Knudson, 2018).

Lived Space – a sense of identity in the environment or the milieu in which Taekwondo is practiced and then translated into experiences outside of the Dojang.

Physical Feminism - in this context, how this specific physical activity serves to act as a “technology of domination that anchors women into a discursive web of normalizing practices” (Markula, 2003, p. 87) by women who encounter empowerment resulting from the practice of martial arts.

Songahm Taekwondo – a specific system of Taekwondo which utilizes the philosophy of its Grand Master, H.U. Lee to derive principles of life associated with Taekwondo practice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how women earning a black belt in Taekwondo make meaning of the embodied learning experience associated with physical movement. The following research questions guide the exploration of the purpose:

- 1- How do women's experiences learning Taekwondo influence their self- perceptions, including the ways in which they exist in and interact with the world?
- 2- What role does the culture and environment in the Taekwondo school play when examining the embodied learning experience as a woman practicing Taekwondo?
- 3- How does the embodied learning experience as a woman participating in Taekwondo contribute to the development of identity.

Literature currently available examining the experiences of women and physical activity is varied and crosses multiple disciplines such as adult education, kinesiology and sociology (Antunovic & Hardin, 2015; Channon & Matthews, 2015; Clark, 2017; Faulkner, 2018; W. L. Rouse, 2017; W. Rouse & Slutsky, 2014; Thorpe, Toffoletti, & Bruce, 2017; Velija, Mierzwinski, & Fortune, 2013). These cited scholars also represent the lack in literature when investigating the sporting female and embodied learning. Furthermore, as Hargreaves (1994) suggests, theorizing allows us to “understand the nature of sports in society” (p. 3) and more importantly, theorizing about women in sport from an embodied learning perspective allows for the contribution to the larger body of literature in search of dispelling the myths of women in sport as unfeminine. Contemporizing theory about sporting women and embodied learning

examines another dimension of knowing and brings the nature of women and knowing into the 21st century.

There is a complementary nature between the theory in adult education and theories in sport sociology and kinesiology. Parallels exist among the bodies of literature in adult education and those related to women and sport and merit an analysis of the interconnectedness of such scholarly work. Little is known about the types of women participating in sport and physical activity and adult education is a burgeoning body of knowledge which can contribute to the discussion of women in sport and physical activity. As Bourdieu notes, “research without theory is blind, and theory without research is empty” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 162). Because of the limited discussions of the sporting female and embodied learning, and the importance of connecting theory to research, the following is an exploration of existing literature associated with the dimensions of embodied learning and women in sport and physical activity

This chapter is an effort to draw connections among bodies of both conceptual and empirical literature that discuss the presence of the sporting female body and different ways of knowing. The aim is to contextualize the theory and philosophies undergirding the purpose of the study by delineating connections among embodiment in adult learning theory and feminism in sport. As such, this chapter will outline dimensions of meaning making by exploring adult learning in the context of experience, embodiment, and sporting women. It begins with an examination of the intersecting theoretical frameworks that inform the study. The second major section focuses on feminism and sport, while the third focuses embodied learning, women, and sport. The fourth section focuses on Songahm Taekwondo, and that conclusion makes a case for why this study is needed in light of the limited literature on the experience of women in the martial arts and with embodied learning.

Theoretical Framework

There are two primary theories through which the research will be viewed: embodied learning, informed by Merleau-Ponty's embodied philosophy, and feminist theory. But because embodied learning is a more specific form of experiential learning, I will mention it briefly in the next section. Experiential learning addresses learning from a holistic perspective from which the learner actively engages in and reflects upon the experience in order to come to know through the experience (Kolb, 1994). Embodied subjectivity, informed by the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, also recognizes learning from a holistic approach based on the role and presence of the body in the learning environment (Merleau-Ponty, 2013) which why it's essentially a subset of experiential learning. Finally, feminist theory addresses the notion of gender inequality in the context of learning while examining issues of patriarchy, sexist oppression, and resistance and places the emphasis on the female viewpoint (hooks, 1984). Within the context of this literature review, emphasis will be placed on the role of the female body in learning and what it means with respect to engaging in a physical activity such as Taekwondo, and how the nature of this experience impacts women's learning. Additionally, in this context, embodied learning is regarded as a component of experiential learning and as such, more emphasis will be placed on the intersection of embodied learning and feminist pedagogy with experiential learning theory as a background element. Nevertheless, here I begin with a discussion of experiential learning

Experiential Learning

Kolb describes learning as a process where knowledge is created through transformation of experience and is an "interaction between content and experience, whereby each transforms the other" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Kolb further emphasizes the relationship between experience, perception, cognition, and behavior in terms of a holistic approach to learning. As Howden

(2012) notes in his article of outdoor experiential learning, the active body is central to learning and because the learner is engaged both physically and emotionally, the active learning draws together “multiple aspects of the person” (p. 43). Emphasis is placed on learning as a process specifically characterized as continual, grounded in experience, and adaptive by transforming this experience through apprehension and comprehension (Kolb, 1984). The concept of adaptation involves an affective component and as will be illustrated later, it is this affective dimension which draws together the intersection between the body and learning. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the notion of bodily apprehension from the perspective of embodied learning and as such places relevance in the bodily experience of learning.

A primary purpose of the humanist perspective identifies self-actualization as a goal of education, where the learner is self-directed and engages in primarily experiential learning to facilitate the learning process. From my perspective, the body and movement of the body are essential to experiential learning. To expand on this perspective, a discussion connecting experiential learning and physical activity will illuminate the relationship between the body and learning. Tara Fenwick also offers a different perspective on experiential learning which calls us to delve more deeply into the extent to which experiential learning impacts adult learning. However, as will be pointed out, the notion of the body is still limited in this perspective.

Expanding perspectives. Fenwick (2003) addressed five alternate perspectives to experiential learning and among these are constructivist, situative, psychoanalytic, critical cultural, and complexity theory. In her critique of more elementary applications of experiential learning similar to Dewey’s foundational framework of progressive education and learning by doing (1938) Fenwick emphasized that as adult education matures and addresses a greater discussion of experiences, experience should also be defined in terms of concrete experience,

communities of practice, psychological assumptions, social norms, and complexity theory.

Enlarging the scope of application of experiential learning allows for a better interpretation of diverse experiences.

While the theories are relevant, Fenwick (2003) neglects to include theory which truly represents the experience itself as it is happening in the individual. A theory that addresses this gap and highlights the body is embodied learning theory. But to understand just how embodied learning theory is related and best represents experiential learning, it is essential to identify varying situations where experiential learning has been used to explore incidences of experience, the body, and learning through movement.

Experiential learning and physical activity.

Because experience is predominant in physical activity, exploring the relationship between experiential learning and physical activity will illuminate the parallels existing between the disciplines of adult education and kinesiology. Both emphasize the importance of lifelong learning and lifelong physical activity. It is the experience of life whether by learning or moving, that unites these perspectives. Investigating research which addresses the significance of experience and movement will demonstrate this strong connection.

Recent research considers various approaches to experiential learning and exercise, emphasizing the cognitive benefits derived from movement and learning (Intlekofer et al., 2013; Perini, Bortoletto, Capogrosso, Fertoni, & Miniussi, 2016; Smith et al., 2013; van Praag, 2005). Kuczala and Lengel (2010) narrow the focus of learning facilitated by movement in their handbook *The Kinesthetic Classroom*. In it they detail strategies to incorporate movement activities into teaching content in the elementary classroom. Their philosophy is that by integrating movement and content, students make a more meaningful connection with what is

being studied thus creating a deeper comprehension of the content as well as better recall.

Kuczala and Lengel's approach is based on principles established by John Ratey in his book, *Spark*. Ratey (2008) discusses the science of learning, movement, and its impact on the brain. To summarize, stressing the irrefutable mind/body connection, Ratey presented his perspectives on the benefits of movement on the brain by emphasizing the positive outcomes from exercise such as improved focus, enhanced quality of life, and the physical transformation of the brain for peak performance (Ratey, 2008).

Connecting physical activity and experiential learning is the common thread in many of the discussions presented here. For example, Scott and Derry (2005) narrowed the focus of experiential learning to a women's studies class in which female objectification was highlighted and challenged through various activities including rock climbing, martial arts, and weight-lifting. The authors sought to "educate students about the ways in which bodily objectification and the social construction of femininity interfere with women's participation in sports and other activities that are beneficial for their physical and mental health" (p. 188). Scott and Derry developed a course design to engage the students in dialogue directly related to their own and others' experiences of bodily objectification, or instances where the contradiction between being feminine and being an athlete was challenged and using the sport activities to confront the paradox of what it means to be a woman participating in these sports. Doing so allowed the students to become more aware of their experiences through the sport activity as well as to translate that to how it provided agency in the challenge to combat objectification. Again, the research is extremely limited in this area. Scholars have attempted to establish relevance of experiential learning in settings such as Diabetes education, service learning from kinesiology students, and perception of mood states (Carlson, Kody; Rowett, Jenny L; Domene, 2017;

Fritschi, Martyn-Nemeth, Zhu, & Jung Kim, 2019; Groot, Alexander, Culp, & Keith, 2015; Jeffs & Ord, n.d.; Kenworthy & Hrivnak, 2012). However, all miss the mark of including the embodied learning experiences of women in experiential learning settings associated with physical activity and in turn neglect to consider this additional dimension of learning and the emancipatory potential of the physical body in sport and physical activity settings. Delving deeper into the field of study in embodied learning will also highlight deficiencies in the literature addressing women, embodied learning and physical activity, but will provide clarity in its epistemological relevance.

Embodied Learning

Embodied learning has been described in adult learning as a “noncognitive dimension of learning” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 187) and recognizes the space through which bodily comportment becomes synonymous with meaning making. It is the experience of the body as it inhabits a space which informs the learner. Karen Barbour proposes an additional epistemological strategy to Belenky et al (1986) which acknowledges that

A woman views all knowledge as contextual and embodied. She experiences herself as creator of, and as embodying knowledge, valuing her own experiential ways of knowing and reconciling these with other strategies for knowing as she lives her life. (Barbour, 2018, p. 221).

The difference between experiential learning and embodied learning is predicated upon how the learner comes to know and how that knowledge is communicated. Previously, experiential learning instances relied on reflection and dialogue to communicate the knowledge associated with the experience. Conversely, a variety of noncognitive dimensions are considered in embodied learning (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998) further contend

that the association of women's nature to the body versus men's nature to cognition reinforces the gender and cognition binaries. While experiential learning is still relevant, it is one of several elements connecting learning through experience and meaning-making without having to rely on a linguistic translation to communicate the learning which is perceived in the presence of the body. Embodied learning, therefore, links this noncognitive component of meaning-making to experience by emphasizing the experience and the perception of the body parallel to the experience versus relying on a verbal representation of the experience. There is a need to more fully examine the relationship of women and "choice, agency, power and subjectivity" (Francombe-Webb & Toffoletti, 2018, p. 45). Furthermore, this examination allows for a deeper analysis of women's embodied experiences in sport when viewed from a socio-historical and contextualized perspective (Francombe-Webb & Toffoletti, 2018).

In the last decade, researchers in adult education have more notably addressed the relevance of embodied learning in varied circumstances such as narratives or storytelling (Day, 2010; Farnell, 2002; Garrett, 2006; Sanders-Bustle & Oliver, 2001; Standal & Moe, 2011), learning through the body, (Barnacle, 2009; Cheville, 2005; Crowdes, 2000; Emig, 2001; Freiler, 2008; Lawrence, 2012) and learning through movement (Bautista, Roth & Thom, 2012; Katz, 2008; Snowber, 2012). This relevance was evidenced by scholarly discussion surrounding trends in embodied learning and overall agreement among authors regarding embodied learning as valid sources of knowledge construction (Clark, 2001; Freiler, 2008; Lawrence, 2012; Snowber, 2012). It is worthwhile however, to briefly examine references to mind/body learning to gain a better perspective on where we are today and where we need to venture in the area of embodied learning.

Definitions of embodied learning. Embodied learning has been referred to in a variety of ways in the literature (Freiler, 2008; Lawrence, 2012; Standal & Moe, 2011; Swartz, 2012). Whether referred to as embodied learning, embodied cognition, somatic learning, embodiment, whole person learning, or even intuitive knowing, authors have come to relatively similar conclusions in defining embodied learning, however utilizing varying terminology. The varying terminology illustrates the degree of ambiguity in the definition of embodied learning which is of paramount concern when assessing embodied learning in research. Consequently, it is essential to clarify these differences and utilize a consistent terminology throughout.

The literature describes embodied learning as “cognition shaped by bodily experience”, (Batson et al, 2011, p. 186), “the body as a location of learning”, (Beckett & Morris, 2001, p. 44), “experiencing a sense of bodily presence”, (Freiler, 2008, p. 38), and “tied to a form of knowledge that primarily expresses itself in acts” (Standal & Moe, 2011, p. 261). In other words, embodied learning can be defined as the experience of creating knowledge situated within the body and how the body situates itself in its space. One might ask if it can be an embodied learning experience if a hands-on approach is not used? Further, Lawrence references Parviainen’s (2010) argument that there is still to some extent spatial intelligence involved in kinesthetic engagement as demonstrated by dancers, gymnasts, and the like. In these and similar instances, this spatial awareness is required to engage in kinesthetic knowledge production (Lawrence, 2012). Does this mean that embodied learning cannot exist on its own? As discussed in the last chapter, Freiler sums up some of the distinctions between somatic, kinesthetic, and embodied learning and notes that in general, embodied learning refers to a “more holistic view of constructing knowledge that engages the body as a site of learning, usually in connection with other domains of knowing (for example, spiritual, affective, symbolic,

cultural, rational)” (p. 39). Further, examining embodied learning from the philosophical perspective of Merleau-Ponty might shed some light on the nuances of the embodied subject, the person in whom learning is present and dimensions associated with embodied learning.

Merleau-Ponty’s concept of knowledge and the body. Defining embodied learning requires an integrated approach to understanding how knowledge is present in the body. When reviewing the above-referenced pieces, scholars refer to embodied learning in different terms, but the descriptors common to all involve the intuitive sense accessed in knowledge construction. Merleau-Ponty discusses this intuitive sense in *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002). Derived from the experiences of bodily comportment through the dimensions of spatiality, lived space, depth, and freedom, Merleau-Ponty established foundations of a new philosophy of learning. Speaking from a pre-reflective space, Merleau-Ponty asserts that knowledge is present in a liminal space between the knowing and almost knowing (2002). Lawrence (2012) suggests, “knowledge is present in the body before it reaches our conscious awareness” (p. 7). In other words, embodied learning occurs when the individual connects with pre-conscious knowledge and translates that bodily knowing into language to demonstrate meaning making. Alternatively, somatic or kinesthetic learning *requires* a movement of the body through which knowledge is formed. Being aware of this bodily connection, Merleau-Ponty would suggest we examine the act of bodily comportment, or how an individual carries her/himself, as a space for cognition. This is one way kinesiology is associated with embodied learning and how the participant in physical activity enacts bodily comportment appropriate to the type of activity.

Kinesiology. According to the Miller-Keane Medical dictionary (2003), kinesiology is the scientific study of movement of the human body or its parts. While Merleau-Ponty examines the phenomenal body, kinesiology examines the physiological body. However, what they have

in common is the way the body inhabits space and makes meaning. Kinesiology is primarily concerned with how the body mechanistically moves through and in space. Merleau-Ponty furthers that examination to include *how* the body inhabits the world, and how the world *informs* the body. Combining elements of kinesiology with the analysis of embodied learning in the female black belt approaches movement from three perspectives: the phenomenal body, the physiological body, and the sexed body all while being rooted in purposeful movement. Purposeful movement is defined here as movement conducted to achieve a specific outcome, which in this case is practicing Taekwondo. In kinesiology terms, the physiological body is represented specifically by the biomechanical execution of each movement in Taekwondo. Combining hand and foot techniques in a specific sequence physically construct the “form” or series of movements to demonstrate a memorized arrangement of movements. Physiologically, this can be explained in terms of muscle memory and repetition. What kinesiology does not consider, is the lived experience of the phenomenal body in relation to how it inhabits space and subsequently, the way the body moves in and through space, and how these movements reveal themselves in the body shifting the body to a site of resistance. Being in the world is not simply a collection of reflexes in response to stimuli; “it is the junction of the ‘psychical’ and the ‘physiological’” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 82). Since the body is the vehicle of subjective experience, it is the means of the body, how the body moves around objects and how objects move around the body which gives rise to consciousness of the world. It is essential then, to analyze this bodily comportment in Merleau-Ponty terms of spatiality.

Spatiality. Spatiality addresses how our bodies inhabit a space. That begs the question however, of how exactly does the body come to inhabit the space? Motricity is a neural impulse which initiates some type of action. Accordingly, from a physiological perspective, the

combination of motricity and spatiality elicit a change in posture thereby changing the presence of the body inhabiting the space. Becoming aware of our body as the sum of its parts can be described using the term body schema. It is through the body schema that the subject becomes aware of the world. An individual would be unable to have a subjective response to the world without a body. And it is through this body schema that the subject can engage in actions which have meaning in relation to the world around it.

In terms of moving in the space of Taekwondo, one might posit that this movement is free and without constraint based on the fundamental principles and philosophy of Taekwondo. However, Young (2005) would argue that from the feminine perspective, although it is not the feminine essence in totality which limits the encounter with space, it is the existence of societal imposed constraints on female movement which inhibits the ability of the female to “trust in our bodies to carry us to our aims” (Young, 2005, p. 34). While this may be true for western sport in general, when the body subject inhabits the space of Taekwondo, there is something about how Taekwondo moves through and in the phenomenal body which removes spatial constraints and frees the body to fully inhabit its surroundings. The gestures of Taekwondo fully inhabit the phenomenal body which delimits the confines of space and the subject reciprocally fully inhabits the surroundings. These gestures represent an intentionality through which the body subject inhabits the space. The notion of intentionality represents a bodily consciousness in relation to the space of taekwondo. “A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is when it has incorporated it into its ‘world’, and to move one’s body is to aim at things through it...” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 140). Consequently, as the body learns a movement or gesture in Taekwondo, the body subject is, in kinesiology terms, establishing muscle memory, but more correctly, in Merleau-Pontian terms, incorporating that movement into its bodily consciousness

and is opening its world. In other words, “The spatiality of the body is the deployment of its being as a body, and the manner in which it is actualized as a body” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 150). The body is an expressive space, it is of space; spatiality and being are both two and one. This synthesis of the body can be described as a work of art especially given the nature of Taekwondo. Taekwondo is a fluid series of hand and foot techniques melded together to create an artistic expression. While the expression is representative of what the subject might do in the event of a physical attack, on its own, the expression exists as poetry in motion. “There is a general function of substitution and replacement that allows us access to the abstract signification of experiences we have not lived through...” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 233). The horizon of the potential altercation is against which the body subject situates this body consciousness in the Taekwondo form. Furthermore, the Taekwondo form, the sequence of movements, are all tied together as one complete gesture, whether the form is 18 or 81 movements. They are not separate, but one flowing expression, a complete synthesis of spatiality and corporeality. The body then becomes self-directing in response to the environment which beckons it and creates a bodily intentionality of the lived space.

Lived Space. In the space of Taekwondo, the body exists as potentiality defined by the environment and situation. The potentiality of space however, is two-fold. Primarily, the gesture of the Taekwondo form is lived in anticipation of a second potentiality of action. Thus the form is lived in response to the perspectival field. Field A is the potentiality of an altercation and Field B is the altercation itself. Movement against Field A is practiced against the horizon of the possible. It could be suggested that this movement is generalized in the anonymous body since there is no concrete experience against which to situate the movement. It is merely theoretical. Field B however, presents us with the field of action through which our gesture

becomes purposeful in a different way. While in each case the movement is purposeful, Field A presents space through which the body lives the movement in anticipation of the potentiality and Field B presents the space through which gesture is enacted habitually and without forethought. Movement in the space of Field A is essential so that thought about movement in the space of Field B is possible. When considering movement against Field A or Field B, the significance lies in the horizon against which the movement occurs. It is not a sexed difference, but a perspectival one. Young (2005) asserts that the “feminine existence, however, does not enter bodily relation to possibilities by its own comportment...” and the “feminine body underuses its real capacity” (Young, 2005, p.36). The lived space of Taekwondo, by its nature, removes feminine inhibition of intentionality, and inherent in Taekwondo is the bodily consciousness of, “I can” (Young, 2005, p. 36) for the phenomenal body. Both invite women to be more agentic through personal bodily comportment. In fact, the lived space of Taekwondo is an extension of the feminine body world which then moves the feminine body from existing as object into the realm of body as subject. By doing so, the feminine body is reoriented as being *of* the world and as such a locus of ontological potential (Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Young, 2005). It can in fact “undo” societal restrictions of spatiality.

Depth. Muscle-memory in this perspective is somewhat of a misnomer. Depth is the visible and invisible in terms of both space and time. In each situation, there is a layering of phenomena of the world which creates a richness of the lived experience. A relevant example might be the perspectival drawing, one which shows buildings or objects retreating to the horizon in a descending linear fashion. These layers of depth present the illusion of an object off in the distance. The phenomenon of depth is achieved through a gradual decreasing of size in the buildings. In terms of time, depth can be perceived as a layering of temporal awareness in past,

present, and future in the present moment. Muscle-memory is the depth of bodily consciousness. At that distinct moment, the body recalls the past into the present in order to perform a gesture. Taekwondo relies on this sense of depth when practicing a form as in Field A, above. Furthermore, the repeated practice recalls the gesture into the present more and more frequently to the point where recall is automatic; you do not have to think about movement (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). This is the phenomenon which prepares the individual to have immediate recall in instances of movement against Field B. To this point, we have addressed the notions of spatiality, and lived space. Returning to Iris Young (2005) and *Throwing Like a Girl*, we can address freedom and the feminine body.

Freedom. According to Merleau-Ponty freedom is both ubiquitous and absent (2002). It is connected to the ambiguity of our being *in* the world and our being *of* the world. This presence of freedom is rhizomatic in that for it to be, it must have a field, but to have a field, freedom must be. Therefore, freedom is situational. Part of these situations then, are the choices of the individual. These choices become part of the style of the subject in that our choices become sedimented in the embodied subject. They are the layers of the past, present, and future which form how we experience the present. Parallel to freedom exists limits, whether self-imposed, based on the body-subject's perception of freedom, or from a societal perspective. Women, as Young points out, are field-dependent, meaning we are limited by the patriarchal society which surrounds us. Young suggests our situation is conditioned by the sexist society in which we live (2005). We are anchored to or restricted by societal expectations imposed on our field of existence. When Merleau-Ponty discusses the notion of choice vis a vis freedom, he refers to the body in general but does not consider the limitations placed on the sexed body. Choice can be delimiting if it is part of the style, or "way of being in the world", of the individual

(2002). The woman inhabits her body as both object and subject. When objectified, the field for the woman is limited. But when the woman embraces the phenomenal body as subject, she is able to tap into the freedom of which Merleau-Ponty speaks. It is at this point where the woman inhabits space which is no longer constricted.

When referring back to the context of Taekwondo space, the woman is delimited in this particular milieu. The confines of space exist only so far as the woman perceives them in her field of movement. Some constraints may be perceived as obstacles, albeit not insurmountable, but again, exist out of her style versus societally imposed limits. Important to note, however, is that this degree of freedom is situational. In the situation of Taekwondo space, the woman experiences greater freedom, or even a greater array of choices than in other potential situations. This situationality is something Young overlooks in her assessment of the sporting female body. She seems to assign a more restricting space surrounding women in sport without entertaining the notion that different situations in sport may garner different limitations or lack thereof. Furthermore, the sporting female may perceive limitations differently based on depth of experience as well as the present situational context. On the other hand, it may be my style to analyze female bodily comportment differently based on the depth of my experience in Taekwondo. Young's experience and my experience both inform our perception of the sporting feminine existence. Different fields of experience evoke different responses. Additionally, these fields of experience differ between gender and therefore must be considered in the embodied experience.

Feminism and embodied learning. Embodied learning from a feminist perspective requires some scrutiny in that while theorists attempting to ascribe terms such as embody and embodiment, there are some considerations which must be addressed regarding possible “hidden

conceptual baggage these terms might bring to feminist theorizing of the body” (Jose, 1995, p. 20). Jose’s argument regarding sexist language and Stoller’s (2000) skepticism about Merleau-Ponty’s anonymous body reinforces questions surrounding the masculine performance of females participating in sport while ignoring the potentiality of feminine performance of males in sport (Hall, 1998). Merleau-Ponty’s gender-neutral assigning of the subjective body reminds us that the female lived bodily experience is not always recognized and requires specific inquiry into the female lived bodily experience to offset existing gender inequality in sport and physical activity. Given this, deeper understanding of the feminist perspective is essential to translate the female bodily experience in sport. A discussion of feminist epistemology will clarify the intersectionality of women, sport, the female body, and learning in Taekwondo.

Feminist Theory

Feminism seeks to understand overlapping systems of power by analyzing gender inequality. Feminism as a movement was initially intended to challenge the fundamental oppression of women but has since grown to address the larger challenge of sexism and sexist perspectives in society (Tisdell, 2008). Theorists such as hooks (2000) Tisdell (1995) and Bordo (1996) among others, address gender in relation to the intersection of race and class and other inequities. They examine women’s oppression and strategies to overcome objectification and propose a variety of approaches to rise above sexism. These approaches are categorized as strands of feminism, each outlining a feminist epistemology in light of various philosophical underpinnings, such as psychological, structural, and post-structural.

Under these categories, the feminist perspective is further defined but remains focused on emancipatory approaches to challenging gender inequities as they currently exist. Scholars under each strand, define differences in ways women’s experiences shape the nature of learning

and knowledge construction. As such, understanding fundamental tenets in some models of feminist epistemology can guide the researcher in analyzing lived experiences of women in sporting activities and how sport participation can represent liberatory strategies which challenge patriarchal forms of oppression. In other words, the female sporting body becomes the agent through which emancipation is achieved. A brief discussion of the categories or strands of feminism and analysis of the female sporting body relative to specific strands will illustrate the existing overlap between the female sporting body and corresponding feminist theory.

Strands of feminism. Not all the trajectories deal directly with issues of power or oppression. Central to all, however, is the notion that gender plays a role in the construction of knowledge (Tisdell, 2008). The primary feminist models, as discussed by Tisdell (1998) address issues of feminist psychology, structural, and post-structural. The influential works of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) and Gilligan (1982) illustrate a model, which emphasizes the self in terms of knowledge construction, development of voice, and emancipation of women as individuals. Structural models have risen from the critiques of scholars such as Freire (1970) who isolates constructs of oppression related to privilege, which translates from a feminist perspective into dealing with issues of oppression based on patriarchy or capitalism. The woman as part of a social structure is believed to construct knowledge in the environment affected by power and privilege and develops voice in spite of these existing power structures. Beginning works from bell hooks addresses these systems of power from a structuralist perspective, but then evolves into a post-structural interpretation of women and learning by drawing connections between challenging structural power and moving beyond this toward deconstructing binaries within social structures (Tisdell, 1998, 2008).

Two widely recognized general categories of feminism under which the different strands of feminism are divided (Anderson, 1995; Beasley, 2005; Elias & Merriam, 2005; Hissong, 2010; Maher, 1987; Tisdell, 1993) are feminist-emancipatory and feminist-humanist. Slight differences exist, however, in the direction of each of these perspectives and, though somewhat subtle, still require clarification in an approach to feminism.

In general, feminism seeks to examine the ontology of the imbalance of power in terms of race, gender, and socio-economic status (Elias & Merriam, 2005; hooks, 2000) and the ways gender influences our perspective of knowledge (Anderson, 1995). Many trajectories exist which seek to provide their own explanations, but not all of them deal directly with issues of power or oppression (Tisdell, 1993). There are however, two widely recognized general categories of feminism under which the different strands of feminism are divided: feminist-emancipatory and feminist-humanist (Anderson, 1995; Beasley, 2005; Elias & Merriam, 2005; Hissong, 2010; Maher, 1987; Tisdell, 1993). Subtle differences exist however, in the direction of each of these perspectives requiring clarification in an approach to feminism.

Feminism in adult education. Questions about knowledge in adult education are addressed from varying points of view. Approaching adult education from a critical perspective allows these questions to provide a space in which assumptions surrounding learning are questioned to provide a larger picture of the ubiquitous nature of power, race, class, and gender (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). bell hooks (2000) suggests it is challenging to define feminism, but scholars have attempted to do so in a variety of ways. Anderson (1995) suggests that “feminist epistemology can be regarded as the branch of social epistemology that investigates the influence of *socially constructed conceptions and norms of gender and gender-specific interests and experiences* on the production of knowledge” (p. 54, emphasis in original).

A broader definition might include the ways feminism seeks to examine the ontology of the imbalance of power in terms of race, gender, and socio-economic status (Elias & Merriam, 2005), and the ways gender influences our perspective of knowledge (Anderson, 1995; Tisdell, 1998). Feminism not only addresses issues of power from the female perspective, but also addresses issues of power and oppression relative to marginalized groups. Historically, feminism addressed issues of power and oppression from the perspective of solely white, middle-class females as part of the first wave feminist movement (Tisdell, 2008). However, as the field and inquiry into feminist epistemology has expanded, it has addressed populations in the larger context of groups who are marginalized, which by mere position of not being part of white privilege, experience life in a place of systemic oppression (Tisdell, 2008). Access enjoyed by those of privilege is not present for individuals in marginalized groups resulting from societal compartmentalization based on race, gender, class, and religious orientation. An argument regarding the sporting female as a marginalized group (Hargreaves, 1994) is also relevant due to the fact that the sporting female does not adopt traditional female beauty standards established by society. In Butler's (1990) discussion of the performative nature of gender and Hargreaves' (1994) approach to critical analysis of women's sport participation, both imply that a feminist perspective is integral to deconstructing power relations circulating in women's sport participation and tease out the links between women and power differentials in sport participation. More will be discussed regarding this however, it is important to include the sporting female as a marginalized population since in Butler's approach, gender is performative and women who perform gender in sport do not articulate socially accepted norms of female gender performance. To gain a better perspective of the feminist stance in sport, drawing

connections between critical and humanist strands of feminism will set the foundation upon which an analysis of the sporting female can be examined.

Feminist-emancipatory versus feminist-humanist. Differentiated between the strand addressing gender versus addressing liberation, sub-disciplines of feminist theory align themselves according to the underlying assumptions associated with the primary category. A feminist-emancipatory critique, also referred to as liberatory, focuses on issues in systems of patriarchy and oppression, and is commonly associated in adult education with scholars such as bell hooks (1994). Furthermore, “It takes for granted the distinctly masculine modes of thought and practice in sports, so that it seems ‘commonsense’ for women to follow in the steps of men” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 250). Additionally, this strand of feminism addresses issues of race, gender, sexuality, and class, and explores the notion of positionality in reference to positions of power such as the teacher/student relationship (Beasley, 2005; Elias & Merriam, 2005; hooks, 1994, 2000; and Tisdell & Taylor, 2001). This body of work founds itself on the scholarship of Freire, Habermas, and the transformative learning works of Mezirow within the field of adult education inquiry. However, scholars such as hooks, Tisdell, and Taylor, translate these fundamental principles into an area of feminist discourse isolating a woman’s experience in terms of positionality in the classroom and also in society (Tisdell, 2001).

Alternately, the feminist trajectory which addresses gender, is more focused on the humanist interpretation of feminism, where on an individual basis, issues of gender are primarily addressed in terms of personal growth and development. The feminist-humanist terminology seems to be highly contested, however, as a quick search of the internet elicits innumerable critiques of how humanism and feminism are *not* related (Carpenter, 2012; Harris, 2007; Shibles, 1989). Because a basic precept of humanism is a fundamental belief in the “dignity and

autonomy of human beings” (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 111) this strand of feminism is fundamentally in alignment with a humanistic approach. While the humanist approach *does not* consider gender, the parallel remains that both place significance on the value of human beings. Furthermore, if feminism addresses the notion of equality regardless of gender, race, or class, and feminism places greater emphasis on issues of gender, feminist-humanist *is* an appropriate term and alternate trajectory under feminism. Where emancipatory feminism views issues from a social stance and stresses social transformation as the goal of education, it is only appropriate that humanist feminism examines these issues from an individual stance focusing on personal development as the educational goal (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Tisdell & Taylor, 2001). Reviewing feminist epistemology in light of embodied ways of knowing directs our attention to critiques by feminists of more widely recognized epistemologies which favor the male perspective of knowledge construction. In her review of feminist scholarship, Karen Barbour (2018) draws our attention to scholarly work that highlights knowing through experience and in addition, the shifting nature of knowledge construction particular associated with movement.

Feminist epistemology.

Under western interpretations of knowledge, ways of knowing and understanding are classified in a dualistic approach as in either/or. As Hartsok (1983) suggests, when viewing these binaries, such as mind/body, knowledge/experience, reason/emotion, or thought/sensation we see primacy placed on gender where “only the first in each pair is associated with the male” (p. 297). This furthers the notion that that logic and rationality are primary, and as associated with the male, identify the male as superior to women and likewise “knowledge and mind were superior to experience and body” (Barbour, 2018, p. 210). However, feminists recognized the importance of dismantling this system of the knowledge binary identifying other ways of

knowing, as Belenky and associates (1986) distinguish in their study elucidating findings on the experiences of women and epistemological strategies associated with ways of knowing.

Scholars such as Gilligan (1993) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), are associated with voice and agency in terms of human development in women, and how women come to know and make meaning in their own way. Exemplified in the foundational piece by Belenky and Associates (1986) their study validated the supposition that “women’s concern for connection, relationships, and responsibility for others makes them more empathetic, sensitive, and more able to express emotion than men” (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 180). A primary strength of this approach lies in a woman’s ability to do or become whatever she chooses. Building on this, a feminist humanist approach satisfies this means (embodied learning) of education. Understanding how adults learn, and more specifically, how women learn, results in educational scholarship acknowledging more pluralistic ways of learning among women and men as we “move toward a broader understanding of gender as a socially and culturally defined system that shapes and is shaped by adult education” (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 181). Broadening the scope of adult education by examining learning at the intersection of diverse disciplines such as Adult Education and Kinesiology can contribute to the larger conversation of lifelong learning from a variety of perspectives. In fact, phenomenologist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) expanded on Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) work of the phenomenology of embodied learning and embodied subjectivity. Her focus highlighted movement as “the originating ground of our sense makings” (p. 161) contending that by focusing on the sensation of movement, we learn about ourselves kinesthetically in reference to the world around us. In a sense, this recognizes Merleau-Ponty’s perspectives on spatiality and being in the world while drawing in the dimension of movement as a method to identify how we interact

with and move about our space. Sheets-Johnstone presented us with a more concrete connection between movement and meaning making. As previously noted, Young (1980) argued in favor of female bodily comportment as embodiment in her discussion from “throwing like a girl” where she expanded on the way in which women’s movement experiences differed from men thus setting a foundation upon which further exploration into women’s movement in physical activity has been based. Since then, examination into women’s physical and sporting activities such as dance (Snowber, 2012) rock climbing (Thorpe & Olive, 2016), and martial arts (Velija et al., 2013) have informed meaning making through movement.

These myriad ways women come to know become more significant when viewing the female body as discursive when engaging in activity that challenges traditional feminine gender narratives. The female body itself becomes an act of resistance. As previously mentioned, the sporting female is a marginalized population in terms of being diametrically opposed to the socially constructed vision of the feminine. As Butler (1990) stresses, gender continues to be discursively created, but it is also performative in that gender “must be understood as the mundane ways in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (p. 179). The performative act of what is typically considered feminine is contradicted when a female engages in sport or physical activity that does not represent traditional female beauty standards. “Characteristics normally ascribed to men, and associated with sports, such as strength, competitiveness, aggression and assertiveness, are rejected, and characteristics popularly classified as female, such as co-operativeness, grace and tenderness, are celebrated” (Hargreaves, 1994, pp. 26-27). This view perpetuates the male dominated perspective of appropriate sport participation by females and further distances the opportunities for women to have equal access to all sport. By challenging this dualism in which

females shouldn't participate in male oriented sport due to the competitive nature and other male ascribed characteristics, the female body becomes an act of resistance and the physical activity becomes an act of feminism. Hargreaves reminds us that "the most dynamic feminism arises from personal experience" (p.30) and sports are becoming that experience through which women are gaining autonomy.

Feminist theory and the physically active body. Discussing physical activity and feminism provides insight in a movement of women utilizing their bodies as an instrument of social justice. It requires a challenge to the hegemony dominant in sport culture to allow sport to remain the liberatory expression through which women attain agency (Hargreaves, 1994). Whether conscious or subconscious, women who participate in sport contribute to the larger discussion of a new wave of feminism. As Hall (1998) points out, "there are unrecognized gender assumptions in sport...which are rarely analyzed or related to social structure" (p. 331). The conversation surrounding Venus and Serena Williams in the sport of tennis for example, illustrates the female athlete paradox and image of women and sport (Tredway, 2018) as perceived through societal assumptions surrounding gender and sport. To understand this new image, investigating physical activity and feminism in light of female athletes and discussing how this translates into the non-competitive female athlete as an emancipatory act will draw more obvious questions about the emancipatory nature of women and sport. The lived experiences of women in sport and their desire to participate despite societal influences deserves a deeper analysis as a relevant area of inquiry and is taken up in the next major section.

Feminism and Sport

Prior to 1870, women's participation in sport was viewed merely as participation in a recreational activity (Bell, 2007). It wasn't until 1972, when Title IX, seeking equitable participation for women in sport, was passed (<https://www.justice.gov/crt/overview-title-ix-education-amendments-1972-20-usc-1681-et-seq>). "Sport is a creation of human agency" (Hall, 1988, p. 331) and is situated in a variety of societal contexts. Today we see more in terms of women in sport although the media represents female sport participation still in a different light from men (Scheidler & Wagstaff, 2008). Gender identification, ability, and women and physical activity are frequently questioned in terms of sport participation (Choi, 2000; Garrett, 2004; Griffin, 1998; Mansfield, 2008; McClung & Blinde, 2002; Rouse, 2017; Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006; Thorpe & Olive (Eds), 2016; Toffoletti, Francome-Webb & Thorpe, 2018). These scholars address issues of gender and femininity isolating incidences of gender discrimination and bias. While some of these examples are dated, there has been little change in the perception of women and sport (Toffoletti, Francome-Webb & Thorpe (Eds), 2018). Even dating back to the 1960's, research addressed the femininity or masculinity of females in sport participation but never the potential for femininity of men participating in sport (Hall, 1988). The discussion surrounding women and sport participation revolved around how sport does or does not masculinize women rather than isolating the learning experiences of women participating in sport.

As women continue to negotiate their space in sporting society, it is incumbent upon the researcher to continually reevaluate the nexus of feminism and sport and physical activity (Caudwell, Wheaton, Watson, & Mansfield, 2017; Roth & Basow, 2004; Theberge, 1987; Thorpe, 2009; Thorpe et al., 2017). Furthermore, it also calls upon scholars to evaluate the

presence and meaning of the female embodied sporting experience, not just as a differing experience from men, but as an experience unique to women, and to develop a mode of analysis to contribute to scholarly discussion of women, embodied learning, and the liberatory nature of participation in physical activity. A discussion of feminism and its relationship to sport and physical activity is an area in which scholarly inquiry should venture to bring us to a better understanding of this phenomenology of the female sporting body.

It is essential to provide some elementary distinctions among the nomenclature associated with the feminist perspective on physical activity. The literature describes a variety of terms when viewing women and sport and physical activity. Common terms found in the literature addressing female bodily movement in physical activity include sport feminism, somatic feminism, corporeal feminism, and physical feminism. It is useful to understand the derivations of each term in order to ascertain terminology appropriate to this discussion of women, physical activity and embodied learning. At the conclusion of the study, I contribute my perspectives on feminism related to sport and physical activity by referring to it as Kinesthetic feminism. This perspective draws on Caudwell's (2011) claim in which she suggests a "recombining of feminist theory" (p. 118). In the discussion section, I aim to propose another way of viewing female participation in sport and physical activity in a way that also recognizes the embodied learning aspect of such participation. This perspective endeavors to act as a departure from the "waves" of feminism by focusing on the embodied learning experiences of women in sport and physical activity, returning to the notion of learning and the moving body and building upon the sport feminist narratives in conjunction with lived bodily experiences. The following provides the most relevant feminist perspectives on physical activity and defines and critiques characteristics of each.

Physical Feminism and Sport Feminism

Some scholars make a distinction between physical feminism and sport feminism. Physical feminism emerged from McCaughey's (1997) attempt to describe "feminism on the physical level" in light of a self-defense culture where women attempt to gain control over their bodies (p. 200). In this limited perspective, McCaughey (1997) views the female body as agentic in the context of the self-defense movement. I would argue however, that physical feminism should encompass any type of sport/ physical activity where the female body acts as a site of resistance by the mere emancipatory potential and female embodied experience from sport participation. McCaughey(1997) also describes female "self-defenders" as a mode for disrupting the "embodied ethos of rape culture"(p. 177) and their role in deconstructing commonplace narratives about genderized bodily comportment. Drawing on feminist theory isolating structures of power, McCaughey's perspective provides a very narrow examination of the body in feminism. It is but one dimension of the permutations that exist surrounding feminism and the sporting body. The discussion surrounding feminism and physical activity must reach far beyond the self defenders in order to successfully redefine the female body in feminist theory and allow more latitude for consideration of sport and physical activity as liberatory process as in sport feminism.

Sport feminism as a critical perspective on the nature of sport participation (Bradshaw, 2002) problematizes the concept of empowerment through sport, and "is an established, significant, developed, and developing mode of critical inquiry within the academy" (Caudwell, 2011, p. 112). From a critical perspective, the question of empowerment is contestable as to enable power is to assign 'power-to' as opposed to 'power-over' (Bradshaw, 2002, p. 7). We ask is it possible to gain power over physical activity or do women derive power from the

participation in physical activity? A feminist interpretation of the power-over perspective might view this as power over changes in identity resulting from sport participation and is related to the notion of control over her own body thus feeling a sense of self-efficacy and shifts personal perception from the body object to the body subject. As this shift occurs, so does the perspective of “power-to” and allows freedom of expression through the physical activity/sport. However, the concept of having control over the body through physical activity can also prove to be problematic if the power of control emerges from a change in perception of the body. For example, if the change in the body is related to popular discourse of female bodily comportment, then is it truly empowering if the change in bodily comportment reflects the discursive definition of feminine beauty and what it means to perform female? Approaching sport feminism from a critical perspective requires a deconstruction of the motive for participation and analysis of outcomes in terms of the style of power derived from participation. If the realized empowering effects of sport participation results in self-satisfaction because personal appearance is more in line with the objectified female, then is the participation truly empowering? Conversely, if the outcome of sport participation results in a changed perspective in the form of agency, then can we agree it is a ‘power-to’ connoting freedom associated from participating in sport as a liberatory act? Hargreaves argues the dominant theme of sports feminism “is the desire for equality of opportunity for women in comparison with men” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 26) relying heavily on the liberatory pursuits of equal access to sport for women, as in the feminist- emancipatory perspective previously described. “Liberal feminism also implicitly rejects biological explanations for non-participation and embraces the belief that if women are given the opportunity, they can participate in the full range of sports that men enjoy” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 28). She stresses that it is culture, and not the nature of being female which impedes women’s

participation in sport reinforcing a tenet of sport feminism which emphasizes equal access to sport and physical activity participation.

Somatic Feminism and Corporeal Feminism

Somatic feminism goes beyond the critical pursuit of sport participation and recognizes the lived bodily experience in that it is described as “feminist inquiry that is explicitly concerned with articulating and theorizing how the systemic restrictions on women’s freedom shape bodily experiences” (Forry, 2013, p. 128). Forry offers a perspective of female sport participation calling it somatic sport feminism proposing “‘Somatic sport feminism’ is then concerned with gendered bodily experiences as they occur in the context of sport and fitness practices” (Forry, 2013, p. 128). Her theory builds on Grosz’s notion of the lived body and its relationship to sport and fitness activity and most closely represents a fully articulated theory of feminism, the body, and physical activity and sport. Forry considers Schilder’s account of the intercorporeal view of embodiment in that the female bodily experience does not occur in a vacuum but is rather moderated by the continual interactions among other embodied beings. This attitude places primacy on the body and its “accompanying schema achieved through movement” (Forry, 2013, p. 130). Corporeal feminism may provide a more encompassing vision of how sport and physical activity and feminism are connected, but as will be illustrated, misses the mark in defining the entirety of the female bodily experience in sport and physical activity.

Grosz (1994) began the discussion of the body and feminism in her work addressing corporeal feminism by recognizing the body as part of agency and examines how sexist ideologies become inscribed in the body. Her focus was a solid reconfiguration of the female body by building on the dissection of Cartesian duality and suggesting a both/and approach to viewing corporeality as the “stuff of subjectivity” (p. ix). The purpose of Grosz’s work was to

problematize the ambiguity of sexuality by deconstructing patriarchal power structures perpetuated by the pervasive presence of sexual difference in terms of its impact on perceptions of the body. Her approach is predicated upon the notion of the moving body. Grosz however, does not overtly discuss the notion of purposeful movement as in physical activity, but she does address the nature of the sexed body as it moves through the space in which the person inhabits. She educates us on a feminism of the body, a Merleau-Pontian approach which amalgamates the mind and body as the conduit through which we perceive and receive information from the world, but Grosz does not explicitly connect the female body in physical activity with her views on corporeality. While Grosz does acknowledge this “being in the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. viii) her perspective lacks an overt connection to embodied feminism through physical activity. An attempt to establish a feminist perspective of embodiment must consider these differing dimensions of the embodied subjective female and identify ways to support the emancipatory nature of sport participation.

Each of these perspectives on feminism and sport and physical activity possess legitimate dimensions of the female sporting body but none encompass all the dimensions as a cohesive epistemology of the ontology of the female sporting body. Further inquiry in the form of research isolating the embodied learning experience of the female sporting body aims to bridge the gap among the theories to provide a more detailed account of this experience. A discussion of the limited research into the area of women, embodied learning and martial arts and other physical activity seeks to shed some light on an under-investigated domain.

Embodied Learning, Women, and Sport

Drawing from commonalities among these varied approaches to feminism, sport and the body, further inquiry examining women, Taekwondo and embodied learning seeks to identify a

relevant feminist perspective on the sporting female and embodied learning. This will require an analysis of the literature addressing women's sport participation in settings such as rock climbing, bodybuilding, yoga, and the martial arts to establish commonalities among the women's emancipatory experiences derived from the sport or physical activity and then translate this into contemporary research into women's embodied learning experiences from the journey of earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo. As such, this section will address components of the intersecting categories of embodied subjectivity or embodiment, women in sport, and the sporting female identity.

Embodiment and Sporting Females

There is a tremendous amount of conceptual literature addressing movement and embodied learning. Scholars have more commonly addressed embodied learning through movement tied to contemplation (Albright, 2013; Caldwell, 2014), dance (Downey & Dalidowicz, 2015; Downey, Dalidowicz, & Mason, 2015; Giardina & Donnelly, n.d.; Merritt, 2015; Snowber, 2012; Wellard, Pickard & Bailey, 2007), and yoga (Berila, Klein, & Roberts, n.d.; Brown & Leledaki, 2010; Daubenmier, 2005; Impett, Daubenmier, & Hirschman, 2006; Mahlo & Tiggemann, 2016). This natural connection between these styles of movement and embodied learning is somewhat problematic in the realm of physical activity and embodied learning since it makes the assumption that embodied learning through movement is only present in contemplative, artistic forms of bodily expression. As previously discussed, physical feminism acknowledges the intersection of the female body, sport, and agency which emerges from the act of sport participation (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; McCaughey, 1997). Furthermore, the concept of feminist physical activity meant to disrupt the narrative of male dominated sport does not apply in these instances since the more affective modes of movement

such as dance and yoga are more commonly associated with the female body. We see research tied to improving body awareness and body image and dismantling female objectification through yoga (Berila et al., n.d.; Impett et al., 2006; Mahlo & Tiggemann, 2016), but to a lesser extent, female participation in the martial arts and embodied learning. Though not explicit, these are in fact foundational works setting the stage to venture into other areas of female physical activity which through participation, whether overtly or covertly, results in a dismantling of patriarchal power structures associated with women and physical activity. This mode of engagement in physical activity can be viewed as a feminism perspective from which critical engagement with ideas of post feminism vis a vis sport and leisure, the physical culture, in addition to enhanced on-line presence resulting from digital engagement, digital culture, establish new venues through which feminism should be examined (Toffoletti, Francombe-Webb & Thorpe, 2018). Furthermore, “a feminism that gives primacy to the (re)construction of the body is a physical feminism. If theories *are* practices, then feminism, like the patriarchy it hopes to eliminate, is physical” (McCaughey, 1997, p. 201). Research into feminism, embodied learning, and physical activity should not be limited to the lived bodily experiences of women addressing issues of body image or objectification, which actually perpetuate discursive practices of sex and gender. Rather, it must encompass all forms of physical activity and sport in which women engage to expand upon the application of embodied learning in all style of movement activity. The research is limited, however, an analysis of discussions surrounding more non-traditional forms of female sport participation and embodied learning is warranted.

Castelnuovo and Guthrie (1998) used their studies of female body builders and female martial artists in a feminist martial arts school to define a framework of the female sporting body which viewed the female body as a tool of resistance. They suggested that "strategies aimed at

fortifying both the body and the mind, as opposed to those that rely on mental change alone, will allow women to contest and resist male dominance more effectively" (p. 13). In other words, the mere participation in sport which challenges heteronormative narratives surrounding the female beauty standard was a feminist act.

While scant, literature addressing physical activity and the female sporting body as physical feminism has gained traction in more recent years (Channon & Matthews, (Eds), 2015; Faulkner, 2018; Giardina & Donnelly, (Eds), 2018; Thorpe & Olive, (Eds), 2016; Rouse, 2017; and Toffoletti, Thorpe, & Francombe-Webb, (Eds), 2018). These works certainly establish a renewed sense of feminism in terms of the female sporting body and the growing interest in physical culture. Notably absent however, is an examination of diverse experiences within the physical activity culture. What is common however are references to martial arts, bodybuilding, running, surfing, skateboarding and rollerderby. These limited populations have been examined in terms of physical capital (Shilling, in Giardina & Donnelly (Eds), 2018), embodiment (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; Faulkner, 2018; Owton, 2015; Pavlidis, 2018) and physical feminism (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; Faulkner, 2018; McCaughey, 1997). Albeit significant in terms of challenging the female beauty/bodily comportment narrative to this point, it does not overtly consider the experience of queer women and, to a lesser extent, women of color. Embodiment includes "recognition of individual difference in terms of race, gender, sexuality, ability, history and culture" (Barbour, 2018, p. 220). As with all emerging theory however, there is an inevitability of gradualness. With further research and contribution to the greater body of literature, there may come a time when more is examined in the realm of *all* female bodily comportment in the arena of sport and physical activity.

For now, as recommended by Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998) as long as women are viewed as commodified objects, further research is imperative in this domain of women and sport. "Strategies aimed at fortifying both the body and the mind, as opposed to those that rely on mental change alone, will allow women to contest and resist male dominance more effectively" (p. 13). That is why it is essential to highlight the body in learning as a result of earning a black belt in taekwondo because it is deconstructing dichotomous thinking by again emphasizing the female body subject versus body object. "It is contradictory because although feminists have taken great pains to demonstrate how this ideology perpetuates women's oppression, their liberatory strategies, by highlighting cognitive activities as the critical emancipatory vehicles, have sustained dichotomous thinking" (Castelnovo & Guthrie, 1998, p. 31). Conversely, utilizing the body and placing primacy on the phenomenon of embodied learning eliminates the mind-body bifurcation thus challenging this patriarchal perspective. Furthermore, it challenges the separatists view of physical activity due to biological differences between gender and ability in sport performance (Hargreaves, 1994). A study emphasizing movement in Taekwondo is important because it places primacy on the non-gendered body subject and how the body inhabits space, only relying on textual cues to establish a discourse of the body which cannot be otherwise expressed. From a Merleau-Pontian perspective, then, it is the lived experience of the body which delineates the embodied experience of the female. In Taekwondo, it is how the female inhabits her space in the Taekwondo school as well as outside the school. It is how she carries herself, this bodily comportment, this personal performative act of being female which constitutes emancipatory knowledge in bodily form. No words can suffice for this liberatory perspective. Understanding the discourse of gender and sport is an essential piece through which we can examine the embodied learning experience of women in

Taekwondo. But it is not until we understand the journey of women in sport itself, that we can fully comprehend the significance of the sporting female body as a site for political, social, and cultural resistance.

Women in Sport

Women and sport participation realized steady growth during the 1970s and second-wave feminism found itself a contributor to this shift in interest in female sport (Hall, 1996). The increased participation in sport was recognized but remained under-studied as a field of research (Hall, 1988, 1996). It is true that sport finds itself a hub of cultural, social, gendered, and race relations. However, in their critiques about research into women and sport Birrell (1988, 1989, 1990) and Hargreaves (1989, 1990, 1992, 1994) emphasize the lack in this area specifically pertaining to issues of sport as representation of social relations with lack of gendered sport discourse being a prime example. Though dated, scholars of the 20th century recognized the need to legitimize through research, the notion of the female sporting body and contribute notable findings to the larger body of sport sociology literature addressing gender and sport. Important to note, sport participation allows women to construct their bodies in a way they deem suitable to their goals. Women's participation in sport and the conditioning activities associated with enhanced sport performance serves to contest the traditional gender narrative regarding the performative nature of the feminine. Sport participation redefines what it means to perform the female gender as it is performed in a different context. With that does come some scrutiny. In certain sports, female participation is acceptable as it does not necessarily challenge the traditional gender norms of appearance and performance. In other words, female gender is performed in a socially acceptable behavior and as such does not disrupt the patriarchal ideology surrounding sport participation. Conversely, it is in those sports that challenge socially

acceptable norms of gender performance, that greater inquiry into the embodied effects of non-traditional female sport participation is of interest.

In explorations of women and bodybuilding for example, scholars identify “female bodybuilding as a site of both resistance and compliance” (Shea, 2001, p. 43) and draw on the empowering effects participating in bodybuilding elicit (Brace-Govan, 2004; Castelnovo, S. & Guthrie, 1995; Choi, 2000; George, 2005; Roth & Basow, 2004). The appearance of female bodybuilders in itself challenges the traditionally accepted style of feminine bodily comportment in that female bodybuilders sculpt themselves in a fashion similar to male bodybuilders. This activity serves as a mode of resistance in terms of challenging the dominant female/male binary and contest patriarchal dualisms of feminine/masculine, sex/gender, mind/body (Johnston, 1996). However, while female bodybuilders seek to define themselves physically, society tends to thwart the progress in the female bodybuilding world by instituting discursive practices of categorizing women who do not fit into the acceptable norms of the female body object. While women are focused on bodybuilding for their own motivation, they are still challenged and critiqued for their less than feminine form. Society nevertheless, attempts to constrain the performative female when she does not adhere to widely accepted visual definitions of female and as such, women risk being labeled as lesbian, offensive, narcissistic, and so on as their appearance is an obvious challenge to patriarchal ideology (Shea, 2001). Butler (1990) might suggest, “doing masculinity builds strength, whereas doing femininity builds weakness (Roth & Basow, 2004, p247). Women’s participation in sport requires a retooling of the perception of performing gender. Sports are an important consideration from the feminist standpoint as female participation in sport serves to contest the nature of doing the feminine and redefines the performative nature of gender.

Rock climbing represents a more recent foray of women into non-traditional fields of sport participation (Chisholm, 2007; Scott & Derry, 2005; Yarnal, 2019; Young, 1997). Discussions abound in challenging the hypermasculine environment existing in the world of free climbing, sport, and traditional rock climbing. Kiewa (2001) shared her findings of twenty-nine rock climbers, fourteen of whom were women, and their perceptions for motivation and satisfaction derived from rock climbing. While analyzing the data as a whole, Kiewa discovered that “female participants in particular expressed concern over their control of the climbing activity, treasuring the event as something of their own” (p. 374) suggesting that control over one’s space was integral to the embodied experience of climbing. This draws on Merleau-Ponty’s (2002) perspective of spatiality and the interrelated nature of the many parts of the one body moving in and through space and its being in the world.

Sporting Female Identity

It is a significant challenge to ascertain the essence of the sporting female identity. A paradox exists in the female athlete as she negotiates her bodily comportment in the sporting milieu. Both female and athlete, the sporting female physiognomy does not subscribe to mainstream female bodily comportment and in and of itself creates a gender role conflict in the sporting female. As the sporting female navigates through her identity as female and athlete, tensions arise as she balances two seemingly incongruent roles. Because the self is dynamic, this may offer some insight in the ability for women to view themselves as whole, or female athlete, versus the parts, either female or athlete.

It may be an impossible fete to attempt to universalize the sporting female identity, however, engaging in this discussion is worthwhile as it assists in better defining the female sporting experience considering its relationship with embodied learning. If we view sport as a

social construction, inquiry into the relationship between sport and women's lived experiences resulting from participation provides space to investigate how the potential outcome of women participating in sport results in agency and voice. There are those who continue to critique the nature of women's participation in sport to examine the relationship between sport and empowerment (Bradshaw, 2002). Whether traditionally male dominated or gender neutral, when women participate in an activity which challenges the dominant narrative either consciously or unconsciously, a new or renewed identity emerges. Hall (1990) reminds us that "women opposed the popular notions of their biologically restricted bodies through their involvement into male-defined sport, but at the same time, their physical emancipation was never without resistance, certainly from men" (p. 39). Hargreaves (1994) began this analysis by examining "both the lived experiences of women in sports *and* the structural forces influencing participation" (p. 2). By looking more closely at contemporary experiences of women in sport, and Taekwondo in particular, it will contribute to the larger discussion begun decades ago addressing the lack of attention to feminine sporting bodies from a feminist perspective (Hall, 1996; Sender, 1997).

Songahm Taekwondo

Martial arts have been long recognized as a practice integrating the body and mind in concentrated efforts to cultivate both a mental and physical skill set in the art of self-defense. Taekwondo is the contemporary term for martial arts that emerged from ancient Japanese practices dating back to the third century. The term Taekwondo is derived from the translation of kick, empty hand, and the way, or loosely translated means the way of the hand and foot. Taekwondo was introduced to the United States in 1955, but up until then, was practiced primarily in secret in Korea due to Japanese martial law (Lewis, 1993). Deeply rooted in

philosophy, General Choi and Master Haeng Ung Lee united the styles of Chinese and Japanese martial arts in a more structured Korean form. Their fundamental goal was to train people both physically and mentally and was woven into the fabric of the system of Songahm Taekwondo. While there are various styles of Taekwondo, it is the version of Songahm Taekwondo that unites the poom sae, or forms, with the various symbols and numbers designated as significant within this system of martial arts. For Songahm Taekwondo as a practice of addressing the whole person to make sense, a discussion of the philosophy of the martial art will assist in outlining the structure of this particular martial arts practice.

Philosophy of Taekwondo

The philosophical premise of the martial arts lies in the culturally responsive learning environment which “can be promoted by teaching diverse sports, such as Taekwondo, and their cultural meanings” (Na, 2009, 33). In terms of contributing to the field of Adult Education, this situates itself perfectly when considering alternate forms of meaning making and the importance of adult educators acknowledging these diverse learning styles and expressions. Building on the origins of Taekwondo increases the familiarity of Korean customs and tradition therefore introducing the students to an alternate view of culture and thus a deeper understanding of themselves. The educator has not only the responsibility of teaching the martial arts discipline itself, but also facilitate the growth of each individual in their competency of Taekwondo practice. Consequently, this opens the doors for greater self-awareness when translating the skill of being aware of the Korean culture to other applications. As such, the Taekwondo student translates this self-awareness to the world around her.

Taekwondo, Embodied Learning, and Self Awareness

In order to recognize the relevance of how Taekwondo is well situated within embodied learning, an examination of the system of Taekwondo is prudent. In this section, the author will present a discussion of the historical and philosophical foundations of Taekwondo. Additional discussion will present literature which represents general characteristics of martial artists and purpose for martial arts participation. The discussion will conclude with an analysis of literature presenting perspectives on women and martial arts participation. Also noteworthy in this conclusion will be an exploration of women and Taekwondo in terms of embodied learning and adult education. It will become apparent that little has been investigated therefore exposing the primary gap in the research pertaining to women, Taekwondo, and embodied learning.

It is the essence of Songahm Taekwondo that dominates the author's thought patterns in the martial arts classroom. However, it is also a guiding perspective which the author takes outside of the martial arts classroom as well. The challenge however, is to impress upon the students that they are not learning solely the philosophy of martial arts but rather are allowing themselves to be open to a plethora of options when encountering perspectives from another culture (Tisdell, 2006). Departing from the more western oriented styles of physical activity, Taekwondo recognizes the whole individual as she participates in the serious leisure activity. It is the fundamental lesson of self-acceptance as well as accepting others that can permeate an individual's ability to change one's perspective on how to make meaning, develop greater self-awareness, and recognize the knowledge which comes from within. Through this research, the author will study how female Taekwondo students on their Black Belt journey view themselves and their environment to develop a greater understanding of the importance which the embodied experience of coming to know through Taekwondo.

Through mastery of Taekwondo skills, the student understands her body in a different way and through clearing the hurdles in each step of the journey toward the Black Belt, comes to know herself by validating her body as present in learning. In her discussion of a variety of martial arts styles, Yap (2016) notes “martial arts, in general, require a great deal of kinesthetic awareness on the part of the practitioners” (p. 95). This bodily awareness is essential in how the practitioner comes to know the forms as she moves about her space in the Taekwondo school. The dojang, or martial arts school, is a sacred space which is revered as a center of learning, knowledge production, and self-discovery. This learning space honors the whole person and recognizes the diverse spiritual and cultural history from which each student has evolved. Delving into non-traditional approaches to awakening cultural inclusivity creates opportunities for unique encounters with other cultures promoting awareness of self and others in the community at large. More importantly, the student discovers qualities and characteristics within themselves as they construct knowledge through this heightened awareness. As previously mentioned, when a woman participates in sport or physical activity, she enters into a female athlete paradox thus necessitating a negotiation of roles or identity in this new environment. The following provides a discussion on women and Taekwondo to address this new dynamic of a woman participating in a martial art.

Women and Taekwondo

While some feminists argue that the woman’s body is an object upon which patriarchal violence is enacted, others suggest that women engaging in the “self-defense culture” (McCaughey, 1998, p. 277) merely perpetuates the violence against women discourse and in some way validates the rape culture. This argument suggests that women who learn self-defense training glorifies violent behavior by forcing women to sink to the level of violence to elicit self-

protection or “sell-out” (McCaughey, 1998, p. 277). McCaughey (1998) conversely suggests this is not a perpetuation of rape culture but reframing the purpose of self-defense education and potential for women’s empowerment. For example, there is research that notes the vastly improved outcomes related to cardiovascular conditioning, flexibility, and sport performance (Bu et al., 2010; Finkenber, 1990; Jung et al., 2016; Lakes et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2018; Markovic, Vucetic, & Cardinale, 2008). As such, the motivation for women to participate in serious leisure activity (J. Kim, Dattilo, & Heo, 2018) is not solely motivated by the desire to practice in a combat sport. But, as will be evident, participation in a martial art does provide the forum for renegotiating identity.

The practice of combat sports involves a degree of aggression towards an opponent in the context of sparring. In these instances, the body becomes a tool of strategy and intentionality. The fighter utilizes her body as subject/object in that not only does it require self-control, but also involves a “sense of one’s own agency that includes the ability to act on other agents...” (Yap, 2016, p. 99). This is a delicate balance in terms of negotiating internalized expectations of performing gender versus the required performative actions of hand and foot techniques associated with the martial arts. Women are often taught to view themselves as less capable and subsequently devalue their ability in physical activity (Yap, 2016). However, once the female can negotiate the purpose of the specific hand and foot techniques, the body then becomes a tool for social justice and challenges the rape culture rhetoric. As McCaughey (1997) argues, self-defense training disrupts the traditional female body narrative by recognizing the female body as capable and strong. It is in the sense of agency that the woman practicing the martial art possesses as she is in complete control of her body thus shifting the perspective from the body object to the body subject also implementing embodied subjectivity as she engages in the

practice of Taekwondo. During the practice itself in a non-combative situation, she masters those hand and foot techniques and develops a greater awareness of self and her inhabiting of her space in the practice of Taekwondo. As Yap (2016) points out the female bodily experience is relational and as such her ability to overcome inhibitions associated with violence in combat sports becomes managed through the relationship between her body and the situation in which she situates herself in the Taekwondo school. In other words, the woman may not ascribe to acts of violence in a general sense, but when these hand and foot techniques are purposive, there creates a shift in the intentionality of the action. Women feel connected to their bodies and retain a greater sense of control. Still, more research needs to focus on the idea of female embodiment and martial arts and self-defense (Yap, 2016). Recall the discussion of Taekwondo from a Merleau-Ponty perspective, where the practice of Taekwondo is present in Field A and Field B represents the potentiality of application of the practice. I am reminded of my personal change of perception in that I know feel capable in Field B because of my practice in Field A. I have now gained a greater sense of self-awareness and control of my embodied self. It does not come in the form of rote self- defense skills where the skills reside in a holding tank always on guard for the appropriate moment. Rather, these martial art skills become but one component of the physiognomic perception being enacted in the form of an appropriate motor response to specific visual cues “incorporated into the body schema as prolongations of our embodying being” (Mazis, 2016, p. 191). The embodied experience of Taekwondo elevates the participant to a different level of awareness because Taekwondo is based on a strong philosophy of honor, respect, and self-control. The practice of Taekwondo becomes an amalgamation of motor responses and philosophical perspective based on the philosophical grounding of each level of training.

Don't think that philosophy is of no importance in your Taekwondo training. It is the hidden ingredient that makes you rise above the other students. You do not see the yeast in a cake, but without it, the cake would be flat. It would not rise as it should and would be less than desirable. (Eternal Grand Master Haeng Ung Lee)

Self-defense education is an important part of Taekwondo and provides the defender with several tools in her toolbox from which to choose should she feel threatened and in need of self-protection. When learning why women participate in Taekwondo, it is essential to carefully consider each individual's motivation, purpose, and expected outcomes. Involvement with Taekwondo, "provides a unique opportunity to introduce students to a multicultural, combative activity that is rich in history and cultural connections" (Hyun-Ju, Hannon, & Banks, 2006, p. 15). Examining the impact of these cultural connections and how the women identify with their experience provides a context through which to better understand both how women come to know through their participation and their motivation for doing so. While there have been consistent findings in the increased sense of women's bodily empowerment through the practice of martial arts, (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; Guerandel & Mennesson, 2007; Velija et al, 2013) none has directly examined the experience of earning a Black Belt and subsequent changes in self-perception resulting from this embodied learning experience.

To build upon the phenomenology of female participation in Taekwondo and the embodied learning experience along the journey toward a black belt, Hogeveen (2013) suggested taking a phenomenological approach to athletic embodiment by examining the gaps between novice and expert. This appropriately fulfills the inquiry into the embodied learning journey toward the black belt in Taekwondo. "By attending to athletes' embodied perception, phenomenology stands to make a meaningful contribution to ...the broader field of sport

research” (Hogeveen, 2013, p. 62). Extending the insights of phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty to the arena of women and embodied learning in sport stands to open the field of women and sport inquiry. Hogeveen’s (2013) perspective alludes to the journey from novice to expert where he implies this interconnectedness between skill development and Heidegger’s *Dasein*, or being in the world. This being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2012) as a participant in sport melds the athlete with the activity to the point where participation “requires very little deliberation” (Hogeveen 2013, p. 67) meaning the athlete and the action become one fluid movement. The sporting female becomes “conscious of the world by means of (her)body” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 85) as she perceives how her embodied intentionality, that is the intention practiced in Field A in anticipation of Field B, brings meaning to her experience. More inquiry into this phenomenon is needed as will be evidenced by the following discussion of contemporary research of women’s participation in Taekwondo.

Summary and Conclusion:

The Need for Research, Women, and Taekwondo

Contemporary research within the last ten years, addressing women, Taekwondo and embodied learning is insufficient. Significant research in this area is limited to three general categories: Physiological benefits (Bu et al., 2010; Casolino et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2018; Markovic et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., n.d.), injury prevention (Boguszewski et al., 2015; Cynarski & Kudłacz, 2008), and psychological outcome from participation (G. Do Kim, Pieter, & Bercades, 2018; Pieter, 1991; Pinto & Teixeira Costa, 2015; Shih & Lin, 2016). Only a few of these studies isolate women’s experiences and most include men and women in the sample population. Furthermore, none specifically discusses embodied learning outcomes from practicing Taekwondo. For example, even in the studies addressing women’s experiences from a

psychological perspective, the outcomes of the studies were more concerned with athletic performance during competition (Casolino et al., 2012), motivation (Pinto & Teixeira Costa, 2015), and competitive state anxiety where the sample size was three women (Lee & Shin, 2016).

Addressing the intersecting perspectives of embodied learning and Taekwondo participation has been absent from the literature since the 1990s when Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998) and McCaughey's inquiry into women's self-defense in 1997. McCaughey (1998) isolated the experience of how women participating in self-defense claimed the ability to subvert dominant gender ideologies but there is more to embodied learning experiences of the Black Belt journey in Taekwondo than subverting gendered ideologies. Taekwondo practice is not intentionally subversive. There is an additional dimension of the embodied, whole body, experience of the journey to a black belt which remains unexplored. As such, investigating the ideologies associated with female sporting identities and body identity development through a feminist interpretive lens contributes to the interdisciplinary nature of women's sport philosophy grounded in adult education theory.

As will be discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, the study highlights the significance of contributing narrative and auto/ethnographic research to capturing the essence of the sporting female embodied experience. Discussions surrounding the physiological benefits of sport and exercise participation for women are numerous, but equally important are discussions emphasizing the philosophical implications of women in sport and exercise. A recently edited text on philosophy of sport (Kretchmar, 2017) includes a variety of dimensions in sport philosophy but neglects to emphasize or even include a chapter addressing women and sport philosophy. Topics span from physical education to sociopolitical dimensions of sport

participation, but neglect to address the nuances of women and sport participation. There is much to be learned about the transformative nature of sport and exercise participation for women, especially women over the age of 50, and it is only when sport participation from a feminist perspective is implemented, that discussions are focused on the importance of gender and sport thus contributing to the larger body of literature on women's sport philosophy.

Before Title IX, women were excluded from equal access to a variety of federally funded educational programming including sports participation (ncaa.org). The inclusion of women in the sports arena has offered much by way of utilizing sport as an equalizer per se in the struggle to challenge male hegemony in sport. From the impact of early feminism in the 1960s, attention was drawn to challenging the boundaries of gendered sport participation, feminine bodily expression, and gender ideologies. Hall (1996) contributed to Belenky and associates' (1986) discussion on women's ways of knowing by calling us to accept women's participation in sport and exercise as an additional way of coming to know. Feminist scholarship then, *must* consider the philosophical implications of women's sport and exercise participation through the emancipatory potential of the lived bodily experience in women's sport. Bolin and Granskog (2003), Hall (1996), and Hargreaves (1994) while contributing to literature addressing women and sport participation from historical and sociological perspectives, fall short of including the philosophical dimension of sport participation that influence the embodied being of the female athlete. Narrative and ethnographic research on the sporting female embodied experience is crucial to expanding on the limited discussions on women's participation in sport and exercise activity. The following chapter will outline recommendations on how research will be conducted to glean relevant data germane to this topic of philosophical implications of women's sport and exercise activity.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how women earning a black belt in Taekwondo make meaning of the embodied learning experience associated with physical movement. The following research questions guide the exploration of the purpose:

- 1- How do women's experiences learning Taekwondo influence their self-perceptions, including the ways in which they exist in and interact with the world?
- 2- What role does the culture and environment in the Taekwondo school play when examining the embodied learning experience as a woman practicing Taekwondo?
- 3- How does the embodied learning experience as a woman participating in Taekwondo contribute to the development of identity.

This chapter addresses the selection and implementation of the autoethnography and narrative inquiry methodologies, as well as participant selection, data collection, and procedures for data analysis. Following a brief description of the qualitative research paradigm is a description of the two specific methodologies chosen for this study. Finally, the background of the researcher will be introduced, along with an explanation of the dependability and verification strategies for the study.

Qualitative Research Paradigm

Qualitative research uncovers the nature of how individuals experience the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) and seeks to problematize how individuals interpret their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe various strategies to interpret and explain the world from the researcher's point of view. Such research paradigms include but are not limited to phenomenology (investigating the nature of experience), narrative inquiry

(using personal stories for data collection), case study (analyzing data existing in a bounded system), mixed methods (employing both qualitative and quantitative research design), critical inquiry (grounded in the analysis of power relations), ethnography (which focuses on the study of a culture), and autoethnography (which examines the experience of the researcher).

Understanding research design can allow the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions that help highlight the relevance of the inquiry and subsequently, the research findings. Over the years, a variety of scholars (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell 2016; Patton, 2002) have addressed from their own perspectives, common research designs and characteristics present in each. The appropriate strategy emerges as the researcher identifies a “study design that corresponds with the question” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 1) the researcher is trying to answer. This desire to answer the question necessitates the implementation of a qualitative research design.

In instances where researchers are interested in a phenomenon or concept, qualitative research can be considered an appropriate methodology to examine how individuals make sense of their experiences (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and has become increasingly prevalent in adult education (Imel, Kerka, & Wonacott, 2002; Taylor, et al., 2001; Merriam, 2009). The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research design, as Creswell (2009) notes, is “often the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is framed in terms of using words (qualitative) rather than numbers (quantitative)” (p. 3). Points of deliberation in choosing a research paradigm involve the researcher’s worldview, purpose of the study, style of data collection and interpretation, goal of the investigation, and the characteristics of the research design (Creswell, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002). For example, as mentioned in Chapter One, the purpose of the study is to examine how women make meaning of

the embodied learning experience of earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo. Data collection such as interviews, written artifacts, and focus groups will rely on words to draw meaningful conclusions. This is what differentiates the style of research between quantitative and qualitative as per Creswell's definition. To effectively utilize a qualitative approach to research, it is essential to define where the study design fits into the scheme of things based on the researcher's beliefs in the nature of reality, or ontology, and the nature of knowledge, or epistemology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative research seeks to examine ways people make meaning of their own experiences (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009) and has the four following characteristics:

1. Individuals create meaning from their experiences based on how they perceive the world;
2. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection;
3. Researchers are searching for a deeper understanding, not necessarily verification; and
4. The world is dynamic and, therefore, reality and individuals' places within the world change. (Creswell, 2009; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton, 2002; Willis & Neville, 1996)

As researchers identify themes in the data, they seek to use a worldview dictated by the theoretical framework of the study, to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participant population. They understand that the parameters of the study are dynamic and fluid, thus, accounting for possible changes in perspectives throughout the study and analysis of the findings. Additionally, the researcher as the main data collection instrument serves as both interpreter and purveyor of the analysis which necessitates a clear research methodology to guide

the researcher when collecting and interpreting results. This is what makes the theoretical framework of the study essential in that following the parameters of the framework allows the researcher to interpret the results based on how the researcher views the nature of being relative to the phenomenon being researched. Unique to qualitative research is that this strategy of data collection through interviews and focus groups allows for flexibility and reflexivity on the part of researchers as they gather and interpret data (Anfara & Mertz, 2006).

A variety of qualitative research designs allows the researcher to determine which design or designs will most effectively collect the data to answer the research questions and draw meaningful conclusions from the research findings. Basic qualitative research is most commonly used to provide a broader interpretation of the meanings discovered by observing how individuals make meaning while engaging in the world around them. Its purpose can be, in fact, “knowledge for the sake of knowledge” (Patton, 2002, p. 215). Research is ungirded by principles specific to the discipline in which the research is conducted while embracing the essence of scholarly inquiry suitable for publication. While impossible to fully bracket out the researcher’s assumptions, integral to the phenomenological research design, the goal is to provide data with enough complexity and depth to represent as closely as possible the participants’ experiences as captured by researcher observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). These observations come in myriad forms such as interview, video, photography, artifacts, and so on. Furthermore, it is the research question which will dictate the research strategy which will best capture the participant’s experience.

To grow in intellectual capital, scholars must actively pursue topics of research study to bridge the gap between theory and practice and contribute new knowledge to a specific field of inquiry. For a study focusing on embodied learning and women practicing Taekwondo, for

example, determining the appropriate research methodology is essential to derive meaningful results to provide a different perspective of a phenomenon. Since I am seeking to explain the experience of women who have a Black Belt in Taekwondo, an appropriate research strategy was narrative as it seeks to utilize the participants' stories to make sense of the phenomenon of embodied learning in women with a Black Belt. Furthermore, since the initial questions emerged from my own experience earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo, using an autoethnographic approach problematized my experience of earning a Black Belt thus providing the framework by which I analyzed and made meaning of other women's experiences earning their Black Belts. Denzin (2014) notes "The use and the value of the autoethnographic method lies in its user's ability to capture, probe, and render understandable problematic experience" (p. 36). To better understand the relevance of narrative and autoethnographic approaches to research, the following section provides a discussion of the various qualitative research types followed by a more thorough discussion of the narrative and autoethnographic paradigms highlighting their relevance in this study.

There are many types of qualitative research including basic interpretive research which seeks to examine participants experience and typically to gather them into themes. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Phenomenology tries to get at the "essence" of a phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). Grounded theory seeks to create theory as grounded in the data, while case study examines a naturally bounded system such as a class or an organization. Ethnography studies culture, autoethnography includes the culture and the experience of the researcher while narrative focuses on the story of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study is an autoethnographic narrative study.

Research Type: Narrative Inquiry and Autoethnography

Based on the descriptions of the various forms of research paradigms, I chose to employ the narrative and autoethnographic methodologies. As outlined in Chapter One, my personal experience earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo was fundamental to my initial inquiry into the lived experience of other women in search of answers to the underlying question guiding the study: have other women who have wanted a Black Belt in Taekwondo shared a similar lived experience as I have in terms of connecting with the embodied learning experience I encountered while earning my black belt? Choosing narrative and autoethnographic allowed me to integrate my story into the narratives of the participants regarding our embodied learning experiences earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo. The following section will provide a detailed explanation regarding the relevance of narrative and autoethnographic data collection in light of the context of the study. Narrative inquiry allows the participants' stories to become a mode of data collection and the autoethnography will permit me the space to analyze my experience in the culture of the women practicing in a Taekwondo school (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research employs the use of field notes, interviews, journals and artifacts such as documents, photos, and letters to offer plausible insights into how individuals make meaning of themselves and the world around them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Van Manen, 1990). It is the rethinking “the continuity and wholeness of an individual’s life experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17). Since “stories are how we make sense of our experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 33) it is up to the researcher to dissect these stories in order to draw meaningful conclusions.

Narrative inquiry permits the researcher to inquire into the subjects' experiences through various data collection methods. Growing in popularity among the social sciences, narrative inquiry delves further into the deeper meaning of an individual's lived experiences, using their stories to illustrate events which provide greater meaning in the context of their lives (Clandinin, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). By examining various sources of data such as interviews, accounts of life histories, creative non-fiction, journaling, and other artifacts from the subjects' experiences, narrative inquiry allows for a different approach to understanding an individual's lived experience. It facilitates revealing the lived cultural and social experiences which shape the subject's perception of the experience and offers a more translucent lens into how the individual interprets the experience (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Furthermore, in this context, narrative analysis allows for the opportunity to practice flexibility and reflexivity, essential to an honest and pragmatic approach to problematizing embodied learning in adult women practicing Taekwondo.

Entering the research process with several underlying assumptions about what the researcher *thinks* should happen versus what *will* happen can be problematic. As such, the narrative process, as well as other methodologies, provides space for the triangulation of data collection as a self-imposed critical reflection on the interpretation of data to assure flexibility in research. Furthermore, blending the two styles of methodology adds an additional layer of reflection on the data analysis thereby illuminating the data from multiple perspectives. Autoethnography, for example, allows the researcher to acknowledge her or his presence among the population being examined and recognizes her/his positionality as an insider to the cultural norms present as part of this group.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is the intentional examination by the researcher of “her or his cultural identity through engagement in one or more of the arts” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 70). “Autoethnographies and biographies are conventionalized, narrative expressions of life experiences” (Denzin, 2014, p. 7) and reflect “the life experiences and performances of a person” (Denzin, 2014, p. 1). The autoethnographic approach is not only relevant in the context of researchers in the arts, but it is also applied in other settings such as its utility in the classroom (Barr, 2018), coping with breast cancer (Sealy, 2012), or Chapman’s ongoing conversation with her graduate advisor in an adult education program (Chapman & Sork, 2001). Ethnography seeks to understand the other and autoethnography seeks to understand the self as situated in the context of the other in a specific culture. In this research study, autoethnography was used to capture my personal experience in the setting of the Taekwondo school and compare it to the lived experience of other women in the similar settings. I referenced my own experiences to gain a deeper insight into the experiences of other women in the Taekwondo school and used that to determine if my experience of embodied learning was unique or if other women experienced the same. By connecting my story with the story of others, it sets the context and draws the reader into a deeper connection with the discussion. Without a personal context Ellis and Bochner (2006) explain,

I become a detached spectator. There’s no personal story to engage me. Knowledge and theory become disembodied words on the page and I lose connection. I want to linger in the world of experience, you know, feel it, taste it, sense it, live in it. (p. 431)

Combining Narrative Inquiry and Autoethnography

The choice to combine narrative and autoethnography allowed me to incorporate my self-narrative with those of other women in similar circumstances to compare and contrast our lived experiences of earning a black belt. Chang (2008) pointed out the various advantages of integrating an auto-ethnographical approach to research such as being a researcher-friendly method; allows space for the researcher to gain a better perspective of self and others; and can potentially change the researcher during the process. Furthermore, autoethnography is advantageous in illuminating the researcher's positionality within the subgroup of participants and allows a greater opportunity for perspective transformation as data analysis occurs.

Data collection in the form of narratives allows the participants to share their stories from their own perspective. While the experience of the autoethnography allows an analysis on the part of the researcher, the narratives provide the larger context into which the researcher self-narrative may fit and also

the focus of narrative inquiry is not only valorizing individuals' experience but is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. (Creswell, pp. 67-68).

Narratives then allow the researcher to explore the life experience of a group and the autoethnography contributes the life-experience of the researcher by integrating her/his story into the data collection process to highlight of the larger cultural meaning of being included in the textual analysis of the narratives being considered (Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, the autoethnography allows the researcher to consider how her/his experience might provide insight into the experiences of others in a similar situation. In the context of this research study about

women's embodied learning experiences while earning a black belt in Taekwondo, my autoethnography illustrated my background as an insider as well as provide me with context related to the other participants' experiences.

Researcher Background

As discussed in Chapter One, I have experienced considerable radical life-changes parallel to my journey of earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo. A more thorough analysis in my autoethnography section will demonstrate the relevance of my life experience as the foundation upon which the study is based. In this section, I will attempt to illuminate the relevance of my life experience to set the stage for the study.

I entered the doctoral program of Adult Education at Penn State Harrisburg in 2005. From the moment I attended the orientation program in February of that year, I knew I had made the right decision to continue my education. The course work was definitely enlightening and revealed some truths to me which I may have known intuitively, but until I connected the theory to my own experience, I did not realize how important this educational experience would be. A fundamental shift in my perspective occurred when taking the social and historical issues in adult education course. After reading the ground-breaking research from Belenky and associates (1986) I realized just how much I identified with the women's experiences in relation to my own circumstances. Their discussions on silence and ways of knowing struck a chord with my experience of feeling silenced in my marriage. In 2007, I filed for divorce and as Belenky et al (1986) suggested, I walked away from my past to pursue my own growth as an individual (p. 76). I was probably unknowingly severing my ties to the past already, having begun my graduate studies, and forging a new perspective on life. This foray into my graduate work also required a sometimes uncomfortable examination of my own sense of self-worth. This self-

reflection took a turn when my son began taking Taekwondo and my subsequent following him on the path to becoming a Black Belt.

In 2008, my then 7 year old son expressed an interest in martial arts. The program offered at Karate for Kids allowed for physical and personal development as it not only guided the children through developing various hand and foot techniques associated with the martial arts, but also encouraged personal self-development in the form of mastering life skills such as respect, responsibility, and self-discipline. His instructor also encouraged me to consider practicing Taekwondo as the skills would help me in terms of developing self-defense strategies. I began my 3 and a half year journey toward my Black Belt that ended up teaching me much more than just how to memorize a Taekwondo form and break boards. My hiatus from my doctoral studies provided the space to connect the learning in the physical realm to the intellectual realm and I was able to translate skills I learned in the Taekwondo school to real life situations.

One of the primary lessons I took away from my years practicing Taekwondo was the knowledge that just knowing I could protect myself should a situation require it, was enough. I didn't need to announce to people that I had a Black Belt. Similarly, since I knew I was capable in the physical milieu, I was also capable in a variety of other settings. The first challenge I encountered was the death of my father. In 2013, my father passed away after a 6 week battle from a traumatic stroke. That was the first significant loss I had to address after the death of my marriage. Two years later, I almost lost my son to a suicide attempt. Drawing from the inner strength and knowledge gained from my Taekwondo practice, I was able to meet my son's needs and support his journey toward restored mental health. More will be discussed in my autoethnographic analysis of these life experiences, but it was from the experience of earning my Black Belt in Taekwondo that caused a perspective change in my life. Prior to earning my black

belt, I lived in a state of silence, my voice being muffled by my insecurity, and also by the unrealistic expectation of my husband to keep me in my place. Just as I overcame these limitations, I developed my voice and learned to advocate for myself. My inner strength was derived through the strength I developed when practicing Taekwondo and earning my Black Belt. The Black Belt was an outer sign of the internal wisdom I had accessed through my Taekwondo practice.

Examining my experience becoming a Black Belt in Taekwondo set the context for integrating my autoethnographic perspective into the study. Additionally, as a Black Belt in Taekwondo, I possessed an insider's access into the world of the Taekwondo school as well as the culture, procedure, and tradition associated with it. Acknowledging my role as researcher and Black Belt uncovered potential bias which was present through the course of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stress the importance of recognizing the researcher's role in gathering and interpreting data as the possibility exists for a skewed interpretation of results. Furthermore, utilizing my story in an autoethnographic approach exposed potential bias existing within the confines of the study as I analyzed the data. However, the autoethnographic approach was beneficial by using my own experience to relate to the experiences of others as I gathered data and used past experience to reinforce the participants' recollections of their experiences. Similar to the yoga greeting, "Namaste" which means, "I honor the divine in you as I acknowledge the divine in me", my autoethnography was the means through which I honored and validated each woman's experience along her journey to becoming a Black Belt in Taekwondo.

Participant Selection

In qualitative research, participant selection is one of many critical components in establishing a robust research framework. Purposeful sampling is one way to develop a population of study by establishing specific criteria to obtain the most relevant data associated with the research purpose and research study questions (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). It allows the researcher to construct an optimal population through which data can be collected relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). There are several types of purposeful sampling discussed in the literature, such as convenience sampling, maximum variation, or snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Since I wanted to examine the limited population of women’s embodied learning experience when earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo, I established the parameters to define the participants. Choosing females outside of the qualifications for the study would not achieve the goal of deeper understanding of the phenomenon of embodied learning.

A purposeful sample for the context of a study was chosen from women in Southeastern Pennsylvania who participate in Taekwondo at a *ATA Martial Arts* school, sanctioned by the *American Taekwondo Association*. These women met the following criteria:

- 1) be at least 25 years of age;
- 2) earned a Black Belt in Taekwondo; and
- 3) demonstrated a desire to explore how and what they have learned through practicing

Taekwondo. This was determined through initial contact with the participant pool, and could be assumed as such from the fact that the women wished to participate in the study.

The participant recruitment began by attending an adult martial arts class at an ATA Martial Arts school in Southeastern Pennsylvania. This was the school through which I earned my black belt. There were approximately 15 adult students, 5 of whom were female. I was able to recruit a total of six participants after implementing snowball sampling, a method through which participants are recruited by word of mouth from individuals already participating in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I recruited three from the martial arts school and three from a second school, both located in Pennsylvania

The participants were females over the age of 25. Adult education scholars continue to draw our attention to women and learning (English & Irving, 2015) and as such, scholars should continue to highlight women's experiences that further "challenge the invisibility and marginalization of women's experience in the knowledge-building process" (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 11). Furthermore, utilizing the age restriction of women over 25 allowed for the participants to draw from previous life experiences to make connections between their Taekwondo practice and its meaning in their lives.

My goal was to obtain a minimum of five participants in order to collect enough data to develop valuable insights into the lived experiences of the women participating in the study. Ideally, a larger sample would have generated more usable data, however, the data collection was time intensive and as such required economic use of time and resources.

Informed Consent

Prior to participation in the study, I provided each individual with a copy of an informed consent form containing all the details required for disclosure for participation in human studies research. As directed by the office of Penn State Institutional Research Board (IRB) I also provided each participant with a copy of the IRB approval to conduct the research study. I

offered to provide any information to each participant prior to their completing the consent form to assure that there was no coercion and each participant engaged in the study willingly. These forms are being kept in a locked cabinet in my office in 114A Beaver Community Center on the Penn State Berks campus. Additional electronic materials are being kept in a secure Penn State provided database application. All informed consent forms, interview transcripts, and other artifacts were coded to maintain confidentiality for each participant. This process remained intact for data collection as well.

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection is derived from sources which highlight the stories of the participants' lived experiences to be analyzed through the study. For the purpose of this study, utilizing semi-structured interviews, personal journals, focus groups, and a performance of a preferred Taekwondo form provided the "thick, rich description" of the participants' experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 43; Patton, 2002, p. 437) reflective of quality qualitative results (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Since I examined the embodied learning experience of a population of women, a primary critique of types of data collection requires the experience to be codified into language in order for participant and researcher to fully, cognitively, understand the dynamics of the embodied learning experience (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998). The whole notion of writing about an embodied learning experience seems to some degree counterintuitive because it requires an experience which does not involve words to be translated into language. Because of this, a variety of data collection methods were employed to develop a richer description of each participant's embodied learning experience. Utilizing foundational methods of data collection such as interviews, observations, and documents and artifacts, allowed me to create a picture

which illustrated the embodied experience of each Black Belt woman (Creswell, 2013). The following section describes the data collection and rationale for each. I will begin by discussing the interview as the initial approach to gathering data. Following this I implemented video-taping as a mode of data collection since this was used as an elicitation device to supplement data already collected through interview. Video can be considered both visual document and elicitation device (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and will be treated as such during the semi-structured interview segment of data collection.

Semi-structured interviews. I began the data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 2009). “Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 108). This interview structure is somewhat standardized but allows for room in terms of flexibility in delivery of questions, and mixes pre-determined questions with probing questions, and utilizes all the pre-determined questions with all respondents (Merriam, 2009). My goal was to provide some cues for the participant to think about her experience but allowed room for the participant to tell her story and construct her own meaning of the experience (Creswell, 2007). Examples of such questions were along the lines of:

“Tell me about a time when....”

“Give me an example of....”

“Tell me more about that....”

“What was it like for you when....”

“Knowledge resulting from the use of feeling, or *a priori* knowledge, as explained by Kerlinger (1986), is intuitive knowledge. Intuition is a self-evident way of determining truth,” (Merriam & Simpson, 2006, p. 4). I am not researching to tell my participants *their* truth. They are allowing

me access to their truth through these data collection strategies in an attempt to retell their story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in as true a way possible. Therefore, additional data collection was necessary to further support this truth. Because the interview process is a journey of discovery, I had some established questions, but I also allowed for flexibility in the flow of the discussion. In this way, the interview structure was a bit more relaxed allowing the participant to have a larger role in the direction of the conversation. This also played a key factor in developing rapport with the participant, keeping the conversation relaxed and inviting to set the stage for asking the participants to allow me to video them practicing their favorite form, and then to participate in a focus group after I collected and analyzed the individual interviews.

The interviews lasted from one and a half to two and a half hours. I began with the initial question set and asked if the participant had time to video her form. When inviting the participants to the initial interview, I asked if they would have the time to also allow me to video them performing a favorite form. I allowed the participants to determine whether or not they wanted to have their form videoed during that initial interview, or if they wanted to schedule a second appointment. Additionally, because I wanted the participants to feel comfortable performing while being videoed, they were given the option to wear their Taekwondo uniform if they chose. Providing the option to allow them to perform in as comfortable environment possible continued this trend in rapport development by establishing an environment of respect for their preferences and time. Each participant chose to engage in the videoing of her form as part of the initial interview. Then the “second” interview commenced after doing the video and acted as a video-debrief and follow-up to the first interview. The video lasted as long as it took for the participants to perform their form, perhaps two to three minutes, and a couple takes were made to assure comfort with their perception of their level of performance being videoed. We

returned to the interview area where we viewed the video and I provided the participants with pen and paper to record any observations as they viewed the video. Then, I began the second interview focusing on the video and the participant perceptions as the elicitation device to drive the direction for data collection in this second section. The interviews were transcribed using secure transcription software. I monitored the transcription for clarity and accurate recording. I also recorded the discussion on a digital recorder to act as a fact check when reviewing the transcript.

Once I gathered the transcripts, and edited them for clarity, I began to analyze for an initial set of themes. The themes began as a set of key words or phrases that appeared consistently throughout each of the participant transcripts. After determining these initial themes of findings, I used the categories as a foundation to facilitate the focus group discussion as one measure of verifiability. My field notes were an additional layer of member checking during the focus groups and transcript review. These factors will be discussed in depth in the data analysis section.

Video and debrief. To supplement the data collection process, I recorded each participant demonstrating her favorite Taekwondo form. In research addressing movement awareness and personal reflection, video and photography have been implemented as data gathering tools (Backåberg, Gummesson, Brunt, & Rask, 2015; Leijen, Lam, Wildschut, Robert-Jan Simons, & Admiraal, 2009; Springborg & Horii, 2016). In these instances, either a video or photo was used to elicit a response by the individual viewing her or himself engaging in a particular activity. In the study with Springborg and Horii (2016) for example, I was photographed teaching a martial arts class. Once all the photos were gathered and produced, I was sent a set of photos to review and comment on. Part of the comments included responding

to questions such as, “Looking at the photographs, what do you see? Were there any surprises for you in these photographs?” (Springborg & Horii, 2016, p. 14). These questions allowed me to reflect on that moment and examine my presence with the students in that moment. Likewise, after videoing each participant, I reviewed the video with her asking questions similar to the following: 1) Why did you choose this form? 2) How did you feel in your body as you performed the sequence? 3) What do you see as you watch yourself in the video? 4) What does this form represent to you? While this exercise still required a verbal/written component, it allowed the participant to enact a physical connection with her journey of earning her Black Belt. Another goal was to further develop a rapport with the participant in the hopes to gain trust required to follow-up with a more in-depth interview in the focus group setting and access to the Black Belt Essay if available. The Black Belt Essay is a real-time account of the journey toward earning a Black Belt and what it means to the individual preparing to finally test for the promotion in rank to a Black Belt. More will be discussed in the documents and artifact section.

Favorite Form. The form, or “Poom-sae”, is the sequence of hand and foot techniques designed for students in the martial arts to practice and create muscle memory. The forms increase in difficulty as the Taekwondo student progresses from the White Belt, involving 18 steps in the form, to the Black Belt, comprised of 81 steps in the form. During the video review, the participants were encouraged to consider and describe elements of performing the form such as: purpose for choosing the particular form, what did it mean to the participant when the form was first learned, and why is it important now. During this review, the researcher also observed how the participant critiqued her performance.

Focus groups. I found it important to convene a focus group at the end of the process as a way to debrief the entire group and allow them to share their experiences of earning a Black

Belt *and* the experience of reflection throughout the duration of the study. General guidelines for focus groups encourage limiting the size to six to ten participants with similar backgrounds to participate in the group interview process (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). A concern I had regarding the focus group was the degree of confidentiality among the participants, thereby possibly tainting the results from the group discussion. It was my goal to elicit responses from the group which to reinforce some of my assumptions gained as the result of analyzing the data sets from the videotapes, individual interviews, and Black Belt Essay. I looked to the focus group as the check mechanism to assure consistency of themes throughout the data set. My sense was that bringing the group together would provoke a subconscious response and illuminate some embodied knowing that the participant may not have recognized until it was sparked by a comment made from someone in the group. The participants were able to in fact, build upon each other's stories when someone mentioned a Taekwondo related experience. For example, a common theme reiterated among the participants addressed the feelings associated with testing for the Black Belt. Each participant echoed similar sentiments when reflecting on the empowering experience of successfully completing Black Belt testing.

Documents and Artifacts. Interviews are one method of data collection and provide an opportunity to ask specific questions directly of the participant in light of the purpose of the research. However, asking for some types of documents or artifacts can add another dimension to the data mining process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One of many stepping-stones in my journey toward earning my Black Belt occurred immediately prior to testing for my increase in rank. It was the completion of my Black Belt essay where I had the opportunity to reflect on and share my journey to becoming a First-Degree Black Belt. While possibly very personal in nature, I hoped that the participants would be willing to share this snippet into their journey as a

real time reflection on how they felt in that moment just before earning their black belt.

Documents and artifacts allow the researcher to access another dimension of the participant's experience in the phenomenon being investigated. I may not have been able to access the participant in real time when she earned her Black Belt, but the Black Belt Essay offered a glimpse into the time when this event occurred. Since only three participants were able to find their essays, I chose to use the document to fact check rather than include in the data collection set.

Artifacts are another opportunity to gain insight into the participant's experience. They are often "three-dimensional 'things' or objects in the environment that represent some form of communication that is meaningful to the participant" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 162).

Artifacts can serve as an elicitation device to stimulate thought surrounding a specific event. In this case, I used artifacts to engage the participant in discussion surrounding the process of earning her Black Belt and how that artifact represents that process. The artifact may even be the black belt itself. But the goal is to uncover another layer of the meaning of earning the black belt and the resulting embodied learning experience.

Observational Field Notes. Finally, I included my own observations in the form of field notes. Field notes should be "highly descriptive" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.151) and enhance the data collection process. Through my field notes I documented observations, which may not have been as explicit through the context of the interviews or video. I included such data collection items that were more in the realm of the physical and affective versus the verbal. Contextual cues such as body position, facial expression, and overall demeanor were recorded to enhance the written data and supplement the "rich, thick description" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 256) required to contribute to the verifiability of the data.

Data Analysis

Data collection for this study included six transcribed interviews, two focus group meetings, video, field notes, and assorted documents. These samples of data were used to gain insight into the individual experiences of the women in the study as they reflected on their journey toward earning their Black Belt in Taekwondo. Field texts can be collected in a variety of forms such as journaling; field notes; interview transcripts; individual discussion notes; and other written documents (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I address trustworthiness in greater detail in the next section, but creating a reliable data set in the context of this study could have been somewhat problematic.

Process of analysis. My analysis examined the written text which illustrated examples embodied learning. At the core of the study sits the notion of embodied learning, but I find the necessity to articulate the experience of embodied learning to be counterintuitive. How can a researcher expect to adequately reflect the nature of the individual experiences of each participant related to embodied knowledge in written form? My goal was to collect enough data in a variety of forms so that each piece could be compared to the other in each participant's individual experience and assess consistency of findings throughout.

Additional analysis of the data used a feminist lens to interpret the lived experiences of the women in the study and their stories of earning a black belt. As will become evident, the findings of this study in the next two chapters feature the narratives of the participants, generated through a narrative analysis process. I also did a constant comparative method of data analysis to generate themes of findings. These themes are discussed in the final chapter. Utilizing a constant comparative strategy in light of the theoretical frameworks of embodied learning and feminism allowed me to explore emerging themes and generate a cohesive analysis of the data as

will be evident in the concluding chapters. But to get there, I needed to first understand each participant's story.

Generating a Story. In order to develop individual stories about each participant's experience in Taekwondo, I reviewed their transcripts to make adjustments for clarity, conciseness, and to ensure the responses were creating a picture that depicted their black belt journey. I initiated this review prior to the focus groups to gain better insight into their individual stories and to find trends in responses I wished to explore with the groups. Once I removed the fillers or redundant items unrelated to the study, I was able to develop a succinct glimpse into the motivations for taking Taekwondo, the desire to continue along the journey to earning a black belt and beyond, and what the participants learned about themselves throughout. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note, "narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience" (p. 18). For me to better understand the experience of being a black belt woman, outside of my personal experience, I sought to create a story from each participant's interview that could provide a glimpse into her life as a Taekwondo woman. The write-up of their stories is included in part two of this dissertation. Divided into two chapters, the stories are grouped by experience. Chapter four isolates those experiences from the women who spent most of their lives practicing Taekwondo. Chapter five summarizes the stories of the women, like myself, who began later in life. Once I was able to create their stories, I went back into the text to uncover notable words or phrases that described their embodied experiences practicing Taekwondo. Such words or phrases included but were not limited to: strength or strong, power, powerful, competent, and the like. This provided the foundation for implementing the constant comparative analysis of the data set, which I discuss in the following section.

Constant comparative analysis. The objective in the process of analyzing data is to make sense out of the information collected throughout the study, (Merriam, 2009). In order to do this, I categorized participant responses from the varied data collection sources, in order to determine themes of findings among the data set. The initial data set in the form of interviews were transcribed and subsequently coded for initial emerging themes. I expected the data set to be almost superfluous, however, as I constructed and named categories, I was able to focus on trends relevant to the purpose of my study, combined responses so that they did not overlap other categories of findings, was able to be descriptive enough for the reader to gain an understanding of the themes, and maintained congruent categories (Merriam, 2009). The initial text analysis began to reveal a pattern in specific words the participants used to describe their experiences.

Table 3.1 illustrates these initial findings.

Table 3.1 Categories of Terms

NAME	Confidence	Strong	Power	Assertive
Marissa	10	13	2	
Colleen	17	17	23	
Wendy	9	16	2	
Michelle	5	4	2	3
Allison	6	2	2	
Andrea	6	1	5	

This beginning set of terms served as the foundation for developing the general themes of findings. Implementing constant comparison guided the process for identifying this vocabulary set that the participants used to describe their experiences in Taekwondo. Once I uncovered this trend, I turned to the focus group field notes and additional artifacts collected to compare for similar language and trends. Collecting and analyzing the data through this variety of methods allowed for triangulation, a strategy which uses multiple sources of data to contribute to the validity and trustworthiness of the results (Creswell, 2009). Data collection and analysis

occurred simultaneously as I continued to analyze data for themes of findings (Merriam & Tisdell 2016). Furthermore, this concurrent data collection and analysis allowed for checking against other member experiences in light of the theoretical framework of embodied learning. The process of constant comparative analysis is “widely used throughout qualitative research to generate findings” (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 202) and uncovered overlapping themes among the data set including my own autoethnography. Additionally, I took this set of terms and reviewed my story to find similarities in my description of my black belt journey. Doing so allowed me to check my responses against those of the participants and consider my experience in light of the emerging themes from the data.

Analysis of autoethnography. Because this research study also integrated my lived experience as a Black Belt in Taekwondo, I incorporated my story as part of the data that was analyzed. While it is not included in the final analysis of participant data sets, it did provide a starting point for assessing the data for themes associated with the theoretical frameworks. I also did a reflection at the end of each of the narratives with my autoethnographic reflections. (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). These observations will be explored in depth in part three later in this dissertation.

Verification Strategies

In order to generate results in a qualitative research study that prove to be valid and reliable, the researcher must approach the research process from an ethical and professional stance (Merriam, 2009). Scholars approach the notion of validity and reliability from a variety of perspectives, (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam, 2009; and Patton, 2002). According to Lincoln and Guba (1986), trustworthiness is associated with evaluating the worth

or value of a study. Trustworthiness requires the researcher to establish the following characteristics:

- 1) **Credibility** - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings;
- 2) **Transferability** - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts;
- 3) **Dependability** - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated; and
- 4) **Confirmability** - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, pp. 76-77).

Understanding the researcher's role in the study, differentiation in data collecting strategies, and implementing objectivity throughout the process of collecting and analyzing data allows the researcher to potentially minimize researcher bias and offer relevant, credible findings. Merriam (2009) reminds us however, that criteria in validity and reliability can differ. Therefore, plausible definitions of both are useful reminders to the researcher to maintain consistency throughout the collection and analysis of data.

A strategy endorsed for generating results that lean toward reliability is called triangulation. Triangulation involves collecting data from a variety of sources and utilizing the data set to cross check for concurrent themes of findings (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Rocco & Hatcher, 2011). My data collection strategies included individual interviews, video narrative analysis (the review of the Taekwondo form on video with the participant), Black Belt essays, personal journals if applicable, and finally a focus group. Member checks were an additional strategy through which participants were asked to review aspects of their data to determine if it adequately represented their lived experience in the setting being studied. Once I discovered the

primary themes and potential quotes associated with them, I requested a second interview to review and confirm an accurate interpretation of data. This second interview took the form of two separate focus groups with three participants in each group because all six were unable to convene at one time. During the focus groups, I informally obtained member checks by using the initial interview questions and selected participant responses to confirm the accuracy of the data collected. For example, I asked the predetermined interview questions to the entire group. After each member shared their responses to the question, I referred to individual interview transcripts to refresh the participants' memories of their original responses if the focus group responses differed or to confirm I accurately documented their previous responses from the individual interviews. Additionally, implementing this style of member checks and focus groups allowed the participants to build upon each other's responses to reinforce underlying themes emerging from the data. Accessing data through these means explored the themes experiences among the participants, and established congruency among the themes of findings for each individual participant. Furthermore, triangulation ensured consistency among each data set for each participant, in an attempt to maintain credibility among the themes of findings from the study. Doing so allowed me to progress toward to the goal of establishing validity among the study results, (Merriam, 2009).

Summary

In summary, the purpose of this chapter was to illustrate the rationale and procedure for the chosen research paradigm. In order to accomplish this, the chapter began with a brief discussion of the purpose of the study with the research questions. A description of qualitative research, and the specific research paradigm appropriate to this study was introduced. Finally, participant selection, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness of the data was discussed.

PART TWO

EMBODIED NARRATIVES

INTRODUCTION TO EMBODIED NARRATIVES

Part two of this dissertation contains chapters four through six where I present and discuss the findings of the study. As a reminder to the reader, the purpose of the study was to examine how women make meaning of the embodied learning experience of earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo. The Research Questions guiding the study are:

- 1- How do women's experiences learning Taekwondo influence their self- perceptions, including the ways in which they exist in and interact with the world?
- 2- What role does the culture and environment in the Taekwondo school play when examining the embodied learning experience as a woman practicing Taekwondo?
- 3- How does the embodied learning experience as a woman participating in Taekwondo contribute to the development of identity?

This introductory section to Part Two of this dissertation features my own personal narrative as part of the autoethnographic component of this study. Then the following two chapters present the data from two types of participants: the women who began practicing Taekwondo as a child emphasized in chapter four and the women who began practicing Taekwondo as adults emphasized in chapter five. I'll say more about these chapters, after featuring my own autoethnography here.

Embodied Learning in Taekwondo: A Feminist Autoethnography

I have shared some of my story throughout this dissertation, but this section will be devoted to the relevance of my story as an autoethnographical analysis in the context of feminist perspectives on embodied learning. Exploring the circumstances leading up to enrolling in Taekwondo and the subsequent path to earning a black belt and its impact on my life will provide a better understanding of the far-reaching effects of the embodied learning experience in Taekwondo. Additionally, it will provide a cultural context for reviewing the stories of the participants who also began Taekwondo later in life. The organization of this section will begin by reflecting my own journey toward the black belt, how I came to know through it, and the resulting outcomes of earning a black belt. Of course the journey toward the Black Belt cannot be entirely separated from my academic journey and coming to understand both feminist perspectives and embodied learning in a much deeper way. Hence my discussion here is divided into three parts, the back story where I focus on my learning through Taekwondo before I returned to finish my doctorate. In the second part I focus more on my continued learning and how I've made further sense of it in light of my academic study and deep dive into feminism and adult education and embodied learning. Finally I provide some reflection and consideration of cultural symbol

The Back Story. I began Taekwondo in Fall of 2008 after my son began taking classes. His instructor strongly encouraged me to consider taking classes as a single mom. Because when I do something, I usually go all in, I was well on my way to earning a black belt and little did I know, also to begin teaching Taekwondo classes as well as earning my instructor certification.

My story of discovering Taekwondo began long before my son began classes. I was married in 1996, had my daughter in 1997 and my son in 2001. I can distinctly remember a time right after my son was born, when my husband was leaving for work, and I sat crying in the family room thinking to myself, “Oh my gosh. I am stuck. I am right where he wants me: alone, with two children, no friends, no possibility of having a job, completely under his control.” It was the worst feeling of my life. I felt unvalued, insignificant, and little more than just an object. The power differential was clear: I had little to none and he had it all. I had never felt smaller in my life.

Turning point. Prior to my son’s birth, I had taught a class at a community college and a few more classes part-time at a local university. When he turned one, I thought about looking for part-time teaching at a university campus near me, Penn State Berks. It began with one course and eventually expanded into a full-time contract. In 2005, I decided to return to graduate school and earn my doctoral degree in Adult Education. That was a significant turning point in my life, also met with extreme resistance from my husband. When I proposed the plan to go back to school, his response was, “You’re tired all the time as it is. How do you expect to go to school, go to work, and take care of everything around the house?” Needless to say, that was a pivotal moment in my journey. Another key turning point was a course I took the following year addressing social and historical issues in adult education. My exposure to feminist epistemology in the form of the foundational piece on how women come to know, from Belenky et al. (1986) was significant to my education, both formally and informally. I saw through my husband’s controlling behavior and realized it was time to finally claim power over my situation. In 2007, I filed for divorce and with all this going on, I had to drop out of my doctoral program temporarily. In 2008 I began my journey toward my black belt propelling me to inhabiting my

world in a way that I had not been able to experience since my childhood. I returned to the doctoral program in 2013 with a significant shift in perspective. I did not understand it at the time but reflecting on my experience in the context of this study provided some clarity regarding my doctoral journey.

When I first entered the program, I was not fully myself. I struggled with balancing academics, being a mother, and also being an instructor in higher education. This along with not feeling present in my body negatively impacted my ability to fully connect with the academic content. After examining my lived experience of practicing Taekwondo, and recognizing that I am a kinesthetic learner, I noticed perhaps the reason I was unable to make these learning connections had to do with how I make meaning in, with, and through my body. The divorce was my first step to reclaiming my sense of self but practicing Taekwondo was the critical step in reclaiming my body, my whole self, thus unlocking its ability to facilitate my learning upon re-entry into the doctoral program. This dissertation is part of that journey and part of my Taekwondo journey as well.

By 2011, I earned my black belt in Taekwondo. I had been working toward that goal for over three years. Wearing my black belt became an outward symbol of my accomplishment but also represented a difference in the way the world revealed itself to me and myself to the world. It was more than just a black belt. I experienced an internal shift in the way I perceived myself, others, and the way I inhabited my world. With the trauma of my divorce behind me, my world looked different. I was different. I was a Black Belt, I escaped an unhealthy marriage, I was working in academia, I was supporting my children, and I no longer felt small. My life in the Taekwondo school had tremendous impact on my bodily comportment and how I perceived my world. It was life-changing.

Taekwondo and discovering the power of my body. I liked being at the Taekwondo school to support my son, but it was also an activity I had never done before, and in the subculture of the Takwondo school embodied ways of being were valued. Engaging in an activity that promoted or utilized physical power was incredibly appealing. I *felt* different as I executed the hand and foot techniques. There was something *powerful* about ki-happing and striking the wave bag or other practice tools. This was a power that had been stripped from me within the confines of my marriage. In her study on female body builders, Johnston (1996) uncovered three possible readings of female body sculpting. The category most relevant here addresses the notion that “The built female body acts as a mode of defiance to patriarchal attempts to render Woman as the Other, weak and formless and lacking solidity” (Johnston, 1996, p. 329). While her study addresses both the physical and mental reconfiguring of the female body, Taekwondo served as a space to reconfigure my body as well. The space of the school allowed me to reach beyond, both physically and mentally, what I had previously experienced. Familiar with the notion of engaging in an activity to reshape the body, the Taekwondo school likewise allowed a change in the physical, but was also coupled with a change in the emotional. I liked the level of mutual respect among males and females, and junior and senior belt levels exhibited in the classes. Everything was sir or ma’am. I felt I was among equals and I didn’t feel as though I was competing with anyone. The power differential was still present to some extent due to the organization of the class and rank. For example, when lining up at the beginning and ending of the class, we organized from highest to lowest rank. Seniority was never based on gender.

Making Further Sense of My TKD Experience: Academia Meets Life Experience

In the above discussion I focused more on my life experience in general with TKD in focusing on the back story, and my experience and thinking at the time as I remember it. But since completing my black belt in 2011, I returned to complete my doctorate after a hiatus. In what follows below, I discuss this in relationship to gender and embodied learning based on what I was learning in studying these topics from an academic perspective and tying them in with my life experience. In what follows below, I discuss them separately but, recognize that these categories of gender and embodied learning also overlap. To be sure there have been feminist writers who have discussed the body in relationship to knowledge construction (Jaggar, 1987; Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1993), though they have done so largely from a philosophical perspective, and not from a learning perspective. Further most of the feminist discussion of the body has been in the late '80s and 1990's and more recent discussions of embodied cognition or embodied learning have not discussed feminism in particular. Hence in what follows, I discuss only the literature that has been most significant to my own journey.

Gender. My gender has always been present in my awareness one way or another. I'm constantly reminded of the challenges that exist as a female in the working world, and in academia that has been how US culture has organized itself under patriarchy. Reading Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's (1986) text and their edited collection 10 years later Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, Belenky, 1996) when I first returned to school in 2005 was groundbreaking, probably in ultimately paving my way to think about gender more deeply, and may have been a factor in helping me leave my husband and marriage to begin with. While I did take a hiatus from my doctoral program while I was getting my life in order, and during my

divorce, that early foray back into the academic world certainly had an effect on my gender consciousness. More recent literature has reinforced the challenges women encounter in the face of the development of physical competence and men's perception of potential physical dominance by women of powerful bodies. Farkas' (2007) discussion, in her examination of female weightlifters, addresses the dualistic perspective on the body in terms of western thought regarding a weak body as feminine. Feminist discourse endeavors to disrupt this view by seeking to "fight patriarchal oppression partly through privileging the female body for its generative and nurturing powers" (p. 4). Regrettably, we are continually bombarded with images that as Farkas (2007) suggests:

society still values physical power and its seeming connection to overall competence, and still tends to associate this competence with masculinity. All too many women do not have, and do not seek, this physical competence; we see our bodies as having less power to get things done. (p. 4)

Participating in Taekwondo allowed me to depart from the socially constructed and cultural confines of gender in real life beyond the academic sense since gender, inside the Taekwondo classroom did not dictate or limit the activities we were expected to demonstrate. Additionally, I secretly enjoyed the idea of being a *badass* by knowing how to break boards, execute the Taekwondo forms, and demonstrate self-defense techniques. Looking back and having a black belt, I recognize that participating in Taekwondo gave me permission to behave in a way that wasn't considered feminine within more traditional social contexts but allowed me to perform my own version of femininity. This option was empowering. I loved it. I felt as though I was among equals. I felt as though I was in my element. I was not restricted by male power, as

I had been in my marriage, but rather I was allowed to claim power through my physical presence in the Taekwondo school.

Growing confidence. As I discussed in the opening chapter of this dissertation, I never felt confident in my ability to protect myself or speak my truth. I was timid and unsure and definitely did not feel worthwhile or appreciated or that I even had the right to exist. After I earned my belt, I felt I gained power over my presence in the world. There was something validating about this outward sign of inner success. I finally felt like I had a right to exist.

I recall the first classes as a white belt and watching upper ranks practicing their forms, board breaks, and weapons forms. I was incredibly intimidated; however, the lead instructor was adept at reminding us to keep our eye on the prize. We were encouraged to be present in the moment and focus on the task. Our mantra, “A Black Belt is a White Belt who never gave up” resounded in my head continuously through each class.

This journey gave me permission to assert my presence and power in the world. I had earned my black belt and subsequently, in my mind earned my right to exist as a female. I translated this validation of self to every aspect of my life. This growing confidence had an effect on my belief in my ability to do my doctorate. And finally returned to my graduate studies with a new sense that I could accomplish anything I put my mind to.

Studying feminism and practicing Taekwondo. Throughout my life, a variety of external and internal factors shaped my identity. One such example I recall is being a teen and lifting weights with my dad at the gym. I felt complete ownership of my body especially in those moments where I could decide for myself how to present myself to the world. Conversely,

when I sought to assert my individual identity during my marriage, I was met with extreme criticism and was mocked for my desire to have some sense of independence. Hayes and Flannery (2000) note that “Specific self-esteem is situational” (p. 56) and degrees of self-esteem shift depending on people and circumstances and individual’s awareness of how others perceive them. When at the gym with my father he approved of my physical activity, otherwise he would not have brought me with him. My father’s approval was paramount and it was reaffirming that he supported my interest in physical activity. Additionally, he was my biggest supporter of pursuing academics and emphasized the importance of earning a college degree. My husband on the other hand was judgmental and diminished my sense of self-esteem and bodily ownership. Any time I stepped into behavior which was self-expressive, I was chastised. Even when I originally entered the doctoral program in 2005, he minimized this goal by suggesting I was already too tired to do everything in the home let alone add graduate studies to my plate. The differences between their responses were staggering. As I returned to my graduate program in 2013, I frequently ruminated on this dichotomy between the two most significant males in my life, my father and my husband, and how their perceptions of me shaped my self-perception and furthermore, why I looked for their approval. Studying feminism provided fundamental answers to this dilemma and became the foundation upon which I built my own understanding of myself and women as learners.

There were diametrically opposing forces at work in my journey to constructing my identity as a daughter and then as a wife and mother. As a reminder, Belenky et al. (1986) conducted foundational research on ways women come to know by engaging in conversation with women as learners to identify categories of psychological models on how women manage “truth, knowledge, and authority” (p. 3). The most significant connection for me was the

intertwining of self-concept and how women come to know. As a daughter, I sought approval from my father as an authority figure and was strongly influenced by his opinion of me. Operating on received knowledge (Belenky et. al., 1986) I shaped my identity by trusting my father and then my educators in college, also authority figures, to assist in developing my self-concept. "...women of received knowledge listen carefully and try hard to live up to the images that others have held up to them" (p. 49). Being stuck in this mode of received knowledge hampered the development of my sense of self and ability to develop a greater sense of self-efficacy which lasted well into young adulthood. As such, when meeting my husband who just happened to also be a police officer, another position of authority, I see now that part of our relationship hinged on seeking his approval as well. When that was met with resistance, unlike my experience with my father, I retreated to a place of silence in my marriage where I completely lost my voice. I had no mode of advocating for myself due to this dynamic and ultimately, I chose to stay in my place navigating his expectations of a stay at home mom. My identity and self-concept were defined by my husband and like the women in the study, my ability for intellectual growth was limited to what my husband allowed. This explains my husband's opposition to furthering my education.

Terminology such as *feminist epistemology*, *feminist pedagogy*, *voice*, *connected learning*, and *women as learners* (English, 2006) reinforces how women's learning is present in feminist literature. Further, in the 1990s and beyond, significant literature has explored women's participation in sport (Choi, 2000; Grousz, 1994; Hall, 1996; Rouse, 2017; Sanchez-Garcia & Spencer, 2014) and as a Kinesiologist, a participant in physical activity, and as a female, I was drawn to literature that explored women's learning in a way that I could apply to my own learning and participation in physical activity, specifically, Taekwondo. To investigate the

relationship between women, learning, and physical activity, I returned to the foundation of feminist frameworks and as Tisdell (1998) outlined in her discussion of post-structural feminism, focused on the relevance of themes in feminism that discuss “(1) how knowledge is constructed, (2) voice, (3) authority, and (4) positionality or how to deal with difference” (p. 140). As I progressed in my studies, it became clear to me this was the lens through which I could analyze my lived experiences related to reclaiming myself, assessing the change in my own bodily comportment, and identifying how and what I learned as a result of earning a black belt in Taekwondo. Implementing a feminist lens to analyze my experience of my Black Belt journey allowed me to access the mechanism of development of voice, knowledge construction, and positionality through practicing Taekwondo. Furthermore, addressing the intersection of feminism and phenomenology seeks to explore the phenomenon of the female sporting body as she performs a physical activity as an endeavor in physical literacy. (Chisolm, 2008).

Feminist pedagogy isolates women’s educational needs, focuses on the teaching and learning of women, and draws attention to the social processes present as women make meaning through an expansion of consciousness as they critically reflect on their world, specifically under the overall influence of patriarchy and in some cases the influence of class, race, sexual orientation and ability status. With limited exception (Musial, 2011) it has not however, overtly examined the lived, bodily experiences of women as we come to know and neglects to critique the significance of the presence of the female body in learning as directly as it might. This is also implied in English and Irving’s (2015) summarizing of the work that has been done by feminist adult educators over the years in considering issues related to feminism in community. In particular, women’s health issues have been examined and critiqued to the extent of access to appropriate health and medical care and recommendations have been made to consider the

person holistically, but this still does not address the knowledge arising from the body in embodied learning contexts. As English and Irving (2015) explained in drawing on health care educators Cueva and Cueva's (2008) work with Alaska Native women,

We know that the body is an important part to learning and being, though it is much neglected in deference to the mind and the brain. Dance and body movement was an important way of connecting their own knowledge and know how, and the Western medical knowledge and medical education model was put in a context and not presented as the only way to learn and be. (p. 35)

I argue that this is an oversight—the role of the body, specifically in the feminist pedagogy of educating women—that needs to be addressed especially in light of my discovery of how I came to know through my lived experience of Taekwondo. It was only after I critically reflected on my dis-embodied experiences while married that I was able to differentiate between when I felt stifled in my sense of self versus capable of autonomous bodily comportment. My prior experience in physical activity served to inform my intellectual connection to Taekwondo, which Brace-Govan (2004) reinforced by acknowledging connections between Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodiment and Young's initial arguments toward the concepts of physical activity, feelings of empowerment and access to improved social status in her study of women weightlifters. Brace-Govan (2004) notes these concepts “are the bedrock of the feminist argument that women need to engage in physical activity that engenders a sense of achievement and success” (p. 513). As an educator interested in feminist experiences in learning, I will draw connections between my learning in Taekwondo and general themes in feminism such as in relationship to the development of voice, authority, the construction of knowledge, and positionality. Given that much of the feminist literature has not focused on the body in

particular, I will draw attention to the body, though in the next major section on Embodiment, I will focus on it more directly.

Taekwondo and development of voice. The finding of voice is a significant theme throughout feminist literature. In terms of pedagogy, it is a fundamental goal to create a safe space in which women are free to use their voice not only verbally but also through self-identity and self-expression. “These moments of gaining voice have been represented as crucial stages in the process of self-actualisation and conscientisation of women” (McLeod, Yates & Halasa, 1994). Voice is also relevant in the development of female students’ identities and the “emerging consciousness of themselves as women” (Maher & Tetreault, 2001, p. 90). Voice can also be displayed through physical movement such as dance (English & Irving, 2015) and certainly through the movement of Taekwondo. As I mentioned above, I felt I had no voice in my marriage but when I entered the Taekwondo school, I felt this safe space where I could use my voice both literally and figuratively. Voice was present through the language of the Taekwondo school in how we addressed our fellow martial artists as “Ma’am” or “Sir”. We recited the tenets of Taekwondo at the beginning and end of each class. And our bodies served as the physical representation of voice when executing hand and foot techniques. This voice was also translated through my confidence as a martial artist and my ability to assert my identity, my gendered identity as a female martial artist, and self-advocacy.

One example of utilizing voice in the Taekwondo classroom is the ki-hap. The ki-hap is a sound emanating from the diaphragm, the muscle that supports the lungs in breathing. It is meant to harness energy which some refer to as spiritual energy, to focus the martial artist on the particular hand or foot technique being executed. When first learning the White Belt form, the

first form in a series of color belt forms leading to the black belt in Taekwondo practice, I was reticent to express the ki-hap at the appropriate moment in the form during the side kick. Being loud, making the noise, drawing attention to myself, was intimidating. However, as I began to move through the Taekwondo space more comfortably, and as I leveled up to the next color belt, my reluctance to utter the ki-hap subsided and I learned that it had tremendous significance in the practice. Allowing my breath to be expelled forcefully accomplished several elements of the Taekwondo practice. It did indeed harness energy and provided the breath required for explosive movements in hand and foot techniques. It further provided focus when executing board breaks, a required element of Taekwondo testing. Expressing the ki-hap during critical times in Taekwondo practice reminded me of my significance as a martial artist, allowed me to harness energy required to penetrate a board with a hand or foot technique, and served as a reminder to be present in the moment. Harnessing the energy through the ki-hap required me to be fully aware of my surroundings, what I was doing in that moment, and how I was executing the Taekwondo skill. The most significant takeaway from the practice of expressing the ki-hap was that I could be loud, I could be seen, and I could be powerful. A feminist analysis would draw parallels to my development of voice in the Taekwondo classroom by how I eventually came to advocate for myself outside of the Taekwondo classroom (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). I was still addressing the minutiae of finalizing a divorce, developing a fair custody agreement, and dividing assets, and although I had an attorney, this was the time I needed to speak for myself as opposed to the time in my marriage when I had no voice. I became my own advocate but also felt entitled to that advocacy and ownership of myself.

Taekwondo and authority. Authority and positionality are additional key tenets in feminist literature and in understanding women's learning. Feminism is inherently critical of

power and requires power differentials to be examined in a variety of settings. English and Irving (2015) address feminism in the context of communities of women and communities of practice. “Feminist pedagogical space is a space in which women challenge power, acquire gendered understandings, and collectively learn to create change” (p. 111). They discuss the transformational potential of exposing feminist strategies to challenge existing structures of power through the implementation of and normalizing practices in feminist pedagogical frameworks. From a post-structural feminist perspective, it is in positionality and authority that we find in the emancipatory capacity of learning for women (Tisdell, 1998) and the opportunity to contest power structures that are inherently oppressive. The classroom setting is historically rooted in power however, the Taekwondo school differs in its interpretation of power. Though gender is obvious, power is ubiquitous and is distributed based on rank, contrary to typical classroom settings. A black belt outranks a purple belt, a purple belt also outranks a white belt, and a Third Degree Black Belt outranks the Second and First Degree Black Belts and so on.

Along my journey to become a black belt, I became an authority on each belt level I accomplished. This process was emancipatory in nature in that the receiving of color belts distinguished me not only by rank, but also as a sign of accomplishing each echelon of learning. Because of this evolving level of awareness of my abilities, I also recognized a desire to teach Taekwondo to facilitate the dynamic through which others might also be elevated in their Taekwondo skills but also in their sense of self. Perhaps this was an amalgamation, although not visible to me then, of my learning not only about Taekwondo, but also about this ability to self-advocate, to reclaim ownership of my body by directing it through the space of the Taekwondo school, and my innate sense of the parallels between lifelong learning and physical activity. I wanted to share the power I claimed through Taekwondo with other students in the Taekwondo

school. Reflecting on my position in the Taekwondo school, each level of color belt testing was an outward sign of my authority on that particular belt level and the belts leading up to it. But my positionality was not just based on my rank in the school. I must also acknowledge that I am a white middle-class female with significant education as evidenced by this dissertation, and that alone places me in a position that many other women may not have access to. This alone impacts the degree to which I have access to power where other women in different situations may not have the same access. So although it is my goal through teaching Taekwondo to provide the circumstances through which other women may access their potential, the outcome may not be equal to my experience. Examining this phenomenon from a post-structural perspective highlights Freire's (2009) emphasis on power differentials but utilizing a feminist lens to further explore the phenomenon draws attention to power differentials challenged by gender and addresses the positionality of the participants in the educational setting. Though not a traditional classroom, in the Taekwondo school men and women engaged in identical activities to achieve each belt rank. As such, my authority was based on rank, not gender, which to a certain extent removed the gender binary traditionally associated with authority. Conversely, because of my cultural background as a white middle class female, I am unable to remove the impact of my positionality in my encounters with other students in the Taekwondo school.

Taekwondo and constructing knowledge. Because feminist pedagogy is rooted in how women construct knowledge, connecting my Taekwondo practice to my learning is paramount to understanding my lived experience transferring embodied knowledge from the Taekwondo school to the world around me and how I grew in my meaning making process. Feminist descriptions of women's knowledge construction center around the fundamental belief that women come to know differently, in terms of what is prioritized. Scholars (Belenky, et. al,

1986; Hayes & Flannery, 2000; Maher & Tetreault, 2001; Tisdell, 1998) have attempted to consider the fluid nature of women's learning and knowledge construction, but fail to consider the body in this different way of coming to know, and it is a critical and often overlooked piece when discussing women's learning. As I refer to earlier in this dissertation, more current examinations of women, learning, and the body, have finally embarked on their exploration of the role of the body in drawing embodied knowledge to our awareness through a variety of means such as dance, (Snowber, 2012), writing, (Lawrence, 2012), and intuition, (Tisdell, 2007; Nieves, 2012), though such writing is not specifically feminist in its orientation, nor does it focus on women per se.. English and Irving (2015) draw attention to the body, specifically the woman's body in learning, in their synthesis of women, learning, and the need for women to join in a community of learners while acknowledging diverse modes of learning. Their claim to a more inclusive approach to learning focuses on the learner as a whole by considering the body. English and Irving (2015) attend to the significance of the body in learning stating,

A critical theory of pedagogy ought to look at how the body is brought to life; it also ought to look at how the body is part and parcel of our lives and how we integrate it. For feminist writers, the body is a source of knowledge and of support, though it cannot be easily known, and for some of us, it may take a lifetime to figure out. (p. 108)

Likewise, the body is a "source of knowledge and of support (p. 108) in the realm of physical activity and in my case, the realm of the activity of Taekwondo. This relationship was definitely not evident until after I returned to the doctoral program and began to examine my experience in the Taekwondo school. Further investigation in the context of this dissertation revealed much more than anticipated. While bell hooks (1984) discussed goals and challenges of feminist education emphasizing the need to dismantle structures in place that limited women's

access to basic literacy skills, missing from her discussion on literacy was the notion of physical literacy. hooks (2009, 2014, 2015) in addressing the intersectionality of racism and sexism in her critiques of the feminist movements, does discuss in general, the presence of the Black female body but also misses the full conversation of what it means to recognize the relevance and presence of the body as essential in learning. My participation in Taekwondo created the avenue to explore literacy in the realm of the body and served to open a conduit of knowledge construction previously hindered by my lack of bodily self-comportment. Again, I did not recognize it in the moment, but critical self-reflection on my embodied Taekwondo experience informed me of the significant role my body played as I was accessing not only intellectual knowledge but knowledge of self through free physical expression. It was as if a door was unlocked through my Taekwondo practice and upon my return to the doctoral program, everything; theories, frameworks, philosophies became crystal clear.

Also significant was that I had a framework through which to better comprehend the relationship between theory and practice by recognizing the relationship between feminist pedagogy and what was occurring in the Taekwondo classroom. We read that bell hooks (1984) critiqued Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* by challenging her parochial perspective of women due to the exclusion of the black female experience. In doing so she draws our attention to the Black Womanist bodily experience but still does not address the female body as a whole from a feminist perspective. Here, drawing attention to women's meaning making through a lived bodily experience addresses this overlooked dimension of women's learning.

Embodied Learning

I have learned a lot from my own bodily lived experience of learning and practicing Taekwondo. But being able to articulate what I have learned is tied up with some of the

academic discussion of embodied learning, as connected to those who discuss it in adult education, and in relationship to the writings of Merleau-Ponty and the discussion of them.

Embodied learning and adult education. Those who have come to discuss embodied learning in the field have not conceptualized it specifically from a feminist perspective, but have centered on the experience of learning through the body. I suppose when I was learning TKD or even now, I do not tend to consciously think about the fact that I am a feminist learner learning as a woman. But I can recall definite sense of success as I completed a form correctly though I never thought to stop and take notice. I do remember being very present, like in that moment, getting the form correct, or perfecting a specific hand strike or foot technique. I had a laser like focus on the skill I was practicing at that instant. It just “felt” different. I felt and still feel as though I own my space, like I belong. Individuals who knew me prior to earning my black belt, after not having seen me for a while, also recognized a difference in my bodily comportment. It’s not only the way I carry myself, but also the way I present myself in various situations. I no longer shrink to try and take up less space. Both physically and personally, this is who I am. I am accomplished and that is how I present myself to the world. I have come a very long way in the last 13 years, though a large part of the learning has not been fully conscious.

Similar to Swartz’s (2012) embodied experiences after having suffered a brain injury, I came to recognize this embodied wisdom as I grew into a renewed sense of self and exhibited a different way of being resulting from this body evolution. She writes of this evolution of the wisdom of the body as an accumulation of experiences.

Because each person’s embodied mind is a unique product of life experience, individual learning will also be unique and specific outcomes will vary, but the desired general

movement would be toward greater integration of past experience and current capability. (Swartz, 2012, p. 18).

The wisdom of my body dictated this new way of being in and of the world. My experiences before, during, and after Taekwondo served to inform my new embodied experiences. Perhaps this is what Moi's (2001) reference to the reconstituted lived body is addressing. "The lived body is a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is body-in-situation" (Young, 2005). I developed the autonomy to freely construct my face to the world through bodily comportment appropriate to the situation. It was through the free expression of the Taekwondo form as an unencumbered lived body that I could translate this freedom of expression in my reconstituted body. This reconstitution involved not only my physical presence but my phenomenal presence as well. My physical body reflected what the wisdom of my phenomenal body already knew. And then, through the connection of the physical activity of Taekwondo, a renewed bodily awareness was revealed.

The question remains whether through engaging in physical activity I come to know as a result of the activity itself, or if I come to discover what was already present in the body through participating in physical activity. In other words, does physical activity facilitate the processing of knowledge to draw it to the surface of the individual in a way that can be fully articulated beyond the gesture of the activity? What I do know is that it required reflection on my bodily experience to uncover the learning that occurred while practicing Taekwondo. The reflection provided the space in which I examined my bodily experience in Taekwondo and process the effects it had on the way I inhabited my world. The other question is, is language necessary to articulate embodied learning or can we just *know* that the nature of cognition has shifted in relation to engaging in a physical activity. Freiler (2008), in an adult education context, explored

similar questions as she sought to conceptualize embodied learning. Drawing on more holistic and Eastern practices of embodiment, Freiler entertained the possibility of intuition as being instrumental in authenticating embodied learning. In this study, I drew on the bodily experiences of female Taekwondo practitioners who upon reflection, were able to recognize the connection between their embodied experiences while earning a black belt and how they came to inhabit their worlds differently as a result. As will become clear in the narratives that follow, the participants, in their reflections on how they felt in their bodies as they practiced, often referred to this *feeling* whether it was “blacking out”, “out of body” or being “in the zone” which can be recognized as the intuitive sensation to which Freiler (2008) refers.

The nature of experiencing and the learning drawn from the experience are more deeply related to subjective meaning and interpretation than to a purposive intent. Thus, this type of experience is more often referred to as an experience of embodiment or embodied learning. (p. 39)

Tobin and Tisdell (2015) in discussing the embodied learning of creative writers refer to the “body as a site for learning” (p. 217) but the body cannot be simplified as merely a “site” for learning. The body is present as locus, observer, participant, learner, and creator in the presence of embodied learning. This takes us to the influence of Merleau-Ponty in understanding my own experience of embodied learning.

The influence of Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty (2002) emphasized the role of the body in learning in terms of the ways in which we inhabit our world differently when connecting our gesture with the gesture of the world in a reflexive physical conversation. Mazis (2016) interprets Merleau-Ponty’s redefining of the body-object to the body-subject by implementing a new way of thinking about the body:

In other words, through perception, embodiment is open to another kind of being that encompasses what had been taken to be the subjective and the objective. ...it is a distinctive and co-emergent *process* and also that it is an *unfolding* that is equally *enfolding*. This level of primordial experience, we will find, is a site in which other beings speak in the voices of silence. (p. 10)

I would argue that what Mazis refers to as primordial experience is exactly that moment where learning lives and breathes in, through, around, and about the body as the body inhabits the space and the physical activity through which it is learning. The body is not simply a vessel but rather the essential energy living at the foundation of knowledge. Embodied knowledge construction then is this intangible quality of knowing that exists as Mazis (2016) suggests in the primordial level of awareness, or the liminal space between thought and action.

As a Kinesiologist, any time I can connect in my body through movement is significant for me. I do my best mental processing when moving and having this outlet to connect mind, body, spirit is cathartic. It provides a platform to express myself authentically and that reinforces my feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy. Merleau-Ponty (2002) elaborates on this notion of intentional bodily movement suggesting that when situated in objective space, the body is of space and not separate; not in but not out, but part of. Mazis (2016) describes in depth, Merleau-Ponty's perspective of body as art and as Merleau-Ponty explains that the body as a work of art is likened to "beings in which the expression cannot be distinguished from the expressed... and who send forth their signification without ever leaving their temporal and spatial place" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 153). In the literal space of the Taekwondo school, the backdrop against which my bodily expression was situated allowed me fuller expression of my being of the world through the gesture of Taekwondo. This gesture delimited my bodily

comportment against the backdrop of other fields of space representing the figurative space through which I view my reconstituted body thus translating the expression of Taekwondo into other modes of bodily expression. My free bodily of expression in the Taekwondo school was transferred to my free bodily expression outside of the school. The delimiting of the physical body translated to a delimiting of the phenomenal body. As such, this phenomenon allowed for “a new use of one’s (my) own body; ... to enrich and to reorganize the body schema” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, p. 155).

Overall Reflection and the Role of Symbolic Knowing

When doing autoethnography researchers are reflecting to some extent the cultural influences on their experiences. Culture is what informs the ways individuals participate in life and how they make meaning of the world around them (Guy, 2008). Part of culture is tied to symbols and the meanings we associate with them and as such, symbols are an essential element when gathering data concerning lived experiences of a particular group. The culture of this group of participants is founded in the tenets of Taekwondo which is rich with symbolism. This dissertation addresses the significance of the Black Belt, an outward symbol of a physical accomplishment of years of Taekwondo practice. To some extent, Taekwondo is a spiritual practice as well as a physical one, which has been the case for me. As Tisdell (2003) notes,

Spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes, often made more concrete in art forms such as music, art, image, symbol and ritual which are manifested culturally. (p. 29)

Taekwondo, it can be argued, may not only be a spiritual practice for me and for others, it is also an art— martial art, but an art, nonetheless, that is tied to the culture of the martial arts. In this study and as will become apparent in the narratives that follow, I asked all my participants to discuss a symbol for the learning, hence I thought it appropriate to do so myself. When I thought about a symbol that was meaningful to me to describe my Black Belt Journey, the first thing that came to mind was the Yellow Brick Road. Along the road, Dorothy meets these characters who are lacking one thing or another: a heart, a brain, and courage. I feel like my Black Belt Journey brought me to those points where I had to find the courage to continue even though I was struggling with learning a form. It paralleled my struggle to regain my sense of self and my voice similar to the courage I needed to file for divorce. It represented this integration of ways of knowing (Belenky, et. al. 1986) as I was able to move beyond myself to construct my own meaning from my experience: “the process of sorting out the pieces of the self and of searching for a unique and authentic voice” (p. 137). At other points I needed to dig deep into my heart and learn to love myself and allow that to come out through mastering the art of Taekwondo. Finally, there was the brain. I needed to know in my brain and in my body and find that knowledge that was already there and use it to continue to persevere to the black belt. It was the Black Belt Journey that guided me through finding all those essential elements, the heart, brain, and courage, to make me whole again after my divorce.

In reflecting on my story above, did my participation in Taekwondo and the earning of my black belt create a shift in how I encountered the world? It was only after reflecting on my experience and the experience of these women that I have been able to decipher the answer, and how deep my learning has been. I will continue to comment on what I learned from the participants’ experiences at the end of each of their narratives and then more fully at the end of

each chapter as a whole. And I will revisit aspects of this autoethnography at the end of this dissertation.

Introducing the Chapters on the Participant Findings

As noted above, the next two chapters feature the participants' narratives, and I have separated the participants into two groups: those who learned Taekwondo as children and those who did so as adults. I separated these women into two groups because although the themes were similar among all the participants, there were nuanced differences between the two groups. Since my focus is gender and the embodied learning experiences of these participants, it was important to acknowledge even the most subtle differences in experiences based on at what point in life the women began their Taekwondo journey.

As a reminder to the reader, this is a narrative study. The chapters are organized into sections for each participant. I begin each participants' section with my own summary and then continue with a synopsis of the participant's interview transcript where I condensed the content into paragraphs and eliminated repetitive words or anecdotes that did not impact the quality of the interview. The participant transcripts are in italics to differentiate between the participant and my voice. My reflections at the end of each of the narratives, and then at the end of the chapters point out the differences between the two groups in the context of my own reflection on what I learned from them.

CHAPTER FOUR

IT BEGAN IN OUR CHILDHOOD

This chapter will present the narratives of the three women who began practicing Taekwondo as children. They are not presented in any particular order, but as previously indicated, each section will begin with a summary of my observations followed by their interview transcripts. At the end of the chapter, I will share my reflections and what I learned from the collective.

Marissa: Claiming Confidence

Marissa is 29 and has been practicing Taekwondo for about twenty-three years. She has earned her Fifth degree Black Belt, teaches at the Taekwondo school and competes in tournaments. Her primary motivations for continuing in the sport lie in her connections with the other students in the school, the positive environment and the skills she has developed along the way. A fundamental lesson she has been able to translate to real world experiences is the notion of being able to “withstand the obstacles that some with a goal or achieving a goal”. Marissa has taken that with her to accomplish other things in life, most notably her Baccalaureate degree and Master’s degree.

Overview of Interview

The word most often used in Marissa’s interview was confidence. She stated on several occasions how Taekwondo has enabled her to translate that confidence into her day to day activities... “it’s instilled such a sense of confidence that you can hang with the strongest of them” (when commenting on interactions with males in the Taekwondo school) “which I think is

really cool because I know for me I even take that into my job, you know, outside of the Taekwondo environment.”

Tuning in. When asking Marissa to comment on how she feels in her body when practicing Taekwondo, she referred to a kind of self-checking where she is in touch with her form. She called it a kind of “tuning-in” and listening to her body. For example, Marissa referred to an “automatic response mode” when describing what happens when she practices her form. She also spoke of a time when she felt a “cool like an out of body experience when I was doing a board break”. These were times when practicing Taekwondo that she was completely in touch with the task of performing her form or executing a board break and she was able to be mindful in the moment. She finished sharing this memorable experience by stating, “I just remember feeling so strong and just the most confident and powerful that I think I’ve ever felt. I don’t really know why, I don’t know how, or where that came from or how that turned on.” In general, when asked about how she feels when she practices, Marissa summarized by stating, “there is this feeling of just kind of being content in the space, ...as if you’re in your own world, your own bubble... feeling I don’t know a sense of self-compassion and self-love”.

Marissa’s response to her video. The participants allowed me to video them practicing their form and then were asked to reflect on what they saw as they viewed themselves on the video. Marissa described her experience by stating, “It’s really amazing that my body just did all that” after watching the video of herself performing the white belt form. When asked about why she chose that particular form she indicated it was because the White Belt Form is the “foundation of all the Taekwondo forms and it is the beginning of the journey to the Black Belt.”

Marissa has noticed over the years that Taekwondo is “pretty much a male dominated sport”. While gender is obvious in the Taekwondo school, this was not a deterrent from

participation or association with the sport. Marissa felt “confident and stronger” because of her experience and ability to compete with men in the sport. She discovered after a while it was irrelevant that men were in the school and over time she discovered the importance of “being kind of empowered that you can hang as much as they can”.

Getting Involved in Taekwondo.

I got involved in Taekwondo actually, when they still handed out Valentine's Day cards. It's been so long, I don't think that's even a thing anymore. I was five, so that was kindergarten and it was invited to try a free class or two weeks or something like that. That's actually how I ended up starting, so it was very kind of out of the blue. That's how we kind of walked in the door. I really love just the environment being around people and for me, it was probably one of my first sports that I tried. I was possibly 5 years old at that point so that was one of my first experiences. I just really remember enjoying it and it was kind of cool that the time. There was no 5 and 6 year old program at the time so you were in with Juniors and adults. Everybody was in there together, which is also kind of cool. It is definitely challenging right off the bat, which I think has stuck with me even up until this point. I would say that would probably be the main reason I stay just for the challenge and the pure enjoyment of it, and it being something that I was doing for the first time at such a young age.

Gender

I mean you definitely notice it (gender). You notice it because you're one of the three women or so in class. I mean after a while you definitely noticed. Did I notice when I was 5? Probably not, but yeah as you stick with it, you start to notice that it's a pretty much male-dominated sport. But in the same token I think that's kind of cool because I can remember even going to school, you're the only person doing this. So you get asked all these crazy questions

and you know, 'can you smash stuff with your forehead?' and 'can you break bricks?'

Obviously the answer is 'yes' but yeah I think you definitely start to notice. I don't know that it ever was a not-so-good experience because of that. I don't know I think anything that makes you feel more confident and stronger about yourself, that you can hang with this group of teens, men whatever the case is and actually defend yourself if not even be better than them.

At this point of it's almost irrelevant who's there with you. I mean at some point you know, I felt intimidated. Many of those thoughts run through your mind: if you can keep up or can you kick as hard as them, are you strong as them? But again I think it's instilled such a sense of confidence that you can do this. You can hang with the strongest of them which I think is really cool because I know for me, I even take that into my job outside of the Taekwondo environment which I think is pretty positive. There's such a stigma of not being able to keep up or do as well as men. But there are times once in a while that it can still be a little intimidating especially on larger-scale events that I attend where there's a lot of men but become a little more of a norm.

Embodied Experiences

I don't know if I'm totally hitting this on the head here but I mean but the one thing I noticed in myself is just a sense of like a rejuvenation when I'm doing this. I'm not sure if it's just because it's been part of my life for so long. It just provides such a relief mentally, emotionally and physically. I can tell you at this point the days you need to go and do it. After-the-fact you feel so much better and have just a sense of almost relief. It obviously for me is a sense of joy and peace. There is this feeling of just kind of being content in the space here in as you're practicing almost to the point where I just kind of and I know this isn't a feeling but it feels as if it is just kind of you are there in your own world your own bubble getting to just focus on you so I

don't know a sense of self compassion and self-love. I definitely think it has taught how to take care of yourself in general, in my day-to-day life. I mean I do for myself personally. I feel strong. You start paying attention to where you are. Basically the take-away is that I feel like I stand up tall and I feel tall.

Out of body experience. *Within the last year or so I was doing a testing towards my 6th degree black belt and I don't know it was just such a cool like an out of body experience when I was doing a board break. I just remember feeling so strong and just the most confident and powerful that I think I've ever felt. I don't really know why or where that came from or how that turned on, but I don't know that's one time that comes to mind where I really was aware. Even to this day it was just such a neat experience. I don't know just the whole thing I remember feeling energized just a strength kind of running through your whole body. Just how the body can do what I can do and that it can twist and spin and generate this power to do these things I think is so awesome.*

Taekwondo practice. *When I'm practicing, the things that run through my head are always about a kind of doing self-checking and make sure I'm feeling comfortable in different positions. I guess what comes to mind is now things hurt a little more and being more mindful of those things. Kind of tuning in, meaning more time to warm up and get a little more loose. That wasn't an issue before which is kind of a thought that runs through my mind now in conjunction with always feeling very hyper focused on, 'okay does this look correct? Are you doing this right?' I feel like those are my thoughts almost a whole class.*

When watching myself in the video, it's always interesting because I think my mind goes right to what I could have done differently. I think this could have been tweaked in some way. I do also kind of think it's pretty awesome to be able to just perform this segment of moves that

you've learned and I think it's really cool to just doing some of the techniques that your body kind of just goes into like a not autopilot but automatic response mode with which I think is that it's really amazing that my body just did all that.

Strength. *I definitely feel strong. It's definitely something that I felt doing it and performing it you know? There's always this sense of excitement doing it just because it's something you love doing. There's also a sense of kind of nervousness and anxiety to it even if people are or are not watching. I think also back to a sense of what is my body going to be able to do today? And how is it going to perform and how is it going to kind of feel for me physically? I don't know for me that kind of is all happening as I am performing.*

Black Belt Journey

I think for me and even the black belt journey has become such a part of my life and I think it can for men and women which I think is really cool. I mean again going from receiving this coupon to start this thing you've never heard of (Taekwondo) to now, 23 years later of doing this thing is I think who does stuff for 23 years? Not a lot of people you know? My biggest takeaway has been again the confidence I have in myself, the empowerment to do positive things in my life in the karate school and outside of the karate school. It's just given me such a sense of being able to take care of myself not only physically but just being mindful of my body and if anything, the relationships we built along the way also I think have been amazing. I wouldn't have met half the people I've met and what it would be like had I not done this. I guess those are the biggest takeaways.

Turning points. *I think my biggest turning point was when I completely failed my 5th degree black belt testing especially since you have a lot of people that are sending you well wishes and wanting you to accomplish this thing. They're just as invested as you are. But to get*

to that point and to have to tell people that you didn't quite cut it or make it definitely was a turning point. It's not exactly something I wanted to share or say to people you know? No one wants to fail so for me I think that was one of the biggest turning points just because it was such a gut-wrenching time to have to own up to that. I had to figure out a way while everyone is watching and for myself to kind of pick back up and either decide are you going to stop are you going to keep going? Is it worth it to try that again? Fortunately I'm glad I had the support that encouraged me to continue doing that and I certainly wanted to. But I think for me, even just how that translates into day to day life. I think that was such a helpful moment now looking back. In the moment it sucks, right now thinking about it that there was definitely a lot of lessons to have to learn in that moment which I do appreciate in retrospect 5 years later. That was probably the biggest moment and it was just kind of a real demonstration that highlighted what are you kind of made of with Taekwondo skills that you've been taught so long can you use them can you apply them.

Symbolism

I would pick the yin yang symbol because it's black and white. So the transition from white to black belt- I like that. But also I mean I would choose that just because of those polar opposite things that you experience in that journey: the great times of success and celebration and supporting other people then supporting you but also the not so fun times, things you missed because you're practicing; the things you have to give up because you're there; the barriers and obstacles within the karate school in general.

I decided to do Songahm One because everyone that has been on the journey to the black belt in the beginning starts with that form. I think that's kind of cool because that is a form that really becomes the foundation for all of the other ones. It starts to teach you how to move and

put things together in a sequence. Then it starts to educate you on how your body moves and I really like it too because the white belt means pure and without knowledge so again that kind of sets the foundation for you to add on and to continue to grow.

How has life changed?

Nothing immediately specific jumps to mind. But I what does come to mind is earning that black belt is a three-year commitment so that's something I do definitely reflect on. Now I'm going on a sixth degree black belt where the commitment continues to lengthen in between reaching those milestones. I think if anything it just it kind of reminds you that if you can withstand that and obstacles that come with that goal or achieving that goal in between I've kind of taken that with me to do a lot of things now and throughout my life: in the graduating, getting a bachelor's degree and master's degree and all kinds of things. So I don't know that there is a specific occasion, but I think it's definitely something I continue to look back on that. It's a pretty long time and there's been some failures even in the Taekwondo world that you know really teach you how to get back up and keep moving.

A lot has changed over time and even from starting to three years later reflecting on my experience and even teaching other people I mean I would say the biggest thing that changes is your confidence. Again going back to being able to fulfill this goal and learn all of these things and finally be able to have this come to light increases your confidence. I would say also your discipline. Again it's a journey so it does take some work and action and dedication to finish what you're doing. I can remember being there three, four, five times a week perfecting this craft that you know you love. So definitely confidence; the discipline and dedication you know; dedication to wanting to achieve these goals and again I think it's so cool that you go in not knowing that these are going to be things that it adds to your life but are extremely relevant to

everything I do today. Unfortunately I wish more people would join to learn these skills by continuing to stay focused and dedicated to it while maybe in those times you don't really want to. It definitely carried over to real life I'll call it. I just love it. I honestly do. Like I said earlier, at this point I can just kind of tell when I need to go and do stuff at the karate school whether it's in the class or privately. I know for me that this is a place that gets rid of a lot of stress whether it's practicing privately or in a class setting. Just being around people for me in that environment does wonders. It has over time and I know it. It's always been kind of a sense of comfort it's always been a positive place to turn to good for me. That's why I continue to go and just all the positive things that it's brought into my life is definitely not something I want to ever give up. I definitely go back to all of the positive takeaways and life skills that it's taught and I truly do not think I could have a lot of the stuff I do or have done without those skills. I mean through college I don't think I would have offered to work as a tour guide and talk in front of people or as a resident assistant and put on programs for college students and have been in front of them. Obviously, you don't know where life would take you without some of those things but I'd like to think it's played a big role and just how I kind of process decision-making and the things I've chosen to do. As far as other positive things I think for me just makes me feel good about myself and again I go back to just the connections and the relationships.

Brief Reflections on Marissa and Her Story

I was impressed by Marissa and her confidence in challenging the oppressive female body discourse frequently encountered in sport. It was not an explicit challenge and certainly she was unaware, however, her ability to claim her space and live the Taekwondo mentality inside and outside of the school represented an ability to resist the sexualized female body narrative and instead adopt her own female body narrative. Foucault is often known to address

the “care-of-the-self” ethic and by this endeavor of self-mastery in the martial art, Marissa has achieved a level of self-care (Fornet-Betancort, et. al., 1987). The lifetime engagement in Taekwondo allowed Marissa to extract herself from the dominant gender discourse and develop a keen sense of self and self-awareness not dependent upon gender.

Allison: Female Empowerment

My conversation with Allison went differently in that she began with asking me a lot of questions about my theoretical framework to help her understand what I was studying. Allison is 29 and has been practicing for 20 years. She recalls that when she first began Taekwondo she actually wanted to play basketball but realizing she was too short, her mother encouraged her to try Taekwondo. Her initial motivation to continue taking the classes was her first instructor (male) who was encouraging and motivating, and made her want to be there.

Female empowerment. When asked about gender, Allison replied, “I think it always just empowered me to think you know, women could do just the same things men could do”. She also emphasized during the course of the interview that the ATA Martial arts school where she teaches is owned by a woman and she, Allison, is the head instructor. She is impressed by and proud of the fact that it is a female owned and operated business. This is a fact she mentioned more than once during the interview. A life challenge Allison encountered was her parents’ divorce. She mentioned that it was a good thing because her father was abusive and her engagement in Taekwondo “kept boosting her confidence” and she was able to find challenges and successes in her tournament participation. Confidence was also the primary word used to describe her Taekwondo journey.

When asked about participating with men in the school Allison replied, “...there’s just really no difference between them and training with females”. She also commented that when

men inquire about taking classes at the school, if they are uncomfortable with the fact that it is female owned and operated they generally self-select themselves out and don't even consider taking classes. "If we have like a new adult student that comes in and he has this kind of machismo attitude, most of the time they (when they see the school is female run), those people just walk right out".

Body awareness. Allison made a significant statement in terms of her body. I asked if she noticed a difference in the way her body moves in her everyday space. Allison commented, "Women in particular are taught to be, make themselves small you know make themselves unheard and after starting martial arts, I became more confident in my beliefs and how I feel about things and standing up other people so I was never one to like cower away from somebody confronting me." Allison is also very aware of her body in the physical sense due to a neurological disorder. She is keenly aware of her body in the Taekwondo space in order to protect her head due to sustaining too many concussions. She also commented that, "Society is pushing the woman to; it's always to only show this perfect side of herself so a lot of women want to be that all the time, and it's hard because you have to realize that you can't you know you have to suck at something before you are good at it and you're not always going to do everything perfectly okay".

Allison's reflections on her video. When viewing the video of her form, Allison critiqued hand and foot techniques as well as stances. Her perspective seemed to come from her experience in judging tournaments and even when pressed to examine how she felt as in an emotive sense, Allison was only able to connect with the physical. She chose the Fifth-Degree form to video because that is her current and most difficult form to date. It is also her favorite form because she learned it directly from the Master of the American Taekwondo Association

(ATA) forms master. Chief Master Stiles teaches each of the color belt and black belt forms for the entire ATA organization. Allison was at a camp where instructors attended to learn the most up to date versions of weapons forms and belt forms.

Allison competes in tournaments frequently in order to maintain her instructor certification as well as earn points to move up in Black Belt rank. When describing her experiences at testings, she noted, "I'm always really nervous to perform my form in fact when I test with my form sometimes I black out I don't know why... I didn't remember it at all". One of her students had taken video and Allison discovered that she had in fact performed the complete form correctly.

How Did You Get Into Taekwondo?

I was 9 years old and I really wanted to play basketball and my mom knew I was not going to be a good at it. I was always really short and I practiced for hours outside to no avail. It was not getting better but she saw this ad for a 4 week trial of Taekwondo and she suggested that we do Taekwondo instead. I was like yeah that sounds cooler so then I got into that and totally forgot about basketball. It's funny because I married a guy who plays basketball.

I was attracted to taking classes probably because of my first instructor. His name was Mister Zeke and he was this really tall almost bald guy and he was really fit and exciting. Like he was happy to be there and he wanted to teach us and I remember my first class. I was really shy and quiet and I went in with you know this group of maybe 30 kids and we were warming up and doing jumping jacks and he was like who's the loudest and everyone raise their hand and I looked around and I raised my hand even though I was shy and not loud. He kind of always made me want to be better so that kind of feeling of wanting to be better all the time. And too, I guess just his passion for it made me want to be there.

Gender

Gender didn't occur to me, not when I was a kid. I'd sparred with guys all the time, and I still spar with guys. Probably the only time I really noticed was when we did ground fighting and I was a teenager and I started to feel a little uncomfortable doing things with the guys on the ground. But other than that, I think it always just empowered me to think you know women could do just the same things with men could do.

Gender awareness. *At our school, our black belt men are awesome. They you know they really respect me and I take classes with them even as their instructor because I want to set a good example. They love that I train with them so I like it because they're- I don't know why? But there's just really no difference between them and training with the females. When I have a problem is if we have a new adult student that comes in and he has a kind of machismo attitude. Most of the time they [when they see the school is] female run, those people just walk right out. So we don't usually have to deal with them except on the phone or just talking to them. They usually don't even make it to the mat to see a class, which is kind of bad because you know you're not seeing everything that we can give you. I mean we're good instructors; we keep up with everything; we are always evolving with the ATA; we always go to training and keep up with our weapons certifications are always midterm and testing. If they see just that we're female then I think that they're losing out. I've encountered men during testing. I don't know how they're doing testing now in terms of scoring but we would do sparring and it's supposed to be no contact for me because of my spine and neurological issues. If you go to test on a national level with ATA, contact sparring is okay but you're not supposed to kill the other person. You're supposed to have a friendly match and you're supposed to... like we have three things that I tell everyone when you're doing the drills. We teach that you're making yourself look good and*

you're making your partner look good and that involves taking care of each other and they'll actually mark you down at testing if you don't take care of your partner.

Societal expectations. *What I've encountered is that a lot of women are hard on themselves and they are nitpicky and you know want to do the right thing all the time and especially. Part of it is society you know? And other people always want us to mess up but we (women) have to always do the right thing and we have to be the rock and we have to be perfect. I don't know it just that's how I've always felt. Society is pushing the woman to always only show this perfect side of herself. A lot of women want to be that all the time and it's hard because you have to realize that you can't. You have to suck at something before you are good at it and you're not always going to do everything perfectly.*

Embodied Experiences

As I have grown, as I go on I noticed more and more whereas when I was a kid practicing I didn't really notice anything. I was just like here's how you do a back stance I know how to do it but I didn't realize I was doing it right. I didn't realize where exactly I was and then when I started teaching I had to look at that more so that I could teach it. Now when I workout it's like constantly what I'm thinking about because I'm getting older and I've had some issues with my spine. I have some degenerative changes in my spine which could be osteoarthritis and I recently had a have been diagnosed with a bulging disc so I wasn't competing the last few months.

Bodily comportment. *Women in particular are taught to be make themselves small you know? They're supposed to make themselves unheard. After starting martial arts I became more confident in my beliefs and how I feel about things and standing up other people. I was never one to like cower away from somebody confronting me or somebody else that I cared*

about. I think the posture in the body language and even how to project your voice and just the confidence in general definitely helped me stand up to people who may have thought I was just going to be the quiet, unheard, unseen woman.

It's hard because I try to be aware (of my body) all the time. I actually have a neurological disorder. I have chronic migraines and I've had too many concussions so I actually am not supposed to contact spar but Andrea lets me do it in the school as long as I wear a white helmet. Wearing a white helmet in our school indicates you can't be hitting the head so everyone tries to go by that. Sometimes you don't realize who you're sparring and just kick to the head because that's how we train them to do it. I'm always trying to protect my head even though I know everyone's doing their best to try not to hit it so I've gotten a lot better at getting out of the way and just learning how to move my feet. But also I mostly rely on blocking. I have to be aware of how I'm moving and how the other person is moving. When I'm doing my form like I said before, I really try to focus on my posture because if you have a tight core and you have good posture I think it makes the form overall that much better. When I do weapons, I love doing weapons, and I can't stand when somebody does weapons and then is just kind of like going through the motions and I'm like that's not the way to do it, but you have to know who you are like this. It's pretty much all the time that I'm thinking about how my body is moving.

It also depends on the day because you know if I have a setback like if I have a migraine or dizziness or if something is wrong with my back, I'm really hard on myself. I always am the person who wants to do the best all the time. I don't care about winning right now, I care about doing my best so if I can't do my best then I'm down on myself and I feel bad about it. I try to instill that in my students to do 100% so I have to demonstrate 150% for them to demonstrate a hundred. I just want to set a good example all the time and I know I have limitations and I've

been trying to come to come to terms with it but you know it's hard. I understand but if I get something right I feel really really good so it just it just depends on the day.

Performing form. *So today, performing the form, I was nervous because like I said I hadn't done it for a while. The end of October I found out that I had two bulging discs but I was in a lot of pain before that and I actually was training for a half marathon. So I was not doing my form hardcore because of my back pain. So this is the first time I did it in a while and it's okay. I need to be somebody who has to do it all the time to keep up the stamina.*

Blacking out. *I'm always really nervous to perform my form in fact when I test with my form sometimes I black out I don't know why. In fact when I midterms in 2018 at Worlds, I had one of my students taking photos of me and I got done and Andrea was helping the Pod leader so she was there and I went off and I was like I didn't do this part I didn't do this part. So my one student comes over me show me these pictures and I thought, 'oh I did. I didn't remember it at all not at all'. I could have been nerves or just being so focused.*

Performing makes me happy because I can do something that not everybody can do so I get that feeling of happiness. But then there's always the nervousness you know? What if I mess up? Or what if I lose my balance? Or what if I don't do this right? So it's both I guess. They're competing but then it's as if I feel like I do it well then I feel pretty good.

Self-reflection. *When I am teaching, the students have private lessons with me for form so I have them first go through the form, and then I get a dry erase marker and comment on my white board because I don't want to stop them from doing what they're doing, but I want to hit all of these things. When I demonstrate, I tell them what I saw. For example, when I was watching myself in the video, my second punch was too high which I knew when I threw it, it was too high. It should have been like an inch or two lower. My head was too far forward in the beginning,*

but as I slowed down a little bit, I held it back because that's something I always try to be aware of; keeping my back straight. In my jump crescent kicks, I should land with my heels out and I'm landing with them just a little bit too far in and I don't want to land and then push them out. I want to land with them in the proper position. My second sidekick wasn't strong because I lost my balance as I was throwing it so I knew it wasn't strong. This is something I didn't notice when I was doing my form but on my second double hammer fist I need a bigger circle because it's not as big as the first one. My balance in the last corner was a little off which usually at the school I never have any issues with balance. If I practice on different surfaces even if I go to a tournament and the mats feel differently, sometimes it's hard because I'm just in the zone and I'm not thinking. At tournaments, somebody's always videoing so that I can watch myself after and it always looks a lot better than I think that I did.

Black Belt Journey

Every time there's a national event like Worlds in the spring or fall Nationals, I always do a training. It's run by the chief Master or a senior master who are sometimes a Grandmaster. I always learn something and I'm like 'oh my God, I know that from before but there is something new'. I'm never going to know all of it. When I was younger, I thought oh I know how to do this and then later I gain learning experience which is why I think it's so important for instructors to continue their education. I cannot just think I have a black thought I can teach now it's not how it goes.

Challenges. *One thing that was really hard for me is things just came easily to me when I was younger. I never had a 'no-change' (no increase in rank). I always went up in rank. I was always invited to move up in rank and responsibility. I was the first to be invited to the leadership program and I was the first to get my red collar (red collar symbolizes instructor*

rank). *It was just natural and it was easy and I know I did practice all the time because I loved it but it wasn't like working hard to me. When I was a fourth-degree I had my first "no change" and I cried I was so upset and I was in my twenties. I was I was not prepared for that. I was like 'oh my gosh I didn't know it was this bad and it was so much harder' and I had to have three midterms. I had three no changes and 3 passing. I did it six times! So I was I was just like devastated each time I didn't make it.*

The Fourth degree was the most challenging and I think I was learning weapons at the time and doing more certifications with weapons. I felt like I was trying my best and I just wasn't able to get there. I always had a tough time for board breaks too. When I was younger I would think, 'I'm going to break the next board' and I did! I was able to do it all the time. But it was just a struggle. In practice, I would break a board higher than I was supposed to. (There are degrees of difficulty of board breaking that correspond with the belt level). When I was testing for my fourth and my 5th degree, I was practicing board breaks all the time. I was bruising and I was just so not good at it because I had this attitude of like 'I can't break the board'. So one day I just decided I was going to break the board and I did! I started practicing on brown boards instead of blue boards because I have to break blue board at nationals right now. I picked some higher boards to practice on and that is easier and now every time I'm just like boom boom boom boom (describing how she was able to break the more difficult board breaks). It was just that mindset and I try to tell younger females in our school that 'you're not going to break it until you decide to break it'. I didn't know how to fail before. I had a hard time failing.

Turning points. *I have kind of a weird black belt story. I don't know if it will help you or not but I was training for my black belt. When I was a color belt they rolled out the color belt state champ program. That's when they first started it and they had it from January to December*

each year. I was supposed to test for my black belt with my brother. My younger brother, he's 3 years younger than me but we are always together training and stuff and he's on the Spectrum. He was never really coordinated with it but he had a blast and that helped him a lot. He actually doesn't take ADHD medication anymore or anything. I really think Taekwondo had a lot to do with that. Anyway we were supposed to earn a black belt together on December 21st. The one owner told my mom, 'Shannon has the highest points in the state for state champ. If she tests for her black belt she loses all these points. She won't be state champ so she has to wait until after the New Year'. But it was wrong, she was wrong, but that's what she thought. So she told my mom that and my mom told me and I you know I was like all right I want to be state champ. So I went to Black Belt testing and I watched my brother and all my friends that I went all the way up through. I watched them test and they're in their black belts and I didn't and after the new year like a week or two after she (the owner) called my mom and she's like I'm sorry I was wrong. She could have earned her black belt with everybody else. I was just so upset. I was 11 years old you know? But they ended up doing a special ceremony for me then as a private testing. I invited a bunch of people.

Then for my second degree testing, I was in Oregon. They moved the ceremony date because we were moving back to Pennsylvania. But they moved it so that we could participate and earn our second belt. I could train anywhere else you know? It's not just a school, it's all over the world and you have brothers and sisters all over the world and that's amazing.

Symbolism

I think probably I can use the ATA one. It has a mountain range and the color journey is climbing the mountain. But the thing is you get to the top of the mountain and then you see

another mountain so it's as though there's always more to learn and there's always a new mountain to climb.

*I decided to choose the 5th degree form. That's my form; it is my favorite of all of the forms. Though I when I was doing fourth-degree form and I've always loved forms, there was never a form that I didn't like. I was a natural when I was a kid. I liked the forms and my mom likes watching me do forms so she always liked seeing me perform. I got the fourth degree and I did not find the 3rd degree form interesting. I didn't like it and I don't know if it was maybe just the combination of moves that didn't suit my body as well? There's like a jump reverse sidekick in it which is in the third degree and I was fine with that but this one is on the left side and there's I don't know it's just I guess just the combination I just didn't I did not like it. I practiced it so much but I never liked it. Then I got to 5th degree and I actually went to Protech Camp a month after testing and I had just found out I earned my 5th degree and this was in 2017. Protech Camp is a national camp by ATA that they go over all of the weapons so if you're certified in any weapons you can recertify there. But they were doing private lessons there throughout the 3-day training. Chief Master Skiles who is **the** ATA forms guy, he was there and he always does things for the Masters Council there like degree forms. He does the forms and the council looks at them and they're like yeah let's do it this way, etc. Chief Master Skiles was doing 5th degree private lessons and I asked him why he asked me here. He replied, 'Ms. Strouse are you going to do this?' and I was like sure I don't know the form yet. And he was like 'what are you going to learn if you don't do it?' So he taught me my form! I know like this is the coolest thing ever! I love it so much!*

How Has Life Changed?

I earned my black belt long ago so I don't know if it changed like right away when I earned it, but it kind of was just like a steady climb from when I started martial arts. Before I did martial arts I was just really shy and I didn't like talking to people or being in front of everyone. When I was doing martial arts I got to be part of leadership. We were invited back then; our instructors invited us so I got invited to the leadership program and they taught us how to stand and how to speak and just how to be leaders. I felt much more confident being in front of other people and then I start helping the little kids and then a little bit older adults and so it was just kind of a gradual increase of more and more confidence so I don't think it changed right at Black Belt it was it was just kind of an uphill the whole way. It still is.

My whole life probably changed from practicing Taekwondo. The first thing that happened, I had to move right after I got my black belt. I had to move across the country and that was really hard because you know I was still shy, I was trying. I was better than I was before but it was still hard to make new friends and we found an ATA school there. My mom was insistent that we had to have an ATA School (American Taekwondo Association) within you know 45 minutes to an hour or something. It ended up being one 1/2 hour away so I kept getting to go. They (my parents), kind of like wanted me to keep it going and you know kept boosting my confidence instead of being isolated as a preteen who moved across country. But then we moved back a year later and then my parents got divorced and it was it was a good thing because my biological father was abusive so it was good that they got divorced. But after that we had to stop going to tournaments. And I was in the top ten double-sahng jeol bahngs (nunchucks) of all time. I still taught and I took some classes but my brothers and sister stopped doing Taekwondo. It was just me and so that was a big change and when I was a teenager I was just figuring out

where I was going. I went to a different location than now and I got my third degree when I was 16. I was a second degree for maybe four years because unfortunately the previous owner was not allowed to test himself so he didn't want anyone else passing his rank. So I was going for 4 years until we decided to go to the other school. Then when I was in college I didn't I couldn't afford to go test so I still taught and then I taught down in a different location because Andrea, her mom bought the school at that location. I was just driving all the time because I went to school in Kutztown and I went to work at the Taekwondo school. I think the biggest thing honestly was that it was my constant because I always had it so I could always you know go and teach and feel better, feel good about what I was doing you no matter what what's going on.

I can't do combat sparring at all because it's too much to the head. Grandmaster G.K. Lee just became the presiding Grandmaster this year at the 50th anniversary celebration. So he was actually at testing at Worlds. His final decision included no fitness testing during rank testing. It's been three things or categories to choose from when testing. (sparring, form, board break and weapons). I've always done form, weapons and board break because I'm not allowed to contact spar so now they're changing it we have to do weapons or board breaks or combat sparring. I don't know what my future is going to hold. I guess it depends on what they say and you know? But we'll see and I hope to become a master but I don't know if I want to get more you know brain damage. I do want to do this thing; this my full-time job; this is my career. I want to do this forever so I want the longevity.

Reflections on Allison

As noted above, a significant theme among Allison's narrative was female empowerment. I was struck by the numerous referrals to being a female instructor in a female owned and operated school. A previous study of martial artists (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998)

linked a heightened awareness of the physical dimension with physical and mental empowerment among female martial artists. Allison's story is reflective of her overall feminist awareness in relation to her martial arts participation. Her activity in Taekwondo impacted her in a way that is representative of feminist embodied learning through physical activity, and in this case, Taekwondo.

Andrea: The Pink Power Ranger

Andrea wanted to be the Pink Power Ranger. The *Power Rangers* was a popular television show in the early 1990's which portrayed male and female superheros who utilized martial arts skills to battle evil. The *Power Rangers* each morphed into their uniforms, so as to hide their true identity, in a specifically assigned color, when they were preparing to fight. In this instance, the color pink was associated with the female *Power Ranger* with whom Andrea most identified. When her brother started taking Taekwondo, influenced by what she saw on the *Power Rangers* television show, Andrea wanted to practice martial arts as well. Her life challenge was that she was incredibly tall for her age and that contributed to negative self-esteem.

Interview Overview

Practicing Taekwondo now for about twenty years, Andrea, at 30, has earned the rank of Sixth-Degree Black Belt and is an owner of a Taekwondo school. While gender is not necessarily an issue, she always preferred sparring with male students because of the challenge and actually likes working with men, "I like working with men a lot more because it's I think it's easier to navigate socially with them than it is with females". Andrea pays particular attention to the male/female dynamics especially at ATA events and especially how she presents herself, "because I see if female Masters that do things that are inherently female in our culture but

they're tearing down people's image of them and it's very distressing to me because I see the male instructors, the male Masters, and they present themselves in a very competent relaxed way and if they if they want to get a laugh they make a joke but it's never self-deprecating and if they're unsure of something they confidently say I'm unsure of this, where female Masters are using self-deprecating humor to get a laugh and if they're unsure they hunch their shoulders like this (she demonstrates) and they're like I'm not sure but we can try". Andrea is close to earning her Master level black belt and has strong opinions about how "it shouldn't have gender specificity. It should just be, Masters present themselves with confidence; Masters don't use self-deprecating humor; Masters gracefully accept they don't know things and they say that with humility and confidence and that's that's where like there's definitely a separation". Andrea is very aware of male/female dynamics in the different dimensions of running her Taekwondo school. She frequently expressed this awareness in terms of how to interact with male students and challenges she faces as a female in the ATA community.

Body awareness. Like the other participants, Andrea became much more aware of her body physically, and developed more confidence as a result. She emphasized how she learned to grow with her body and work with it as it changes as one ages. "I feel like I can look at everything now whereas before I was much more inwardly focused or singularly focused".

Andrea's response to her Video. We watched Andrea's Songahm One for the video. She chose the White Belt form, "I liked it because I don't do it enough". When asked about how she feels when she performs, Andrea replied, "it feels different depending on what I'm doing. When I'm teaching it I really physically don't think about how it feels almost. I think more about how cool I look to my students because I want them to see a spectacular demonstration and be able to show that at tournaments". When practicing Taekwondo, Andrea is much more aware of

her presence because she is the Lead Instructor at her school and it is important that she presents her very best self for the students, specifically the children. Her attention to details when performing a form is specifically designed to execute precise hand and foot techniques for the students to also learn how to properly demonstrate the form. When testing at tournaments, Andrea doesn't black out as she has heard other women describe but rather "I feel like I get in the zone". Andrea's focus remains on her presence and presentation to others around her.

Tell Me a Story

I was on vacation with my dad's side of the family in Germany and my mom was at home with my little brother. My mom stayed home with him because he was young and she hates flying so she told us to go to Germany without them. My little brother started doing martial arts because it was something that he wanted to do. One of my best friends had actually earned her black belt already by that point, we were about 11 years old and I went with her to a buddy day. I hadn't signed up at that point because I was doing other things and I wasn't really that much interested. When I got back from Germany and my little brother was doing martial arts I was furious. I was like why is he and not me? We should sign up at the same time. So Mom and I signed up. I always tell people I wanted to be the pink Power Ranger because I thought that would be cool. My mom wanted me to sign up because when I was a kid I got bullied for being really tall. I was moved ahead in school because I always was 2 years ahead height wise and my mom told me over and over again at the time 'I would rather get you a tutor because the grade level that we have you at academically is above you than get you a therapist for how hurt you're going to be because everyone's going to bully you'. That is such a sad thing to have to tell a kid. I was one of the younger ones in my grade but I was the height of the tallest or the second tallest person up until High School. When I was twelve and 7th grade I was 5'10" and at that point in

time I think another reason I hadn't signed up for martial arts prior to that was I was playing basketball because everyone's like oh she's tall she would be great at basketball which is not true. If you grow faster, you have no idea how big your feet are or where your legs are or how the ball moves so I was I was playing basketball horribly and my team wouldn't let me have the ball.

Martial arts memories. *I really don't have many memories of martial arts up until I was a third degree. I remember instances but I can't recall much like these are the classes I took and this is how I felt and these are memories I have. I just remember the moments so like my earliest memory of martial arts was walking out of the Buddy day with Lily which we did before I signed up. When I was an orange belt, we were doing front kicks on porkchop pads and I had bad foot positioning and so I hit with my toes and I chipped off part of my big toenail and it was it was bleeding a little bit but it wasn't like down to the quick or anything and the instructor at the time came over and just made me feel like such a badass. He was like 'your foot position was off but what power! Look at you and you're not even crying- you've got a missing part of your toenail! You're a champ!' I was just like yeah! I just remember this was like a rush of self-esteem. Besides that I remember bits and pieces from black belt testing for my red collar (instructor collar) and being a Junior instructor. But yeah I started martial arts because I want to be the Pink Power Ranger.*

Gender

Gender occurred to me so much. It occurred to me earlier on but in a I'd like to say empowering way. If I dissect it psychologically it's also kind of a sexist way. When I was a teenager, I always want to spar with these old men because I wanted to play kick the crap out of someone and when I would spar with the women there were there like one or two that were

really really good. I hated sparring with them because they beat me and I hated it. If I would have been my instructor I would have said you need to calm down because you're going all out and you're not taking care of your partner. I wasn't focused on that I just wanted to pick on people hard so I would spar with that the adult man and I was always like oh I'm so cool because I could spar with a man. Looking back that's such a sexist thing to think. Like I should have been sparring with the two that are better than me because they could have really helped me improve.

Changing perspectives. *In the last ten years after becoming a black for me it was a big thing, but becoming School owner and then becoming a 5th and then six degree, those are really big turning points. When I became a school owner it was even more apparent to me that first of all I like working with men a lot more because it's I think it's easier to navigate socially with them than it is with females in addition to that this the typical structure of an ATA school. School owners were typically a husband and wife couple where the husband is on the mat teaching and everyone looks to him for physical guidance in martial arts, but the wife is kind of like the brains behind the operation. She's always upfront in sales, making phone calls, she's a happy face. For me it was really difficult because I'm not married and my head instructor is also a female. This means the school is female owned and operated and we've dealt with a lot of prejudice over the last even six years in this location. It's something that as a teenager and as a black belt I didn't really see on any level other than men are typically stronger. I like sparring with them and I think I knew subconsciously at that point they were easier to interact with socially but becoming the school owner and then becoming a high rank I really I pay a lot of attention especially at ATA events as to how I present myself.*

Taekwondo culture. *I see female Masters that do things that are inherently female in our culture but they're tearing down people's image of them and it's very distressing to me. I see the male instructors, the male Masters, and they present themselves in a very competent relaxed way. If they if they want to get a laugh they make a joke but it's never self-deprecating and if they're unsure of something they confidently say I'm unsure of this. On the other hand, I see female Masters use self-deprecating humor to get laugh. If they're asked a question and they don't know the answer, they hunch their shoulders like this and they're like I'm not sure but we can try. There are things like crying for example. People can't cry but when women cry, men perceive it as being weak but when men cry culture perceives them being passionate and it's okay it's so great that you're feeling. As a female master, I don't want to cry and I know what makes me cry, but if I get really emotional about something I try to keep my cool. But I see female Masters, they do these things they say kooky silly things that if they were a male I don't think they would say. I'm up for Master Chief and I don't want to be a female Master who does this. Male Masters do this, and I want it to be a master so I want to do this. It shouldn't have gender specificity. It should just be that all Masters present themselves with confidence. Masters don't use self-deprecating humor. Masters gracefully accept they don't know things and they say that with humility and confidence. That's where there's definitely a separation.*

Keeping up appearances. *This is very superficial but seeing the differences in instructors: female versus male, what they wear, and how they look, it's very interesting. It's very interesting because male instructors are very focused on watches and they're concerned about clothes too but that's how they express themselves. The men like to express themselves with their watches and their hair and their beards and they need to have it trimmed in certain ways and that's what they're concerned about when they're in their blue suits (official judging*

uniform). They're concerned about their accessories so they like to have fancy shoes. They like to tie their tie a certain way and add the pocket square. Female martial artists go to so much more trouble to look nice and the people that win forms and weapons competitions are some of the prettiest. I think subconsciously that has something to do with judging which is unintentional. The ones who pay more attention to small details like how they do their makeup, their eyeliner how their hair is styled, even their fingernails and toenails probably win. Because those are the people that pay more attention to the details of their form and their weapons forms. Where the people who win typically sparring and combat sparring, physically they excel and part of this is because they're wearing gear so you're sweating off your make-up your hair spray's all coming out, crunching any hairstyle you had down. Part of it is just logistically about how they have to have stuff but they don't pay as much attention to the little details. But a lot of them, they're not paying as much attention to it because they have to hit you. It doesn't matter how they look. They can they can be like the ugliest person in the room. How she looks has nothing to do with it (sparring) but in form you have to look, objectively, the best. If you start looking totally clean and put together it's better. I noticed it when women are in uniforms, it's makeup, hair, and nails. I've actually started doing my nails because of that because I want to be proficient at forms and weapons and part of me is okay like focus on the details. But part of me is like I have to look as pretty and put together as everybody else in my ring where the guys they want to have a nice trim hair and beard but I don't think that they want to look pretty. I think that they want to just like be focused and feel like they look good for their own internal benefit.

When women are in their judging Blues, we want something that matches our personalities so heels or a special print or a certain brand that's more where the women are

looking and it's what makes us look the most attractive in our minds. I hate that because I don't think we should focus looking attractive. I think we should focus on looking clean and uniform so a lot of women don't even wear a tie. Allison wears a button-up shirt but she's got the Ascot which women are allowed to wear. I button my shirt all the way up and I have my red ATA tie and so I look like the guys. I have my white shirt without a pocket square but I have my tie because I want to look uniform. A lot of a female judges wear their hair down when they're in their Blues. I always wear my hair up because I can't see when my hair's in my face anyway. I won't be able to see the ring. We should all just look clean and uniform that's why we all wear the same uniform.

School owners. *Another area that gender is obvious is the school ownership thing. Last week I had an adult male come to the school. He might have been special needs or had a head injury based on his social interaction because there were a lot of social cues that he was not picking up on. Typically we might have gotten people that have Asperger's or since it's not recognized any more on the spectrum for autism. But he really wanted to spar however, you don't spar until you're six months in because you're not ready. You don't know what you're doing or about how much you think you know. I want the students to understand the social climate that you're in and I'm going to tell you right away if you're not a good match for the school. So I told him we don't let you spar until you're at least a camo belt. That's from when you started about six months in. The next morning he called the Master out in West Chester to get a man's opinion on whether or not I should be letting him spar. This Master also has the same rule in place. We're very similar. I finally called him to let him know that I felt the school was not a good fit for him because it was evident it's because I'm female. I have asked all of our*

kids or adults if you have any gender bias negativity towards women why are you taking martial arts from me? My instructors are female.

*I had another time where I had an adult male call the school for information. He asked for the owner when is he in? I said well actually I'm the owner of the school and I'm here now. I was really impressed with his answer because he went oh my God I feel like such an a***** he's like I shouldn't have assumed that the owner was male I'm so sorry and I was like totally fine.*

Embodied Experiences

I've been having I'd like to say that they're age-related but the more I think about it the more it might be stress related issues in my body. Things going on like I have knee issues and I have recently last couple weeks something in my collarbone. I think about everything when I'm doing my form and I think a lot about how I feel when I have good technique. I always have to lower my stances because I'm so tall so I have to work twice as hard as everybody else to have good-looking stances. I'm constantly thinking about specifically my quads (thighs) because I can feel how low I'm getting and I think about my posture and pulling my back up so I think about that. Physically I'm very aware of if anything is hurting or if I'm comfortable because recently I've tried to become almost hypersensitive to that so I can deal with injuries ahead of time. I sprained my ankle 4 years ago and I have a patella fracture. I'm thinking a lot about my joints and then I also think to about especially with learning this new form about how cool I feel during 4th degree; it's the hardest form.

Practice makes perfect. *5th degree is hard but you don't have to jump and take a knee as much so it's not physically as taxing as the fourth degree form. It's difficult but for different reasons and then 6th degree? Just like man this is easy, not like that it's easy to have good*

technique because I still struggle with that, but I don't have to jump that much. In fact I don't think there are any jumps. There's a lot of time working on my technique for those too so I'm very aware of where I'm placing my stances for each of those. I have never thought like oh they're doing the compound Square block so that's supposed to mean X stance. I just watched them and thought wow they look cool. I'll stop and look in the mirrors and feel like yeah yeah this is cool, like I look good in this. Where with 5th degree I felt I looked better than fourth. Fourth degree when I did it, I felt like I knew the form but I never could look good doing it. I love doing 5th degree and I don't know if I look any better but I loved it because fourth degree was so like everything was tight and sideways and I keep better in front than I do to the side and you get to do you like parade across the ring on a diagonal and do jump kicks. I can finally open up in this form and I can spread out use my wingspan and stretch my legs. You still have to do some jumps and that's where with spraining my ankle I was like oh, it was just like it's so much fun. With the 6th degree you're like on the ground. I just I love doing it but I'm terrified that I'm going to do it poorly because 4th and 5th degree I feel like I learned them fast and I'll fix them later, but it hasn't worked for me. I learned them and then I do them wrong and then I kind of fix the bad habits but even my 6th degree form for my mid-term testing it was solid-average form. My next chance to learn a form is going to be 6 years down the road when testing for my 7th degree.

Self-reflection. *When watching my video, I have been working on organic movement vs. robotic because a lot of people teaching robotic movements and it's winning at competition because it looks cool. I liked doing Songahm One it because I don't do that enough. I did it for gymnastics (watching video). I don't do it enough and I'm very good at picking out what people have to work on. I think it's interesting because women have hips and my leg doesn't look*

straight but I know I can feel that I'm straight in the back leg so it's interesting that I can see if I'm doing it right.

I was thinking a lot about my face because I don't have a weird facial expression. I was consciously thinking of pushing through that final movement and then I was also a little bit I think, thinking about my knees in my head says I heard my hip pop at the one point. I was like whoa that was my hip. Calm down don't worry it doesn't hurt but it sounds like awful. I was thinking about this knee (points to knee) because this one's been the one that's hurting and it didn't hurt during the form of course you know I wasn't usually on the floor and I think it's interesting when I'm practicing at the school I'm very sensitive to my feet and how they feel on the mat.

In the zone. *When I'm performing Taekwondo, it feels different depending on what I'm doing. When I'm teaching, I really physically don't think about how it feels. I think more about how cool I look to my students because I want them to see a spectacular demonstration and be able to show that at tournaments. I know a lot of other women black belts who once they get higher in the ranks and compete at like World Championships, a lot of competitors they black out. I don't black out but I feel like I get in the zone. I don't get nervous about presentations in general until about two minutes beforehand so when I when I went to my six degree testing I was excited for it. I was super focused and excited but I didn't like start shaking or get really anxious until I knew I was the next group. I feel excited and I'm very aware when I'm doing my form which is why when Allison tells you she blacks out I laugh because I'm like I feel so weird after I do my form. I am very aware of what I'm doing and I'm thinking about what I'm supposed to be doing so like when I was testing for my 6-degree I was really focused. I was aware of the people that were testing around me and like where they were in their forms but I was very focused on*

okay at this section of my form I really have to bend my knee in my back stance to make it lower so does it feel like I'm bending it? Yes it does. When I do the kicks it wasn't as high as I wanted it to be but that's okay keep on moving don't dwell on that kick I have to keep going. When I got to the section where do all the jump front kick of the section these kids make it look really really good. Then I did my spin reverse side kick which was fine like I think about it while I'm doing it but it's very much what am I supposed to be doing? It's very focused so it's not like you know what am I eating for dinner later tonight or what have people around me doing it's in this moment what is my objective? How do I feel keep moving? I don't know. When you blackout do you have those thoughts or is it that you just don't know what's going on until after you are done blacking out? I think that's part of why that ability to focus like that is why so many people should do martial arts. When people say there's a mental aspect of martial arts they are referring to that focus.

Black Belt Journey

So much I think has changed for me earning my black belt. I became more physically aware of my body which was bound to happen with any sport I did at the time of my life because as a teenager I was very dopic. That's because everything was growing so fast and I had glasses I was moving to contacts. But earning the black belt was definitely instrumental in figuring out where I was and kind of coming into my own where I felt confident that I could defend myself. That's kind of a byproduct but I felt confident that I could move in a way that my brain and my body were connected where in basketball I would dribble the ball and be like yeah I'm dribbling the ball and I would bounce it off my toes. But in Taekwondo, like if you put a target bag right here in front of me and I punched, my first two knuckles will connect with a pad and I'll have about 2 inches of penetration and it was it was like I knew exactly where my body

was. For me as a black belt, that physical confidence was where that really changed I think. As a first and second degree my awareness shifted outwards to students because that's when I started to become an instructor. I was helping out with classes and I was realizing I really enjoyed teaching other kids. I liked having the authority over them and I liked that I was helping them because I always like to be very helpful. That was from 14 up until about 17 and I realized, that's when I really discovered I love instructing which set me on the path up to now and then when I was 17 up until about 21 I think 20 or 21 I tested for my fourth degree.

Growing pains. Testing for my third degree were big failure years. Those were all years of: I failed a class in college, I failed my 3rd degree testing at my first Nationals. It was just, it was feeling those feelings of how crappy it feels to fail and the drop in self-esteem and being like Oh my God me this isn't what's right for me. And I'm not doing a good job and I suck at martial arts. It was just those four years were where I learned how to deal with the bad stuff. When I earned my fourth degree I changed my instructor. A senior instructor reached out to me who said she would love to have me as a student because she saw my potential. She guided me through probably the last couple of months for my fourth degree and also the 5th and 6th degree black belts. I'm so sad because I wish that she would have been my instructor from the beginning she is such an amazing instructor and she allows me to think about Taekwondo from many different perspectives. I don't just think about when I was earning my black belt physically at how am I improving or when I was the first and second degree or how am I helping others as a 4th 5th and 6th degree. I think about how am I better for myself from a martial arts perspective; how I'm being a good school owner and impacting my community and helping students of my school. I focus on how am I being an ambassador for ATA and impacting the lives of the people that are under me to give them opportunities not only for training, but for their career and for

just emotional and mental and physical well-being. Other considerations include thinking about me as a martial artist. I think, you're a pretty high rank now - how are you getting better? how are you learning to grow? and how are you working with your body as it? I feel like I can really look at everything now where before I was much more inwardly focused or singularly focused. It's kind of shifted over the years and I know martial arts is my life so it's cool.

Reflections on Andrea

Andrea wanted to be the Pink Power Ranger. She was already positively impacted by a strong female role model who used the strength of her body in a non-conforming way. Andrea possesses a strong feminist liberatory perspective in that she is extremely cognizant of gender differences in certain aspects of performativity in the Taekwondo culture. She spoke at length about the appearances of both the men and women in higher ranks. Her awareness of the feminist sporting body extended beyond the sport participation itself into other dimensions of Taekwondo culture. Furthermore, Andrea has a keen understanding of the performative nature of gender (Butler, 1999) in this setting thus increasing her vigilance in adhering to strict expectations related to professional disposition at Taekwondo events. Andrea relies on these expectations to maintain a sense of equity among the male and female upper ranks to minimize the possibility of being judged solely as a female but rather as a rank.

Conclusions and What I Learned

Reviewing these participants' stories revealed a glimpse into a dimension of Taekwondo women that I had not experienced personally. Each of these participants had earned a minimum of a Fifth-degree Black Belt placing them far above the rank of First-degree which I had earned.

With that increased rank came a significant shift in perspective of gender, embodiment, and their roles as Black Belt Women. Elite female martial artists have chosen to encounter the world through a different way of being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). In doing so, they engage in a care-of-the-self ethic through martial arts training and develop a body identity that contests the social construction of gender. Since I had only earned a First-degree Black Belt, I did not encounter the same experiences that these women had in their lifelong learning of Taekwondo. Because of my previous engagement in body-building, I was familiar with genres of physical activity that act as a mechanism to dismantle social constructions of gendered sport participation. As such, I had a familiarity with adopting a mode of bodily comportment counter to traditional female body discourse. This further provided an insider perspective of these participants' experiences. Each shared an air of confidence, commitment, and understanding that was left underdeveloped in myself having only practiced for three years. In terms of gender, the three women were keenly aware of differences existing not only in the Taekwondo school, but also life in general and were able to transfer the Taekwondo skill and mindset to address issues of gender inequity both in and outside of the school. Gender was not a hindrance to their success either. In fact, embracing their position as women allowed them to break barriers and change mindsets of students in the Taekwondo schools as will be evidenced in an interview in the following chapter. These women understood the unique quality of men and women practicing as equals in a Taekwondo school and were able to translate those experiences to real world encounters.

Lifetime training. I was intimidated by their rank as I interviewed these participants. I felt unworthy of even discussing their accomplishments as I had “quit” my Taekwondo training. But I also knew of the importance of drawing their attention to their embodied experiences of practicing Taekwondo. As women who had the opportunity to devote a lifetime to learning

Taekwondo it was incredibly difficult to guide them in isolating experiences where they were connected bodily with their Taekwondo practice and likewise provide the opportunity for them to recognize that's what it was. Perhaps it was because of their almost lifetime exposure to the art. These women grew up challenging gender narratives as women who practice Taekwondo, "enculturated by habits of comportment distinctive to interactional settings" (Young, 2005, p. 17) of the Taekwondo school. They practiced in a space that emphasized respect and honor based on rank and experience, not on gender. Expectations for performing forms, engaging in sparring, and executing precise technique was not gender specific; each Taekwondo student was held to the same standard. These women learned how to be in touch with their bodies through repeated practice of forms and hand and foot techniques. They were trained to be technical, precise, and methodic in their execution of the techniques. But they also experienced similar challenges. An interesting connection among these three women was their shared difficulty in executing the Fourth-Degree form. Allison aptly pointed out, and Andrea made reference to the fact that it seemed that particular form was not designed for a female body to perform. They both commented on the need to shift their hips differently and move their legs in a way that was foreign to their bodies in order to execute the series of kicks and jumps required in the form. This was a significant revelation in terms of the women being more bodily aware than they realized. They instinctively knew ways to adjust their bodies to accommodate techniques required to perform a precise jump/kick technique.

Drawing out experiences. As upper rank black belts, their skills have been so strategically honed that they had a difficult time separating their physical bodily experiences from the phenomenal body. Engaging them in considering the phenomenal body was challenging but I was eventually able to draw on their experiences and show them how what they

were experiencing was in fact, an embodied experience. I also learned of the difficulty in separating the technical aspect of practicing Taekwondo from the meditative and mindful nature of the arts portion of the martial art. Perhaps it is because as Merleau-Ponty (2002) points out we only see the body at its periphery. We cannot *see* our bodies unless we have a second body with which to perceive the original body. Utilizing the video attempted to act as the second body to offer an additional perspective of the participants executing their individual forms. Asking them to look beyond what they perceive of themselves while in themselves created the opportunity for a different variation of the self to be perceived. Ultimately, they did come to speak to incidences of embodied subjectivity when focusing specifically on the practice of performing their forms at National competitions. I was only able to recognize this embodied learning experience after critically reflecting on my own experience practicing Taekwondo.

The following chapter paints a very different picture. This set of participants was able to draw on their numerous years of experience in Taekwondo and were able to recognize moments of embodied learning throughout their years of Taekwondo practice. You will see in the next set of data that the difference in years of experience yielded much different reflections.

CHAPTER FIVE

IT BEGAN IN ADULTHOOD

This chapter will present the narratives of the three women who began practicing Taekwondo as adults. They are not presented in any particular order, but as previously indicated, each section will begin with a summary of my observations followed by their interview transcripts. At the end of the chapter, I will share my reflections and what I learned from the collective.

Colleen: The Performer

Colleen is a 53 year-old Third Degree Black Belt. She practiced for approximately eleven years and no longer attends Taekwondo school, however she does practice her form from time to time and teaches a martial arts class. Her primary motivation for participating in Taekwondo began when she attended classes with her daughter. She enjoyed watching her daughter and the other adults practicing and was finally enticed to begin taking classes as a fortieth birthday gift to herself. Initially Colleen was attracted to the movement itself. As an actor, Colleen was interested in the performance aspect or the art component to the martial art of Taekwondo. Performance was a primary theme that circulated through Colleen's reflection on her experience practicing Taekwondo. She enjoyed the competition aspect and described herself as "having the balls" to compete at a certain level. (interesting use of masculine terminology).

In the zone. Colleen was very connected with the notion of being cognizant of every hand and foot technique and placement when competing. When describing what it was like for her to compete, she commented, "when I'm in front of the judges all goes away and I am just in the zone and I'm in that moment and I'm paying attention to my breath and how I'm breathing

through the movement and the pace of my movement in the pit (competition ring). The position of every single part of your body you have to be aware of because when you're not, that's when you don't do well in competition." When reflecting on her experience performing a form for competition Colleen stated, "I think I would lose my focus if I started talking in my head and not feeling what comes next; what is your next move; and just kind of let go...I get into that space in my head where everything goes away...I'm very conscious of my breath as I'm doing it".

Body confidence. Colleen also mentioned the notion of confidence frequently throughout the interview. A turning point in her life was when she got divorced. She reflects on that time, "I always wondered if my new sense of confidence in myself contributed in any way to changes in the marriage". The theme of confidence was reinforced in terms of body confidence, "I think there's a difference between mentally feeling confident but then your body matching that confidence knowing that you can do certain things...I know that my body can perform at levels I never thought possible before and that gives you a new sense of confidence in life in the aging process. You're not stopping learning ever, you know? You're going to challenge yourself and you're going to keep going."

An interesting observation Colleen made about her Taekwondo practice was the "meditative spirituality that Taekwondo allows". She referred to the spiritual dimension of Taekwondo in terms of the degree to which you need to be in touch with your body and the breathing and embracing positivity by letting go of the negative.

Upon reflecting on performing her form on video, Colleen seemed somewhat disappointed initially since she was out of practice with her form and did not execute it how she had hoped. She chose the Third-Degree Black Belt form because it "challenges me the most because it requires a great deal of balance and strength and because that one's the hardest one for

me and that's why that one is my favorite". On deeper reflection, Colleen acknowledged that she saw, "a really strong, powerful woman; very focused, very strong and what she's doing, feels like she could really do anything she puts her mind to." Power was a word Colleen used most when describing her Taekwondo experience. On personal reflection, Colleen acknowledged about herself, "girl, you've got it! Going on 53 years old and you can move your body like that?!" Another interesting observation Colleen made in response to her training was that her training "reshaped my body into a more feminine form that I was not used to and so for me that was huge just how that made me feel my body change physically." Colleen offered a final comment, "Coming from a mother's perspective, we do for everyone else and we are tasked with wearing many hats and doing many jobs and expectations and so when I signed up for martial arts on my 40th birthday it was my gift to me."

Tell Me a Story

My daughter was taking classes and she enrolled in January of that year. So just being a parent and watching her and watching the other students and how much fun it looks like, that's when I decided that I wanted to take classes as well I had never seen the adult classes because I was only there for my daughter's classes. At the time she was 9 years old so I only saw the younger kids doing it but then I became aware of the adult classes and decided to enroll in August of that year. So it was a couple months like almost a half a year after she started that I decided to do it as well.

I was very interested in the movement watching the students and the movement that they were doing. It was almost like a performance in a way and then going from being a spectator to actually being on the floor and doing the movement? Initially I felt like I had two left feet and

two left hands and couldn't do anything right until my body started learning the techniques and how to how to perform it. I guess you'd call it muscle memory as well like learning the muscle memory of it all but that was the one thing that really attracted me to it was the movement. It surprised me when I started doing it how well I could move. Because initially I started on my 40th birthday. That was my 40th birthday gift to myself- to sign up and after having 3 kids, thinking this isn't something a 40 year old woman should be doing. For a woman, I surprised myself how well I felt doing the movement because I had arthritis in my knees, and was just a little concerned that my body wouldn't react well to the movement. It actually made me feel better and my back, just little issues that my body had and the movement was what it was all about for me.

Creativity. *With my background, I always have needed a creative outlet in my life. At that time I really didn't have anything other than painting the rooms in my house. That was the only level of activity of creativity I had so in a sense this was like being on a stage and performing. Having been on the stage and either in musical theater or drama everything is choreographed. There are movements that you have to do you have to perform at certain times in order for the audience to understand what's going on and to be able to see everything correctly. So in a sense, Taekwondo has that same kind of effect to me especially with what Taekwondo called traditional form. Others call it kata or however people relate to it, but it's a series of movements that you learn. Each belt level has its own and each of them progress and get harder and harder. For me martial arts is performance art.*

Memories. *The first memory that comes to my mind is the time when I was competing; competition was the most memorable times for me. It brings out that performance aspect. When*

you're in competition you're in a ring and you're competing against other people in your age range and your belt level but for me I'm also competing against myself. I'm trying to better my skills, I'm trying to better myself, I'm trying to get past those insecurities that I might have and for me that was the most important thing about competition. It wasn't about getting State champ or District champ or going on to Worlds. It just was about me, myself, and what can I do to be not only a better martial artist but a better person. There are so many aspects that competition brought out I don't know if everyone feels that way but for me it was just being able to, can I say have the balls, can I say that? To have the balls to even feel like you can compete at a certain level. To kind of get past those thoughts in your head to say 'yes I can', 'yes I am good enough', 'yes I can do this, I can do something that I've never done before in my life'. Those pat myself on the back moments. As a woman, as a mom, to kind of feel like you're being a role model to your children, to say you can do anything you put your mind to. This was one way of me showing them that you can do something you've never done before.

In competition, I think because we all (the women martial artists) had such respect for each other. A lot of us were mothers, we were all a certain age, at a certain place in our lives, and as a woman you should be cheering each other on not only in Taekwondo competition but in life. Like hey girl you're awesome, you're amazing, you did this! Whether you have kids or you don't, you experience life and you've reached a certain level in your life and you're awesome. We all understood the journey and just are very supportive of each other.

Gender

When I practice and when I see myself practice, I see a really strong powerful woman: very focused, very strong. What she's doing feels like she could she could really do anything she

put her mind to it. I feel 'girl you got it going on!' You're 53 years old and you can move your body like that?! When I move like that it's just amazing. I remember clearly when I started at the lower belt levels and I would watch upper ranks perform. I was like there is no way I can do that; this body doesn't move that way, I can't do that. Then as I progressed and I learned and I trained and then I could do that I was like yeah okay. It was very empowering to take those next steps in improving and getting better and stronger and more advanced. When I see this it just reinforces to me how incredible movement is in my life what it means to me in my life to be able to physically do that at this age after having 3 kids and everything I've lived through.

Embodied Experiences

Having been in competition you have one judge looking just at your footwork, you have another judge looking only at your hand technique, and then you have another judge looking at the overall picture. With that in mind you have to be very cognizant of every single movement and the placement of your feet of your stance, of your arm technique, of your positioning, of your hand, of the level of where it should be. So you have to be so aware of every single movement. So while I'm performing that's what's going through my head. I don't see or have sense of anything else around me. Usually in competition there are several rings going on at the same time. You can have as many as twenty or you could have as little as 10 at the same time and there's a lot of activity going on. There's people walking all about, a lot of noise. It's karate. People are yelling, a lot is going on at one time, but when my name is called and I'm out there and I'm in front of the judges it all goes away and I am just in that zone and I'm in that moment. I'm paying attention to my breath and how I'm breathing through the movement and the pace of my movement in the pit. Like I said before, the position of every single part of your body you

have to be aware of because when you're not that's when you don't do well in competition. When you don't have any recollection of where my foot placement should be on this move, or what should I be doing with my hand here or out of the corner of my eye I see somebody walking by you're not in that moment that you should be while competing.

Body awareness. *There could be several instances of when I am especially aware of my body. One of them would be feeling pain and working through pain and getting past it whether it was pain that I just had in my body not necessarily from Taekwondo. Being very cognizant of okay you have to slow your movement down a little bit or you have to do your movement a little differently because of this pain. Another instance would be when my body would do something new or better than I had done before and thinking to myself oh yes like that was awesome because whether it was okay you couldn't do that before but now you can do that, that's awesome! That type of feeling when you finally accomplish a move that you've been struggling with, those moments were even better than having to deal with pain and working through that because you felt like you achieved something.*

I know physically I have become more flexible than I ever was. My balance is much better. The long-term results were that I've always felt like a very confident person but now I think my body posture supported that confidence in a new way because I felt stronger than I ever had physically in my life before that time and that's a big difference. I think there's a difference between mentally feeling confident but then your body matching that confidence knowing that you can do certain things. It's knowing that my body can perform at levels I never thought possible before and that gives you a new sense of confidence in life in the aging process and thinking okay if I can do this now what can I do in another 10 years? What am I going to learn?

So for me it was that realization that you're not stopping learning ever. You're going to challenge yourself and you're going to keep going and you're going to do new things. You're going to learn new things and you're going to challenge your body until it gives out. So those types of realizations and were significant for me.

Power of the feminine. *When talking about power on the physical level and having trained for so many years and feeling physically how my body changed you know the muscle tone and the posture the balance; that gives you a sense of power because you feel your strength and then just knowing that you can do certain things is very powerful. So that's the physical side of it. Then there's the mental power you know? Knowing that you can do certain things as part of the mental strength. I was explaining that it's physical as well but it also is mental just having that confidence and knowing that if you're ever in a situation, you can handle yourself and you'll be okay. You could help others and you could take care of other people as well that gives you a lot of mental power. It's just power of the feminine. Taekwondo is a sport for every everybody, it's not just a male thing and when people think of sports sometimes they think it's masculine more so than feminine. But there are there is a femininity to it in the graceful movements that we have so you feel more empowered as a woman to be able to move in certain ways so there are so many levels of power so many things.*

Body conscious. *You have to be very conscious of every turn of your body. For me that is being present and in the moment so in that sense it touches upon spirituality. Also your breath and breathing and relaxing: that's part of the meditative spirituality that Taekwondo allows. At least for me it did and probably for you as well and it's an intense experience and it's very relaxing. If you had a bad day, you go to the school and you start kicking pads and hitting stuff.*

It's a release of either negative energy or just an energy that you just don't want in your body and you release that. The pleasure and the joy that you get out of that is what my spirituality is as well as letting go of negativity and embracing positivity. I always feel enriched in charge you know it recharged so that's how Taekwondo is at school.

Physically, what Taekwondo did for me, it shaped my body differently than what I had known previously. I lived my life a majority of the time as a stick figure and never felt really super feminine. I'm a very petite woman kind of all over the place and never felt curvy. I have more of a boyish figure you know so what Taekwondo did for me was it shaped me, oddly enough, although having 3 kids that helped with the hips a bit but it shaped my muscles differently in a way I never anticipated at all. It gave my body a different feeling and so with that feeling I walked a little differently, I felt a little differently, presented myself differently wore clothes a little differently than I had before. I embraced the new figure and was really pleased with you know the way it's shaped me.

Self-reflection. *When I saw myself in the video I noticed the techniques that are challenge me the most are the ones with the balance. So right before I perform the movement I think in my head the position that I need to be in, my alignment, and so I'll say to myself in my head okay make sure your knee is chambered up higher for this so that when you do execute the kick easier. I'm consciously thinking of right before the moves that challenge me what I need to be doing and how I need to prepare my body for those. Then I execute the techniques just kind of slow and easy and simple. I'm not even consciously thinking of them, it's just the ones that challenge me more I think right before I execute them about the alignment and how to position myself properly so that I can make them much stronger than and what I did. It's an awareness. I*

know for example before I do my sidekick rechamber and then do the tension I know I have to have my chamber my knee up higher before I do it. I just know physically what I need to do before I execute it and it's not something that I say oh don't forget put your knee up higher it is a physical gut feeling that I know how to position myself before that move.

I love the movement of Taekwondo. I do have a background in dance and acting and so I have a performance quality about myself that I enjoy. It's not necessarily to perform for others; it's to perform for me. I wonder what does my body want to do? How does it want to feel? And in that sense I place myself in that space and as I'm doing the movement it feels natural. It feels empowering and strong. I get into that space in my head where everything goes away so just hearing my breath; I'm very conscious of my breath as I'm doing it because that's part of when we do kihap. That's part of the breathing, the relaxing, the getting through the movement. I do hear my breath, that's pretty much all I hear when I'm performing. It's just such a peaceful calm state even though I am performing powerful moves with the speed, power, and accuracy. To me it's just a common peaceful space and that's why I love it.

Black Belt Journey

It is a journey. It's very much like either life or climbing a mountain and that's one of the metaphors used in Taekwondo is the mountain. When you start, you're the white belt and you have to climb your way up the ladder progressing to the different belt levels and reaching that mountaintop. In essence you never really reach the mountaintop because you're always driving regardless of what level you're at. To get to your first degree black belt, it's a process of two years possibly two and a half years depending upon things in your life and then to get your second degree it's another 2 years so you're looking at that for your investment that point maybe

four and a half years. To get your third degree it's another 2 years so you're looking at six years six and a half years. That's a long period of time to be doing one thing although you're learning different things all the time but that's the journey. It's a long time. It's a lot of work. It's a lot of effort, but it's a lot of fun too so it's worthwhile.

Turning points. *The turning point for me was when I was a white belt and that was the very first level and realizing that I could do it. I only had a two-week period of time from when I had to learn everything to get myself up to snuff for testing. It was hard but knowing that I could do it at that point and then reaching that first belt level was a big turning point for me and then once that happened I was hooked. Learning how to spar was a whole new level for me too. That was another turning point, and then the actual getting to the black belt, that's a whole other journey. You feel like you're beginning all over again but on a much higher level. Watching the higher ranks and you're watching their movements and what they're doing and I remember clearly in my brain thinking 'oh dear God I am not going to be able to do that!' not realizing the journey to get there.*

Symbolism

For me the symbol that comes to mind is the tree. In Taekwondo the symbolism is Pine Tree and rock and it's the metaphor that is very strongly present throughout all of the training. For me it has a lot of symbolism not only in what is mentioned in the classes but if you think about the tree itself it has far-reaching roots underneath the ground which you can't see and so for me those roots are everything that I've done in my life to support me up to that moment. Underneath the trunk is this power and the strength that I feel to stand tall, to be strong. The limbs or the branches of the tree is me reaching out helping others mostly as an instructor as

well. So mostly through instructing others but just knowing that I have the power to help other people. Then you have attached to the branches, you have the smaller limbs and that reminds me of being flexible not just body-wise but just mentally being flexible in life when life throws you a curveball how are you going to react? Just having that flexibility. The leaves are the ever-changing nature of life. In our part of the world we have changing colors of trees and they fall off the tree and then they are reborn again so it's that cycle of life and we all go through cycles of life throughout our journey and especially through Taekwondo. There's so many different levels and ups and downs and good days and bad days you know so for me it is the tree that symbolizes it all.

How Has Life Changed?

I always wondered if my new sense of confidence in myself contributed in any way to changes in the marriage. Who I was for years and in my marriage was prevalent from my upbringing, always doing whatever I could to not cause waves, to not speak out, to do what I should to be the perfect wife. I'm not saying that Taekwondo released the rebel in me however what I feel is with new levels of confidence in myself and new levels of awareness of what I was enjoying finding out being what would I as a woman was becoming for me that was significant and possibly that contributed to the end of my marriage. He didn't like seeing those types of changes in me and it's not that I was suddenly combative. But perhaps it was this new level of womanhood or confidence that he didn't like. I think about it often and I question it. I really do. I would never trade it for the world. I love who I am, how much stronger I am as a person as a woman, how much confidence I feel in myself and in my abilities and I have Taekwondo to thank for that you know I really do so can't trade it for the world.

I think when people hear that you're a black belt and you're a third degree they think you're a badass or you could kick my ass. That's their first impression and yes that's true however that's not the most important thing and it's not the end-all and it's not what it's about. So if you didn't know and if you were not a black belt yourself I would tell you what we've gone through. Taekwondo is not just a sport it's a metaphor for life. Everything that you go through: the ups and downs, the bumps in the roads, you go through it all and that's what it's about. What it does for you as a person, what might be different if you never started your journey? Would you gain something different than I did? So everyone's journey is different but that's what you would explore and find out for yourself going through the journey.

Living Taekwondo. *I can think of an altercation situation in our neighborhood: a scene out of do the right thing. It was a hot summer day, people are on edge, and one particular neighbor kind of got in my face and I know I could have leveled her if I wanted to. But I also know that, that is not what a martial artist does and so I stood there and I have my hands behind my back and I just stood there with my shoulders back, head up. I just allowed her to vent what she wanted to say and then I walked away from her not only worried that her children were present, but my children were as well. I was really conscious of not doing something that I would have regretted. To be that martial artist that doesn't react in a negative way to hurt someone. That's not why I trained. In that sense my martial arts training assisted me in that situation. If I didn't have that I think I would have reacted differently. I probably would have put her in her place verbally. I was very proud of myself and how I represented myself. Even my other neighbor who her son was training at the time, she saw what I did she was like 'oh my God she's like you just used your martial arts training!' so yeah and that sense it came in handy.*

My parting words would be to women that you can do so much with your life with your body with your brain that either you didn't think was possible or you never thought you would try. Challenge yourself to do new things, to experience something that you never thought you would, and you know it's not to say you're going to stick with it for 10 years you know you might be like okay I tried that didn't like it didn't work for me that's fantastic you did something you tried something but you might surprise yourself. You'll learn something new about yourself about the world about life you wouldn't have if you have not tried so that's my parting thought is continue trying, continue learning, continue growing.

Reflections on Colleen's Interview

Colleen was the most intuitive of all the participants. Additionally, she had a very distinct sense of self and awareness of her body schema. Described as “a summary of our bodily experience” (Merleau-Ponty, 2000, p. 101) Colleen's consciousness of her body was integral in her ability to truly connect with the essence of her phenomenal body. She perceived beyond the physical into a realm where she was in tune with the movement of her body through space when engaging in the gesture or “kinetic melody” of Taekwondo (Merleau-Ponty, 2000, p. 135). Just as it is a challenge to articulate the true nature of embodied subjectivity, so too is it difficult to articulate the “knowing” of the body. Because of her performance nature, the act of performing whether it was gender, Taekwondo, mother, teacher, each of these performative aspects resided in the pre-reflective space of her being. This was her being of the world, the multilayered milieu in which she inhabited.

Wendy: Rising Above

Wendy began taking classes after her son signed up. She was trying to find a good physical activity to participate in after an Achilles tendon injury. She has earned her Third Degree Black Belt and is still practicing after beginning eight years ago. Wendy was keenly aware of gender in the Taekwondo school if only for the desire to rise to the challenge of sparring and competing with other men in the class. She found having men present allowed her to fully practice the martial art and not feel as though she had to hold back if she was sparring with someone she did not feel physically compatible to. When practicing with men, Wendy indicated that, “when they do attack or they push me to do more, to do better, to hit harder because sometimes with the women you have a tendency to hold back because you don’t want to hurt them”. Wendy also has experience with sports when she was younger so participating in a sport was not a foreign idea for her. She referred to herself as a sort of Tomboy with her involvement with sport growing up. Strong or strength was the word that permeated her interview.

While confidence was also a significant theme in her responses, it was practicing Taekwondo that truly cemented her self-confidence after struggling with living with a cleft palate for much of her life. Although she had corrective surgery, Wendy commented that it was not until she began practicing Taekwondo that she finally felt able to talk with people in public settings. “I hold my head higher and I’m proud of myself for what I have accomplished and I don’t have to hide my face anymore”.

A Story of How I Began Taekwondo

Actually it was my sister-in-law who got my son signed up at the studio and he started in January. That February I tore my Achilles tendon and then had surgery like a week after I tore

it. Four months after that, my therapy ran out and at that point they were offering the adults 3 months of classes for free. So myself and another mom signed up and that's how I got started. I actually got a good workout and I couldn't use weights because of the injury. I liked the fact that there were adults there and we were all learning together. It wasn't like I had to jump in by myself. I had two friends with me to do it the workout too.

Gender

I think about gender a little bit, especially since I work with the men. Not that they are mean but sometimes I feel like they held back. In Taekwondo class, because I am a woman, I didn't want them to hold back and I didn't want them to haul off and hit me either. But they had a tendency to hold back. I wanted to learn by doing so I needed them to punch me or kick me or do what you need to do. Also, I guess kind of being a woman in that sense where you see the other men really hit each other, I wanted them to hit me too in the moment. In class I actually, I just want them to pretend they are the mugger or the bad guy and make it more realistic than just somebody go up and just grab you and you do your stuff.

Black Belt Journey

I love it so much, earning my black belt. But confidence was the big thing. I lacked confidence and it was because of how I grew up and part of that was I was born with a cleft palate. I was bullied all my life until my senior year when I finally had plastic surgery and even after that I went to college nobody knew me there but I was always the shy one, the quiet one. I hid myself a lot and I hid my face even though it's fixed now. I still had my face but going there to the Taekwondo school, I learned so much. I would have never done this (the interview) with you to be honest. I mean I'm not the one to go out and talk to people, well I wasn't. But now I'll go out to a bar and have a conversation with somebody I don't know and just have the

confidence to stand up and tell them who I am and what I am. It's been a long road for me. It was probably actually along the same lines of having confidence in being able to teach. I can teach kids now. I would have never done that before.

Embodied Experience

In my body, I feel strength. I feel confident. I feel like I could take on new challenges if somebody throws something at me. I'm definitely in the best shape I've ever been in strength-wise body-wise. I hurt but it's a good hurt. It's a very good hurt. I know I'm happy with myself. I'm happy with the way I look. I feel strong. I like being able to talk to strangers and say hi to somebody in public that I don't even know. Going by somebody and smiling at them so it's something good. I feel good about myself.

I guess if I had a bad day at work I can go in and beat something up and feel good when I come out. I just love being there. I love doing it, love beating up guys. I have happiness teaching the kids to letting them learn what I've learned and teaching them what I've learned.

I love it. I don't know about anybody else but I do love it because I love the strength. When men do attack, they push me to do more, to do better, to hit harder. Give me just a couple women there that do the same thing. One adult female student for example, she and I work very well together. We push each other to go harder and stronger. With the men you can punch as hard as you want on the pads or kick as hard as you want on the pads and they don't seem to mind. Sometimes with the women and younger adults, you have a tendency to hold back because you don't want to hurt them. I just mean with the men being stronger that you can take it harder on them. But I do also notice in my body, it makes me feel better knowing that I did exercise for myself. I'm eating healthier and exercising so that overall makes me feel good too.

Physical presence. *I notice that I hold my head up higher. I'm proud of myself. Nobody knows what I did but I'm proud of myself for what I have accomplished so far. I hold my head up high now and I don't hide my face anymore. Back then we didn't call it bullying but high school kids you know were not nice.*

I guess I just know that doing push-ups when I first started were difficult. I would only do like 10 on my knees. Now I can probably do about 50 regular ones without being on my knees yeah so I have to say my strength in my arms from doing the push-ups and getting stronger that way I have changed. In the Taekwondo School I am fluidly stronger. I like doing the forms. I like being free with the free movements the flowing movements.

As I was watching, when I see myself jump there, literally like this high on the floor [she shows me a few inches between her two hands high] it feels actually jumping this high [she shows me her hands farther apart to suggest a larger distance]. I'm still working but I saw that it will take me to pull out a few more phone books to help me jump higher. I do enjoy it. I know everything about it even on those days that I don't want to go I make myself go and I come out so glad that I went. Sometime there's crappy days when you have at work and you can go in and I ask if we can hit something tonight and punch the bags.

Focus. *When I practice, I think, first am I doing this right? Or I also think if my stance is correct. Am I doing the right move? I'm always three moves ahead of myself thinking what I have to do to which turn is next. I don't so much picture what's going on with my body as opposed to what going on in my head. It's a good job to get through it correctly without falling or stumbling or losing my balance. When practicing I might lose my balance a lot but I know when it's time to do the form I tighten up not in a bad way but just to make sure that I'm holding what I'm supposed to be holding in to make sure that balances there are good.*

Black Belt Journey

I had fun with taking Taekwondo with my son. To this day we still have fun learning. I learned so much and I just like the Taekwondo but just who I am, how I have come to learn. There's stuff that I couldn't do that I could just keep trying and trying. You can do it, learning to be a teacher. Growing up I would never have thought that I'd be a black belt in Taekwondo. I guess the most important thing or the most fun it was doing it along with my son. I'm just glad I did it. I've always wanted to do it and I don't know why I just I don't know why I never asked and then I kind of forgot about it after while until my sister-in-law took my son there. I think I don't let anything hold me back anymore. I'm not one of those who get hurt and I'm going to sit for the rest of my life. I will always find something to do but for now I do Taekwondo.

Symbolism

My metaphor for something that describes the black belt journey would be Choong Jung. That means everything turns out perfect and beautiful and it's always just hit me. It's something that I like hearing because I feel like I've turned out perfect and beautiful. What I mean by that is like you look at high school yearbooks and then to be here. Things have changed so much. Also, I think another symbol would be the yin and the yang. The yin and yang- that's me that's everything blends nicely.

How Has Life Changed?

I was divorced before. Not too many people know that. He turned out to be a liar. It was devastating. I didn't know that at first and then after the years went by it just got worse. I couldn't take it anymore, so I called it quits. To some extent, women in general, seeing or learning that they've been through a divorce and something significant impact them positively in their life like Taekwondo makes a difference. Like being in Taekwondo has given me confidence.

Lessons. *I know I had quite a few things come from taking Taekwondo. Just learning different moves. Some of the harder ones, when you finally figure it out how to do it, a lot of times you overthink things. Like why we're doing it and is it actually simpler than what we're making it out to be, becoming stronger and being able to do board breaks. Well you know what fun it is breaking the boards.*

I always put myself in a little scenario every now and then to see how I might react. Like if I see somebody I don't know like how am I going to get out of it? Like I had a guy at work and he was fighting me because he kept telling me that I was doing stuff wrong and that I cancelled his appointment and it wasn't me but he was getting in my face. I'm standing there trying to figure out okay what am I going to do to get out of this? He was up in my face and that was the first time he did, but it was still running through my head. I always have thoughts running through my head of how I'm going to get out of a situation if something should happen. One thing I take away from this is to do that one thing that makes you feel uncomfortable. I am so appreciative my bosses are thrilled that I do this stuff. They like that I go to National headquarters and learn more. And it may have nothing to do with the work I do for them. It's not like they feel they don't pay for me to go learning outside of everything. But they like that I do this for me.

Reflections on Wendy

Wendy thinks in very concrete terms. Her focus and answers emphasized very tangible reflections on her performance of Taekwondo. Because she grew up being hyper-aware of her appearance due to her cleft palate, it was difficult to dissect the affective lived experience away from the concrete. Heavily influenced by societal constructions of gender, being able to perform gender was clouded by her ability to move through space free from restraint (Young, 2005, p.

31). Wendy imposed self-restraint for a significant portion of her life and once delimited by the act of Taekwondo, stepping outside the confines of a patriarchal society was foreign. Wendy's narrative was however, a testimony to the liberatory nature of engaging in martial arts where she was able to claim ownership of her body. Previously, Wendy was painfully aware of the imperfections left from a cleft palate and as such her being in the world was primarily informed by external forces. Once she harnessed the generative power of Taekwondo in reclaiming a sense of self, Wendy was able to release the attachment to her imperfect body and embrace a reconstituted version of herself as a powerful and confident martial artist. In this way the ethic of self-care was evidence in increased sense of self-efficacy which Wendy was able to transfer from the Taekwondo school to the whole world in which she inhabited.

Michelle: Taekwondo Mom

Michelle also began practicing Taekwondo after her daughter started taking classes. It turned into something the two of them could do together. Since her daughter had already been practicing Taekwondo, Michelle did not take much notice of gender in the classroom. Furthermore, Michelle is an engineer and as such, is keenly aware of gender differences in the workplace. More notable was the fact that this particular school where Michelle practices, is owned by a female and the head instructor is female. Typically in many of the ATA Martial Arts schools, you will find a male owner and head instructor or a married couple owning the school where the husband is the leader. In this case, the school is owned and operated by a woman and because of this, gender differences are not as explicit in terms of power. "I'm surrounded by women in that school so I don't ever reflect on it because I'm surrounded by so many women that are so good at this that I've never stopped to imagine that it's out of the ordinary... but even

at like tournaments, there are so many women who are amazing and inspiring and I can't even imagine the school being run by a man and what that would be like".

As a Third-Degree Black Belt, Michelle has also overcome physical injury and took a break from Taekwondo to allow herself time to heal after two separate knee surgeries. Her Taekwondo practice has lasted about eight years and she plans to continue for as long as her body will let her. She has persisted however and performed the Third-Degree form for the video. She commented that this form was challenging and knew there were techniques that she needed to improve on but she enjoyed rising to the challenge and wanted to perform the form. In fact, she appreciated the opportunity to watch herself on the video and was eager to see how she did. Her comments about viewing herself included positive remarks such as, "I look better in the kicking sequence than I thought", "a lot of women my age (50) can't do this", "I look better than I feel" (when asked about how she felt in her body when performing the form). Additionally, Michelle commented, "I have to focus...In fact when I get distracted is when I usually make big mistakes so I feel like if I'm not fully focused on what I'm doing, that's where [*I make a mistake*]".

Michelle frequently commented on the use of her martial arts training as a type of fitness activity. She never thought about the journey of becoming a Black Belt but rather embraced Taekwondo as an opportunity to engage in a fitness class that was different from others she had taken in the past. However, upon reflection, Michelle stated, "If I had to choose the top outcome of my Songahm training, it would be this new-found focus. Though it isn't something I've mastered, I have found enormous improvement in my ability to tune out the noisy world and concentrate." She referred to her level of confidence as a significant outcome from her martial arts training.

My Taekwondo Story

When my daughter was younger we just let her try out a lot of different things. I brought her to the ATA Studio in Wyomissing and she liked it. I just always had to sit in the lobby and periodically they would have a special for the parents to join as a member. She begged us to do it and there was no way my husband was going to do it. So, I said I'll do it. I needed some exercise and it looked a lot easier than it turned out to be so that's how I ended up starting. I liked it enough. I remember one night I discovered what a great workout it was like I did a lot of fitness classes before. I preferred group fitness classes, but I hadn't done that in a while. I really did need some kind of exercise and I thought it was great. It was like a full body workout and I got lots of cardio out of it so I just really enjoyed the physical fitness aspects of it. Also my job is so hectic. It's always on, I had to be on at crazy hours, and my brain I just felt like I could never shut it off, like I could never have any down time. I really liked that during class I had to focus on what I was doing and I could not spend time thinking about work. I guess in the moment that allows you to block everything. I don't think I thought about that until I you asked us to reflect on what we were getting out of our journey but that's what I was enjoying out of the class.

Gender

I didn't think about gender too much because my daughter was doing Taekwondo and the head instructor was a woman and the owner of the school was a woman. I didn't think about it being anything special or different. But actually at work when people find out that I train in Taekwondo they make a big deal out of it. I don't really understand why that is something they're intrigued by I don't know I guess it became an identity for me. But I never thought anything different about being a woman practicing Taekwondo.

Well we train together, men and women, in the Taekwondo school. I definitely avoid the ones that are super aggressive and don't seem to know how to adjust intensity to the sparring or working with even the ones who are not as aggressive. One time I got kicked in the breast really hard and I was like 'oh man that really hurt', even with the chest guard on. I had never been so squarely hit that hard before. I try not to let that intimidate me going forward. That's the only time that's ever happened. Sometimes they don't understand so I said 'you know when you do those repeated strikes it's giving me a headache' and then he backed way off like for the next several weeks. He didn't understand I wasn't trying to tell him to take it easy on me, just don't hit me in the head. But all he hears is now all of the sudden he's got to be very hands off. And that is not what I think so I'm always afraid to tell them those kind of things because I don't want them to think that I'm asking them to go easy on me because I want challenging sparring partners. That just makes me a better at sparring.

Woman power. *I'm surrounded by women in that school, so I don't never reflect on it really, being a woman practicing Taekwondo because I'm surrounded by so many women that are so good at this. I've never stopped to imagine that it's something that's out of the ordinary. I know it is. I realize it is. But even at the tournaments there so many women at ATA tournaments that are so inspiring and amazing I can't even imagine the school being run by a man. I can't imagine what that would be like because she (the head instructor) is so invested in learning how to teach children and that is such a big part of our school. Honestly, I can't imagine a man being that invested in educating themselves to do this the right way. I'm not sure I would enjoy being part of a school where the women, where they were weren't instrumental in running the school. I can't imagine what that would be like or if I would continue to be part of it because I remember the head instructor before this school ownership change. He was funny and all but I*

don't think I would have stuck with it if it was still him that was running the school to be honest. And he was goofy and funny but he was irritated with the kids and you could see it. You could see him with your kids and see that it wasn't something he enjoyed and I watch the current instructors with the kids and it's amazing. They're so encouraging but they're not easy on them and I can understand why that school is thriving because they're such great instructors and so how do I feel about being a woman in Taekwondo? The role models I have, I guess I'm proud. I'm proud of them and so being associated with them makes me proud. Like I said at work, they've never seen me do anything with Taekwondo, yet they're all like joking about how they shouldn't mess with me...and you know she'll kick your behind. I'm not even like that at work. I'm not mean. If I ever raise my voice, it's like that is really big because it's something I don't do.

Embodied Experiences

I think it's part of why I keep doing this. I really enjoy it and how I feel afterwards. Even when I'm tired I come to class and I'll be standing in line. Even if I don't really feel like it and I'm just focused on what I'm doing, and it feels good because it feels good even when I'm overtired. I just really enjoy how I feel even though I'm tired of sucking wind and I feel so good and I have learned the strategies to overcome other males in the class, their aggression and I can still beat those kids you know?

Body awareness. *Okay balance is one thing that I have improved on. I mean it's still my biggest challenge but you feel stronger that way and just my everyday life I just feel stronger in general. I do think my posture has improved also. I've been doing it for so long that it's hard to remember back but I know I was like this all the time right? Working on my computer and now I*

cannot stand that anymore. I have to get up and move around in my office move around I do I just crave the movement instead of just sitting staring at my laptop all the time.

I don't pay close attention to my body, because I usually just trying to think about how I'm going to execute that move so I guess I'm not paying attention to it. That was part of what attracted me to do this because I have to focus on form and technique, and I can't focus on all everything at the same time to do everything perfectly. In fact, when I get distracted is when I usually make big mistakes like at the very beginning as I watched myself do this form because I was nervous. I feel like if I'm not fully focused on what I'm doing and that's where you make the mistakes.

Black Belt Journey.

I've enjoyed my Taekwondo training so much that I've felt compelled to continue training even after two knee injuries and two surgeries, all of which my friends and family kept telling me were signs from the universe that it was time to stop. But there is a saying that pops up on the monitor in the Taekwondo studio office that says "Nothing worth having is easy" – I agree. The universe is telling me this is worth it!

Along the way, I've had the pleasure and honor of observing and participating in the personal growth of many others at the school, which was even more satisfying than blasting through the plastic board for board breaks the first time with a well-placed hook kick. While I know from personal experience now how hard it was for my daughter to earn that first black belt, I see her striving like never before as an advanced black belt student and as part of the Legacy program. That being said, I also find inspiration in every student at the studio – each offering their uniquely admirable trait(s), whether it be flawless technique, resilience, a smile generating encouragement.

From my vantage point as a rare woman engineer in management, I'm thrilled that my daughter is under the rigorous instruction of two notable female role models that I hope will imprint on the many students that are under their care. Watching another instructor develop into a leader and role model has also been a highlight of my color belt training.

Now I'm a third degree and I feel guilty testing because my daughter can't test for her fourth-degree until she's eighteen. I'm going to be the same rank as her. I can conceivably test before her for fourth-degree because of her age when she started. I almost feel like I self-sabotage sometimes to slow that process down so that I'm not going to overtake her. The second-degree form is my favorite form. It's more challenging than the color belt forms but I still haven't perfected all of the techniques. I like this significantly more than the first degree one. I'm terrified of the third degree one because everyone keeps telling me how hard it is. They always say you can go back to the first Songahm One because it's as simple as it may seem. The Grand Master says that he practices it all the time because you can't perfect it enough.

Lessons. *There was a woman who was older than me that I was sparring and I didn't really perceive her as a threat in any way but she whooped my butt. She didn't look any more threatening to me or any more intense than I am and she was a black belt. I thought I could never ever be that good. It's fine but seeing her the way that she just destroyed me, I thought I don't know. Is that something that's possible for me to do? So I think having that sort of inspiration changed the way that I trained in sparring drills. I'll be honest I started off thinking that was too easy. I felt like because I heard people complain about ATA being a belt factory and I agreed with them to a to a degree, that the practice was not as difficult. But when I was earning recommended black belt, when we started black belt training, I thought this is like 10 times if not more harder than getting to black belt. But then as a black belt, I'm looking back at*

the color belts and thinking wow they're struggling and I just I didn't remember the struggle once I got to the black belt. I was going to describe the struggles of how I felt but I wasn't remembering that when I was getting my black belt. But then the simplest technique makes me realize how hard I did work to get to Black Belt.

How Has Life Changed

I've always been non-confrontational. I think that my extreme dislike for sparring had something to do with it or if it was related to why I hated sparring. When they would tell you to get your gear on I would wish they do that much earlier in the class so I could get it over with it and I just hated it. Actually, it wasn't until I became a black belt and I started learning more strategies and things like that that I stopped hating it. I will admit, I don't hate it as much now. I also feel like my black belt training has helped me get over two torn ACLs. I don't know how related it is to my work and personal life and being more willing to be assertive, but I feel it is a parallel there. It's a parallel where I was just becoming more confident. That was always something in my reviews at work that my employer found me to be so dependable but I needed to work on my confidence. You know maybe there's parallels there with earning the black belt and growing together. Maybe not specifically cause and effect but it was just generally growing I definitely feel there's parallels there in my growth as a person.

It's hard for me to identify specific changes in my life because my daughter, her changes become my changes. Right now I feel like the only connection I have with my daughter, she's a teenager, is our Taekwondo training. We ride together to the Taekwondo school, and she'll talk to me during the ride and we have this thing in common. I can't recognize a change my life other than the changes that are through her growth. I mean she's been doing this since she was four and she's fifteen and I guess 2006. But then I took a break because of my injury so it's hard for

me to recognize a change in my life. It took me one class (and 3 days-worth of avoiding stairs and lifting anything heavier than a coffee cup) to realize my ignorance when I took my first class. I was hooked, because not only did I leave every class satisfactorily exhausted, but I found the focus required throughout the class provided a meditative effect that was much needed (i.e. non-face-buried-in-the-laptop-time). If I had to choose the top outcome of my Songahm training it would be this new found focus. Though it isn't something I've mastered, I have found an enormous improvement in my ability to tune out the noisy world and concentrate in the moment.

Reflections on Michelle

The most significant observation about Michelle is her reluctance to take credit for her successes in Taekwondo. Her male coworkers are acutely aware of her participation in the sport and recognize this accomplishment, however, Michelle seems to still function in the realm of received knowledge (Belenky, et.al., 1986).

“The women who hold the perspective of received knowledge feel quite comfortable with advancing themselves, only if it is clear that self-advancement is also a means of helping others” (Belenky, et. al., 1986, p. 47)

Michelle embraced Taekwondo practice as a way to cement her relationship with her daughter and did not grasp the liberatory power of the activity. Additionally, she was reluctant to acknowledge among her work peers, who were primarily male, that she did indeed possess this power. As an engineer, Michelle was the most challenging participant to get to think in abstract terms.

Conclusions and What I Learned

The interview questions provided a look into the lived experience of each participant as a Black Belt Woman. From the summaries above, it is apparent that while each participant's

experience has been unique, there are areas of overlap in terms of their journey toward and as a Black Belt. Once I sifted through this data set in comparison to the previous grouping, I recognized a notable differences in the lived experiences of each set of participants. Due to the lesser amount of years of experience, while these participants had mastered a Third-degree Black Belt rank, their observations of gender and embodied learning differed. In fact, extracting incidences of embodied experiences were much more challenging in this group. I was able to glean minimal reflections on both gender and embodied experiences, but it appears that the lack of experience as a Black Belt Woman in Taekwondo impacted the ability to critically reflect on instances of embodied learning in particular. Furthermore, as in the interview with Michelle, her observation of gender in the Taekwondo school was completely absent as it was owned and operated by a woman. This eliminated the presence of gender differences completely since there were no male instructors and the only men who remained as students at the school had no obvious bias against a female run school.

PART THREE

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The purpose of the study was to examine how women make meaning of the embodied learning experience of earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo. The research questions guiding the study were:

- 1- How do women's experiences learning Taekwondo influence their self- perceptions, including the ways in which they exist in and interact with the world?
- 2- What role does the culture and environment in the Taekwondo school play when examining the embodied learning experience as a woman practicing Taekwondo?
- 3- How does the embodied learning experience as a woman participating in Taekwondo contribute to the development of identity.

This study was a narrative study informed by autoethnography. In the last two chapters I provided my own autoethnographic analysis and the narratives and analysis of each of the participants. The analysis is grounded in both the feminist emancipatory and the embodied learning frameworks, as well as Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body. In the first section of this concluding chapter, I will discuss the themes of findings of the study in light of the research questions and the theoretical frameworks of the study. Next will be a discussion of the implications for theory and practice. Following, is a consideration of the limitations to the study and suggestions for future research. Finally, I will reflect on the general findings of the study and what I learned as a result. To help the reader follow, I am including a data display of the

main findings from the study. The research questions and detailed findings will be presented after the data display in Table 6.1 below.

TABLE 6.1: DATA DISPLAY

Q1: How do women's experiences learning Taekwondo influence their self-perceptions, including the ways in which they exist in and interact with the world?

Increase in Self-confidence

Difference in Bodily Presence

Style

Gesture

Ownership of Space

Q2. What role does the culture and environment in the Taekwondo school play when examining the embodied learning experience as a woman practicing Taekwondo?

The Significance of Ritual that Relates to the Spiritual

Rituals promoting equality

Rituals promoting strength

Perceived Culture/Environment of Gender Equity

Claiming a (metaphorical) voice

Choosing to tell one's story with intention

Accessing Agency

Q3. How does the embodied learning experience as a woman participating in Taekwondo contribute to the development of (identity or self?)

The Embodied Knowledge of the TKD Woman

Performing as a gendered body

Becoming aware of embodied feminine power.

Becoming More Conscious of Embodied Learning Through Reflection

Reflection through Self Observation (video)

Body becoming subject

From the pre-reflective to the more reflective body

Research Questions

The themes of findings in this study are in essence a response to the research questions listed above. As discussed in the chapters addressing the data, there were significant findings related to the participants' experiences as females practicing Taekwondo and how that translated to their way of being in the world. These changes in their ways of being can be traced back to elements of embodied learning experiences while earning the Black Belt. A combination of factors that influenced a shift in each participant includes the culture found in the Taekwondo school, the comradery among female martial artists, and the process of drawing out the experiences of embodied learning through Taekwondo practice. These elements contributed to drawing conclusions that connect the embodied learning experiences of women who have earned a Black Belt in Taekwondo. Trends in increasing self-confidence, and perceptions of themselves as a female black belt, the sense of feeling powerful as a woman, and the importance of reflection on the embodied learning experience of Taekwondo dominated the narratives as evidenced in the previous chapters. The following sections provide a more in-depth analysis of these themes in light of the research questions and highlight literature that supports these claims.

Q1: How do women's experiences learning Taekwondo influence their self-perceptions, including the ways in which they exist in and interact with the world?

The intention of this question was to directly connect the participants' growth in Taekwondo to growth in other areas of ways of being. The concept of self-perceptions and embodied being of the world integrates the philosophy of embodied learning and the feminist perspective of the sporting female. This is but one step in drawing conclusions toward the liberatory nature of female participation in sport and physical activity.

Increase in Self-confidence

The most notable and perhaps most pervasive theme that emerged from the data was the sense of self-confidence. This increase in self-confidence is manifested in terms of the change in mental strength, the participants' shifts of self-perception, and a change or increase in self-esteem. Young (1999) expands on Merleau-Ponty's (2002) discussion of the "bodily 'I can'" (p. 36) explaining this notion of "I can" as associated with an uninhibited intentionality. The uninhibition translates to an innate sense of "I can" in the participants' experiences while earning their black belts. Consequently, this "I can" attitude can be described as self-confidence. Often heard in Taekwondo circles is the phrase, "It's not Taekwon-don't, it's TaekwonDO!". A combination of the TaekwonDO mindset along with the awareness that we participate in a non-traditional physical activity contributes to the realization of self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Literature from the last couple decades addressing the radical notion of women participating in self-defense activities suggests that women participating in any style of martial art or resistant activities can be considered subversive (Antonides & Hall, 1998; Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1995; Hargreaves, 2002; McCaughey, 1997; Rouse, n.d.). As such, this idea challenges the physically active female narrative which purports that women only participate in physical activity to engage in activity that sculpts the female body in a way to make it more feminine and adhere to the feminine body narrative (Gill & Orgad, 2017; Markula, 2003, 2018; Ostgaard, 2006; Thorpe, 2008). I argue that because participation in martial arts challenges the physical activity norm, that martial arts is a non-traditional style of physical activity. Further, the participants choose to engage in the activity not for body shaping, but rather for mental and emotional shaping. Such motives for participation set the stage for a transformative experience through Taekwondo. This transformative experience, as Foucault (1988) suggests, is a result of

individuals engaging in resistant activities such as martial arts in a way that employ the technology of the self “so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (p. 18).

Similar to the findings in the study from Castelnuovo and Guthrie (1998) on women participating in body building and martial arts, or McCaughey (1997) and her study of women and self-defense, increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy were prevalent as measurable outcomes of Taekwondo participation. In this study, one measure was noting the presence of words related to confidence during the interviews and focus groups. The participants mentioned the word confident in some way, a minimum of six times. The total number of times the participants as a group mentioned confidence was 53 times. The connection between the participants and their sense of self-confidence was obvious as exemplified by statements from the interviews. Colleen explained:

I've always felt like a very confident person but now I think my body posture supported that confidence in a new way because I felt stronger than I ever had physically in my life before that time and that's a big difference. I think there's a difference between mentally feeling confident but then your body matching that confidence knowing that you can do certain things. (Chapter 4)

The sense of self-confidence, I propose, evolves from this other way of knowing similar to Freiler's (2008) discussion on learning through the body. Self-confidence is made manifest through this alternate way of knowing through the body facilitated through physical activity. Discussions abound regarding impetus for women participating in physical, most notably associated with feminine bodily comportment and participation for the sake of fulfilling the expectations of the fit female narrative. In this instance however, the women did not participate

solely to fulfill performative expectations of feminine bodily comportment, but rather, in a circuitous way, subsumed Foucault's (1988) notion of ethic of care by engaging in a body technology that favors the self over the other. Because the motivation for engaging in Taekwondo was grounded in a desire for self-improvement, or to "transgress the discursive domination of the feminine body ideal" (Markula, 2004, p. 303) though perhaps subliminally, the resulting successes were based on level of competency and as such translated into new found feelings of confidence and self-worth based on the accomplishment itself, the Black Belt versus the external change in physicality.

These new ways of being were not easily articulated without deep inquiry through the interviews and focus groups. The participants identified with this explicit shift in self-efficacy in that they could measure in some way a difference in self-perception. To be able to think critically and reflect on one's experiences was essential in drawing out the connections between the notion of perceived shift in self-confidence and the participation in Taekwondo. The participants named specific instances related to increased self-confidence connected to their growth through practicing Taekwondo. More on this reflective piece will be discussed in the third research question, but a smaller discussion is relevant here as well.

Difference in Bodily Presence

The notion of bodily presence reflects Young's (2005) essay on bodily comportment in light of Butler's (1999) of gender performativity. Young argues that there is a "particular style of bodily comportment that is typical of feminine existence" (p. 31) which describes the way women exist in the world. From this data set, it was evident that participation in Taekwondo shifted the way in which the participants moved about their world after having engaged in Taekwondo. The nature of how each participant performed gender, shifted but markedly so in

the women who began Taekwondo later in life. These experiences prior to Taekwondo were not influenced by the liberatory nature of Taekwondo. For example, Marissa, Andrea, and Allison all experienced life through the eyes of a female martial artist. They began their practice in their childhood. Recalling the discussion above in terms of the “I can” attitude, these women existed in a space that promoted a different way of being in the world even before they were exposed to social binaries such as male/female; weak/strong, and so on. Their notion of feminine bodily comportment was already built on the way they engaged in Taekwondo and subsequently performed gender as a female martial artist.

There appeared to be a more noticeable shift in bodily presence for those of us who began TKD later in life. I attribute this to existing in the world prior to Taekwondo where we were all impacted by previously held assumptions of women’s roles and position in the world. In fact, Colleen shared her experience beginning Taekwondo:

That was my 40th birthday gift to myself- to sign up (for Taekwondo) and after having 3 kids you know, thinking this isn't something a 40-year-old woman should be doing.

(Chapter 5)

Wendy also recognized a change from before practicing Taekwondo and she reflected on how things changed from when she was picked on in high school due to her cleft palate:

I hold my head up high now and I don't hide my face anymore. Back then we didn't call it bullying but high school kids you know were not nice. (Chapter 5)

Style. The theme of self-confidence that emerged through the data was a notion of how each participant perceived herself in the world. Butler (1999) writes,

These (styles of the flesh) all never fully self-styled, for styles have a history, and those histories condition and limit the possibilities. Consider gender, for instance, as a *corporeal style*, an act as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where “*performative*” suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning, (p. 177)

Taekwondo is likewise intentional and performative. As intentional, Taekwondo serves a specific purpose of teaching the body ways in which to respond to the potential of an attack. The forms are a repeated sequence of hand and foot techniques that inscribe certain bodily responses to a particular set of circumstances. However, when placed in the horizon of the Taekwondo school these acts become performative in the sense that there is no attack on the horizon and as such, the choreography of the Taekwondo form is an exercise of imprinting hand and foot techniques into the cellular structure of the muscles for future use. Taekwondo becomes performative in the sense that it is contingent upon the potential. Gender in the Taekwondo classroom is performative by nature of the Taekwondo form.

The Black Belt Woman claims her presence in the world by performing herself, her gender, in a way that is meaningful and perhaps transformational in that it creates an internal shift exposed by her outward style. This is what it means for a Black Belt Woman to perform the feminine. This newfound way of claiming our presence is likewise reflected by the world which we inhabit. The face of the world presents itself differently in our encounters as a Taekwondo woman. The face of the Taekwondo woman is not the physiological face that we see but rather her presence in the world. The gesture of Taekwondo reshapes the interaction between the embodied subject, the participants of the study, and the face of the world. Mazis (2016) reminds us “The face of things for Merleau-Ponty is a specific dimension of meaning that addresses perception’s ability to *situate* embodying being within the matrix of sense of the surrounding

world” (p. 75). In other words, the field in which the participants occupied prior to earning a black belt is no longer the field that is perceived as a Black Belt Woman. The world is now changed in a physiognomic sense as the perceiver’s physiognomy has likewise shifted. This presence emerges from the metaphorical voice of embodied knowledge derived from the journey to the black belt.

Gesture. The practice of Taekwondo is a gesture. The bodily gestures represent the “meaning potential” (Evans, Davies, Rich, 2009, p. 394) or discursive potentiality that resides in the embodied being. It involves the entirety of the embodied being in the intentional practice of hand and foot techniques. The repeated gesture of Taekwondo becomes imprinted into the lived experience of the Taekwondo woman and as such becomes part of the style she embodies through her face to the world. She now presents herself differently as reflected by the way she moves about her space. This presence is then revealed to her in a reflexive encounter with the world. This encounter shifts dependent upon the context of the face of the world. For example, Colleen reflected on a time where she had an encounter with a neighbor:

It was a hot, hot summer day. People are on edge, and one particular neighbor kind of got in my face and I know I could have leveled her if I wanted to but I also know that that is not what a martial artist does. And so I stood there and I have my hands behind my back and I just stood there with my shoulders back head up I just allowed her to vent what she wanted to say. Then I walked away from her..., not only worried that her children were present, but my children were as well. So it's really conscious of not doing something that I would have regretted to be that martial artist that doesn't react in a negative way to hurt someone. That's not why I trained right? And so in that sense my martial arts training assisted me in that situation. If I didn't have that, I think I would

have reacted differently. I probably would have mouthed off and put her in her place verbally. But I didn't and I was very proud of myself and how I represented myself. Even my other neighbor who her son was training at the time, she saw what I did she was like 'oh my God', she's like 'you just use your martial arts training!' so yeah in that sense it came in handy.

Wendy reflected a similar instance and told a story of a work situation where a man was “getting in her face” and she was trying to figure out what to do:

He was back up in my face and that was the first time he did but it was still running through my head about what to do. I always have thoughts running through my head of how I'm going to get out of a situation if something should happen.

The repetition of the gesture of Taekwondo became ingrained in the Taekwondo women's ways of being. Consequently, the physical way of being transferred to a mindful way of being or an embodied being of Taekwondo as reflected in how these women responded in specific situations. In Michelle's circumstances, she realized that there was a reflexivity in the interactions with her coworkers where she sensed a shift in their perception of her due to her Taekwondo identity. In turn, her face to the workplace world shifted by allowing her to take up more space and be a larger presence in the workplace.

Ownership of Space

Another way the participants reflected on their Taekwondo journey was in relation to how they feel about the amount of space they occupy. Michelle shared some thoughts about her experience at her workplace. As an engineer, she is in a male dominated field and as such, she has become used to the male posturing in the workplace, however, when reflecting on her Taekwondo experiences she shared this:

I've learned to be more assertive in particular with combat sparring, but there is this parallel happening in my work, like in my personal life of being more assertive at work. And now I am getting labeled with my Taekwondo identity at work like they, they all call me names and stuff and they respect that I'm trained in martial arts and I feel like I take up more space.

Bodily presence is also a mode of being in relation to the space the participants inhabit in the world. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty's perspectives on spatiality, bodily presence relative to the Taekwondo practice itself and how the participants move about the Taekwondo space is equally important. "What is more important for us, at an elemental level, than the control, the owning and operation, of our own physical selves? And yet it is so automatic, so familiar, we never give it a thought" (Sacks, 2007, p. 47). This body autonomy was evidence specifically when practicing their form. Each described a time when they were so deeply connected with the Taekwondo activity that they seemed to be performing in a vacuum. This automatic response of the performance of Taekwondo implies the body became the voice itself as it moved through space and communicated so eloquently the language of Taekwondo through the corporeal device. It is in these instances that each participant experienced what Merleau-Ponty refers to as the phenomenal body (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). It happens when the individual has delved beyond the physical and encounters what lies just on the horizon without even being aware of a tangible perception of grasp. It is in this moment that the gesture of Taekwondo transcends the physical and though not explicit to the Taekwondo Woman, transmits her to an 'other' body, or phenomenal bodily experience. At this exact moment, the level of perception shifts from the physical to the phenomenal and as evidenced in the statements below, shifts the participants' bodily awareness. Effectively, the participants become one with the space. She is in the space

and the space is in her. Statements such as, “I kind of blackout when I perform my form”; “cool out of body experience”; “I’m just in the zone”; and “autopilot” represent each participant’s description of what it feels like to practice Taekwondo and be so in the moment that everything else around them fades into the background.

Evans, Davies, and Rich (2009) explore this notion of embodied subjectivity and the “inadequacies of the language and description available to deal with them in a way that neither essentializes, privileges, nor dislocates the ‘agency’ (and restraints) of mind or body” (p. 393). The relationship between mind and body becomes blurred as the woman sinks into the practice of the form, the rehearsal of hand and foot techniques combined to produce a moving meditation “as a way of articulating the materiality of the *lived experience*” (Evans et al, 2009) of self-defense strategies. The body becomes agentic as she moves through her space in the shape of Taekwondo. Merleau-Ponty (2002) points out, the body becomes “no longer an object of the world but rather as our means of communication with it” (p. 95). The messages communicated by the participants appear through their daily bodily discourse of engagement with the world around them. As previously described, the participants noted that they moved about their world differently; they stood taller, took up more space, held her head higher. This reflexive act of being one with her space and the space being in her represents the perspective shift from being the body object to the body subject. Her body has now become an agent of reclamation of her presence in the world thus translating to claiming ownership of her power to *be* an embodied *being* of the world.

Each of the interrelated elements above; confidence, style, gesture, and claiming space, fundamentally inform the way the participants perceive and subsequently interact with the world around them. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty, the embodied learning perspective represents our

mind-body interface with the world around us and as such impacts how we inhabit our space based on how we perceive the world. Engaging in Taekwondo became an act of resistance, whether or not it was intentional. This act of resistance interpreted as freedom allowed the Black Belt Women, to interact with the world according to our individual ways of being. However, as Castelnovo and Guthrie (1998) note, from a Merleau-Pontian perspective, “Resistance as freedom could never be a solitary activity defined by one individual; it must include interaction with other similarly identified individuals within a particular socio-historical context” (p. 53). This application is twofold. Resistance as freedom must be implemented in a social context, i.e. our perceptions of the world around us. And the act of resistance, in this case Taekwondo, must be practiced as a collective with other women as the nature of practice among like-minded women contributes to the overall liberatory potential of the martial arts as it transforms the martial artist. Taekwondo women would be unable to achieve the same level of competence and self-efficacy if it were not for the example of other empowered women guiding novice martial artists through the ritual of the martial art. Consequently and conveniently, the following section answering the second research addresses the nature of the Taekwondo environment and the significant impact of the Taekwondo culture and practices in shaping liberatory outcomes from practicing Taekwondo.

Q2. What role does the environment and culture in the Taekwondo school play when examining the embodied learning experience as a woman practicing Taekwondo?

The context of the Taekwondo space is extremely significant to how the learning unfolds. Entering the Taekwondo space, demands a certain etiquette when interacting with not only the other martial artists, but also the space itself. Prior to entering the floor, students are expected to

wear their Gi, or uniform, remove their shoes, and bow to the practice space. This sets the stage to remind the student of the importance of their practice in this space, and makes it almost be a sacred space. Critical feminism critiques power structures and as power and position are present in the Taekwondo school, these dimensions must also be scrutinized to examine how power circulates in the school. A feminist critique however, must consider the significance of particular dynamics unique to the Taekwondo setting. The school is not merely a place where one exercises in the traditional sense of the term. Actively engaging in Taekwondo involves dimensions of both a physical and spiritual form. The obvious physical engagement is present through varied hand and foot techniques, body conditioning and so on, which I discussed to some degree above. The spiritual, however present but less tangible, exists through ritual of classroom management, style of interpersonal interactions among the martial artists, philosophy of Taekwondo, and meanings behind ceremonies associated with increasing rank within the Taekwondo school. Hence the significance of the environment and context is manifested in three primary ways related to the findings; the significance of ritual.

The Significance of Ritual that Relates to the Spiritual

The etiquette of the Taekwondo space makes strong use of ritual. This is evident in some of the ways noted above in relation to entry into the space. This sense of ritual can touch on the spiritual for some people and can provide substantial pathways and connections between martial artists and their practice. Tisdell (2003) notes, "...ritual can hold a lot of affective and spiritual power for people on a conscious and often unconscious level" (p. 51). Colleen shared this in part of her reflection:

For me that is being present and in the moment so in that sense it touches upon spirituality. Also your breath and breathing and relaxing: that's part of the meditative spirituality that Taekwondo allows. (Chapter 4)

This sense of the spiritual and ritualized aspects of practice may be rooted in Taekwondo's history and culture; after all Taekwondo is "a version of unarmed combat designed for the purpose of self-defense" (Choi, 2008, p. 23) and formally emerged as a martial art during the early 20th Century. The practice evolved from the martial arts of Japan and as a technique has existed for over 1300 years. However, it was only when Eternal Grand Master Haeng Ung Lee in collaboration with Mr. William Clark, developed a formalized system that integrated the hand and foot techniques, the traditions, and the philosophy, that it became what we know today as Songahm Taekwondo (Lewis, 1993). Rich in tradition, symbolism, and rituals, the culture of Taekwondo school is an environment anchored by a philosophy that is integral to Taekwondo training and growth as a martial artist. Songahm Taekwondo is "the martial art that trains people physically and mentally" (Lewis, 1993, p. 9). The term "Taekwondo" is made up of three Chinese/Korean words which loosely translated means 'the way of the hand and foot' with "the way" meaning a way or path of life (Lewis, 1993). Integral to the philosophy of 'the way', rituals exist that maintain balance and structure within the Taekwondo school. While not perceived as formal rituals, there are many facets to proper Taekwondo etiquette within the school and as such these practices emphasize the presence of equity, strength, respect, honor, and discipline to name a few. Central to this study are the notion of equality and strength and how the participants perceived the presence of such qualities during their practice.

Rituals promoting equality. In a typical adult class, students are classified by rank. When lining up at the beginning and end of a class, students line up by descending rank,

beginning with the highest black belt degree progressing down to the white belt rank. There is no differentiation among gender, only belt level. Throughout the context of the class, students are paired with equal belt levels when possible, again giving no consideration to gender. When sparring, males and females spar interchangeably, and more attention is paid to providing opportunities for upper rank students to engage with and teach lower rank students without regard to gender. In research querying the male experience of hitting females in a martial arts school, Channon (2014) examined the dynamics of the normalcy of males and female hitting each other as part of the context of the martial art classroom and suggests “men hitting women can be, contextually speaking, a good thing for sex equality and a potentially important moment in the subversion of gender” (p. 97). Data derived from this study reflects a similar experience among women in that each participant recognized her own competence when engaging in contact exercises placing female versus male in the activity.

For example, Michelle (Chapter 5) recognized that “*I want challenging sparring partners. That just makes me a better at sparring*”. This demonstrated a recognition of gender equity in terms of equality of sparring ability. Note she did not qualify that her better sparring meant she was as good as the men, but rather focused on her own competence at sparring. Her focus was specifically on the physical. Equally important was the perception of gender equity within the context of the school. As Colleen (Chapter 4) pointed out: *There's just really no difference between them (males) and training with the females.*

When discussing the opportunity to become a Master rank. Andrea (Chapter 5) shared this perspective:

I'm up for Master Chief and I'm like I don't want to be a female Master who does this.

Male Masters do this, and I want it to be a Master so I want to do this. It shouldn't have gender specificity. It should just be that all Masters present themselves with confidence.

Here, Andrea illustrates her desire to maintain gender equity in her role as Master by disrupting previously held assumptions about how female Masters typically behave and assume her role as Master without regard to gendered expectations.

Rituals promoting strength. Taekwondo is a martial art and as such there is an element of self-defense training inherent in the practice. The ritual of repeating forms, executing board breaks, and sparring in the Taekwondo school allow the participant to practice hand and foot techniques used primarily as a method of self-protection from the potential of an attack. This practice allows the female martial artist to develop control of her lived body in terms of self-awareness, preparedness and strength in the event of a physical attack. Physically then, in the lived body, the female martial artist is prepared. Not only is she practicing hand and foot techniques for the potentiality of the need for self-defense, but she is also practicing the hand and foot techniques by claiming control over her body in how it moves through space. Participation in Taekwondo removes the focus from engaging in physical activity to better her appearance and instead shifts the focus to martial art training to see exactly what her body can do. In Hall's (1996) analysis of sport and feminist cultural studies, she proposed that because sport is an obvious segment of popular culture, it is impacted by structures of power within society. Because strength is an observable disparity between males and females, strength then becomes an equalizer in the Taekwondo classroom as male and female martial artists are expected to execute the same techniques that demonstrate physical power and strength.

Participation in Taekwondo dismantles the power differential to the extent that the participants felt as equals physically when compared to their male counterparts. Notice Marissa's (Chapter 5) reflection on her experience having completed a challenging board break where she states: "*I just remember feeling so strong and the most confident and powerful that I think I've ever felt.*" This ritual of board breaks in particular is a visible signification of strength within the context of the Taekwondo school. It is also critical to the development of female martial artists in that "self-defenders, in forming new bodily habits, change what it means to be a woman" (McCaughey, 1997, p. 137). This change permeates the essence of the woman and consequently changes the perception of the culture of gender equality in and out of the Taekwondo school.

Perceived Culture and Environment of Gender Equality

There is no dimension of culture that exists without the influence of gender. Sport is no exception, and neither is the Taekwondo school. While gender is obvious in the school, power existing in the school is not gender specific, and the participants perceived that the environment was one that promotes gender equity. Power is ubiquitous in the Taekwondo school but the perception among the participants is that it circulates through rank as opposed to gender. The discussion of gender equity in sport remains a hot topic among contemporary sport philosophers and sociologists (Capranica et al., 2013; Hoerber, 2007; Kavoura, Kokkonen, Chroni, & Ryba, 2018; Lopiano, 2014; Pickett, Dawkins, & Braddock, 2012) yet does not deftly examine the nature of gender in the martial arts schools (Channon, 2014; Hayhurst, 2013). Perhaps it is the philosophy of Taekwondo that challenges gender discourse, but the fact remains that the women participating in this study, while aware of gender differences among the students, experienced

minimal negative impact, if at all, due to gender. Michelle (Chapter 5) reflected on her perception of gender and the school:

I didn't think about gender too much because my daughter was doing Taekwondo and the head instructor was a woman and the owner of the school was a woman. I didn't think about it being anything special or different. But actually at work when people find out that I train in Taekwondo they make a big deal out of it. I don't really understand why that is something they're intrigued by I don't know I guess it became an identity for me. But I never thought anything different about being a woman practicing Taekwondo.

In fact, each participant commented that gender was not an obvious issue when practicing Taekwondo. They noted, “In the mix of male and female instructors, I never felt superior or inferior to anyone; I never felt not respected because I was a woman.”; “taking classes I don’t really see any differences in gender”; “I kind of like how there is an egalitarian feel to the mixed-gender classes”. To offer further analysis here below I consider the notion of these women in this space through the lens of Gilligan’s notion of claiming a (different) voice, and Bakhtin’s notion of intentionality of voicing one’s story.

Claiming their voice (metaphorically). Through the Taekwondo classroom or environment, the participants came to inhabit their world differently and as such, speak to their real voice but also the ability of claiming the self, or sensing an evolved identity resulting from participating in the Taekwondo context and space. By participating in Taekwondo, the participants actively position themselves in such a way that is counter to the traditional discursive practices associated with women and physical activity. Gilligan (1982), nearly 40 years ago reminded us of the evolution of the silenced voice as girls grow into puberty and young adulthood, in response to societal expectations. It is a complex dynamic of the interplay

between the real and metaphorical arising from the way women inhabit and navigate their world. While a long time has passed since 1982, it doesn't appear that too much has changed for women in their attempts to claim their own voice. Choosing a non-traditional form of physical activity for women still challenges the dominant gender narrative related to physical activity. Many women may want to resist the traditional gender narratives existing in society through their place of work, family dynamics, but still find it difficult. But the sphere of influence Taekwondo practice had on these women served to broaden their metaphorical voice to challenge these traditional gender norms of performativity. They took what they learned in performing in the Taekwondo context outside to other aspects of their lives.

The finding of voice is a central theme to feminist pedagogy as it represents the metaphor for the intertwined dimensions of “a sense of voice, mind, and self” (Belenky, et al., 1996, p. 18). Scholars approach voice from varying perspectives. Applying the concept of voice from Gilligan (1982) for example, illuminates the development of female voice from various modes of experience. She writes:

Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. (p. 173)

The woman's experience in the Taekwondo classroom provides a unique backdrop against which to ascertain her lived experience “in a different voice” (in this sense, metaphorically, because we are in essence talking about a new way that women inhabit space in this environment.). This dimension of social engagement allows the woman to exhibit a diverging mode of bodily

comportment or gender performance. She freely moves about her space in the Taekwondo classroom thus freeing her to claim her “voice” through freedom of movement. By engaging in a physical activity which allows her to challenge the dominant narrative of female bodily comportment, she is empowered to reclaim her body as body subject versus body object. This reclaiming takes shape in the form of confidence as described by the participants. As described above, they reflected confidence as one of the primary descriptors of their lived experiences as Taekwondo women. This confidence, as evidenced by their stories translated to a new way of encountering the world in the form of claiming voice, or ownership of self and the ability to express themselves in a way that was authentic to how they viewed themselves as a Black Belt Woman. As an example, Andrea (in Chapter 4), expressed it this way.

So much I think has changed for me earning my black belt...earning the black belt was definitely instrumental in figuring out where I was and kind of coming into my own where I felt confident that I could defend myself.

Here the notion of the mind and body being inextricably linked is reinforced by the changes in her style and performance.

Choosing to tell one’s story with intention. Another dimension of voice is illustrated through Bahktin’s notion of intentionality or why the speaker chooses what to share when telling their story. Rodriguez expands on this notion of intentionality explaining it as the motives or desires behind why the teller has chosen to share this dimension of their lived experience (Rodriguez, 2000). It is through the dialogue between the teller and receiver that voice is exposed in terms of the story of the lived experience of the teller and how the receiver interprets and utilizes elements from the story. The participants were compelled to share stories of power, confidence, and achievement, through the prompting of interview questions, but demonstrated

ownership of their stories. It is through this voice participants claim their presence in the world. Articulating the bodily experience of becoming a black belt female illuminates and reinforces a new physiognomy or face to the world as constructed through the experience of the Black Belt journey. This is reflected in how these women black belts present aspects of their story in their own unique way. For example, Marissa (Chapter 4) highlighted the notion of confidence:

I think anything that makes you feel more confident and stronger about yourself that you can hang with this group of teens, men whatever the case is and actually defend yourself if not even be better than them

By contrast Colleen (Chapter 5), highlighted the fact that working on your black belt becomes a metaphor for working on your life:

So if you didn't know and if you were not a black belt yourself I would tell you what we've gone through. Taekwondo is not just a sport; it's a metaphor for life. Everything that you go through: the ups and downs, the bumps in the roads, you go through it all and that what it's about.

The last reflection here fundamentally represents the journey of these Taekwondo women. In essence, if you haven't earned a Black Belt, you truly won't understand what the process is all about. It becomes a part of one's identity, this story of how these women became Black Belts and how it now defines them.

Accessing agency. The participants in this study perceived that the environment was one that promoted gender equity and helped them access not only a sense of self-confidence but an increased capacity for agency. Post-structuralist or feminist emancipatory views of physical activity can be applied in this circumstance where participation in physical activity becomes

agentic. As Tisdell (1998) notes, tenets of poststructural feminist thought are “germane to the four interrelated themes of poststructural feminist pedagogy—knowledge construction, voice, authority, and positionality” (p. 147). As such, this notion of agency exists when women engage in knowledge construction, or embodied learning through the physical activity of martial arts. The participation facilitates a feeling of access to acting independently in autonomous decision making. As McCaughey (1997) proposed in her study of women and self-defense, “...the experience of the routine sexual objectification and the constant threat of sexual assault encourage women to feel as though their bodies are not their own” (p. 120). Conversely, the sense of lack of autonomy is overcome through the physical and emotional success of earning a black belt. The participants in this study whether known or unknown, came to a new lived experience by challenging their positionality through their being of the world, or the way they move about their space, or adjust their face to the world as a Black Belt woman (Merleau-Ponty, 2012; Mazis, 2016). It is a feminism *of* the body where the body is refigured and understood as “part of agency, consciousness, and reflection” (Grosz, 1994, viii). The participants shared times when they felt they had no autonomy or sense of agency prior to practicing Taekwondo, but then recognized an alteration between the before and after. For example, when reflecting on the circumstances surrounding her divorce, Colleen (Chapter 4) shared this:

I'm not saying that Taekwondo released the rebel in me; however what I feel is with new levels of confidence in myself and new levels of awareness I was enjoying finding out what I was becoming as a woman.

She does not attribute her Taekwondo practice itself to the eventual dissolution of her marriage but questioned whether this new sense of self may have impacted that change in some way. Similarly, Allison (Chapter 4) recalled being timid as a child and when reflecting on her

experience realized: “...after starting martial arts I became more confident in my beliefs and how I feel about things and standing up other people. To be sure, These statements signified moments where the participants became aware of their ability to make choices and subsequently act on them independently and in a way that was true to themselves as Taekwondo women.

Q3. How does the embodied learning experience as a woman participating in Taekwondo contribute to the development of identity.

While feminist poststructuralism is somewhat problematic in that it “is underpinned with the understanding that language (and discourse) constitutes subjectivity” (Gavey, 1989, p. 463) it does acknowledge the complexity of experience, particularly by recognizing women’s experiences of challenging traditional gender narratives and power differentials as they create for themselves new, and constantly shifting identities as Black Belt Women. Merleau-Ponty’s (2002) theory of embodied subjectivity counters the idea that experiences are not independent from language as poststructuralism suggests, by drawing our attention to the embodied learning experiences of the participants in the study. For the embodied subject, this sport activity specifically challenges the existing power dynamics typically associated with the gender binary observed in sport participation. The decades old perspective of gender appropriate sport is counterintuitive in terms of the potential for emancipatory outcomes associated with women who participate in sporting activities. The specific lived experiences of women who have a black belt in Taekwondo provide an added layer of discussion in the world of philosophical implications for women and sport and exercise activity. In the following sections, several components related to embodied learning as informed by Merleau-Ponty, will be illustrated as it relates to the research question to share the significance of the participants’ embodied experiences of earning a black belt.

The Embodied Knowledge of the Taekwondo Woman

From a feminist perspective, being a female practicing Taekwondo presents a conundrum of sorts when examining it in light of the social construction of gender. Where Cartesian dualism preferred mind over body, and bodily functions are typically associated with females, and intellect and cognition are generally associated with males (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998) one must consider the bodily as capable of meaning making. The feminist movement rejects the narrative of the female body strictly being associated with emotions and affect (Butler, 1988). The objective of placing primacy on the body as site of knowledge construction is integral both to dispelling the emotional female myth as well as legitimizing embodied learning in women who practice Taekwondo. Analyzing gender performativity as a female practicing Taekwondo can contribute to the conversation on shifting away from Cartesian dualism and societal constructions of gender to embrace a new way of being in the world which begins within the context of the Taekwondo school and then radiates outward into the world at large. How does a female perform gender as a martial artist?

Performing gender as a Taekwondo woman. The mere participation in sports such as Taekwondo is a challenge to typical sport and physical activity by women. Further, women participating in sports associated with violence, has the potential to destabilize norms associated with male versus female sport participation (Chisolm, et. al., 2016). Young (2005) reminds us that “Feminine existence, however, often does not enter bodily relation to possibilities by its own comportment” (p. 36). Conversely, Taekwondo opens the door for female martial artists to engage in uninhibited intentionality in the engagement with the Taekwondo space. This uninhibition is subsequently transferred through how the Taekwondo woman then represents herself to the world in how she chooses to perform her gender, thus contributing to the disruption

of patriarchal sport participation norms. Butler (1988) notes, “Embodiment clearly manifests a set of strategies or what Sartre would perhaps have called a style of being or Foucault, ‘a stylistics of existence’” (p. 521). This style of being migrates from the Taekwondo school to the everyday existence of the Taekwondo woman. The participants noted instances of a changed way of being or performing as a Taekwondo woman. Colleen shared this reflection:

There is a femininity to it in the graceful movements that we have so you feel more empowered as a woman to be able to move in certain ways so you're so many levels of power so many things. (Chapter 4)

Allison shared her perspective on how she sensed a difference in how she presents herself in the world:

I think you know the posture in the body language and even how to project your voice and just the confidence in general definitely helped me stand up to people who may have thought I was just going to be the quiet, unheard, unseen woman. (Chapter 4)

The phrase “quiet, unheard, unseen woman” was noteworthy because it represented an awareness of societal expectations of feminine comportment versus her perception of how she intends to perform as a female from her experience as a black belt. Michelle commented further on the relationship between her growth in the Taekwondo school and her growth as a person:

You know maybe there's parallels there with earning the black belt and you know growing together. Maybe not specifically cause and effect but it was just generally growing I definitely feel there's parallels there in my growth as a person. (Chapter 5)

Michelle (Chapter 4) noticed her Taekwondo practice impacted her life in some way. Andrea was keenly aware of the impact Taekwondo has had on her development as an individual, as a female practicing Taekwondo. She shared this:

I think about how am I better for myself from a martial arts perspective; how I'm being a good school owner and impacting my community and helping students of my school. I focus on how am I being an ambassador for ATA and impacting the lives of the people that are under me to give them opportunities not only for training, but for their career and for just emotional and mental and physical well-being.

Andrea (Chapter 4) conveyed a deeper connection to being a Taekwondo woman who represents the ATA (American Taekwondo Association). Her identity is considerably connected to Taekwondo.

I don't just think about when I was earning my black belt physically at how am I improving or when I was the first and second degree or how am I helping others as a 4th 5th and 6th degree. I think about how I am better for myself from a martial arts perspective; how I'm being a good school owner and impacting my community and helping students of my school. I focus on how I am being an ambassador for ATA and impacting the lives of the people that are under me to give them opportunities not only for training, but for their career and for just emotional and mental and physical well-being.

These styles of existence as reflected in the participants narratives drew strong parallels as females practicing Taekwondo. Butler (2004) proposed that “the future symbolic will be one in which femininity has multiple possibilities...” (p. 196). The participants’ embodied learning experiences set the foundation for discovering the possibility of what it means to be feminine. Part of that discovery involves an awareness of the power potential from practicing Taekwondo and the subsequent impact of that self-discovery.

Becoming aware of embodied feminine power. Another significant theme that emerged identified the sense of the embodiment of power the participants experienced as a

woman practicing Taekwondo. Since critical feminism critiques structures of power and gender inequalities in a variety of contexts, analyzing the participants' experiences with power contributes to the overall conversation of feminist perspectives of women and participation in sport and physical activity. Bourdieu (1990) suggests that imbalanced power impacts embodiment and therefore, performing gender is impacted by power differentials inherent in society. Taekwondo however, because of the culture of the school in its implied gender neutrality, the power differentials constantly shift and are equally challenged by the physical power of participants as they progress upwardly through rank. Each participant described ways she moved through her space differently whether it was encounters with others, male or female, or just the way she described how she inhabited her space. The sense of power as a woman was reflected in statements like: *"I think it always just empowered me to think you know women could do just the same things with men could do"* as Allison (Chapter 4) stated.

The notion of a power differential between sexes is a widely discussed topic in feminist literature surrounding the body, women in sport, and gender performativity (Bolin & Granskog, 2003; Butler, 1999; Castlenuovo & Guthrie, 1998, McCaughey, 1997; Young, 1990). When examining hierarchical discursive dichotomies such as mind/body, male/female, hard science/soft science, power/subordinate, subject/object, we find there are diverse meanings and structures associated with each (Young, 1990). McCaughey (1997) refers to Bourdieu's comments on these power differentials existing in terms of bodily dispositions associated with and derived from social contexts existing in a specific culture. "The embodiment of culture is also gendered" (p. 39). As such, power becomes an issue when examining bodily comportment in the form of a martial artist's way of being, and in this case, way of claiming ownership of power in spite of the gendered dichotomies of power. When analyzing the narratives of each of

the participants, the most dominant theme that emerged had to do with the notion of power. The activity of the martial art was empowering, emancipatory in fact, in that each participant had some sense of rising above the entrenched cultural beliefs of power distribution based on gender. The most explicit responses summarizing the “*power of the feminine*” (Colleen, Chapter 4) were illustrated through statements such as:

My biggest takeaway has been the again the confidence I have in myself, the empowerment to do positive things in my life in the karate school and outside of the karate school. (Marissa, Chapter 4)

I think just over time being kind of empowered that you can hang just as much as they [men] can. (Michelle, Chapter 5)

Impacted me in “in a I'd like to say empowering” way. (Andrea, Chapter 5)

Young (1990) reminds us that through a gendered division of labor, women are “excluded from access to power” (p. 145) because they are confined to domestic space, or that of the traditional tasks associated with women’s work. The idea of claiming ownership of power challenges the power differential allowing the Taekwondo woman to occupy and claim her space. The power of Taekwondo becomes the social equalizer inside and outside of the Taekwondo classroom. It is inherent the process of earning a black belt in Taekwondo that the participants were able to realize a claiming of all the aforementioned dimensions of their embodied being.

Becoming Conscious of Embodied Learning through Reflection

For the most part participants had not given much thought to the notion of “embodied learning” until they were asked about it in the interview and were to reflect on the experience of

being a female martial artist. This is not surprising given that Merleau-Ponty (2002) talks about the experience of the body as pre-reflective. Further, he notes:

In order to insert the organism into the universe of objects and to thereby seal off this universe, the functioning of the body had to be expressed in the language of the in-itself and the linear dependence between stimulus and receptor and *Empfinder* [the one sensing], had to be discovered beneath the level of behavior (, p. 75).

In this study, the functioning of the body was defined as the Taekwondo Woman. She functioned as a martial artist practicing taekwondo and as such, it was only when she uncovered that the practice of Taekwondo delimited her presence *of* the world that she was able to uncover her bodily expression in the language of Taekwondo. It was at that moment she became aware of embodied knowing (Merleau-Ponty, 2002) or subjective knowing (Belenky, et al, 1986). This third research question explored the notion of what it means to be a woman practicing Taekwondo specifically analyzing the embodied experience of the activity.

This experience of being able to be more reflective of it became especially more apparent in three inter-related ways: in reflecting on the body through the video reflection, which resulted in seeing the body as subject (rather than object); and finally in moving from the pre-reflective, to the more reflective. As Jordi (2011) noted, “reflective practices have the potential to... integrate a range of cognitive and nonconceptual elements that make up our experience and consciousness (p. 218). Drawing on Gendlin’s (1996) notion of felt sense, Jordi further proposed that drawing on reflective processes allows access to “the organic emergence of conscious meaning” (p. 218) thus propelling the reflector toward assessing the meaning of what is felt in the midst of the experience and then translating that to connect the cognitive with the affective.

The participants were truly unaware of this organic nature of embodied learning until pressed to view their videos and then reflect on what they saw.

Reflecting through self-observation. The element of the video reflection, when the participants observed their bodies performing Taekwondo, provided the context through which the participants could critically reflect on the embodied learning experience of being a Black Belt Woman in Taekwondo. “The basic nature of the mind is assumed to be mindful awareness” (Swartz, 2011, p. 5). Reflecting on the video allowed for a mindful awareness of their performance of the Taekwondo form and subsequently form opinions about what they felt as they moved about their space. Young (2005) notes that as women move in sport, they are still confined to a specific space or particular milieu. Women tend to “wait for and then react” (Young, 2005, p. 34). Conversely, the space of Taekwondo allows for a stepping out of the confines of traditional sport participation to offer the opportunity for a full bodily expression of Taekwondo. When reflecting on her performance in the video and participation at tournaments, Andrea (Chapter 4) speaks to this ability to step outside of the confines of space:

I love doing 5th degree and I don't know if I look any better but I loved it because fourth degree was so like everything was tight and sideways and I kick better in front than I do to the side and you get to do you like parade across the ring on a diagonal and do jump kicks I can finally open up in this form and I can spread out use my wingspan and stretch my legs.

Andrea’s remark on spreading her wingspan was notable because as a tall woman, it is difficult not to take up space. As Allison mentioned previously, women are expected to be small. Andrea was no longer confined and claimed her right to be present in the space of practicing Taekwondo. Viewing her video reaffirmed her use of space and ability to maximize

her presence on the floor. Utilizing the video as an elicitation device draws on Merleau-Ponty's (2002) notion of the pre-reflective. The video allowed the participants to move beyond what was visible in the moment to what was invisible before the moment of performing Taekwondo. It connected the physical with the pre-reflective space by examining the "individual points of sensation" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 34) and connecting with what is perceived and what is seen. For example, Andrea continued saying:

It's very focused so it's not like you know what am I eating for dinner later tonight or what are people around me doing. It's in this moment- what is my objective? When people say there's a mental aspect of martial arts they are referring to that focus.

Focusing is a concept discussed in Jordi's (2011) examination of reflecting on experiential learning. As was discussed earlier in this dissertation, embodied learning is a mode of experiential learning. Jordi (2011) notes that reflection allows for implementation of focusing, a concept derived from Gendlin's Focusing methodology, to "bring an unclear, vague, inner sense of a problem or situation into clearer focus" (p. 11). Also evident is the vague nature of embodied learning so the strategy of reflecting on the video performance sought to widen the lens of evaluation to draw the participants toward a better connection of the embodied experience of Taekwondo.

A popular criticism of interpreting embodied experiences is the requisite language component for interpreting the bodily experience. Capturing the bodily experience through reflection takes one step back from the necessity of language by integrating the affective perspective on embodied learning in Taekwondo. Colleen (Chapter 4) shared her experience watching herself on video:

When I saw myself in the video I noticed the techniques that are challenge me the most are the ones with the balance. So right before I perform the movement I think in my head the position that I need to be in, my alignment, and so I'll say to myself in my head okay make sure your knee is chambered up higher for this so that when you do execute the kick easier. I'm consciously thinking of right before the moves that challenge me what I need to be doing and how I need to prepare my body for those. Then I execute the techniques just kind of slow and easy and simple. I'm not even consciously thinking of them, it's just the ones that challenge me more I think right before I execute them about the alignment and how to position myself properly so that I can make them much stronger than and what I did. It's an awareness.

It is this awareness that was only recognized when the participants were encouraged to delve into the deeper meanings of their bodily sensations while practicing Taekwondo. The video acted as the vehicle through which the notion of the embodied subject could be introduced translating from the pre-reflective to reflective.

Body becoming subject. There appeared to be a realization through contemplation and reflection of significant points of contact between Taekwondo and embodied learning. Swartz (2011) refers to the wisdom of the body arising spontaneously, requiring a connection between “subcomponents of wisdom: the prefrontal cortex, the most recently evolved part of the brain; and the limbic striatum, a most ancient brain area, associated with fear regulation”(p. 6). I draw on Swartz’s perspective not to confuse the reader about the neurological disposition of wisdom, but rather to draw attention to significant connections between emotion or affect, processed in the prefrontal cortex, and the physiological origination of the fight or flight response (mimicked through Taekwondo practice) in the limbic striatum. Participating in Taekwondo dives into the

organic nature of the embodied subject forcing connections between the body and mind, the known and the unknown, and the emotional with the physical. Marissa (Chapter 4) shared her experience with the first Taekwondo form learned, the white belt form, and how it impacted her Black Belt Journey and journey through life:

It starts to teach you how to move and put things together in a sequence. Then starts to kind of educate you on how your body moves.

The significance of the phrase, “it starts to teach you how to move” was paramount to comprehending the foundation of the body becoming subject versus the objectified body visible in sexed gender narratives. Marissa recognized this movement as a mode of teaching and learning once she thoroughly examined her own participation in it. Allison (Chapter 4) shared her realization of how Taekwondo shifted her self-perception:

I think you know the posture in the body language and even how to project your voice and just the confidence in general definitely helped me stand up to people who may have thought I was just going to be the quiet, unheard, unseen woman.

Two key phrases from this reflection were “body language” and “quiet, unheard, unseen woman”. Allison recognized, though she articulated it differently, a shift from the objectified female to honoring her body becoming subject by discarding the notion of the unseen, unheard woman. Andrea (Chapter 4) shared her interpretation of how she felt in her body as subject versus object, and stated: “*I felt confident that I could move in a way that my brain and my body were connected.*” In each instance, the participants articulated what was actually the experience of embodied learning and the act of discovering the knowledge from within facilitated through the practice of Taekwondo.

Not only do we find ambiguity as we attempt to articulate the embodied learning experience in Taekwondo, but we also find ambiguity in how these women were able to claim their bodies as subject. As a reminder, the sporting female is often faced with an identity conflict as they navigate between the incompatibility of the feminine and athleticism (Royce, Gebelt, & Duff, 2003). Shifting from the body as object to the body as subject represents the ability of the participants to claim freedom through participation in Taekwondo. Young (2005) reinforces Merleau-Ponty's notion of "locating subjectivity not in the mind or consciousness, but in the *body*" (p. 35). I translate this to discovering the phenomenal body or the ability to recognize the subjectivity *in the body* to which Young and Merleau-Ponty refer. The phenomenal body is also representative of the merging between the pre-reflective to the reflective body as will be discussed in the next section.

From the pre-reflective to the more reflective body. In a study of embodied learning and creative writing, Tobin and Tisdell (2015) highlight Merleau-Ponty's perspective that "embodied knowing and learning through the body remain largely unconscious" (p. 216). Similarly, in this study the participants repeated numerous times of the bodily feelings associated with the deeper level of knowing associated with performing Taekwondo such as:

I feel like I can really look at everything now where before I was much more inwardly focused or singularly focused (Andrea, Chapter 4)

I feel like I could take on new challenges if somebody throws something at me; I do also notice in my body, it makes me feel better knowing that I did exercise for myself (Wendy, Chapter 5)

Tobin and Tisdell's (2015) notion that the "embodied stream of conscious way of engaging the body–mind...connecting space between Merleau-Ponty's pre-reflective sense in the body with

what is reflected in word or gesture” (p. 218) can be implemented here to describe the physical stream of consciousness evident when executing a Taekwondo form. The video reflection allowed the participants to expand beyond their immediate awareness and examine the felt sense, such that Gendlin (1996) proposed in light of meanings derived from bodily sensations. The bodily sensations were the mechanism for the participants to translate their embodied learning experiences to their consciousness and express their embodied experiences in Taekwondo.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of the study offer some interesting implications for theory and practice which can best be discussed after summarizing the findings discussed above. The purpose of the study was to examine how women make meaning of the embodied learning experience of earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo. Briefly then, the women in the study were able to make meaning of their experiences earning a Black Belt in Taekwondo by critically reflecting on their experiences through their Black Belt Journeys, and discovered the presence of increased self-confidence, an increased sense of self, and a feeling of feminine power. These findings directly correlate with the initial discussions earlier in this dissertation which questioned the relationships between the mind and body, focusing on the lived experience of the phenomenal body in relation to how it inhabits space, and, subsequently, the way the body moves in and through space, and how these movements reveal themselves in the body. These findings have encouraging and exciting possibilities in the disciplines of adult education and kinesiology in that both are positively impacted by the fact that the study demonstrated a strong positive correlation between physical activity, Taekwondo and embodied learning.

Embodied learning theory and critical feminist theory worked together to inform the study. Incorporating these categories of examination allowed for a more focused understanding

of embodied communication by drawing attention to the generative nature of the body when engaged in physical activity. More specifically, this study drew attention to the lived embodied experiences of women engaging in physical activity thus illuminating the potentiality of developing a deeper understanding of women's experiences as embodied constructors of knowledge through Taekwondo. Applying the notion of the embodied learning experience of women from a feminist perspective highlights the potentiality to explore how the female body subject can be viewed pedagogically as an autonomous constructor or producer of knowledge. This perspective contributes to the discussion of the ontological potential of the body. Furthermore, it seeks to disrupt the female body object narrative deeply entrenched in the circles of patriarchy. Dismantling the notion that women function primarily as affective being versus embodied being is essential to shifting the discourse away from the belief that women are merely valued based on the male gaze as body object versus the potential for radical knowledge contributions inherent in the embodied subject. In light of these insights and the findings of the study, there are implications for both theory and practice in working with women as embodied learners in multiple settings.

Implications for Theory

The following sections provide some considerations for the further development of theory in the realm of physical feminism, feminist pedagogy and finally Merleau-Ponty and the female body identity.

Physical feminism and Embodied Learning in Taekwondo. In her study on women's self-defense and feminism, McCaughey (1997) proposed that the self-defense movement was a

call to action to “tear down rape culture” by changing the narrative of violence as “male turf” (p. 179) through women’s consistent engagement in self-defense training and sexual assault awareness and prevention education. While her perspective has some merit, it lacks a more inclusive look at the philosophical rewards of women participating in sport, here the martial art of Taekwondo, that has the potential to challenge female sport discourse by drawing attention to the potential of the agentic body in martial arts as seen in this study. For example, as Burke (2019) contends, female participation in sports previously monopolized by men should represent more than a mode of feminist political resistance. Drawing the body into that discussion elevates the notion of physical feminism from a political, feminist realm, to the larger discussion of the philosophical and holistic nature of sport. Drawing on the embodied experience of women practicing Taekwondo seeks to contribute to a more developed theory of physical feminism by incorporating the presence of knowledge in the female body through physical activity.

In McCaughey’s (1997) study of women and self-defense, she builds her theory based on emphasizing the differences between men and women as a foundation for challenging rape culture and the politics of male domination, through highlighting the “pleasures of combat” to “undermine the exclusive association between masculinity and aggression” (p. 178). She ignores however, the liberatory aspect of sport participation where the female does not participate in order to infiltrate male dominated sport, but rather to explore the empowering and transformative potentiality inherent in sport participation. This is where the embodied learning aspect is crucial to distinguish and elevate the female body in sport. Expanding the theory of physical feminism to include the embodied subject and examine the holistic experience of participating in sport goes beyond the physical into the phenomenal body. Doing so changes the nature of viewing sport participation as merely an activity rather than also seeing sport participation as a facilitator

for creating knowledge *in* and *of* the body. As the data reflects, a significant amount of learning occurred because of the participants' activity in Taekwondo. It was not limited only to being in better physical condition, but rather epiphanies were recognized in terms of holistic growth as a person, extending into the psyche through the connection of the body *and* mind. This in turn adds to the arguments which dispel the Cartesian cogito by explicitly promoting the significance of the body in learning and reinforcing the body-mind connection. Furthermore, it dismantles the notion that the female body is a political object and sport participation fulfills political aims by drawing the reader toward acknowledging that women's participation in sport is more than just being as good as men by placing primacy on the female body in movement. It further dismisses the notion of body object by acknowledging that the female body is indeed a source of knowledge rather than being seen as only emotive (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998). This in turn legitimizes the female body beyond socially inscribed narratives of feminine bodily comportment to expand the view that women can indeed perform gender as sporting bodies and as such negates the feminine/athletic dichotomy existing in society (Burke, 2019; Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; Choi, 2000; Hall, 1996; McCaughey, 1997; Royce, Gebelt, & Duff, 2003). The next section engages in a discussion of feminist pedagogy and how that contributes to a new perspective on the liberatory nature of female sport participation and a new vision of physical feminism.

Feminist pedagogy. As Tisdell (1998) notes, there are a few versions of feminist pedagogy – some of which are more psychological in their orientation, and some of which are more liberatory and stress challenging power relations. A fundamental precept of feminist pedagogy relies on the liberatory potential existing in the dynamics and setting of the learning experience. Interestingly enough, there's been limited discussion of the body specifically in

relation to feminist pedagogy. This may be due to the fact that there was more writing about feminist pedagogy in the 1990's, and the discussions of embodied learning in adult education didn't come to the fore until a bit later, in the mid years of the first decade of the new millennium. While hooks (1994) does discuss the body in the classroom and Musial (2011) discusses the body in relation to feminist teaching, there could be more direct discussion of the role of the body in the feminist pedagogy literature.

In this study, I isolated the lived bodily experiences of women earning a black belt in Taekwondo. This exposed a deeper phenomenon of the embodied learning experience by women who implemented their bodies as integral to the learning experience. While the primary focus was Taekwondo, a secondary outcome was a deeper level of awareness aside from the physiological and psychological dimensions of sport participation. To review, poststructural feminist pedagogy (Tisdell, 1998) emphasizes an overarching philosophy that guides teaching and learning in a way that embraces feminist beliefs, values and outcomes by creating learning situations that seek to blur gender binaries, disrupt power imbalances, and shift internal dialogue in a way that allows the female student to engage in critical reflection upon deeply entrenched ideologies that are counter to feminist emancipatory goals. Embodied learning emphasizes the use of the body in educational settings to facilitate more meaningful encounters with learning and coming to know (Freiler, 2008; Musial, 2011). Furthermore, it reinforces the perspective of "self as body and mind rather than body separated from mind" (Brook 1999, p. 3) and as Grosz (1994) illustrates in her critique of the Mobius strip of the three-dimensional inverted figure eight: This model provides a way of problematizing and rethinking the relations between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility, but the torsion of one into the other, the passage,

the vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside.
(Grosz, 1994, p. xii)

Likewise, the blend of feminist pedagogy and the acknowledgement of the whole embodied being in this learning setting recognizes the intertwining of the female mind and body as she learns Taekwondo and then critically reflects on this lived bodily experience. It is through the critical reflection on the lived learning experience of earning a black belt that the woman becomes aware of her embodied knowing derived from the experience. Also important is to reflect on this from the lens of Merleau-Ponty.

Merleau-Ponty and the female bodily experience. An oversight in the literature about embodied subjectivity by Merleau-Ponty has to do with his lack of recognition on the female embodied experience (Brook, 1999; Castelnovo & Guthrie, 1998; Cataldi, 2001; Young, 1990). As we seek to come to know, not only the world around us, but also our bodies, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that as gendered bodies we experience the world differently. While in critical or poststructural feminist perspectives, our gendered bodies are products of cultural determinants, we cannot ignore that the bodies we live in also determine our experiences of the world. Pervasive in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002) is the notion of the anonymous body. And while Merleau-Ponty may want to view the anonymous body as an embodied subject, we cannot ignore that Merleau-Ponty is male and as male was deriving his experience of the anonymous body from the male perspective. As a philosopher and theorist it is impossible to remove this bias from his perspective. However, if we recognize that the anonymous body is multifaceted, as in the Mobius strip, then we can seek to comprehend the phenomenon of the female lived bodily experience. Merleau-Ponty did indeed achieve this in his

quest to expand on Husserl's view of phenomenology and the lived experience by drawing us back to "unexplored aspects of experience" (Mazis, 2016, p. xvii).

Merleau-Ponty shows how the movements of the body are expressive of meaning and not just motion in an indifferent space. This explains, for instance, the ground of body memory in the "postural schema of the body", which then goes on to increase and deepen the sense of the meaning of gestures, or 'motor meaning'" (Mazis, 2016, p xviii).

The lived experience of the Taekwondo women reinforces the ideas of body memory, postural schema, gestures, and motor meaning in that each hand and foot technique is an intentional gesture inscribed upon the bodily schema of the practitioner. The lived bodily experience of the female, as a martial artist, redefines the phenomenon of the anonymous body in that it embraces the spiraling outward of the experiences inscribed upon the embodied subject resulting from the martial arts practice. As such, though anonymous, the lived body acknowledges gender in the redefining of the phenomenon of a female practicing martial arts thus recognizing the presence of embodied learning and embodied knowledge in the act of engagement in meaningful sport and physical activity, and in this case, Taekwondo.

A common critique of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body is that it does not address the gendered body *per se*, but also does not differentiate the sexes when discussing the embodied subject. What is important however, is his fundamental philosophy of embodied learning and the pre-reflective state that taps into a priori knowledge which we only become cognizant of after reflection and contemplation. And for these participants part of that reflection and contemplation was as an embodied female engaging in sport—in this case Taekwondo. They became far more consciously reflective of what this mean by being asked directly about it,

which goes from the pre-reflective to the reflective, not just about the body, but as a *female body* in particular. All these aspects have implications not only for theory but for practice as well.

Implications for Practice

This study also offers possibilities for practice. While this study focused on the lived experiences of women earning a black belt in Taekwondo, the following are recommendations that can be transferred to teaching in adult education based on what was learned from the study.

Drawing from the women reflecting on their experiences learning Taekwondo, the first recommendation is for educators of adults to consider the pre-reflective in learning. Incorporating the pre-reflective in teaching and learning acknowledges the holistic dimension of learning and incorporates the wisdom of the body (Swartz, 2011) into learning. But learners need to also be called on to have the pre-reflective become more reflective by asking students specifically to reflect on the role of the body in knowing and learning. One can do so by asking learners to pay attention to how they feel in their bodies as they are learning for starters. It is essential to directly invite learners to think about it and to discuss it so that learners can become more cognizant of the embodied learning experience.

Another strategy to expand on learning is to incorporate activities that involve the whole body in learning. Connecting the kinesthetic with cognition reinforces learning and allows learners to access a new way of coming to know through their body. Hayes and Flannery (2000) shared their collection of essays discussing the importance of understanding how women learn. As such, it is also important for educators to recognize the importance of women's embodied learning experiences as part of understanding how women learn. In turn, educators need to familiarize themselves with ways to facilitate embodied learning experiences when teaching.

For example, teaching and learning typically revolves around a lecture and note taking format. Integrating simple movement activities either prior to or during a discussion of course content, coupled with encouraging students to reflect on how they feel in their bodies as they move and learn approaches learning from a more holistic perspective. Another strategy is to preface learning with having students intentionally notice what they are experiencing in their bodies throughout the lesson. They can periodically write down certain feelings that arise in their bodies as the lesson progresses in a kind of “checking in” exercise throughout the lesson. Because embodied learning is part of experiential learning, specifically isolating the emotional connection with movement and learning makes connecting movement and learning more explicit in the classroom.

In a physical activity classroom, the challenge is to connect learning to movement. In the previous example, the task was to integrate movement into the learning environment. Here, the embodied learning process exists on a longer continuum as the individual cultivates a skill set along the path of engaging in the physical activity. At the beginning of the course, the students might reflect on how they are feeling at that point in time as the activity course begins. Students should be reminded to continually check in with themselves regarding how they are feeling in their bodies as they participate in the activity and progress throughout the duration of the class. At the end of the semester, pointed questions regarding noticeable differences in how they feel about their competency in the skills acquired, how they feel about themselves upon completing the class, and so on acts as a gauge of embodied awareness and draws more attention to the embodied learning process associated with participating in a physical activity.

Because part of the findings addressed the notion of symbolic knowing, recognizing the significance of symbols in learning is relevant. The participants offered symbols as examples to

describe their journey toward obtaining a black belt. While within the confines of educational institutions, we require standard modes of assessment, such as this dissertation, integrating opportunities for students to experiment with identifying symbols representative of their learning draws attention to the lived experience of the learning activity thus amplifying the significance of the body in learning.

The above recommendations transfer to both formal and nonformal learning environments for women. It explicitly highlights the body in learning and accesses women's other ways of knowing. Furthermore, recognizing the body in learning solidifies the ontological significance of the body thus legitimizing the female body as a source of knowledge.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Any research study has strengths and limitations, and this study is no exception. This study looked at and examined embodied learning from the perspective of women who are black belts in Taekwondo. Any time research is undertaken, researcher bias is a constant consideration. As a participant researcher, the study is not without bias and implementing an autoethnographic approach makes it impossible to bracket out researcher assumptions; nor is it even desirable in a study that is informed by autoethnography. However, one could argue that the autoethnographic component to this narrative study was a limiting factor. I came into the study with assumptions regarding what I expected to find and given that I am a black belt in Taekwondo, I had a degree of insider knowledge which may or may not have impeded my investigation. As a Black Belt Woman, I have first-hand knowledge of much of the experiences shared by the participants. I knew three of the participants personally, one of whom is a close friend. The other three participants were new to me, but because we are all in Taekwondo, there was a comradery in our shared experience. This could prove limiting in that I may have

interpreted their experiences in a way I thought would contribute to the expected themes from the data. The fact that we did have some type of connection could have also been advantageous, perhaps by providing a common ground through which the participants were most eager to share their experiences.

Additional limitations lie within the sample population. While qualitative research is not meant to be generalizable (Merriam, 2009) I was able to draw upon the experiences of the women in the study and came to general conclusions for this sample. Utilizing the focus groups allowed me to gauge the reliability of the conclusions for this particular sample. I was drawing from the data by implementing member checks in the follow-up discussion groups. Nevertheless the small sample size is a limitation. The sample population was drawn from a particular segment of the martial arts community. I specifically required the participants to be female, over the age of 25, and collected participants from only American Taekwondo Association schools in Berks County, Pennsylvania. While this narrow set of guidelines allowed me to be precise in developing a participant population, it may also have hindered the collection of more diverse experiences within the Taekwondo community.

The purpose of the study was to examine women's bodily experiences while earning a black belt in Taekwondo. Keeping that in mind, not only was the purpose to examine these experiences but also consider possibilities for future research and application. Given the previous discussion above that examines the dimensions of female embodied learning in Taekwondo, the potential exists for a variety of applications in other areas of women and sport. The following addresses those possibilities and explores the significance of the study in light of where further exploration may journey in the arena of women and physical activity.

Future studies can explore embodied knowing/learning in women who participate in other sports traditionally associated with male participation. For example, I also teach rock climbing and participate in weightlifting/bodybuilding. These two sports also involve a degree of gender specific sport participation. Primarily male focused, women who break into body building likewise challenge the gender narrative of sport participation. Examining the experiences of female bodybuilders through utilizing discourse analysis of male and female body builders in the gym might be worthwhile. Analyzing their conversations and observing how those interactions shape the identity of the female bodybuilder has the potential for contributing to the larger discussion of embodied learning. An ethnographic exploration of embodied learning in athletes who participate in high risk activities such as free climbing (a rock climbing style without the use of ropes) would provide an interesting examination of the subculture of rock climbing and how being part of the culture shapes the rock climbers. Comparing the lived experiences of males and females might provide data that can be applied to a greater population.

After such studies were done in relation to other types of sports, it could be possible to perhaps develop a survey that gets at the embodied learning experiences of women and men, where it may be possible to look for statistically significant differences in perception of changes between men and women in relation to the effects of embodied learning in relation to sport. While such a study would be interesting, it would not provide the rich stories of participants that this study provided. Nevertheless, the future is ripe for further studies of embodied learning, making use of multiple research methodologies. These are just a few suggestions.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

This study contributes to the larger discussions of adult education, embodied learning, kinesiology, and sport feminism because it identifies a relationship between embodied learning

and physical activity in sport. One of the findings of the study identified the significance of accessing embodied learning in physical activity. In Young's (2005) anthology of "women's everyday lived bodily experience" (p. 3) she presented essays that illustrated ways through which women's bodies are policed and marginalized through gendered societal constructs and "value-laden dichotomies" (p.5) held captive by hegemonic discourse. By contrast, the participants' stories in this study offer a counter perspective where women become unencumbered through their martial arts participation. This engagement provides a physical context through which women claim power in the dimensions of voice, presence, and space, thus utilizing their bodies as an agent of power derived from their embodied learning experiences of practicing Taekwondo. The body is no longer the object but instead becomes the subject as the women in the study claimed their power in the space of Taekwondo and subsequently translated that to this space in which they inhabit. As evidence by the interviews, video, and focus group discussion, this dimension of embodied learning was not explicit but rather lurked at the edges of comprehension or the perspectival field (Merleau-Ponty, 2012).

Evans et al (2009) note, "Without an adequate theory of 'body knowledge', social constructionist perspectives may be resigned to position taking and polemic, claim and counter-claim around who has the better version of the truth" (p. 398). As such, examining the lived embodied experience of women who have earned a black belt in Taekwondo seeks to contribute to the greater body of literature addressing lived experiences from an embodied subject experience. Furthermore, contributing to the body of ethnographic research on women's participation in sport and exercise solidifies the significance of connecting women's body identity within the framework of feminist research (Bolin & Granskog, 2003). Taking Van Manen's (1990) directions on researching lived experience examining ways through which

women come to know in a variety of settings contributes to the larger discussion of what it means to be human and more specifically what it means to be a woman practicing sport and physical activity.

In summary, expanding feminist perspectives in adult education to incorporate feminist perspectives on women's embodiment and movement allows us to change the way physical activity is viewed as it acts as a change agent to allow space for growth claiming relevance of voice and power. There is much more to be done in terms of understanding the implications of women who participate in sport and physical activity, but the underlying thread exposes the significance of the emancipatory nature of sport and exercise. When a woman participates in a sport, any sport, it sets the stage for her to reclaim her body as subject and challenges the deeply entrenched patriarchal discourse surrounding women and physical activity. When a woman experiences a change in identity resulting from sport participation, it changes the way she perceives the world and the world perceives her. It shifts the embodied learning aspect of physical activity into embodied knowing. The sport facilitates a deeper connection between the phenomenal body and physical body as her body identity is reshaped through participating in physical activity.

Final Thoughts

Writing in a time of COVID and having the opportunity to be quarantined these past four months has allowed me to pursue my writing of the final pieces of this dissertation, a summation of many years of arduous work. Similar to my Taekwondo journey, my life in the past fifteen

years has had what I initially thought were insurmountable challenges: my divorce, my father's passing, my son's battle with mental health, even my own battle with depression and anxiety. Each belt level and each board break represented those struggles that were so overwhelming, I did not believe I would be able to continue. Then, returning to the graduate program after a six year hiatus, having to repeat my attempt at passing my comprehensive exams, and repeating courses so that I could develop a deeper understanding of the nuances of theories and philosophies in adult education reflected the corresponding board breaks at each belt level, or the performance of the 81 step Black Belt Form, or even having to demonstrate all nine belt level forms to earn my Level 1 Instructor collar. The parallels between my life journey and my Taekwondo journey would not have been evident to me without seeking this research as a topic worthy of examination, and had I not had the courage to continue. The six years away from the doctoral program allowed me to heal from my divorce, but also introduced me to Taekwondo and allowed me to practice self-care through this physical activity. I developed strength, both physical and mental, to support and guide me through the process. At the time, I had no knowledge of how far-reaching the learning would be and that it would extend far beyond the Taekwondo school.

It was because I was able to successfully move up in rank, and break boards, and beat the daylights out of practice pads, or my classmates in the Taekwondo school, that I was able to translate that physical strength into mental wherewithal to return to the graduate program as a changed person. I learned that feedback from my professors was not meant to be disparaging, but rather, constructive to guide me as a better writer, researcher, and educator. It was when I came to believe in myself as a real person (Merleau-Ponty would call this the embodied subject), and recognize that I had a right to exist in the world, that I recognized I had value as a person.

From that belief came the ability to positively and willingly seek out feedback to help my growth as an individual, and a grad student, and as an educator.

Looking back on fifteen years of work reminds me of the importance of acknowledging the whole person in teaching and learning. Had my professors not viewed me in totality, I would not have been able to get the academic and emotional support required to complete this endeavor. The time away from the program was necessary because similar to each belt level, moving on to the next required a mastery of skills. When I began the doctoral program, my skill set for learning was lacking. The time and challenges I encountered from the onset were a necessary step in growing as an academic, just as the progressing belt levels required testing and competency in order to move forward toward my black belt goal. As I learned, and then took a step back to reflect on my learning, I was able to synthesize the integral pieces of earning a doctoral degree in adult education. Additionally, it reminded me of the utmost importance of recognizing each person I encounter as a whole person, this beautiful embodied being who was likewise worthy of feeling valued.

Reflecting upon the experience of earning my black belt and earning my doctoral degree, I can conclude that one could not have been accomplished without the other. My initial foray into my doctoral studies of Adult Education introduced me to a new way of thinking. This new way of thinking was augmented by discovering a new way of living through my Taekwondo practice. Had I not learned what I did through the Adult Education program, I would not have had the opportunity to explore Taekwondo. Had I not participated in Taekwondo, I would have never come to better understand my embodied experience traveling along my Black Belt journey. One was contingent upon the other. And like the folding and unfolding of the Mobius strip, so too will my journey of lifelong learning and participation in sport and exercise activity, and the

endeavor to guide women to continue seeking ways to challenge their limitations continue to unfold and contribute new ways of understanding the human experience to the fields of Adult Education and Kinesiology.

References

- Aaltonen, E. (2012). Punching like a girl: Embodied violence and resistance in the context of women's self-defense. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(2),
- Adams, F. (2010). Embodied cognition. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 9(4), 619-628. doi:10.1007/s11097-010-9175-x
- Ahn, J. D., Hong, S. h., & Park, Y. K. (2009). The historical and cultural identity of taekwondo as a traditional Korean martial art. *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26(11), 1716-1734. doi:10.1080/09523360903132956
- Akella, D. (2010). Learning together : Kolb ' s experiential theory and its application, 16(1), 100–112.
- Alfred, Mary, (2000), *The Politics of Knowledge and Theory Construction in Adult Education: A Critical Analysis from an Africentric Feminist Perspective* *Posted on Saturday, January 01, 2000* Alfred, Mary V., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, USA
- Allison, P., & Pomeroy, E. (2000). How Shall We “Know?” Epistemological Concerns in Research in Experiential Education. *Journal of Experiential Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/105382590002300207>
- Amann, T. (2003). Creating space for somatic ways of knowing within transformative learning theory. In C.A. Wiessner, S.R. Meyer, N.L. Pfhal, & P.G. Neaman (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Transformative Learning* (pp. 26-32). New York: Teacher’s College, Columbia University.
- Anafara, V.A. and Mertz, N.T. (2006). *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Anderson, E. (1995). Feminist epistemology: An interpretation and a defense. *Hypatia*, 10(3), 50-84.
- Antunovic, D., & Hardin, M. (2015). Women and the blogosphere: Exploring feminist approaches to sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(6), 661–677.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690213493106>
- Azzarito, L., & Solmon, M. A. (2006). A Feminist Poststructuralist View on Student Bodies in Physical Education: Sites of Compliance, Resistance, and Transformation. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 25(2), 200–225. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.25.2.200>
- Backåberg, S., Gummesson, C., Brunt, D., & Rask, M. (2015). Is that really my movement?- Students’ experiences of a video-supported interactive learning model for movement awareness. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*.
<https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v10.28474>
- Badgett, M. V. L., & Frank, J. (2007). *Sexual orientation discrimination: An international perspective*. New York; London: Routledge.

- Batson, G., Quin, E., & Wilson, M. (2011). Integrating somatics and science. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, 3(1/2), 183-193. doi:10.1386/jdsp.3.1-2.183_1
- Barbezat, Daniel P., and Mirabai Bush. *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pensu/detail.action?docID=1524285>.
- Beard, C. (2018). Dewey in the World of Experiential Education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2018(158), 27–37. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20276>
- Beasley, C. (2005). *Gender & sexuality: Critical theories, critical thinkers*. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: SAGE.
- Beckett, D. and Morris, G. (2001). Ontological performance: Bodies, identity and learning. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 33 (1). Pp. 33-48.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing. In *The development of self, voice, and mind*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.03.025>
- Berila, B., Klein, M., & Roberts, C. J. (n.d.). *Yoga, the body, and embodied social change : an intersectional feminist analysis*. Retrieved from https://cat.libraries.psu.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/0/0/0/57/5?user_id=PUBLICNONPSU&password=PUBLIC&searchdata1=%5EC18412057
- Bergsteiner, H., Avery, G. C., & Neumann, R. (2010). Kolb's experiential learning model: Critique from a modelling perspective. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 32(1), 29–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01580370903534355>
- Birrell, S., & Cole, C. L. (1994). *Women, sport, and culture*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Blakemore, C. L. (2003). Movement is Essential to Learning. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 74(9), 22–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2003.10608514>
- Bodin, T., & Martinsen, E. W. (2004). Mood and self-efficacy during acute exercise in clinical depression. A randomized, controlled study. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 26(4), 623.
- Boguszewski, D., Adamczyk, J. G., Kerbaum, K., Antoniak, B., Obszyńska-Litwiniec, A., & Białoszewski, D. (2015). Susceptibility To Injury During Falls In Women Practising Combat Sports And Martial Arts. *Polish Journal of Sport and Tourism*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pjst-2015-0009>
- Bolin, A., & Granskog, J. (2003). *Athletic Intruders*. New York: State University of New York Press
- Bordo, S. & Raissiguier, C. (2008). Teaching and learning from the body: A conversation between Susan Bordo and Catherine Raissiguier. *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy*, 19(2), 92-106.

- Brace-Govan, J. (2004). Weighty Matters: Control of Women's Access to Physical Strength. *The Sociological Review*, 52(4), 503–531. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00493.x>
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brecklin, L. R. (2008). Evaluation outcomes of self-defense training for women: A review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 13(1), 60–76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.AVB.2007.10.001>
- Brendel, W. & Bennett, C. (2016). Learning to embody leadership through mindfulness and somatics practice. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(3), 409-425.
- Bresler, L. (Ed). (2004). *Knowing bodies, Moving minds: Toward Embodied teaching and learning*. Kluwer; Boston, MA.
- Bresler, L. (2006). Embodied narrative inquiry: A methodology of connection. *Research Studies in Education*, 27(1), 21-43. doi:10.1177/1321103X060270010201
- Brook, B. (1999). *Feminist perspectives on the body*. New York: Pearson.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (2005). *The power of critical theory: Liberating adult learning and teaching*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, A., Cervero, R., & Johnson-Bailey, J. (2000). Making the invisible visible: Race, gender, and teaching in adult education. *ADULT EDUCATION QUARTERLY*, 50(4), 273-288. doi:10.1177/07417130022087044
- Brown, D., & Leledaki, A. (2010). Eastern movement forms as body-self transforming cultural practices in the west: Towards a sociological perspective. *Cultural Sociology*, 4(1), 123–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975509356866>
- Brown, L. and Reid, D. (2006). Embodied Cognition: Somatic markers, purposes and emotional orientations. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 63, pp. 179-192.
- Bu, B., Haijun, H., Yong, L., Chaohui, Z., Xiaoyuan, Y., & Singh, M. F. (2010). Effects of martial arts on health status: A systematic review. *Journal of Evidence-Based Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-5391.2010.01107.x>
- Bunsell, T. (2013). *Strong Hard Women: An ethnography of female bodybuilding*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Butterwick, S & Selman, J. (2012). Embodied knowledge and decolonization: Walking theater's powerful and risky pedagogy. In Lawrence, R.L. (Ed). *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. 134, pp. 43-52.
- Cairns, J. and Ferguson, S. (2012). The truth in embodied stories. *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'Études Canadiennes*, 46(2), 221-244.

- Caldwell, C. (2014). Mindfulness & Bodyfulness: A New Paradigm. *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*.
- Carlson, Kody; Rowett, Jenny L; Domene, J. F. A. (2017). Mindfulness in Education: Narratives of university students who have completed a course in mindfulness - ProQuest. *Fredericton*, 7(1), 143–152. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/docview/1903429261/abstract/964984BDCE44FD6PQ/1?accountid=13158>
- Carmack, N. A. (1992). "Women and Illiteracy: The Need for Gender Specific Programming in Literacy Education." *Adult Basic Education* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 176-194.
- Carolan, M. S., & Ebooks Corporation. (2011). Embodied food politics. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub.
- Carpenter, S. (2012). Centering Marxist-Feminist Theory in Adult Learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 62(1), 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713610392767>
- Castelnuovo, S. & Guthrie, S. R. (1995). Liberating the Amazon: Feminism and the martial arts. *Women & Therapy*. https://doi.org/10.1300/J015v16n02_12
- Castelnuovo, S. & Guthrie, S. R. (1998). *Feminism and the female body: Liberating the amazon within*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Casolino, E., Cortis, C., Lupo, C., Chiodo, S., Minganti, C., & Capranica, L. (2012). Physiological versus psychological evaluation in taekwondo elite athletes. *International Journal of Sports Physiology and Performance*. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsp.7.4.322>
- Caudwell, J., Wheaton, B., Watson, B., & Mansfield, L. (2017). Feminist theories of sport, leisure and physical education. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Feminism and Sport, Leisure and Physical Education*. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53318-0_22
- Channon, A., & Jennings, G. (2014). Exploring embodiment through martial arts and combat sports: A review of empirical research. *Sport in Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2014.882906>
- Channon, A., & Matthews, C. R. (n.d.). *Global perspectives on women in combat sports : women warriors around the world*. Retrieved from https://cat.libraries.psu.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/0/0/0/57/5?user_id=PUBLICNONPSU&password=PUBLIC&searchdata1=%5EC16218859.
- Chapman, V. L. (2005). Making a good victoria sponge cake: Schooling empire, class, gender and sexuality. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390500081972>
- Chare, N. (2017). European Journal of English Studies Transcribing the corporeal: physical feminism, autobiography and the intermedial, 273–287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825577.2017.1369264>
- Channon, A., & Matthews, C. R. (n.d.). *Global perspectives on women in combat sports : women warriors around the world*. Retrieved from https://cat.libraries.psu.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/0/0/0/57/5?user_id=PUBLICNONPSU&password=PUBLIC&searchdata1=%5EC16218859

- Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 651-679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Chawla, D. (2007). Between stories and theories: Embodiments, disembodyments, and other struggles. *Storytelling, Self, Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies* 3(1), 16-30. doi:10.1207/s15505340sss0301_2
- Cheville, J. (2005). Confronting the problem of embodiment. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 18(1), 85-107.
- Chisholm, D. (2007). Climbing like a Girl: An Exemplary Adventure in Feminist Phenomenology. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*.
<https://doi.org/10.2979/hyp.2008.23.1.9>
- Chödrön, P. (2007). *The places that scare you: A guide to fearlessness in difficult times*. United States.
- Choi, P. Y. L. (2000). *Femininity and the physically active woman*. Retrieved from
<https://cat.libraries.psu.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/?ps=gykqGunAye/UP-PAT/X/9>
- Chyu, M., Zhang, Y., Brismee, J., Dagda, R. Y., Chaung, E., Von Bergen, V., Shen, C. (2013). Effects of martial arts exercise on body composition, serum biomarkers and quality of life in overweight/obese premenopausal women: A pilot study. *Clinical Medicine Insights: Women's Health*, 2013, 55-65.
- Clance, P. R., & Imes, S. A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 15(3), 241-247.
- Clandinin, D. J. (Ed.). (2007). Preface. In *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. ix-xvii). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Clark, C. M. (2001). Off the beaten path: Some creative approaches to adult learning, somatic learning and narrative learning. [Electronic Version]. *New directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 89, 83-91.
- Clark, M. C. (2005). Embodied learning. In English, L. M. (Ed.). *International encyclopedia of adult education*. Houndsmill [England]; New York;: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Clark, A., Clark, & Amy. (2017). Exploring Women's Embodied Experiences of 'The Gaze' in a Mix-Gendered UK Gym. *Societies*, 8(1), 2. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc8010002>
- Cole, Cheryl L. 1993. "Resisting the Canon: Feminist Cultural Studies, Sport, and Technologies of the Body." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 17: 77-97.
- Colin, S. A. J., & Preciphs, T. K. (1991). Perceptual patterns and the learning environment: Confronting white racism. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1991(50), 61-70. doi:10.1002/ace.36719915009
- Collard, S., & Stalker, J. (1991). Women's trouble: Women, gender, and the learning environment. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1991(50), 71-81. doi:10.1002/ace.36719915010
- Connelly, F.M. and Clandinin, D.J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*. 19(5), 2-14.

- Conti, G. J. (2007). Identifying your educational philosophy: Development of the philosophies held by instructors of lifelong-learners (PHIL). *Journal of Adult Education*, 36(1), 19-35. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/754909348?accountid=13158>
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative approaches to inquiry. In J. W. Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed., pp. 53-84). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). Narrative research designs. In *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 511-550). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). "Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data" and "Narrative research designs." *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 243-270; 511-550). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Crowdes, M. (2000). Embodying Sociological imagination: Pedagogical support for linking bodies to minds. *Teaching sociology*, 28, 24-40.
- Csordas, T. J. (1994). *Embodiment and experience: The existential ground of culture and self*. Cambridge; New York;: Cambridge University Press.
- Cunliffe, A., & Coupland, C. (2012). From hero to villain to hero: Making experience sensible through embodied narrative sensemaking. *Human Relations*, 65(1), 63-88. doi:10.1177/0018726711424321
- Cynarski, W. J., Yu, J. H., Warchol, K., & Bartik, P. (2015). Martial arts in psycho-physical culture. *Ido Movement for Culture*, 15(4), 33–38. <https://doi.org/10.14589/ido.15.4.5>
- Cynarski, W. J., & Kudłacz, M. (2008). Injuries in martial arts and combat sports – a comparative study. *Archives of Budo*.
- D'Abundo, M.L. (2009) Issues of health, appearance and physical activity in aerobic classes for women, *Sport, Education and Society*, 14:3, 301-319, DOI: 10.1080/13573320903037655
- Daubenmier, J. J. (2005). The relationship of yoga, body awareness, and body responsiveness to self-objectification and disordered eating. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2005.00183.x>
- Day, A. M. (2010). Hide and seek: Exploring connections between embodied rhythmic associations of experiences and of stories. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(9), 697-704. doi:10.1177/1077800410374181
- Delafield-Butt, J. T., & Adie, J. (2016). The Embodied Narrative Nature of Learning: Nurture in

- School. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 10(2), 117–131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mbe.12120>
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) 2008, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Kappa Delta Pi: New York, NY.
- Dixon, M., & Senior, K. (2011). Appearing pedagogy: from embodied learning and teaching to embodied pedagogy. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 19(3), 473-484. doi:10.1080/14681366.2011.632514
- Do Kim, G., Pieter, W., & Bercades, L. T. (2018). Determinants of performance in university taekwondo athletes. *Science and Sports*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scispo.2017.08.005>
- Downey, G., & Dalidowicz, M. (2015). Apprenticeship as method: embodied learning in ethnographic practice. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 183–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114543400>
- Downey, G., Dalidowicz, M., & Mason, P. H. (2015). Apprenticeship as method: embodied learning in ethnographic practice. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 183–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114543400>
- Duckett, B. (2010). Culture Wars: An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Voices.
- Elias, John L. & Merriam, Sharan B. (2005). *Philosophical foundations of adult education* (3rd ed.). Malabar, Florida: Krieger.
- Emig, J. (2001). Embodied learning *English education (0007-8204)*, 33(4), p.271.
- English Association. (1994). *The year's work in critical and cultural theory*. Published for the English Association by Blackwell Publishers. Retrieved from https://cat.libraries.psu.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/0/0/0/57/5?user_id=PUBLICNONPSU&password=PUBLIC&searchdata1=%5EC1563478
- EunKyung Lee, & JungTaek Shin. (2016). The Effects of Performance Routine on Competitive State Anxiety, Psychological Skills, and Perceived Performance of Taekwondo Poomsae Players. *IJASS(International Journal of Applied Sports Sciences)*. <https://doi.org/10.24985/ijass.2016.28.2.184>
- Farnell, B. (2002). Dynamic embodiment in Assiniboine (Nakota) storytelling. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 44(1), 37-64.
- Farnell, B., (2012). *Dynamic embodiment for social theory: I move therefore I am*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Faulkner, S. L. (2018). *Real women run: Running as feminist embodiment*. New York, NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315437859>
- Fenwick, T. J. (2000). Expanding conceptions of experiential learning: A review of the five contemporary perspectives on cognition. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 50(4), 243-272. doi:10.1177/07417130022087035

- Fenwick, T. J. (2001). Experiential Learning: A theoretical Critique from Five Perspectives. In *Experiential Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/495689>
- Fenwick, T. J. (2003). Reclaiming and re-embodying experiential learning through complexity science. *Studies in the Education of Adults* 35(2), pp. 123; 141.
- Finkenber, M. E. (1990). Effect of Participation in Taekwondo on College Women's Self-Concept. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1990.71.3.891>
- Finkenber, M. E. (1990). Effect of Participation in Taekwondo on College Women's Self-Concept. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1990.71.3.891>
- Finkenber, M. E., DiNucci, J. M., McCune, D. E. & McCune, S. L. (1992). Analysis of the effect of competitive trait anxiety on performance in Taekwondo competition. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 75, 239-243.
- Focht, B. C., Bouchard, L. J., & Murphey, M. (2000). Influence of martial arts training on the perception of experimentally induced pressure pain and selected psychological responses. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 23(3), 232.
- Foster, K., McAllister, M., & O'Brien, L. (2006). Extending the boundaries: Autoethnography as an emergent method in mental health nursing research. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 15(1), 44-53. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1447-0349.2006.00402.x>
- Fraser, W., & Hyland-Russell, T. (2011). Searching for sophia: Adult educators and adult learners as wisdom seekers. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2011(131), 25-34. doi:10.1002/ace.418
- Friedman, L. and Moon, S. (1997) *Being bodies: Buddhist women on the paradox of embodiment*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Press.
- Frieler, T.J. (2008). Learning through the body. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 119(-), 37-47.
- Freire, P., & Ramos, M. B. (2009). Chapter 2 from "pedagogy of the oppressed". *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 2(2), 163-174.
- Fritschi, C., Martyn-Nemeth, P., Zhu, B., & Jung Kim, M. (2019). Active Learning: Lessons From Women With Type 2 Diabetes in a Walking Program. *Diabetes Educator*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145721719848437>
- Garcia, R.S. & Spencer, D. (Eds)(2014). *Fighting scholars: Habitus and ethnographies of martial arts and combat sports*. London: Anthem Press.
- Garrett, R. (2006). Critical storytelling as a teaching strategy in physical education teacher education. *European Physical Education Review*, 12(3), 339-360. doi:10.1177/1356336X06069277
- Garrett, R. (2004). Negotiating a physical identity: girls, bodies and physical education, *Sport, Education and Society*, 9:2, 223-237, DOI: 10.1080/1357332042000233958
- Gavey, N. (1989). Feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis: Contributions to feminist psychology. *Psychology of women quarterly* (13), pp. 459-475.

- Gendlin, E. T. (1996). *Focusing-oriented theory: A manual of the experiential method*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- George, M. (2005). Making Sense of Muscle: The Body Experiences of Collegiate Women Athletes*. In *Sociological Inquiry* (Vol. 75).
- Giardina, M. D., & Donnelly, M. K. (n.d.). *Physical culture, ethnography and the body : theory, method and praxis*. Retrieved from <https://www.routledge.com/Physical-Culture-Ethnography-and-the-Body-Theory-method-and-praxis/Giardina-Donnelly/p/book/9781138290068>
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Giraud, G. (1999). Participant journals as data source: An unbiased method for eliciting and comparing participant experience.
- Griffin, P. (1998). *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*. Human Kinetics: Windsor, Ontario.
- Groot, M. De, Alexander, K., Culp, B., & Keith, N. (2015). *Experiential Learning in Kinesiology : A Student Perspective*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2373379915594391>
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Gustafson, D. (1998). Embodied learning about health and healing: Involving the body as content and pedagogy. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 17(4), 52-56.
- Guthrie, S. (1995). Liberating the amazon - feminism and the martial arts. *Women & therapy*, 16(2-3), 107-119. Doi:10.1300/j015v16n02_12
- Hall, M.A. (1996). *Feminism and sporting bodies*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports*. New York: Routledge.
- Hayes, E., & Flannery, D. D. (2000). Women as learners : the significance of gender in adult learning. In *Jossey-Bass higher and adult education series*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00018-011-0871-7>
- Helmbold, L. R. (2000). Real knockouts: The physical feminism of women's self-defense (Review). *NWSA Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nwsa.2000.0007>
- Henderson, K. A. (2000). World Religions, Spirituality, and Experiential Education. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 23(3), 128–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105382590002300303>
- Hengehold, L. (2011). When safety becomes a duty: Gender, loneliness, and citizenship for urban women. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 39(1/2), 48-69. doi:10.1353/wsqr.2011.0009
- Hernandez-Avila, I. (2002). Saturday, September 21, 2001-Before traveling to Harvard. *Frontiers*, 23(2), 156.

- Hissong, A. (2010). Feminist Philosophy: A beginning point for adult educators promoting women's wellness education. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 19, 2010, 1-21.
- Hoffman, S. J. & Knudson, D. V. (2018). *Introduction to Kinesiology: Studying physical activity* (Fifth ed). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hollander, J. A. (2015). Does Self-Defense Training Prevent Sexual Violence Against Women? *Violence Against Women*, 20(3), 252–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801214526046>
- hooks, bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Cambridge MA: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*(2nd Ed). Cambridge, MA: South End Press
- Horn, J. and Wilburn, D. (2005). The embodiment of learning. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 37(5), 745-760.
- Howden, E. (2012). Outdoor experiential education: Learning through the body. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2012 (134), 43-51.
- Howe, Leslie A. 2003. "Athletics, Embodiment, and the Appropriation of the Self." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 17 (2): 92-107.
- Howson, A. (2005). *Embodying Gender*. London, Sage.
- Hugo, J. M. (1990). Adult education history and the issue of gender: Toward A different history of adult education in America. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41(1), 1-16.
doi:10.1177/0001848190041001001
- Hyun-Jo, O; Hannon, J.; and Banks, A. (2006). Teaching Taekwondo in Physical Education: Incorporating the Color Belt System. *Strategies*, (20).
- Imamura, H., Yoshimura, Y., Nishimura, S., Nakazawa, A. T., Teshima, K., Nishimura, C., & Miyamoto, N. (2002). Physiological responses during and following karate training in women. *The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness*42(3):431-7.
- Impett, E. A., Daubenmier, J. J., & Hirschman, A. L. (2006). Minding the body: Yoga, embodiment, and well-being. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1525/srsp.2006.3.4.39>
- Intlekofer, K. A., Berchtold, N. C., Malvaez, M., Carlos, A. J., McQuown, S. C., Cunningham, M. J., ... Cotman, C. W. (2013). Exercise and sodium butyrate transform a subthreshold learning event into long-term memory via a brain-derived neurotrophic factor-dependent mechanism. *Neuropsychopharmacology*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/npp.2013.104>
- Jacelon, C. S., & Imperio, K. (2005). Participant diaries as a source of data in research with older adults. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(7), 991-997. doi:10.1177/1049732305278603
- Jeffs, T., & Ord, J. (n.d.). *Rethinking outdoor, experiential and informal education: beyond the confines*. Retrieved from https://cat.libraries.psu.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/0/0/0/57/5?user_id=PUBLICNONPSU&password=PUBLIC&searchdata1=%5EC22093987
- Johnson-Bailey, J. (2005). Gender. In English, L. M. (Ed.). *International encyclopedia of adult education*. Houndsmill [England]; New York; Palgrave Macmillan

- Jola, C., Ehrenberg, S., & Reynolds, D. (2012). The experience of watching dance: Phenomenological–neuroscience duets. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *11*(1), 17-37. doi:10.1007/s11097-010-9191-x
- Jordi, R. (2011). Reframing the Concept of Reflection: Consciousness, Experiential Learning, and Reflective Learning Practices. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *61*(2), 181–197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713610380439>
- Jung, H. C., Lee, S., Kang, H. J., Seo, M. W., Kim, H. B., & Song, J. K. (2016). Taekwondo training improves CVD risk factors in obese male adolescents. *Archives of Budo*.
- Keating, R. (2006). Towards establishing a wisdom dimension in education through poetry: An exploration of some of Thomas Merton’s ideas. *Handbook of the Religious International, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*
- Kenworthy, A. L., & Hrivnak, G. A. (2012). Do Sweat It: Using a Fitness Session as an Introduction to Research on the Relationship Between Physical and Mental States. *Journal of Management Education*, *36*(2), 264–289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562911432847>
- Kerka, S., & ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH. (2002). Somatic/Embodied learning and adult education. trends and issues alert.
- Kim, J., Dattilo, J., & Heo, J. (2018). Taekwondo Participation as Serious Leisure for Life Satisfaction and Health. *Journal of Leisure Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2011.11950249>
- Kirby, V. (1997). Telling flesh: The substance of the corporeal. New York: Routledge.
- de Koning, B. B., & Tabbers, H. K. (2011). Facilitating understanding of movements in dynamic visualizations: An embodied perspective. *Educational Psychology Review*, *23*(4), 501-521. doi:10.1007/s10648-011-9173-8
- Knowles, M. S. (1977). Adult learning processes: Pedagogy and andragogy. *Religious Education*, *72*(2), 202-211. doi:10.1080/0034408770720210
- Knowles, M. S. (Malcolm S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education : from pedagogy to andragogy*. Association Press.
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *4*(2), 193–212. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMLE.2005.17268566>
- Kontra, C., Goldin-Meadow, S., & Beilock, S. L. (2012). Embodied Learning Across the Life Span. *Topics In Cognitive Science*, *4*(4), 731-739. doi:10.1111/j.1756-8765.2012.01221.x
- Kostikiadis, I.N. (2018). The Effect of Short-Term Sport-Specific Strength and Conditioning Training on Physical Fitness of Well-Trained Mixed Martial Arts Athletes. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, *17*(3), 348–358. Retrieved from

<https://www.jssm.org/hf.php?id=jssm-17-348.xml>

- Krauss, S. E. (2005). Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.16>
- Kretchmar, R.S.(Ed). (2017). *Philosophy: Sport*. Farmington Hills, MI: Cengage.
- Küpers, W. (2008). Embodied “inter-learning” – an integral phenomenology of learning in and by organizations. *The Learning Organization*, *15*(5), 388-408. doi:10.1108/09696470810898375
- Küpers, W. (2005). Phenomenology of embodied implicit and narrative knowing. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *9*(6), 114-133. doi:10.1108/13673270510630006
- Lafferty, Y. and McKay, J. (2004) “Suffragettes in Satin Shorts”? Gender and Competitive Boxing. *Qualitative Sociology*, *27* 3: 249-276. doi:10.1023/B:QUAS.0000037618.57141.53
- Lakes, K. D., Bryars, T., Sirisinahal, S., Salim, N., Arastoo, S., Emmerson, N., ... Kang, C. J. (2013). The Healthy for Life Taekwondo pilot study: A preliminary evaluation of effects on executive function and BMI, feasibility, and acceptability. *Mental Health and Physical Activity*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2013.07.002>
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought. In *Primary Metaphor and Subjective Experience*. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-44502001000100008>
- Lantz, J. (2002). Family development and the martial arts: A phenomenological study. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *24*(4), 565-580. doi:10.1023/A:1021221112826
- Law, D. R. (2004). A choice theory perspective on children's Taekwondo. *International journal of Reality Therapy*, *24*,13-18.
- Lawrence, R. L. (2012). *Bodies of knowledge: Embodied learning in adult education*. San Francisco: Wiley.
- Lawrence, R., Nieves, L. Y., Snowber, C., Kong, L., & Ntseane, G. (n.d.). *Embodied Knowing: Getting Back to our Roots*. Retrieved from <http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2013/symposia/2>
- Lee, Haeng Ung. (1993). *The Way of Traditional Taekwondo*. Little Rock, Arkansas: American Taekwondo Association Publication
- Lee, S. H., Scott, S. D., Pekas, E. J., Lee, S., Lee, S. H., & Park, S. Y. (2018). Taekwondo training reduces blood catecholamine levels and arterial stiffness in postmenopausal women with stage-2 hypertension: randomized clinical trial. *Clinical and Experimental Hypertension*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641963.2018.1539093>
- Leijen, Ä., Lam, I., Wildschut, L., Robert-Jan Simons, P., & Admiraal, W. (2009). Streaming video to enhance students' reflection in dance education. *Computers and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2008.07.010>
- Lelwica, M.M. (2009). Embodying learning: Post-Cartesian pedagogy and the academic

- study of religion. *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 12(2), 123-136.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications
- Lindeman, E. (1961). *The meaning of adult education*. Norman, Okla: Oklahoma Research Center for Continuing Professional and Higher Education.
- Lindgren, R. and Johnson-Glenberg, M. (2013). Emboldened by embodiment: Six precepts for research on embodied learning and mixed reality. *Educational Researcher*, 42(8), 445
- Liu, Q & Jorgensen, E. (2011). Muscle Memory. *The Journal of Physiology*, 589(4), 775-776.
- Maher, F. A. (1987). Inquiry teaching and feminist pedagogy. *Social Education*, 51(3), 186.
- Maher, F. A. (1987). My introduction to "introduction to women's studies": The role of the teacher's authority in the feminist classroom. *Feminist Teacher*, 3(1), 9-11.
- Maher, F. A., & Tetreault, M. K. T. (2001). *The feminist classroom : dynamics of gender, race, and privilege*. Rowman & Littlefield. Retrieved from https://cat.libraries.psu.edu/uhtbin/cgiisirs/0/0/0/57/5?user_id=PUBLICNONPSU&password=PUBLIC&searchdata1=%5EC2181332
- Mahlo, L., & Tiggemann, M. (2016). Yoga and positive body image: A test of the Embodiment Model. *Body Image*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2016.06.008>
- Mainemelis, C., Boyatzis, R. E., & Kolb, D. A. (2002). Learning Styles and Adaptive Flexibility: Testing Experiential Learning Theory. *Management Learning*, 33(1), 5–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507602331001>
- Maivorsdotter, N., & Lundvall, S. (2009). Aesthetic experience as an aspect of embodied learning: stories from physical education student teachers. *Sport, Education & Society*, 14(3), 265-279.
- Mansfield, L. (2008). Reconsidering feminisms and the work of Norbert Elias for understanding gender, sport and sport-related activities. *European Physical Education Review*, 14(1), 93-121. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/851225436?accountid=13158>
- Mansfield, L., Caudwell, J., Wheaton, B., & Watson, B. (2017). The palgrave handbook of feminism and sport, leisure and physical education. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Feminism and Sport, Leisure and Physical Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53318-0>
- Markovic, G., Vucetic, V., & Cardinale, M. (2008). Heart rate and lactate responses to taekwondo fight in elite women performers. *Biology of Sport*.
- Markula, P. (2003). The Technologies of the Self: Sport, Feminism, and Foucault. *Sociology of Sport Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.20.2.87>
- Matthews, E. (2006). *Merleau-Ponty : A guide for the perplexed*. London ; New York, NY : Continuum International Pub. Group

- Mazis, G. A. (2016). *Merleau-ponty and the face of the world : Silence, ethics, imagination, and poetic ontology*. State University of New York Press.
- McCaughey, M (1997). *Real knockouts: The physical feminism of women's self-defense*. New York: New York University Press
- McCaughey, M. (1998). The fighting spirit: Women's self-defense training and the discourse of sexed embodiment. *Gender & Society*, 12(3), 277.
- McClung, L. and Blinde, E. (2002). Sensitivity to gender issues: Accounts of women intercollegiate athletes. *International Sports Journal*, winter, 117-133.
- Meier, K. (1979). Embodiment, sport and meaning. In E. Gerber & W. Morgan (ed) *Sport and body: A philosophical symposium*(1) pp. 192-198. Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger
- Mennesson, C. (2012). Gender regimes and habitus: An avenue for analyzing gender building in sports contexts. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 29(1), 4
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2012). *The phenomenology of perception*. London and New York: Routledge Classics.
- Merleau-Ponty, M., & Landes, D. A. (2013). Phenomenology of perception. In *Phenomenology of Perception*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203720714>
- Merriam, S. B. (1995). *Selected writings on philosophy and adult education*. Malabar, Fla: Krieger Pub. Co.
- Merriam, S.B. and Associates. (2007). *Non-western perspectives on learning and knowing*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Co.
- Merritt, M. (2015). Thinking-is-moving: dance, agency, and a radically enactive mind. *Phenom Cogn Sci*, 14, 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-013-9314-2>
- Meyer, P. (2012). Embodied learning at work: Making the mind-set shift from workplace to playspace. *New Directions For Adult & Continuing Education*, 2012(134), 25-32. doi:10.1002/ace.20013
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Michelson, E. (1998). Re-membering: The return of the body to experiential learning. *Studies in Continuing Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037980200208>
- Michelson, E. (2015). Gender, Experience, and Knowledge in Adult Learning: Alisoun's Daughters. In *Gender, Experience, and Knowledge in Adult Learning: Alisoun's Daughters*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315709291>
- Mijacevic, D. (2013). Where mind meets body -- it's not just a workout: A phenomenological analysis of sport experience, human movement, play, exercise and Body/Self wholism through storytelling. ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing).

- Miles, A. (1998). Women's bodies, women's selves: Illness narratives and the 'Andean' body. *Body & Society*, 4(3), 1-19. doi:10.1177/1357034X98004003001
- Mohan, J. (2004). *Ageing, spirituality, and well-being*. New York: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.)
- Moi, T. (1999). *What is a woman? And other essays*. New York: Oxford.
- Murphy, E. J. (2007). Prior learning assessment: A review of bloom's taxonomy and kolb's theory of experiential learning: Practical uses for prior learning assessment. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 55(3), 64-66.
https://doi.org/10.1080/07377366.2007.10400135
- Musial, J. (2011). Engaged Pedagogy in the Feminist Classroom and Yoga Studio. *Source: Feminist Teacher*. https://doi.org/10.5406/femteacher.21.3.0212
- Na, J. (2009). Teaching taekwondo through Mosston's spectrum of styles. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 80(2), 1-1.
- Nieves, Y. (2012). Embodying women's stories for community awareness and social action. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 134, pp. 33-42.
- Noel, H. (2009). Un-doing gendered power relations through martial arts? *International Journal of Social Inquiry* (Vol. 2). Retrieved from https://psu.illiad.oclc.org/illiad/pdf/2365524.pdf
- O'Loughlin, M. (1998). Paying attention to bodies in education: theoretical resources and practical suggestions. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 30(3), 275-297.
- Pagis, M. (2009). Embodied Self-reflexivity. *Social Psychology Quarterly*; 72, 3; pp. 265-283.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation Methods*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Perini, R., Bortoletto, M., Capogrosso, M., Fertoni, A., & Miniussi, C. (2016). Acute effects of aerobic exercise promote learning. *Scientific Reports*. https://doi.org/10.1038/srep25440
- Pieter, W. (1991). Performance characteristics of elite taekwondo athletes. *Korean Journal of Sport Science*.
- Pieter, W. (2009). Taekwondo. (pp. 249-259). Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
doi:10.1002/9781444316872.ch19
- Pinnegar, S. & Daynes, J. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically. In Clandinin, D. J. (Ed.) *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 1-34). Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pinto, S. de A., & Teixeira Costa, G. de C. (2015). Motivation of taekwondo players: An inquiry research among gyms in Belo Horizonte. *REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE FUTSAL E FUTEBOL*.
- Priest, S. (2000). Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body-subject. *Nursing Philosophy*.
1(2), 173-174.

- Proffitt, D. R. (2006). Embodied perception and the economy of action. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *1*(2), 110-122. doi:10.1111/j.1745-6916.2006.00008.x
- Puchalski, C. and Ferrell, B. (2011-06-01). Making health care whole: integrating spirituality into patient care (kindle location 138). Chicago distribution. Kindle edition
- Quin, E., & Wilson, M. (2012). Integrating somatics and science. *Journal Of Dance & Somatic Practices*, *3*(1/2), 183-193. doi:10.1386/jdsp.3.1-2.183_1
- Richard C. Bell, Ed.D., J. . (1998). A History of Women in Sport Prior to Title IX. *The Sport Journal*, *20*. Retrieved from <http://thesportjournal.org/article/a-history-of-women-in-sport-prior-to-title-ix/>
- Roberts, T. G. (2003). An Interpretation of Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED481922>
- Roth, A., & Basow, S. A. (2004a). Femininity, Sports, and Feminism. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *28*(3), 245–265. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723504266990>
- Rouse, W. L. (2017). *Her own hero :The origins of the women's self-defense movement*. New York: New York University Press.
- Rouse, W., & Slutsky, B. (2014). Empowering the physical and political self: Women and the practice of self-defense, 1890-1920. *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781414000383>
- Ruby, M., Dunn, E., Perrino, A., Gillis, R., and Viel, S. (2011). The Invisible Benefits of Exercise. *Health Psychology* *30* (10), pp. 67-74.
- Sanders-Bustle, L., & Oliver, K. L. (2001). The role of physical activity in the lives of researchers: A body-narrative. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *20*(6), 507-520. doi:10.1023/A:1012282416927
- Scheidler, T. & Wagstaff, A. (2008). Exposure to Women's Sports: Changing Attitudes Toward Female Athletes. *The Sport Journal*, *20*.
- Schmalz, D. and Kerstetter, D. (2006). Girlie girls and manly men: Children's stigma consciousness of gender in sports and physical activities. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *38*(4), 536-557.
- Schmidt, W. S. (2009). Transformative pilgrimage. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, *11*(1-2), 66-77. doi:10.1080/19349630902864242
- Schwandt, T. A. (2007). "Literary turn (in social science)" and "Writing strategies" [Dictionary entries]. *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed., pp. 179-80, 322). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schwartz, J., Takito, M. Y., Fabrício, •, Del Vecchio, B., Antonietti, L. S., & Franchini, • Emerson. (n.d.). *Health-related physical fitness in martial arts and combat sports practitioners*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11332-015-0220-6>

- Scott, B. . and, & Derry, A. (2005). Women in Their Bodies: Challenging Objectification through Experiential Learning. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 33(1/2), 188–209.
- Shen, C.-L., Chyu, M.-C., Zhang, Y., Brismée, J., Dagda, R., Chaung, E., ... Doctolero, S. (2013). Effects of Martial Arts Exercise on Body Composition, Serum Biomarkers and Quality of Life in Overweight/Obese Premenopausal Women: A Pilot Study. *Clinical Medicine Insights: Women's Health*. <https://doi.org/10.4137/CMWH.S11997>
- Shih, Y. L., & Lin, C. Y. (2016). The relationship between action anticipation and emotion recognition in athletes of open skill sports. *Cognitive Processing*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10339-016-0764-7>
- Skulmowski, A., & Rey, G. D. (2017). Measuring cognitive load in embodied learning settings. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01191>
- Smith, A. M., Spiegler, K. M., Sauce, B., Wass, C. D., Sturzoiu, T., & Matzel, L. D. (2013). Voluntary aerobic exercise increases the cognitive enhancing effects of working memory training. *Behavioural Brain Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbr.2013.09.012>
- Snowber, C. (2012). Dance as a way of knowing. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2012(134), 53-60. doi:10.1002/ace.20017
- Sodhi, M.K. and Cohen, H.L. (2012). The manifestation and integration of embodied knowing into social work practice. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 62(2), 120-137.
- Somerville, M. (2004). Tracing bodylines: the body in feminist poststructural research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(1), 47-63.
- Somerville, M. (2004). Tracing bodylines: the body in feminist poststructural research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(1), 47-63.
- Sparkes, A. (1999). Exploring body narratives. *Sport, Education and Society*, 4(1), 17-30. doi:10.1080/1357332990040102
- Spencer, D. C. (2009). Habit(us), body techniques and body callusing: An ethnography of mixed martial arts. *Body and Society*, 15(4), 119–143. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X09347224>
- Springborg, M., & Horii, C. V. (2016). Toward a New Creative Scholarship of Educational Development: The Teaching and Learning Project and an Opening to Discourse. *To Improve the Academy*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tia2.20048>
- Standal, Ø. F., & Engelsrud, G. (2013). Researching embodiment in movement contexts: A phenomenological approach. *Sport, Education and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2011.608944>
- Standal, Ø. F., & Moe, V. F. (2011). Merleau-pony Meets Kretchmar: Sweet Tensions of Embodied Learning. *Sport, Ethics & Philosophy*, 5(3), 256-269.
- Stoller, S. (2000). Reflections on feminist Merleau-PontysSkepticism. *Hypatia* 15 (1): 175-182.

- Sussman, A., & Kossak, M. (2011). The wisdom of the inner life: Meeting oneself through meditation and music. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2011(131), 55-64. doi:10.1002/ace.421
- Swartz, A. L. (2011). Wisdom, the Body and Adult Learning: Insights from Neuroscience. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 131, pp. 15-24.
- Swartz, A. L. (2012). Embodied Learning and Patient Education: From Nurses' Self-awareness to patient Self-Caring. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 134, pp. 15-24.
- Theberge, N. (1987). Sport and women's empowerment. *Women's Studies International Forum*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(87\)90056-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(87)90056-2)
- Theeboom, M., De Knop, P. & Wylleman, P. (2008). Martial arts and socially vulnerable youth. An analysis of Flemish initiatives. *Sport, Education and Society*, 13(3), 301-318. (IF 0.511)
- Theeboom, M., De Knop, P and Vertonghen, J. (2009). Experiences of children in martial arts. *European Journal for Sport and Society* , 6 (1), 19-35.
- Thorpe, H. (2009). Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture: Gender Reflexivity and the Habitus-Field Complex. *Sociology of Sport Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.26.4.491>
- Thorpe, H., & Olive, R. (2016). *Women in action sport cultures : identity, politics and experience*. London: Palgrave MacMillan
- Thorpe, H., Toffoletti, K., & Bruce, T. (2017). Sportswomen and Social Media: Bringing Third-Wave Feminism, Postfeminism, and Neoliberal Feminism Into Conversation. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 41(5), 359–383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723517730808>
- Tisdell, E. J. (1993). Feminism and adult learning: Power, pedagogy, and praxis. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1993(57), 91–103. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.36719935711>
- Tisdell, E. J. (1998). Poststructural feminist pedagogies: The possibilities and limitations of feminist emancipatory adult learning theory and practice. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48(3), 139-156.
- Tisdell, E. J. (2003). *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Tisdell, E. J. (2006). Spirituality, cultural identity, and epistemology in culturally responsive teaching in higher education. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 8(3), 19-25. doi:10.1207/s15327892mcp0803_4
- Tisdell, E. J. (2011). The wisdom of webs a-weaving: Adult education and the paradoxes of complexity in changing times. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2011(131), 5-13. doi:10.1002/ace.416
- Tisdell, E. J., & Taylor, E. W. (2001). Adult education philosophy informs practice. *Education*. <https://doi.org/Article>

- Tobin, J. A., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). "I Know Down to My Ribs": A Narrative Research Study on the Embodied Adult Learning of Creative Writers. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 65(3), 215–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713615574901>
- Todres, L. and Galvin, K.T. (2008). Embodied interpretation: A novel way of evocatively representing meanings in phenomenological research. *Qualitative Research*. 8(5), 568-583. http://www.edu.uwo.ca/Narrative_Inquiry/faq.html#Q1
- Toskovic, N. N., Blessing, D., & Williford, H. N. (2004). Physiologic profile of recreational male and female novice and experienced Tae Kwon Do practitioners. *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness*, 44, 164-172
- Travis Sheadler, Audrey Wagstaff, Ph.D., M. (2008). Exposure to Women's Sports: Changing Attitudes Toward Female Athletes. *The Sport Journal*, 20. Retrieved from <http://thesportjournal.org/article/exposure-to-womens-sports-changing-attitudes-toward-female-athletes/#more-5779>
- van Praag, H. (2005). Exercise Enhances Learning and Hippocampal Neurogenesis in Aged Mice. *Journal of Neuroscience*. <https://doi.org/10.1523/jneurosci.1731-05.2005>
- VanRheener, D. (2011). Reflections on an After-School Literacy Program and the Educational Value of Taekwondo : A Preliminary Analysis. *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*.
- Vanderstraeten, R. A. F. (2002). Dewey ' s Transactional Constructivism. *Journal of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain*, 36(2).
- Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. *Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bmcl.2015.09.055>
- Velija, P., & Kumar, G. (2009). GCSE physical education and the embodiment of gender. *Sport, Education and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573320903217083>
- Velija, P., Mierzwinski, M., & Fortune, L. (2013). "It made me feel powerful": women's gendered embodiment and physical empowerment in the martial arts. *Leisure Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2012.696128>
- Wagner, L. (1997). *Jeet kune do: Bruce Lee's commentaries on the martial way / the tao of gung fu: A study in the way of Chinese martial art / Bruce Lee interviews, 1958-1973*. Chicago: Booklist Publications.
- Wargo, M. a, Spirrison, C. L., Thorne, B. M., & Henley, T. B. (2007). Personality characteristics of martial artists. *Social Behavior and Personality*. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2007.35.3.399>
- Weiss, G. (Ed). (2008). *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary encounters with Merleau-Ponty*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Welch, J. L., Jeffries, P. R., Lyon, B. L., Boland, D. L., & Backer, J. H. (2001). Experiential learning: Integrating theory and research into practice. *Nurse Educator*, 26(5), pp. 240-243.

Wilson, M. (2002). Six views of embodied cognition. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 9(4), 625-636. doi:10.3758/BF0

Yap, A. (2016). (hip) throwing like a girl: Martial arts and norms of feminine body comportment. *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 9(2), 92-114.

Young, I. (2005). *On female body experience: "Throwing like a girl" and other essays*. New York: Oxford.

**Appendix A:
Black Belt Women and Embodied Learning
Consent to take part in research**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how women earning a black belt in Taekwondo make meaning of the embodied learning experience associated with physical movement.

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves two brief interviews along with a video recording and focus group meeting.
- I understand I will be asked to provide my Black Belt essay as part of the data collection process.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded and video-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the final dissertation product as well as conference proceedings and published papers.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio and video recordings will be retained in a secure Penn State provided database application.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalization I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Can you tell me the story of how you got involved with Taekwondo?

What did you find attracted you to taking the classes?

How do you feel about being a woman practicing Taekwondo? (Did your gender ever occur to you when you decided to start practicing?)

Was there anything you felt you could not do before earning your Black Belt that somehow changed so that after earning it you felt you might be able to accomplish whatever that was?

What changed in your life from the time you began your Black Belt journey to finally having earned it?

How do you feel in your body when you are practicing Taekwondo? Have you ever stopped to notice your body as you are practicing?

Put another way, do you sense any feelings from within when you are practicing?

How do you feel about being in the environment practicing Taekwondo with men?

Do you notice a difference in the way your body feels or moves about your everyday space?

Have you sensed a change in the way you move in the space inside or outside of the Taekwondo school?

Tell me a story about a time when you felt particularly aware of your body in Taekwondo.

Is there anything in particular you want me to know about the way you move in the Taekwondo school?

How you notice your body move in the TKD school?

Is there anything in general you think might be important for me to know as I learn about the journey of women earning their Black Belt in Taekwondo?

How would you feel about my videoing you as you practice your favorite belt form?

Immediately prior to videoing...

Think about the way your body moves in the space as you demonstrate your form.

Try to be aware of how you feel in your body as you practice.

Questions from video as elicitation device

How do you feel while watching this video of yourself?

Do you remember what you were experiencing in your body at this point?

Why did you choose this particular form for me to video?

Describe what it feels like when you are performing Taekwondo.

General interview questions

Have you noticed any changes in your sense of self as a result of practicing Taekwondo and earning your black belt?

Did you discover any qualities that you possess that you either were not previously aware of or that you may have noticed once you earned your black belt?

When you started Taekwondo can you think of what made it memorable

Tell me a little bit more about the journey to your Black Belt

How many years total did you practice?

Are you still currently practicing now

What is your belt level?

What kind of turning points or aha moments did you experience during your training for your black belt?

Do you notice a difference in yourself from the beginning to now?

If you could choose a symbol or a metaphor or something that describes that black belt Journey what might that be?

Is there anything in particular about earning your black belt that you want to share that I don't know about or that you think is particularly significant?

Is there a question that you wished I would have asked you perhaps?

Where are you aware of the difference in your bodily presence?

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

It's more than a Black Belt: Embodied Learning in Taekwondo Women

The purpose of this voluntary research study is to investigate the experience of women who earn a Black Belt in Taekwondo. You are invited to take part in a research study because you have earned a Black Belt in Taekwondo, and your perspective on earning your Black Belt is integral to the study.

For this study, you will be asked to discuss your experience when earning your black belt, choose a favorite Taekwondo form and perform it while being videoed, and then discuss your experience performing the form. Additionally, you will be asked to provide a copy of your Black Belt essay, and bring with you, if applicable, an item which you feel represents your journey toward obtaining your Black Belt. Finally, the group of participants in the study will gather in a focus group to share their experiences of earning a black belt and also participating in the study.

I cannot promise any benefits to you from your taking part in this study. However, possible benefits include that you may be able to identify ways through which Taekwondo has affected your life.

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You can decide to participate or not to participate. You may choose not to take part in this research study.

To determine if you are eligible to participate in this study, please answer the screening questions below.

Thank you for your consideration to support me in my doctoral research.

Please answer the following questions to determine if you fit the criteria for a study participant.

- 1- Are you over the age of 25?
- 2- Do you have a Black Belt in Taekwondo?

VITA

Valerie Ann Cholet

EDUCATION

D.Ed. Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg, PA
Concentration: Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

M.Ed Elementary Education
Arcadia University, Glenside, PA

B.S. Exercise and Sport Science
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Minor in Business

UNIVERSITY WORK EXPERIENCE

2002- present	Assistant Teaching Professor The Pennsylvania State University
2000-2001	Instructor Eastern University
1998 – 2000	Instructor Montgomery County Community College

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Cholet, V. (January 8, 2020 - January 11, 2020). "It's more than a Belt: Embodied learning in Taekwondo women," NAKHE annual meeting, NAKHE, Palm Springs, CA

Cholet, V. (January 6, 2017). "Intersecting Embodied Learning and Kinesthetic Intelligence: An Emerging Model of Adult Learning," NAKHE Annual Conference 2017, NAKHE, Orlando, FL

Cholet, V. (January 2016). "Taking Curriculum Standards Outside the Classroom," San Diego Collaborative Congress, NAKHE - National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education, San Diego. International.

Cholet, V. (February 2014) Using Physical and Health Education for Teaching General Curriculum, 2014 EDA Convention, Newport, Rhode Island.

Cholet, V. AAACE: Windows into Cross Discipline Research, Building Sustainable Futures Through Learning and Partnerships", Lexington, Kentucky. (2015)

Cholet, V. (Co-Presenter), Schocker, J. (Co-Presenter). Social Studies After School: How Yoga and Taekwondo Enriched the Learning Experiences of Third Graders and Preservice Teachers, 2014 Professional Development School National Conference, Las Vegas, NV.